

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

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Secure at Dunbar

Dunbar is one of twelve railway stations on the East Coast Main Line that have been awarded a national security rating.

The stations, all of which are managed by National Express East Coast, have won 'Secure Stations' status from the British Transport Police (BTP) and the Department for Transport (DfT).

The Secure Stations scheme is a Government-backed initiative aimed at improving personal security at railway stations.

The national scheme covers all rail and underground networks policed by the British Transport Police. It sets out good practice standards and recognises stations which work with the transport police and other local partners to implement security measures.

To qualify for Secure Stations status, there are four key levels of security which have to be reached:

- the design of the station has to conform to standards set by the British Transport Police to prevent and reduce crime;
- the way the station is run has to allow for crime prevention, response to incidents and communication with customers;
- statistics for the station for 12 months prior to an inspection must demonstrate positive efforts to manage crime; and
- a survey of station users has to demonstrate that on the whole, customers feel secure when using the station.

National Express East Coast's head of stations, Anna Heathcote, said: "Our customers should feel safe and secure at all times. This important accreditation is the result of a lot of hard work by our employees, in partnership with the transport police. We are investing in our stations as safe and welcoming gateways to rail travel."

The twelve stations managed by National Express East Coast have benefited in recent years from improvements, including new and extended CCTV coverage, improved lighting and signage.

New Timetable

Arriva CrossCountry have informed us that the late night Fridays only service from Edinburgh to Dunbar will be five minutes earlier when the new timetable comes into operation on 17 May. This means that it will leave Waverley at 23:17 hrs arriving at Dunbar at 23:53.

Also the Sunday 13:43 from Sunday service from Dunbar to Edinburgh will be reinstated from the same date. This service had been dropped during the winter timetable due to engineering works.

With a new timetable coming into operation, it is always wise to check that your favourite train has not changed its time!

The Aims of RAGES

- To improve the rail service between Edinburgh and Dunbar with extension to Berwick upon Tweed at a later stage.
- To have East Linton and Reston stations re-opened for active use.
- To improve the level of service to North Berwick.
- To consider the implications with regard to car parking and bicycle storage at stations between Waverley and Berwick upon Tweed.
- To keep under scrutiny the standards of passenger facilities at stations between Waverley and Berwick upon Tweed, including North Berwick, and to draw the attention of the relevant bodies to shortcomings which arise.
- To re-open the branch line from Longniddry to Haddington.
- The group, being environmentally minded, will actively strive to encourage rail travel within its geographical area.

Welcome to this issue of The Rages Rag, which we publish regularly. It is the main means of communication with our members.

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The editor invites contributions which should be sent to him at the "Published by" address at the foot of page 4.

Berwick News

The past few months have been uneventful. The station has been repainted and now looks really smart. Trains have run generally to time and there have been no major delays. However, there have been too many signs of a decline in standards of service on the trains of both companies serving Berwick. On two successive weeks, there was no ticket inspection at all on the 17:33 hrs Arriva train from York to Berwick. The trains concerned were busy, but by no means full and it was not clear what the conductors were doing with their time. One train (3 April) ran 34 minutes late, but no explanation was given to “customers” for the delay. Equally importantly, on one of these occasions, one toilet was locked out of action and a second seemed to be permanently occupied, leaving one to cater for the needs of at least 150 passengers. This is definitely not good enough and to put it into perspective, it may be mentioned that a double-deck TGV train on SNCF has 14 toilets for 509 passengers, a ratio of about 1 to 36. On NXEC, ticket inspection is, as always, virtually non-existent in the northbound direction from Berwick and now increasingly irregular coming south from Edinburgh. On one journey to York, no ticket inspection was carried out at all, but at Newcastle a team of men boarded the train and passengers were warned to clear all luggage from seats, as this team was made up of Railway Enforcement Officers. They were not wearing uniform, but casual clothes topped by hi-visibility vests and they did not seem to do anything, other than to look vaguely threatening. They did nothing for the image of the train as a civilised way of travel. Regular and thorough ticket inspection by a force of smartly-uniformed conductors would create a much better impression.

In the last report, I complained about the amount of verbiage which assails the ears of railway passengers to-day. The prize for the silliest announcement must now go to someone at Waverley, who pressed the wrong button about 18.30 on 2 April, a day which had enjoyed perfect Spring sunshine from an early hour. Suddenly we were cautioned to take extra care, since “in view of today’s wet weather, surfaces may be slippery”. Where had the person who initiated that announcement been all day? What did her/his supervisors think? It was as sloppy as the indicator displays at the same station which often show a train as “on time” when it all too clearly is not.

It was with great regret that users of Berwick station learned of the death of George Meldrum on 2 April. For very many years until last year, George was one of the platform team and regulars have missed him since he retired. He was in fact one of the first railway workers to press for the chance to continue to work beyond 65 and he remained in post for another year after his 65th birthday. Sadly he was not to enjoy his leisure for long, since he spent much of the last year fighting illness. Although his first occupation was in the Berwick salmon fishing industry, most of George’s working life was spent in railway service, as a dedicated and very professional railwayman, and countless passengers over the years have been grateful for his presence on the platform. His funeral at the Methodist Church in Berwick on 9 April was attended by well over 100 people, including many railway staff, past and present.

Parking at Dunbar

RAGES eventually received a reply to our letter to National Express East Coast (NXEC). Sadly they are not going to back down on the increase for car parking at Dunbar stating that they are in line with rises elsewhere on their stations.

They re-iterated that these charges would be reduced if passengers were to purchase a season ticket, but not encouraging for the day traveller.

Members at Dunbar Station recently have found the car park with very few cars in it. We believe that it was due to the increase in charges and people are parking on the nearby streets. When we enquired at the station, the staff confirmed that there was no decrease in the number of passengers using the station. It would appear that by increasing the parking charges, NXEC have actually lost revenue by passengers voting with their wheels.

Overcrowding

It has again been noted that some of the CrossCountry trains are well overcrowded. One recent example was the 11:05 hrs from Edinburgh on Saturday April 4th

It was reported that they were packed like “sardines” and one has to ask about safety in such circumstances.

Membership

We now have around 160 members from around the counties.

Please encourage your neighbours or fellow passengers to join RAGES.

Membership forms can be obtained from committee members, whose names can be found on your membership card.

Station Use on the Increase

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has released 2007/08 station usage estimates for all national rail stations in Great Britain. Extracts for the stations in our area are shown below.

More information on station usage can be found at the ORR web site: <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1529>

Station Name	2007/08 Entries	2007/08 Exits	2007/08 Total of Entries & Exits	2006/07 Total of Entries & Exits	% Change
Brunstane	53,767	55,776	109,543	121,752	-10.0
Drem	47,738	51,997	99,735	84,905	17.5
Dunbar	163,785	168,592	332,377	299,172	11.1
Edinburgh Waverley	8,003,965	8,165,326	16,169,291	15,285,837	5.8
Haymarket	900,852	706,502	1,607,354	1,620,102	-0.8
Longniddry	76,150	85,260	161,410	140,490	14.9
Musselburgh	149,577	156,608	306,185	202,895	50.9
Newcraighall	91,672	98,355	190,027	176,933	7.4
North Berwick	209,134	213,547	422,681	398,056	6.2
Prestonpans	83,458	86,930	170,388	142,604	19.5
Wallyford	75,897	84,052	159,949	135,819	17.8

With the exception of Brunstane and Haymarket, all these stations have shown a substantial increase over the previous year. It would be expected that the 50% increase at Musselburgh is due to the students attending Queen Margaret University using the trains - car parking space at the Campus was deliberately made minimal.

These figures are declared as "estimates" and are based on ticket sales.

It is well known that ticket sales do not always reflect actual passenger numbers as not all passengers come into possession of a ticket - for various reasons.

The industry is of course trying to address this by providing more ticket machines at un-staffed stations [*Ed: see article below*] and in particular First ScotRail have ticket collectors at the Waverley barriers during peak times.

Ticket Machine Advice

On noting members' problems about their use of station ticket machine, First ScotRail have advised RAGES as follows.

If a machine becomes defective for any reason it is picked up on the Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) supervisor's monitor and they will arrange attendance to fix or remove problem.

There could be a variety of reasons that a TVM stops taking credit/debit cards or coins or notes, the majority of which are outwith our control i.e.

- damaged cards / coins / notes which get stuck in TVM
- vandalism
- cards held on request by the bank if they are "hot" cards

Customers should, if they have time, report the faulty TVM via the station Help Point so that we have a record of the inability to pay should this be required. They should board the train and advise the on-train staff of the problem and pay by other means. If they have no other means to pay for a ticket then a ticket irregularity report will be created by the on-train staff to allow onward travel.

If a card is retained by the ticket machine, then report it to the CCTV control room who will pass the message on to the TVM supervisor to retrieve the card and contact the customer to arrange return.

Questions to Parliament

In February John Lamont (MSP for Roxburgh and Berwickshire) asked the Scottish Executive what its position was on the re-opening of Reston railway station.

The response from the Minister for Transport, Stewart Stevenson MSP, was:

“The provision of rail services to Reston and East Linton is not one of the priced options secured under the ScotRail franchise extension. However, the option to operate additional services between Edinburgh and Dunbar is part of the franchise extension consultation being carried out by Transport Scotland. If implemented, that option will trigger a study into the feasibility of a Dunbar hourly service and this will also examine the possibility of further services.

“In considering the provision of new stations, Ministers must balance the desire to attract new users against the impact on network capacity, and the needs of existing passengers whilst taking account of value for money and affordability.”

Also RAGES wrote to Stewart Stevenson highlighting the withdrawal of the 13:43 hrs Sunday service between Dunbar and Edinburgh and suggesting that this was a further reason for a “local” service. As this was a matter for Transport Scotland, they replied as follows:

“As you are aware from your correspondence with Richard Gibson of Cross Country Trains, the 13:44 service from Dunbar to Edinburgh will be reinstated from the start of the May 2009 timetable on 17 May. The service was not included in the December 2008 timetable due to ongoing engineering works on that line. Ordinarily if the service is advertised in the timetable and engineering works prevent the service operating, a bus service will be provided. Arriva CrossCountry are not operating a replacement bus service as the Dunbar service was mistakenly advertised in the timetable.

“Turning to your comment about First ScotRail providing a local service between Dunbar and Edinburgh, you will be aware that as part of the ScotRail re-franchising process an option exists to implement two extra services between Edinburgh and Dunbar. The option also exists to undertake a study on the possibility of an hourly Dunbar to Edinburgh service. This option is one of twenty-eight created by the franchise extension. A consultation exercise has taken place which sought stakeholders views on how the funds secured by the franchise extension could be best implemented and invested. The results of this consultation will be put to the Minister by the end of this month (February). All consultation responses received by Transport Scotland can be accessed online at <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/reports/consultation-papers-and-responses>.

“Should it be agreed that implementing this option is the most appropriate way forward, the study will consider the appropriate value for money rail options and will allow these options to be developed in the strategic context identified in the East Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS).

“I hope this clarifies the current position.”

Analysis of Rail Services in East Lothian

Continuing to support our aims, East Lothian Council have written to the Minister for Transport, Sestrans and First ScotRail with an analysis of patronage of rail services in the East Lothian area.

It declared that East Lothian is the fastest growing area in terms of patronage numbers, but the service currently received is not of the standard of services in Fife and West Lothian.

Key points from the analysis were:

- Edinburgh is First ScotRail's fastest growing area in passenger numbers
- No area in Edinburgh City Region (ECR) is growing as fast as East Lothian
- All ECR stations enjoy at least 30-min frequency except East Lothian
- Nowhere else has East Lothian's growth now or future potential in tourist traffic, which counter-flows commuter traffic and enhances profit at little cost
- ORR statistics do not yet reflect huge growth in patronage at Musselburgh from the opening of QMU in Autumn 2007.

East Lothian Council believe therefore that the case for First ScotRail doubling its East Lothian service to twice an hour and running every second train to Dunbar from Drem is both overwhelming and good business.

I would therefore be obliged if you could advise us of the step you are currently taking to support the expansion of rail services at this time.

Reply

Transport Scotland on behalf of the Minister for Transport has replied to the Council's letter in a similar vein to our response above, but is more positive on the local service option - “If this option [*two additional services*] is implemented we are committed to carrying out a study into the benefits of an hourly Dunbar to Berwick service which will also consider the needs of the Edinburgh to Berwick-upon-Tweed corridor more generally, this may include the potential for new stations at Reston and East Linton and the consideration of increased service provision to Drem station.”

They also assured the Council that the recent increase in passenger growth has been taken into account in the Strategic Transport Projects Review.

Lastly they say that their response to the consultation will be published in Spring 2009 and that decisions on the options to take forward will be taken thereafter.