

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

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More Services for Dunbar

After eleven years of campaigning for a local service to and beyond Dunbar, RAGES heard the news last month that Transport Scotland is working with First ScotRail to introduce new Monday to Friday services from May 2010.

We already knew that from December 2010 First ScotRail would be providing the 06:39 hrs Monday to Friday from Dunbar to Edinburgh, the 23:17 hrs Fridays only from the capital to Dunbar, and the possibility of a latish Monday to Thursday to Dunbar after 21:00 hrs. The Scottish operator would take over the first two services from Arriva CrossCountry.

However, under this latest proposal, which is subject to confirmation under standard industry procedures, two off-peak services will be introduced from May 2010 when passengers will be able to travel to Dunbar from Edinburgh at 10:00 hrs and 14:21 hrs and in the opposite direction at 10:57 hrs and 15:04 hrs. Confirmation of the late evening service from Edinburgh to Dunbar to run at 22:00 hrs (or later) Monday to Thursday was also indicated.

Transport Scotland is negotiating the introduction of all of the new services as part of the deal to extend the ScotRail franchise with FirstGroup, which was signed in April 2008. Also included in this agreement was that a Development Study, funded by the Scottish Government, would look at the re-opening of East Linton and Reston stations together with an hourly service between Edinburgh and Dunbar - to start at the end of 2009 and be completed within twelve months.

Our chairman, Tom Thorburn, issued a press release which said: "The RAGES committee are delighted that their hard work is starting to pay dividends with the announcement that First ScotRail will be coming to Dunbar on 24th May 2010.

"These new services will provide more travel opportunities for the passenger from Dunbar and its surrounding area - indeed the new morning and mid afternoon services will fit in nicely between existing services at Dunbar. It is also very welcome news in that a Monday to Thursday late evening service is also going to be implemented which will complement the existing Fridays only service which has proved to be very popular since its introduction. Importantly, the introduction of these new First ScotRail services at Dunbar in May will provide the necessary driver training which will pave the way for the much expanded local service which this town so much requires and deserves.

"It is to be hoped that weekend services will also see extra services at Dunbar which will go a long way to alleviate the problems we witness when a main line train is cancelled and the inadequate two hour service is stretched to two and half hours resulting in all its passengers having to use the next already very busy service.

"This announcement is a key milestone in as much that a local service will be returning to Dunbar after a long absence and we hope these will prove to be equally as successful as other additional services we have had introduced in the Group's area."

In the Transport Scotland announcement, Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson said: "More people are switching to more sustainable modes of transport and these new services would provide further opportunities for passengers to travel between Edinburgh and Dunbar by rail.

"We are working hard to ensure communities along the east coast and across Scotland can benefit from access to the rail network and are investing significantly in extending services - both in terms of expanding infrastructure and plugging gaps in the timetable.

"We are seeking to confirm this option which will enable ScotRail to operate these additional services during the week and will open the door to other potential service improvements in the future."

Also First ScotRail managing director Steve Montgomery said: "Our commitment to improving rail travel opportunities between East Lothian and the capital is well known. We very much hope to be in a position to welcome people on board these planned new ScotRail services."

The joint Transport Scotland and First ScotRail development study of the benefits of an hourly Dunbar to Edinburgh service will also consider options between Edinburgh and Newcastle. It will look at the possibility of services from Edinburgh to Newcastle, Edinburgh to Berwick and the possibility of new stations at East Linton and Reston. First ScotRail are due to appoint consultants to undertake the study.

RAGES would expect that the new services will be undertaken by the existing class 322 electric multiple units.

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.

Class 380 Trains for the North Berwick Service



Mock-up photographs: Above is courtesy of First ScotRail, others are RAGES

First ScotRail announced last month that they are to replace the current Class 322 trains on the North Berwick service with the new 380 class in March 2011 when the lease on the 322s expires. The new trains have of course electric traction.

In general, the Transport Scotland investment in 38 new electric Class 380 trains will add 9000 seats to the Scottish rail network.

Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson said: "We are delighted to see the progress being made by Siemens towards the delivery of the Class 380 rolling stock. Rail patronage is increasing and this vital investment in a new fleet of environmentally friendly trains will deliver not only benefits for passengers through improved facilities, more trains and more seats on the network, but also help us meet our ambitious climate change targets by encouraging people to leave the car at home in favour of more sustainable forms of transport."

Steve Montgomery, managing director of ScotRail, said: "The arrival of the Class 380s will trigger a cascade of different classes of trains across the network. Our priority under the cascade is to deliver extra capacity where it is needed most and, of course, to release trains to serve on the new Airdrie-Bathgate line."

Train briefing

RAGES, along with other interested parties, was invited to a briefing on the new trains by First ScotRail last month in the Museum of Transport in Glasgow. Cllr David Berry and East Lothian staff member Paul Ince were also present.

The briefing was presented by Nick Hortin, New Trains Director of First ScotRail, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation followed by a tour of the class 380 mock-up at the museum with many questions and answers.

The new trains are currently being built by Siemens in Germany in two varieties - three car and four car sets. It will be the latter that are implemented on the North Berwick service in March 2011. It was explained that these trains have been developed from proven Desiro trains already operating in South East England with 150 million miles run. They will be maintained in Glasgow by ScotRail as at present with the 322s.

There are 282 seats which is slightly less than the current 322s. This reduction in the number of seats was raised at the

presentation and First ScotRail said that a survey showed that even when passengers were standing on certain services, there were still seats available. The current trains have seats in rows of two and three and it is the middle one of the three that is sometimes left empty. It would appear that passengers do not want to squeeze into these. The new trains will only have two seats per row with much easier access.

There will be more cycle space. Firstly there is a dedicated space for two cycles in a well-defined area with plenty of room for passengers to pass them. There are restraining straps in this area. Secondly, there is the ability to have one cycle in each of the eight vestibules, space permitting, making a total per train of ten cycles. These vestibules are wider than those in the current trains and again passengers will have no problem in negotiating their way past them. First ScotRail assured the meeting that safety issues had been addressed to ensure that this new arrangement was acceptable.

An interesting discussion arose concerning the position of the coach with the dedicated cycle space. As it will be in one



of the centre coaches, users will soon get to know where to stand.

However, it is not as simple as that, because it could be a different centre coach each day! We asked if some of the four-car trains were made up differently and if not how could the North Berwick trains get turned

round. The answer is simple! All trains are assembled identically, but unlike the present situation, the trains will not be dedicated to "our" service. On some days they will be doing duties in Ayrshire where some services are involved in a triangle which results in the trains facing the other way. It was therefore suggested that some form of signage should be easily visible to cycle users.

First ScotRail would look at this possibility.

There are also two dedicated wheelchair spaces with close-by seating for someone accompanying the wheelchair.

Of the two toilets, one is fully designed for wheelchair access and is close to the dedicated spaces.

Another good feature of the new trains is better luggage space. As well as luggage



stacks, there is room between seats where these are back to back in association with tables.

The doors will be able to be operated by the Guard from any coach. This is an improvement on the 322s where the Guard can be seen rushing back to the rear coach at stations to operate the doors.

Additional features included air conditioning and electric power points under the tables.

There had been speculation that the North Berwick service



was getting the new trains which had been destined for GARL, but we were reassured by First ScotRail that this is NOT the case.

Prior to the new trains being implemented the meeting thought it would be useful to have a leaflet campaign highlighting the differences for travellers. This could be available at all stations and RAGES could also distribute a leaflet with their newsletter.

It was also indicated that if the new Dunbar services were to be operated by the class 322s, then in March 2011 these would be taken over by the 380s.

Thanks are due to First ScotRail for inviting RAGES to this briefing and allowing us to make useful suggestions which they

may incorporate prior to delivery.

Berwick News

The main event at the station during the past few months has been the renewal of the roof. Work has proceeded as fast as weather conditions have allowed, but first of all high winds and latterly snow and ice have frequently interrupted the programme, which in consequence is taking longer than planned. The work has been carried out very tidily and without any serious inconvenience to station staff or passengers and we look forward to seeing the finished result in due course. The material being used is apparently self-cleaning and this facility should further improve the appearance of our station.

The recent spell of bad weather has of course interrupted services, but staff have clearly done their best to keep the trains moving. At a time such as this, small gestures are appreciated by passengers and, on the evening of 8 January, it was good to be allowed to wait in a warm, empty train in platform 9 at Waverley, while Cross-Country awaited the arrival of the train which should have formed the 17:08 hrs departure and which was over thirty minutes late. However, it is noticeable that the information systems do not always keep up with what is happening, or not happening, and, apart from instances at other stations, it was noted that at Berwick, on 8 January, the 18:47 Rail Link bus 60 was shown on the departure screens as running on time when in fact it had not run for three days. It is not clear whose fault this was, but such misinformation is not helpful to passengers and suggests a lack of elementary road-rail co-ordination.

National Express East Coast has now passed, unmourned, into the history books and the ECML trains are now once again in public ownership. So far there has been little sign of change, but things can only get better. One of the last unnecessary expenditures by that company was the installation at many stations of information points, illuminated at night, which were fully capable, when a train was running 45 minutes late, of showing "Good service". It would seem that such non-information serves only to cause additional problems for hard-pressed platform staff. However, on-board ticket checking still leaves much to be desired.

Luggage theft is a growing problem on ECML trains and an elderly lady acquaintance was recently a victim of this when travelling from Glasgow to Newcastle. On board and platform staff at the latter were helpful but could do nothing. At one time, when the HST sets were built, there was adequate luggage space between the seats and passengers could easily keep an

eye on their property. The 225 sets, as built, lacked some of this space, but did have luggage racks in the middle of the coaches, which were almost equally useful. Re-building of both types of train under the auspices of GNER - under pressure from the mandarins of the British government to maximise the numbers of seats - removed these facilities and concentrated all luggage space at the ends of the coaches. The first inconvenience of this change can be well observed at intermediate stations such as Waverley on the 17:30 hrs departure, a train which originates in Aberdeen. Those who board first immediately start to place their baggage in the limited available space and thus bring the whole process to a halt, greatly increasing the dwell time in the station. Much more serious, however, is that the luggage is not near the owners and so can easily be removed by thieves. Conductors have clearly been instructed to recommend that passengers should keep an eye on their luggage "at all times", but few seem to take any notice of this unrealistic advice and if they did, the congestion in the vestibules at intermediate stations would be even worse. With good reason, some clearly are reluctant to use the end racks and there are also still too many instances at busy times of passengers placing large cases on seats or in the gangway, either due to lack of storage space or to fear of theft. Who can blame them? It is to be hoped that the designers of new trains will not repeat these errors, but in the meantime, instead of having conductors issuing warnings about the problem, it would be good if those responsible for bringing it about could now do something constructive to remedy matters. It isn't pleasant to lose, with one's case, a brooch which one has been cherished for many years.

The lack of the through service to Motherwell and Glasgow by East Coast will be discussed at committee.

Membership

We now have around 140 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.

Local Service Meeting

RAGES was again involved in the regular meeting hosted and arranged by Cllr Paul McLennan and East Lothian Council. Also present were councillors and staff from both East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils and SEStran.

In a reply from Transport Scotland about the progress of the local service study they confirmed that they were committed to moving the study forward, the actual work to be carried out by First ScotRail. It would also examine the case for new stations at East Linton and Reston. The enquiry would follow STAG principles and both economic and social benefits would be considered in the formulation of the business case. The question of re-opening Portobello station had been raised, but it was most unlikely that this would actually happen and members of the group agreed that it was not worth considering this proposition further. There was a possibility that the management of Dunbar station would be transferred to First ScotRail. The question of involving community councils was raised and Councillor P McLennan said that East Lothian Council would follow this up. Councillor J Fullarton, SBC, raised the question of the effect on the ECML of a future HS2 line to Scotland, but it was agreed that this was so far in the future that it was not worth considering at this stage. Brian Patton, RAGES, questioned the matter of paths for the local service, in the absence of any mention of this in the draft ECML timetable. There would be no point in the study recommending the case for a local service if no paths were available for its trains. North Berwick trains would also have to be re-timed to fit in with the new main line service.

Tom Thorburn, RAGES, had written to CrossCountry about extending the late evening and early morning Dunbar trains to Berwick. CrossCountry had responded: "The provision of these additional services is through a commercial agreement with Transport Scotland. If Transport Scotland wanted to formally

ask us for a costing for their extension to Berwick we would be happy to provide them an estimate." It was agreed that SEStran would follow this up in a letter. The matter of a lack of space in the car park at Dunbar and the possibility of taking over the former coal yard as additional space was raised, with ownership being transferred to East Lothian Council. The yard at present belongs to Network Rail. It was agreed that Paul Forsyth and Trond Heugen would write to the former to enquire about a change of ownership.

The furore over the through service off the ECML to Motherwell and Glasgow was discussed and it was agreed that its omission from the draft timetable was probably due to the priority given to consideration of services in the south of England and should not be taken to mean that it would be discontinued. Councillor McLennan had written to East Coast concerning the possibility that the last train to Dunbar ex-Waverley would be at 18:35 hrs. A reply from East Coast stated that the ORR had made it clear that the service north of Newcastle in the draft timetable was still "a work in progress" and that the industry was at present consulting on a draft but unfinished version. In the meantime East Coast would continue to operate the current contracted timetable. Brian Patton reminded those present that those who had attended a meeting at Waverley earlier in the month had been told by Adrian Caltieri – at that time of NXEC – that the draft had to be finalised by 8 January 2010 and effectively that meant by 23 December of this year. It was agreed that Paul Forsyth and Tom Thorburn should jointly write to East Coast to raise the matters of concern to the present group.

The question of building a parkway station to the east of Waverley, as originally proposed by GNER, was briefly discussed and it was agreed not to support this idea.

East Coast "Meet the Managers" at Dunbar

Tom Thorburn, RAGES Chairman, attended the above on Thursday 26th November and raised the following points:

- National Express had been a very poor communicator with RAGES and the passenger at large and he hoped that this would vastly improve with East Coast.
- Car parking charges were too high and indeed they should lower them at their earliest convenience as people are not using Dunbar for this reason and after all they are in the business of transporting passengers in their trains. Also on the car park front he stated that the car park required to be extended and they should contact East Lothian Council on this important matter.
- High cost of fares from Dunbar and Berwick in as much as they were disproportionate to the distance travelled. Also he brought up the facts that there were no cheap fares to London and that there no 'off peak' fares available from Dunbar, unlike other East Lothian stations. They expressed surprise at no cheap fares to London (similar to Edinburgh) and asked the ticket office staff to check whereupon they said they were but that passengers were advised to book up to 12 weeks ahead.
- Consider stopping more of their London trains at Dunbar. He feels this should be followed up by a letter to them for an 09:22 hrs call.
- The decline in first class services i.e. papers, tea and coffee etc and reduction in train staff. Tom said that he would speak to those that had made these complaints to him and be more specific and get back to them on this subject.
- More bicycle racks were urgently required at Dunbar and this point was also brought up by a passenger. They did not see this as a problem.

Tom noted that the East Coast managers were somewhat surprised as to the numbers using Dunbar as each train came in from Edinburgh. They counted the following numbers: 17:28 110 passengers; 17:54 106 passengers; and 18:25 48 passengers.

[Ed - we have since had positive feedback from our 1st class season ticket holder members that things already have much improved in first class since East Coast took over.]