

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

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Local Rail Service Studies

Yes - studies in the plural!

There are currently two studies being carried out: one by First ScotRail investigating the possibility of providing an hourly service between Edinburgh and Dunbar in the short term and the other instigated by Transport Scotland to look at the longer term options.

The former is discussed on page 2 of this newsletter.

Feasibility Study for Enhanced Rail Services between Edinburgh and Newcastle

MVA Consultancy have been appointed by Transport Scotland to undertake the second study. Recently they organised a consultation meeting in Haddington for local organisations. The firm's representatives were Scott Leitham and Paul McCartney. RAGES was invited and attended.

Scott re-iterated the study objective: "to provide a complete, operationally robust, demand driven and economically sustainable train service proposal for the Edinburgh Newcastle route, having considered and appraised all of the stakeholder desires".

They were consulting directly with local groups and representatives and also writing to other groups for their views.

An interesting barchart showed that in 2007/8 North Berwick passengers accounted for 210,000 ticket sales on over 40 daily trains, whilst Dunbar had 165,000 on 24 daily trains. Berwick-upon-Tweed with 55 daily trains attracted almost 200,000 tickets for that year. The Musselburgh ticket sales appeared to be low as towards the end of the barchart period, the Queen Margaret University opened.

Well documented in the past by RAGES have been the recent studies into local rail done in 1999, 2004 and 2005. These all put forward the need and probable viability of a local service between Edinburgh and Berwick with re-opened stations at East Linton and Reston.

The East Coast Rail Utilisation Study, undertaken by Network Rail in 2008, identified:

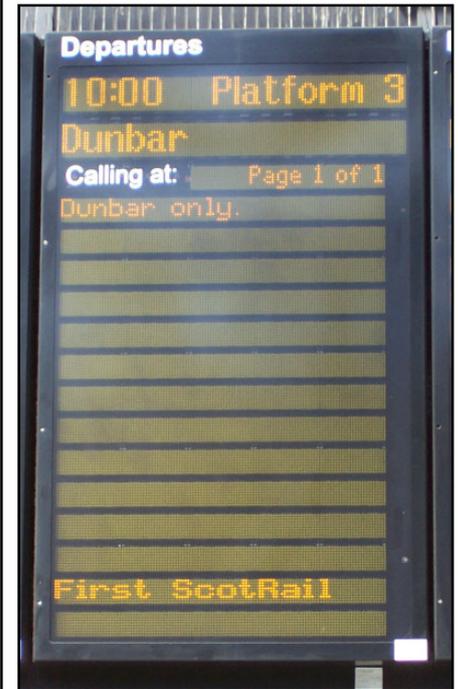
- Irregular stopping patterns
- Stopping patterns at smaller stations
- Increase in local services in Scotland
- Speeding up Long Distance High Speed (LDHS) services

with options of:

- More even spread of services throughout the day and maintain Berwick upon Tweed which were timetable dependent
- An Edinburgh – Newcastle semi fast - but not recommended in isolation
- Additional LDHS stops at Dunbar - but no case for step change – market based
- Berwick to Edinburgh local (including Reston and East Linton) and North Berwick to Edinburgh ½ hourly - poor value for money
- New platform at Dunbar - good value for money
- Dunbar to Edinburgh hourly - stronger case

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A Mirage?



No! Full story on page 2.

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

Inside Issue 46:

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- Festival Trains - Page 4
- Eureka update - Page 4

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

New ScotRail Service to Dunbar got off to a Quiet Start

After 11 years of RAGES (and more from others) campaigning for a local service between Edinburgh and Berwick, First ScotRail renewed its acquaintance with Dunbar after 20 years on the 24th May when 17 people boarded the class 322 EMU in platform 3 to depart for Dunbar at 10:00 hrs.



Unfortunately, the destination board does not show Dunbar as it is unable to do so!

Only four passengers were “real”. As well as five of the RAGES committee members, there were five Transport Scotland representatives and three ScotRail employees who were enjoying their day off for the run on its first day.

However, speaking to the four passengers showed that they were delighted with the new service as they had come to the station for the 11:08 CrossCountry to find the new earlier one.

The journey, supposedly non-stop, had its interesting times: as expected we went into the Prestonpans loop to allow the 10:08 CrossCountry to pass us which by then was only four minutes behind; and we stopped at Drem. There seemed to be a misunderstanding and we believe this does not happen now, although the on-line timetables showed this stop in late February.

On arriving at Dunbar Tom Thorburn, RAGES Chairman, said: “Today heralds a new dawn in train services to Dunbar. RAGES very much welcomes the new weekday First ScotRail services to Dunbar at 10:00, 14:21 and 22:08 [Ed: Monday to Thursday, 23:17 CrossCountry on Friday] returning to Edinburgh at 10:57 and 15:04 which will provide much needed travel opportunities to and from Dunbar. The committee travelled to Waverley such that they could come to Dunbar on the first train of this re-introduced local service. Particularly pleasing was that ten passengers used the 10:57 from Dunbar to Edinburgh. It is important to appreciate that now that a local service is being provided by First ScotRail, when the consultation which is currently being undertaken concludes, we would hope to see further new services into

Dunbar and also to Berwick with new stations at Reston and East Linton. Meanwhile the Group continues to press for a Saturday late night service to Dunbar and Berwick to address the long standing problem of the last service being 19:00 and

an intermediate stop on local services at Musselburgh to enable students access to Queen Margaret University from Dunbar and surrounding area.”



The train driver features in the centre of the photograph!

Among others, Cllr Paul McLennan, the other RAGES committee member and now leader of East Lothian Council, and Cllr Jacqui Bell, also a RAGES member, were at Dunbar to welcome the arrival of the train.

Cllr McLennan said: “I am delighted to see ScotRail back in Dunbar after a long absence. Hopefully this will be the start of an hourly service to Dunbar and we will try to encourage as many people as possible to use this service between Edinburgh and Dunbar.”

Cllr Bell also commented: “This is a wonderful occasion. The last trains I remember coming out of Dunbar up to Edinburgh were when we first moved here. It is great to see this service back and on track.”

On the return journey there were about a dozen passengers who also welcomed this new mid-morning service from Dunbar.

RAGES believes that the mid-morning to Edinburgh and the mid-afternoon to Dunbar have an encouraging number of passengers.

We continue to encourage people to use these services.

First ScotRail Study

In parallel, First ScotRail are undertaking a study which will identify any further opportunities within available resources, but implementation will be subject to available funding. As part of this study, they are considering where such an hourly service may call and what the demand may be.

RAGES hopes that stops will be possible at Musselburgh and one other, say Drem. Stops at Musselburgh are particularly important to allow students to access the Queen Margaret

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Our chairman alighting at Dunbar

“Today heralds a new dawn in train services to Dunbar.”

Tom Thorburn, RAGES Chairman

From page 2

University from east of the campus.

This study is due to be completed in October 2010 with findings published in November.

RAGES would expect that if funding became available, then implementation would be at the start of the May 2011 timetable - also the planned start for the East Coast Eureka timetable.

Extra new service

First ScotRail is currently looking at providing a further return service between Edinburgh and Dunbar around midday to complement the mid-morning and mid-afternoon services that were introduced in May. This is subject to normal rail industry timetable planning process and could start with the December 2010 timetable.

These journeys would enhance the number of calls at Dunbar and along with the services of other operators, will provide a regular service across most of the day between Edinburgh and Dunbar from December.

Apart from the mid-afternoon service which calls at Musselburgh in both directions, there will be no intermediate stops.

Local Rail Service Meetings

These continue to be held at the East Lothian Council offices in Haddington, hosted and chaired by Cllr Paul McLennan, with council staff from East Lothian and Scottish Borders, SEStran and RAGES.

Longer Term Study

From page 1

These RUS findings were however “dependent on the establishment of LDHS service pattern” which will form the May 2011 Eureka timetable. This is still in draft form and an update is expected any day (in fact any day since April!) It is billed as providing:

- Extra services
- Faster journey times
- More regular services

This new study by MVA Consultancy has two main elements:

- Timetabling - What is operationally possible based on the May 2011 Eureka timetable?
- Business case development for new service options, building on the RUS gaps as above.

New service options will be looked at:

- Edinburgh to Dunbar - it was noted that ScotRail are separately considering an Edinburgh-Dunbar hourly service
- Edinburgh to Berwick-upon-Tweed
- Edinburgh to Newcastle
- Reduced LDHS service calls at Dunbar – i.e. faster long distance trains
- New (!) stations at East Linton and Reston

There was much discussion from the floor of eight representing Dunbar, Reston and Coldingham. Also of interest was that six of those present were members of RAGES! Some of the main points raised were as follows.

Cllr Hampshire whilst welcoming hourly services to Dunbar did not want to see any reduction in long distance trains stopping there. RAGES was, and always has been, in agreement with this.



The 10:57 hrs return (first from Dunbar to Edinburgh) journey displayed at Dunbar

David Jones of Coldingham was very passionate throughout the meeting with his case for a re-opened Reston station. It is not just Reston that will benefit from a rail connection, but all the surrounding area. He noted that it is not possible to park in Berwick unless you are there early. There is plenty of space for car parking to make Reston a rail hub. He wanted the Reston area to be able to benefit from the new east coast main line services.

Rhona Goldie of Coldingham CC noted on the slides that East Linton and Reston stations were declared as “new”. In fact these stations would be “re-opened” as they used to exist until the 1960s. [Ed: RAGES always refers to their re-opening]

She also noted that many would-be visitors didn't book in the area when they found that they could not get there easily by rail.

This study is due to complete in October with findings published in November. There will however be another consultation meeting later in the summer when “an emerging set of options” will be discussed. David Jones invited MVA Consultancy to hold this next meeting in Coldingham to allow more of the local community to air their views.

Scott noted that currently background research is being done, but actual timetabling options cannot be carried out until the Eureka timetable is fairly well established. [Ed: The last version certainly was not]

The last entry on the slides was: “Balance between local and long distance needs is the key issue here”, but MVA Consultancy would have left the meeting with no doubt in their minds about what type of rail services the local communities wanted and needed.

Recommendations arising from this study would be fed into the ScotRail franchise renewal of 2014.

Thanks are due to Scott and Paul for their meeting at Haddington.

Festival Trains for All

ScotRail supports North Berwick's Fringe

An improved late-night train will be trialled by ScotRail during this year's Fringe by the Sea in North Berwick - from 10-15 August.

The 23:55 hrs service from North Berwick will call at all stops en route to Edinburgh.

This will give more festival-goers the opportunity to leave their cars at home and enjoy the atmosphere at this unique event, which has something to suit all tastes from music and comedy to film and children's shows.

It also means those attending Edinburgh's other festivals will have the chance to take in North Berwick's very own Fringe.

During the trial, the service will call at Drem, Longniddry, Prestonpans, Wallyford, Musselburgh, and arrive into Edinburgh Waverley at 00:28 hrs.

ScotRail late service to North Berwick during the Edinburgh Festival again?

First ScotRail has informed us that: "We are awaiting confirmation of the timings from Network Rail for an additional service from Edinburgh to North Berwick on Friday and Saturday nights similar to last year." [Ed: the current on-line timetables show departure from Edinburgh at 23:37 hrs calling at Musselburgh, Wallyford, Prestonpans, Longniddry and Drem on Fridays from 6 August - 3 September inclusive and similarly on Saturdays from 7 August - 4 September inclusive, but at 23:40 hrs. There are two extra Sunday services from Edinburgh on 5 September at 22:07 and 22:33 hrs. Please note that this is an update from the paper version of our newsletter.]

East Coast to run late service from Edinburgh during its Festival

The East Coast newsletter recently announced: "Good news! To help cope with the Edinburgh Festival crowds, we've organised extra trains to run."

An extra late night service during the Edinburgh Festival for the five weekends from 6th August on Fridays and Saturdays with an additional late night service after the Fireworks on Sunday 5th September.

The Friday and Saturday services will depart Edinburgh at 23:45 hrs each Friday and Saturday, calling at Dunbar at 00:05 hrs and arrive into Berwick at 00:38 hrs.

The late night train after the Fireworks on Sunday 5th September departs Edinburgh at 23:45 hrs, calls at Dunbar at 00:05 hrs and arrives into Berwick at 00:30 hrs.

However, RAGES wonders how this service cannot be run every weekend.

Update on Development of New Eureka! Timetable

The following information was recently received from East Coast.

Thank you for your welcome feedback on the development of a new timetable for the East Coast Main Line. We thought you would appreciate a brief update.

As you know, the new Eureka! timetable, which is due to be introduced from May 2011, aims to meet predicted extra demand for rail in the short-term. The plans have been warmly welcomed, but remain under development. Excellent progress is being made, shaped by customer and stakeholder comment.

During our 12-week consultation, we received more than 1,500 submissions from stakeholders and customers. Feedback was gathered in a number of ways - via written submissions, 9 stakeholder roadshow events, an on-line questionnaire for customers, and on board a public information bus that visited 21 stations in England and Scotland.

We also worked closely with Passenger Focus, the independent passenger watchdog, to encourage the feedback. This has now been fully reviewed and is informing our work with rail industry partners to develop the timetable still further.

The principal feedback related to the following areas listed below. The issues raised are being addressed by the industry as the timetable continues to be developed:

- Frequency and pattern of services to Northumberland stations and Dunbar
- Transferral of the majority of East Coast's Glasgow - King's Cross services, including the Motherwell - Edinburgh commute
- Providing a weekday arrival time at King's Cross before 10.00 for stations north of Newcastle
- Later services from King's Cross and Edinburgh

We still await the latest draft.

Membership

We now have around 130 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.