

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

www.rages.org.uk

Issue No. 50 - July 2011

New Trains Have Arrived

The new class 380 trains made their debut on the North Berwick service on 11 June 2011 with one running all day. Another went into service on the following Monday and made their first calls to Dunbar. These electric multiple units (EMU) are replacing the current 20 year old class 322 EMUs which will be going to Northern Rail

Despite the weather, I enjoyed a return journey from Drem to Edinburgh on that first day. I was very impressed and found the train comfortable and quiet. However, the on-board train information system was not working, but on the return journey, the guard announced the stations. This has now been fixed.



Class 380 at Drem on Saturday 11 June 2011 © RAGES

The only surprise from the briefing that I attended on behalf of RAGES in December 2009 (see *The Rages Rag* issue 44 pages 2 and 3), was that the dedicated cycle space was in the front coach (Edinburgh end on 380104). I reported at the time that it would be in one of the centre coaches.

Interesting information from the chat group scot-rail, is that train number 380104 was delivered and accepted by ScotRail on 26 October 2010 and after extensive testing and being used for driver training was put into passenger service in mid-February on the Ayrshire services.

Also of note is that two class 380s visited East Lothian in the middle of the night on 23th and 24th March 2011 for training purposes.

RAGES looks forward to all the North Berwick and Dunbar services being run by these new trains, which we believe will be by the end of July.

Impressions

I have received a few good comments from members about the new trains, but see in the local press that cyclists are concerned about the different arrangements for cycles. In the previous 322s, cyclists had a special compartment and could therefore sit together in the train. With the additional use of the vestibules on the 380s, the cyclist presumably needs to stay with his machine.

Editorial

It is not often that I indulge in an editorial, but this time there are two reasons.

Firstly, this is the fiftieth issue of *The Rages Rag* and I cannot believe that I have edited so many. I did try to give it up a few years ago, but was persuaded by the RAGES Committee to continue. They offered to do the distribution work. I am pleased to record that I am grateful to them for this. The content of each newsletter is dictated by what has happened in the previous three months and I also rely on the members to raise anything of note. Therefore, different emphasis is put on each area in different editions.

Secondly, just after publication of issue 49 in April, I received an e-mail from a long-standing supporter of RAGES, although not a member, complaining "Getting really tired of RAGES habitual blind spot regarding three-quarters of all rail passengers that use the NB line. You count passengers on a single Dunbar train stop but omit to mention the NB line and their many shortcomings. If you want my support, get less blinkered, please." Our members had not raised these "many shortcomings". Our committee replied to this criticism, addressing some of his points and noting that North Berwick has featured well over the years. Readers will remember that the train count was because that particular train was being withdrawn. In the meantime, he has had a dialogue with ScotRail on other points.

We have 26 members who live in towns served by the North Berwick service and 37 who live in Dunbar.

However, this edition does feature North Berwick in more detail.

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

Inside Issue 50:

- North Berwick News - Page 2
- Cycle Information - Page 2
- Local Rail Meeting - Page 3
- Fares Anomaly - Page 3
- Berwick News - Page 4

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

North Berwick Service News

Just after publishing the last newsletter, I had the following e-mail from a member. He also sent the e-mail to ScotRail's Customer Relations Department.

I had the bad luck to be on the 14:37 train yesterday (Thursday 5th May) from Edinburgh to North Berwick when it apparently lost power around about Longniddry. An announcement was made over the train's PA system (*Ed: on a 322*), but it was such poor quality sound that I, as a person who has hearing difficulties could not make sense of it. The driver went to the rear of the train, reversed it for a short distance then proceeded on to Drem where it stopped and we were all asked to leave. The explanation given there by an official was that the train had suffered a power failure and could not reach North Berwick. He said that there would be another train in 15 minutes (he was under the impression that it was a half hourly service)! As there is no bus service at Drem I had to phone my wife to collect me by car (I am 78). It is possible that if this was explained clearly at Longniddry I could have transferred to a bus there.

There are several points to which I would like answers:

- Why did a member of the train crew not come down the train at Longniddry to explain the problem and ensure that everybody had understood. There were many elderly passengers on this journey and probably others with hearing difficulties like myself.
- This is the second time that this has happened to me, in exactly the same way, since the current rolling stock was introduced. It looks as if lessons have not been learnt.
- I understood that new rolling stock was supposed to have been introduced in the Spring of 2011 but that this has now been delayed. What were the problems and what is the current position please?
- When (if) the new rolling stock is eventually introduced will the train's PA announcement system be similar in quality to that on the newer trains running out of Waverley which I can hear perfectly.

The following reply took four weeks to reach our member,

but has addressed all his points with a bonus!

I am sorry you have had cause to complain.

Your service terminated at Drem as a result of power problems near Longniddry. On arrival at Longniddry the driver made his way to the rear cab to perform power tests. After doing so, he made the decision to proceed with the journey. However, on arrival at Drem it became clear that the train could not remain in service due to loss of power and the decision was made to terminate the service.

At this point the conductor made an announcement over the passenger address system to inform passengers of the situation and ask everyone to leave the train.

He then walked along the platform speaking to passengers and it was at this point that he became aware that the PA system had not been audible in the front coach. The conductor apologised to customers and explained the situation to them.

I have discovered that there was a technical fault with the passenger information on this train. The manager responsible has asked me to apologise for the inconvenience caused.

Turning to your query re the new rolling stock, I am pleased to confirm that the new Class 380 trains have already begun to be introduced on your route. We hope to be using the new trains on all North Berwick and Dunbar services later this summer.

The PA system on the Class 380s is much clearer and is designed to be audible to passengers with hearing difficulties. In addition the on-screen customer screens provide the same information as the spoken announcements.

On a separate matter, I note that we have not responded to your comments within 7 days and I am happy to enclose a Rail Travel Voucher for £5.00, in accordance with the conditions set out in our Passengers' Charter. The voucher can be redeemed for tickets with any UK domestic Train Operating Company within the next 12 months.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

If readers require to make a complaint about First ScotRail services then these can be addressed to ScotRail Customer Relations - scotrailcustomer.relations@firstgroup.com

Cycling Information Boards

Cycling information boards have been installed at three railway stations in East Lothian: Musselburgh, Wallyford and Prestonpans.

Train operator ScotRail has welcomed their introduction by Sustrans, a UK charity promoting more journeys by public transport, cycling or walking.

The boards come with maps of cycling routes, useful telephone numbers and other information for cyclists.

Membership

We now have around 150 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.

East Lothian Local Rail Meeting

Cllr Paul McLennan hosted this regular meeting held at East Lothian Council, when representatives of East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils, SEStran and RAGES were present.

The meeting was informed that MVA Consultancy's long awaited report into a local rail service between Edinburgh and Newcastle with possible re-opening of East Linton and Reston stations was now with their clients - Transport Scotland and ScotRail.

Whilst we are not party, as yet, to its content we do know that there are enough extra network paths available for such a service.

To be able to put our combined case forward to the government, it was decided that:

- A letter should be sent to the Minister for Transport, Keith Brown, from the two councils, SEStran and RAGES requesting copies of the study and a subsequent meeting with him. This would hopefully be prior to the summer recess. Transport Scotland would be copied in the letter as well as Northumberland Council. As the local rail service is considered as far as Newcastle it was thought that council would be interested in intermediate stops between the border and Newcastle and therefore assist us in our case.
- Send a briefing to all the MSPs in our areas (constituency and list - covering the four main parties) to enable them to lobby the minister.
- It was also noted that ScotRail might be interested in running late night Saturday trains to Dunbar at say 21:00 and around 23:00. A letter would be sent to Steve Montgomery, Managing Director of ScotRail. RAGES noted that East Coast had said that the Festival trains would not run this year, but that a smaller ScotRail set might be more economical.

RAGES has also written in parallel.

Our chairman wrote to the MSPs in our area and finished the e-mail with: "Can I ask for your support in lobbying the Transport Minister such that we can see the investment come to our area in the shape of better rail services." Several MSPs

have confirmed their support.

An e-mail to Transport Scotland produced the following reply:

"Thank you for your email to Frances Duffy, Transport Scotland's Rail Directorate Director, regarding the Edinburgh-Newcastle Rail Study and Saturday evening services to Dunbar.

"As you are aware there is a study ongoing which is considering the case for enhanced local services over the Edinburgh-Newcastle corridor as well as assessing the business case for new stations at Reston and / or East Linton. Transport Scotland officials are reviewing a draft of the study report and have sought clarification on some matters. It is expected this process will be concluded later this summer at which point the finalised report will be published on the Transport Scotland website.

"The Minister for Housing and Transport has requested officials ensure interested parties, like RAGES, are informed when the study is finalised. In line with your request I will alert Tom Thorburn when the report is complete. The Minister has also indicated he would be happy to meet stakeholders subsequent to the report's publication.

"In relation to Saturday evening services to Dunbar, the last departure from Edinburgh is at 19:00 as the line is restricted after this to enable Network Rail to carry out maintenance on a section of the network which is very busy at other times. However, as part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of timetable performance Transport Scotland are considering if there are any operational opportunities to deliver service enhancements on a resource neutral basis across the Scottish network. This includes options for additional Saturday Edinburgh-Dunbar services.

"A consultation on the next ScotRail franchise, to be let in 2014, will be undertaken later this year. Ministers will consider the evidence presented in the consultation responses carefully in determining future services on all sections of the Scottish rail network."

Our secretary also wrote to Steve Montgomery, Managing Director of First ScotRail, thanking him for the additional Musselburgh and Dunbar services.

Fares Anomaly

At our recent committee meeting it was pointed out that a single fare from Dunbar to Musselburgh is £9.40, but to Edinburgh Waverley is only £6.10.

Returns are not much better:

- off-peak £10.90 and £10.00
- anytime £17.10 and £14.80

Surely this is a mistake and perhaps it is priced assuming that the passenger has to go to Waverley first in order to return to Musselburgh?

This does not encourage students in particular to use the new service.

A response when this went out as an e-rag suggested that this should be pursued with ScotRail and Passenger Focus. Both get our e-rags, but perhaps one will respond to this?

Berwick News

Brian Patton

It is often said that little changes in Berwick and that is certainly true of the matter of the toilets in the main building of the station. Both the conventional toilet and that for persons with special needs are still out of action, to the great inconvenience of many people, but especially those in the latter category. I did not take a note of the date on which they were closed but by now it must be all of four months ago and it seems incredible that East Coast has not yet been able to find a plumber to correct whatever is amiss.

Eureka has now arrived and passengers in Berwick are living with the consequences of a 33% reduction in the number of calls by southbound trains at the busiest times of the day, the loss of connections through Peterborough and the provision of the through service to Glasgow by the inadequate Voyagers. I was not at the station on the Sunday of the launch, but on Monday 23 May, the 09:31 hrs East Coast train was cancelled and when the slightly-delayed 10:19 arrived, it was already full with passengers who should have been on the cancelled train. There must have been almost 100 passengers waiting at Berwick, many with children and luggage clearly bound for Glasgow, and by the time the 10:19 pulled out, at about 10:30, there were between five and seven passengers standing in each vestibule, plus of course many in the interior of each coach. Some, including myself, took the helpful advice of the platform staff and waited for the following 10:37, but that was not of much use to those who wanted to get to Glasgow and did not wish to face a change in Waverley. Bearing that in mind, it would seem that the confident assertion by East Coast management that the launch of Eureka had gone off well did not apply to Berwick.

On Tuesday 31 May the morning traffic at the station was somewhat interrupted by the arrival of HRH the Duke of Rothesay, *en route* to Greenlaw. Fortunately he did not ask to use the facilities. The need to close the booking office at a busy time upset a good number of passengers and the situation was not helped by attempts over 15 minutes by two determined old ladies to find out how the ticket machine worked. However, HRH did not dally and heroic efforts by the booking office staff ensured that everyone had their tickets by the time that their train arrived. Then on Tuesday 15 June the said machine broke down completely at more or less the same time,

resulting in a queue well across the concourse and more heroic efforts.

Apart from these difficulties and a few delays due to overhead line problems, matters have run smoothly.

This is the last report which I will write for *The Rages Rag*. I shall be standing down from the committee in September, having become increasingly frustrated by the need to cope with a railway system which was broken up in the most ridiculous way by a government which, it must be recalled, had no mandate in Scotland and neither had much of a mandate in England. My frustration is probably nothing compared to that of the staff on the ground who have to try to make the whole daft system work. Latterly this sense of futility has been compounded by the endless stream of marketing jargon issuing from East Coast's publicity machine, in which everything is either "exciting" or "fantastic" and by the knowledge that management completely ignored all that was said by myself and other members of RAGES, by members of other groups and by the general public at the many consultation meetings which we attended and in some cases organised over the gestation period of Eureka. I don't like wasting time.

I hope that readers have found what I have written to be interesting and thought-provoking and that they will continue to support the railway industry in general, despite all its present shortcomings, and in particular the great staff at the best station between King's Cross and Waverley.

Appreciation and Plea

It was with regret that the Committee accepted Brian's resignation. He has been our Berwick representative for over five years and in fact volunteered when I made the plea in our newsletter. Brian has been a member for ten years and during his time on the committee has attended most meetings, represented RAGES at other meetings, after which he prepared a report, and provided this editor with a regular report of Berwick happenings.

So now I again make the plea for a member to come forward as our Berwick representative. This person would attend the regular committee meetings to give a report and also contribute to this esteemed newsletter.

James King

RAGES learned of the death on 12 June 2011 of James King after a long illness.

On the official inauguration of RAGES in 1999, James was appointed Vice Chairman and North Berwick Services representative. James carried out these posts for a number of years until he joined the committee of Rail Passengers Committee, Scotland which after a name change has become Passenger Focus. James also worked closely with the Transport Police over a number of years.

The RAGES Committee would like to pay tribute to all of James's commitment, not just to the aims of RAGES but the wider aspect of rail throughout this country.

Ken Denton

RAGES has been informed that Ken Denton, newsagent at North Berwick Station for the last 23 years, retires on 31 July. We wish him well in his retirement.