

# The Rages Rag



Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland



[www.rages.org.uk](http://www.rages.org.uk)

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## RAGES Fourteenth Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting was held on 18th September 2013 in the West Barns Bowling Club when ten members were present. Apologies were received from 15 members.

The Chairman, Tom Thorburn, welcomed all present.

The Minutes of the thirteenth annual general meeting were accepted as correct.

### Resume of Activities during the past Year

Tom reported:

The MVA Additional Study, which East Lothian Council, Scottish Borders Council and SEStran jointly financed, had got under way. Meetings were held with MVA and local community councils in East Linton and Reston where there was a lot of good discussion and information and local requirements put forward as far as the need for their respective station re-openings was concerned. Visit Scotland had submitted a report in support of the station re-openings and RAGES met with South of Scotland, Regional Director Visit Scotland, Paula McDonald at Selkirk. The study is due to be published very shortly – so we hope that we see several of our aims to have the Edinburgh to Berwick local service, with East Linton and Reston re-opened, fulfilled.

Our webmaster, Russell, had given our website a total makeover and this had proved to be very popular with the viewer/user of the site. Tom added that a website can only be considered good if it is regularly updated and is easy to navigate round – to that end our site is great!

Tom particularly pleased when First ScotRail agreed to run four additional Saturday services to Dunbar in addition to their late night Saturday service, with all trains calling at Musselburgh. These services are proving to be very popular with good feedback on patronage *[Ed: see article on page 3]* and from members on the level of comfort and cleanliness on the class 380s. Again the Group continues to press for this service to be extended to Berwick.

On the Haddington Rail Link, meetings and discussions had taken place between Haddington and District Community Council, Haddington Vision, Haddington Community Development Trust and ourselves. The Trust had circulated an all encompassing questionnaire and was pursuing a short term proposal to have a bus link to Wallyford until the line to Haddington is reinstated.

The safety issue of train announcements (stating that the next train to call at the platform was the service to Edinburgh, when it was actually a high speed through service) at Drem Station was quickly resolved when we brought this matter to the attention of First ScotRail.

The Group had raised issues with East Coast over their restrictive policy on use of their services from Berwick and

Dunbar regarding Club 55 tickets. Sadly on both occasions due to these restrictions, Club 55 is not available for use on East Coast Trains. We have, and still are, consulting with Cross Country on the lack of connectivity between Dunbar and Berwick and the reverse. Hopefully we will see trains calling at both these stations as they did prior to Eureka.

The Committee continues to meet with: our MSPs to discuss the case for further investment in Rail; Passenger Focus and Railfuture to also press our Aims; attend applicable Rail conferences; Scottish Borders Business Forum and the quarterly meetings with SEStran. The latter meetings having been hosted by Councillor Veitch at East Lothian Council.

Finally it was of great pleasure that we saw our Secretary and East Linton representative, Allison Cosgrove, elected as a Director to the Board of Railfuture. The committee are very proud of Allison's achievement.

At the end of his report, Tom thanked the Committee for their work during the year.

A vote of thanks was also proposed to Tom for the excellent work as Chair he had carried out during the year.

### Secretary's Report

Allison reported on passenger count figures for the 22:10 hrs ex-Edinburgh service on Saturday evenings. The service had been well used during the Edinburgh Festival.

She also reported on the ScotRail funding scheme and was awaiting information on whether East Linton Playgroup had been successful in their application to help them promote safe use of stations for young children.

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

#### Inside Issue 59:

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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.

# Annual General Meeting

From page 1

## Treasurer's Report

The audited accounts were distributed, showing a balance at the year end of £956.68. The accounts were accepted by the meeting.

## Membership Report

Russell reported that our membership currently stood at 146 which was 6 less than this time last year.

Only 80% of last year's members had renewed their subscriptions, which is less than this time last year. This percentage represents a loss of 22 members compared with last year's 26, but since the last AGM we had recruited 16 new members.

Reston members again outnumber all other station areas, but along with Dunbar the two together still represent over half of our membership at 53%.

RAGES now has seven community councils as corporate members: Haddington and District; North Berwick; Dunpendar; Reston and Auchencrow; Eyemouth Town Community Council and, since the last AGM, Dunbar and Ayton. East Lothian Conservatives; Queen Margaret University; and Sustaining Dunbar are also corporate members. *[Ed: Coldingham Community Council has since renewed their membership.]*

The use of banker's orders as a method of subscription payment went well again this year.

Russell has continued with the e-membership card as a form of acknowledgement of receipt of a member's subscription which is a saving of stationery and stamps.

RAGES also had received seven donations amounting to £14 when members renewed their subscriptions.

## Publications

As usual four Rags were published during the last year and Russell noted that he was grateful to the committee who take it in turns to distribute them. *[Ed: see article on page 4.]*

At a recent committee meeting, a member suggested that the Rag should have some photographs in it. This had not happened for some time due to lack of space. However, the

member got her wishes by appearing on the front page of the previous issue!

The Electronic Newsletters continue to be sent on an ad-hoc basis to all members for whom we have e-mail addresses.

## Web Site

The web site was re-launched last October with a new look and continues to be updated regularly. After 11 months we have had almost 1300 visits. We get the occasional new member via the web site membership form.

Russell was thanked for his excellent work on the website and in producing Rags and E-rags.

## Election of Office Bearers

Most of the Committee members had been agreeable to stand for another year. Elections were as follows:

Chairman: Tom Thorburn  
Vice Chairman: Barrie Forrest  
Secretary: Allison Cosgrove  
Treasurer: Ian Bowman  
Membership/Newsletter: Russell Darling

### Station Representatives:

Berwick - Barrie Forrest  
Dunbar - Morag Hadow  
East Linton - Allison Cosgrove  
Haddington - Russell Darling  
North Berwick Service - Harald Vox  
Reston - Barrie Forrest

Harald was thanked for his many years as Treasurer and Ian was welcomed back to the Committee. The Auditor was also thanked *in absentia*.

## General Discussion

Allison reported on the Railfuture Board meeting, where she was the representative from Scotland. She was to be attending a Passenger sub group meeting the following Saturday.

## Scottish Borders Business Forum Event

Tom Thorburn and Barrie Forrest attended this event on Saturday 14th September 2013 which was the first meeting of this Forum.

The meeting was excellently chaired by Graham Bell.

Colin MacDonald from Network Rail gave an update on the progress on the Waverley Project - The Borders Railway,

Peter Lloyd, of Transport Scotland, spoke about the East Coast Main Line and the ongoing process towards the re-opening of East Linton and Reston stations.

Both of the RAGES representatives were able to ask questions of Colin and Peter, who were the two speakers of most interest to RAGES aims.

Other speakers were Robert Young, head of the Road Department of Scottish Borders Council and Phil Flanders from the Road Haulage Association.

This new event was deemed a success and it was decided to hold future meetings.

## Membership

We now have around 170 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.

# Directly Operated Railways - Financial Results for 2012/13

Directly Operated Railways, who own East Coast, recently published their financial results. The headline achievements were:

- 4.2% increase in total sales at East Coast
- £208.7 million returned to the taxpayer during the year in premium and dividend payments – an increase of 6.6%
- Highest level of staff engagement recorded at East Coast in history of the franchise
- Record level of customer satisfaction achieved during the year at East Coast

Currently there is a campaign to stop the government re-privatising the service by October 2014. Their argument is that East Coast shows that publicly owned and operated rail can be a success in the UK as the above points from DOR's financial results show. The campaign claims that: "This sell off is unnecessary, financially irresponsible and motivated by a blind faith in the false economy of rail privatisation."

## Success Story for Dunbar Service

The patronage on the late night Saturday ScotRail service from Edinburgh to Dunbar is continuing to improve.

During the time of the Edinburgh Festival, Allison, when using the service, noted that there were an average of 125 passengers alighting at Dunbar.

Our Chairman wrote to Steve Montgomery, MD of First ScotRail as follows:

"These terrific figures prove what RAGES have been calling for since its inception that late night Saturday services are desired and required and are well used. Even prior to the Edinburgh Festival, Allison ... noted that numbers were increasing week on week from the low 20's to a handsome figure in the 50's. Now that even more people are aware of this service, I am sure that this service will enjoy greater patronage under normal/non festival periods."

He also raised the point about extending this service to Berwick. "Again the Group has long campaigned to have a late service to Berwick. The feedback we receive from the public in the Berwick area is enormous - this subject is raised more than any other at Berwick.

"RAGES would be very grateful if you could extent the 22:06 ex-Edinburgh Saturday service to Berwick. Passengers figures were very healthy when East Coast ran weekend late night Festival Trains."

## Extra Stops at Dunbar Requested

Our chairman wrote recently to Richard Gibson of CrossCountry with a request for the consideration of additional stops at Dunbar.

"Since the implementation of the Eureka Timetable, Dunbar has seen the loss of services to and from Berwick i.e. CrossCountry Trains that call at Dunbar no longer call at Berwick going south and trains that call at Berwick no longer call at Dunbar going north. What we would like to see as a minimum would be the southbound 07:27 at Dunbar make an additional call at Berwick, and the northbound 17:43 at Dunbar to stop at Berwick at approximately 17:20 to enable people who live in Dunbar and work in Berwick the opportunity to use the train. Our members have long complained to us of this loss of connectivity between these two stations.

"As Dunbar is a well-used commuter station to Edinburgh, we would like you to consider having the 07:35 ex-Newcastle timed slightly earlier (by say some 10 minutes) to allow a call at Dunbar to collect commuters around 08:30 which will cater for them arriving into Edinburgh just before 09:00. Currently there are no services at Dunbar between 07:42 and 08:54. This train would also benefit passengers by giving them a direct service to Glasgow Central - something that Dunbar lost with Eureka."

Richard's replied to say that he had arranged for their Train Planning and Revenue teams to look in detail at the changes we would like to see implemented at Dunbar. These teams had generated a mock timetable to measure if the stops were operationally possible and then modelled this to see whether they would be revenue generative. Summarising their findings, he said that "Regrettably, their assessment continues to show we are unable to deliver at this time the changes you are seeking."

Their findings are paraphrased as:

- The 07:27 departure would be unable to call at Berwick due to a freight service following immediately behind which needs to pass into the passing loop at Crag Mill before East Coast's 07:30 Edinburgh to Kings Cross service requires to pass.
- We would be unable stop our 17:43 service to Aberdeen at Berwick as this has a critical departure time from Edinburgh at 18:11.
- Stopping the 07:35 Newcastle-Glasgow service at Dunbar was operationally possible as the earlier departure from Newcastle did not cause any impact on other this or services. However, when modelled for revenue purposes, the impact of the stop was shown to have a negative business case.

Regarding this last issue, Richard noted: "As you will appreciate, in this current climate it would not be appropriate for us to seek DfT's approval to implement a change that did not generate revenue."

He finished by saying that: "... the impending refranchising of East Coast could present an opportunity to revisit the calling pattern of inter-city services along this route."

## Vacancy for an Editor

Your editor has been assessing the jobs that he does for RAGES. Currently he performs three tasks - editor, membership secretary and webmaster. Having one person responsible for these important jobs is not a healthy situation for any organisation.

To make a start in running down, he has informed the committee that after publishing issue 60 of *The Rages Rag* at the end of January, a new editor will be required.

As you know, our newsletter is published four times a year, usually at the end of January, April, July and October.

If required, the desktop publishing and photo-editing software currently used will be available to the new editor.

Once completed, the newsletter is passed to our chairman to proof read and approve. After any corrections are made it is sent to the printers, collected on completion and passed to one of the committee for distribution. An electronic copy requires to be sent and this can be done by either the editor or the membership secretary, the latter having e-mail distribution lists.

## Passenger Focus Meeting

Barrie attended the Passenger Focus Meeting in the City Art Centre in Edinburgh on 11th September 2013

In the opening keynote address Anthony Smith, Chief Executive Passenger Focus said that Passenger Focus will continue to work towards giving passengers a better voice.

First ScotRail Managing Director, Steve Montgomery, gave an update on the improvements and new services since 2004. He noted that there has been eleven new stations opened during that time.

During the questions Barrie thanked Steve Montgomery for bringing ScotRail services to Dunbar and asked if the late Saturday night service to Dunbar could be extended to Berwick upon Tweed.

Passenger Focus Manager, Robert Samson, gave a talk on passenger priorities for the future and mentioned Barrie's question for better and later services.

Transport Minister, Keith Brown MSP, attended the evening reception. Beforehand Barrie managed to have a few words with him about what the latest information was on our aims to have East Linton and Reston re-opened with a local Edinburgh to Berwick service.

He did not give anything away, but re-iterated that talks between Transport Scotland, East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils and SEStran were still ongoing.

Barrie was also introduced to Michael Connelly, a representative for Abellio, a company who will be bidding for the new ScotRail franchise in 2015.

## ScotRail Stakeholder Reception

RAGES was invited to this reception and Barrie Forrest attended.

First ScotRail Manager Director, Steve Montgomery, opened the meeting stating that even though there are only eighteen months of the present franchise left ScotRail would continue to improve services up to the end of the present franchise. He was hopeful that First Group would be back again for the next franchise which is for ten years.

With both the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup coming to Scotland next year, ScotRail will be putting on extra trains to these events including later services for the finishing night of the games.

Haymarket Station is due to open after its refurbishment on 19th December 2013 when new ticket machines will have been installed.

The 156 trains are to be refurbished.

Barrie again asked the question about extending the late Saturday night service to Dunbar on to Berwick but was told this might not happen within the next eighteen months but there is a possibility that this train could run later to Dunbar.

Steve Montgomery informed Barrie that RAGES could discuss this with Jerry Farquharson, Director of Planning for First Group who deals with timetabling.

## ScotRail Parliamentary Reception

Tom Thorburn and Barrie Forrest attended this reception on 13th August 2013.

Invitations had been sent to Rail Groups, Politicians and Councillors.

There were speeches from deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, and Steve Montgomery, Managing Director of First ScotRail.

After these, Tom and Barrie were able to walk round and talk to other people, such as Paul Wheelhouse MSP and John Mitchell, Depute Leader of Scottish Borders Council who said that that the council are fully supportive of the re-opening of Reston station.

Barrie was able to introduce Tom to Jack Clark from the Borders Chamber of Commerce a well-known Auctioneer in the Borders who wants more for the region.

Barrie notes that the reception was well worth attending, having given RAGES the opportunity to meet people who will help to bring our aims forward.