



The newsletter of the **Rail Action Group, East of Scotland**, bringing members up-to-date with progress on improvements to local rail services.

left: An LNER Azuma passes underneath the overbridge which will carry the new road replacing the level crossing between East Linton and Markle on 30th March 2025.

(Photograph: T. Dickson)

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2025 TIMETABLE UPDATE

DECEMBER 2025 TIMETABLE UPDATE

The National Rail Timetable is changed twice a year, usually in December and May of each year.

The publication of the December 2025 timetable in

November 2024 showed a gap in services during a peak time of travel for East Linton, Dunbar and Reston commuters.

With the proposed December 2025 timetable, Dunbar would have had a gap of 1hr 31min

between the 16.33 ex. Edinburgh ScotRail service and the 18.04 ex. Edinburgh CrossCountry service. For East Linton, there would have been a gap of 1hr 36min between the 16.33 ex.

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2025 Timetable Update (concluded from page 1)

Edinburgh ScotRail service and the 18.09 ex. Edinburgh TPE service.
For Reston, the situation would have been even worse with a gap of 2hr 1min between the

16.08 ex. Edinburgh service TPE and the 18.09 ex. Edinburgh TPE service.
RAGES sent letters of concern to all the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), Scottish Cabinet Secretary for UK Transport, UK Minister for Transport, Scottish MSPs and

UK MPs for East Lothian and the Southeast of Scotland, local councillors and community councils. In addition, members of the committee attended a Transpennine Stakeholders event in January to raise our concerns about the proposed timetable changes in person.



TPE	ScotRail	XC	TPE	XC
16.08	16.33	17.05	17.21	18.04
East Linton	East Linton		East Linton	
Dunbar	Dunbar	Dunbar	Dunbar	Dunbar
Reston			Reston	

HADDINGTON REPORT

RECONNECTING HADDINGTON

Our regular monthly stand at the Farmers' Market continues to attract significant positive interest. This includes newcomers to the town, who express surprise that the county town, despite its ever-expanding population, the result of policy decisions by

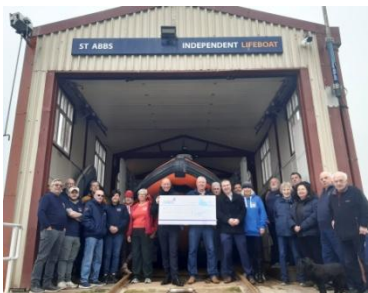
successive Scottish governments, lacks a train service to the capital. Although the second stage of East Lothian Council's Access Study, narrowing down the possible options from the first stage study, was passed to Transport Scotland (TS) by the Council's consultant, Stantec, in March 2024 for appraisal,

nothing further has been heard from TS. Bearing in mind also that **RAGES** originally gave its feedback to the Council's consultants in late 2019, we felt that a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Fiona Hyslop MSP is called for. Accordingly, we wrote to her in April requesting this.

TPE SUPPORTS ST. ABBS LIFEBOAT

On 4th April 2025, TransPennineExpress held a ceremony at St. Abbs to mark their donation of £12000 to the local lifeboat.
RAGES Barrie Forrest was invited to attend, and was also

allowed to travel in the cab of the train from Edinburgh to Reston. The photo (right) shows the TPE representatives with Barrie and the lifeboat team at the handover.



NORTH BERWICK & DREM REPORT

Pat Hanson, the new **RAGES** Station Representative for North Berwick and Drem, reports:

Several issues have been raised recently with ScotRail and some helpful replies received from Scott Prentice (SP), Strategy and Planning Director:

- North Berwick station bus information screen. *This screen has been out of order for some time. SP reports that it is on the workplan for station upgrades and the local area manager will ensure that this is followed through in good time.*
- Drem station – level access to Edinburgh-bound platform. *This access is currently only available via the back road, a drop off point and heavy gates. SP reports that ScotRail has received feedback that the drop off point at platform two has faded away completely and station signage would help direct people to this area. However, the road which leads to it is a very narrow country road, and as it is outwith the ScotRail lease area, any*

signage would need to be agreed with the Council. The large gates are currently broken (I didn't know this – PH), but these have been added to the workplan for station upgrades and should be operational very soon.

- Sunday morning services from North Berwick to Edinburgh. *The first train is at 1026, which compares unfavourably with the Leven and Tweedbank branches. SP replies that the time of the first train is dictated by a number of factors. The first is that when Network Rail carries out maintenance and inspections on the line, these have to be carried out at night so as to not disrupt customers unnecessarily. The East Coast Main Line, between Edinburgh, Drem and the Borders, is usually kept open overnight due to the volume of traffic, with the only time available for closing the route being on a Saturday and Sunday night, meaning that opening the route earlier would have a significant impact on maintenance opportunities. Further to that, continues SP, the time that the route opens and then the time that the first passenger train operates from North Berwick is constrained by the need*

to get a train from our depot near Edinburgh. Most rolling stock is stabled in depots overnight so that it can be cleaned and serviced. Unfortunately, it's not possible normally to stable rolling stock at North Berwick, as ScotRail would need to bring a driver from Edinburgh in a taxi and it wouldn't be possible to clean and service the train as there are no facilities for doing so at the station.

- Saturday services on the North Berwick line. *We had argued for a return to the previous half-hourly Saturday frequency. SP replies that ScotRail continues to be impacted by the number of drivers within the business and is recruiting and training 160 drivers per year, the most of any UK train company. However, it will take time to be in a position where ScotRail does not require overtime to operate the timetable. Once there is a full complement of traincrew in the Edinburgh area then ScotRail will be in a better position to make service enhancements. The timetable paths for the half-hourly Saturday service are protected and it is ScotRail's intent to increase frequency on this corridor when it can be done reliably and without reliance on staff overtime.*

CAMPAIGN FOR BORDERS RAIL EXTENSION UPDATE

BORDERS RAILWAY COMPLETION FROM TWEEDBANK TO CARLISLE UPDATE

The 30-mile Borders Railway section from Edinburgh to Tweedbank opened on 9th September 2015. Ten years on from the opening, approval has been issued to start the next phase of work to explore the case for completing it to Carlisle.

The UK Department of Transport and the Scottish Government have agreed to fund up to £5m each through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. This will allow the appointment of a Project Manager to lead a team to assess the benefits and challenges of completing the line to Carlisle.

The feasibility study and the development of the business case is the next key part of the project.

The Borders Railway to Tweedbank section has proven to be an unrivalled success story for the borders. The re-instatement of the remainder of the line will improve transport links to Hawick, improved connectivity for residents, commuters and attract tourists to the area and economic growth. All this would be achieved with a more environmentally friendly form

of transport.

UK Government Scotland Office Minister Kirsty McNeill

"Growth is a priority mission for the UK Government and we've been clear that the £450 million Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal spanning southern Scotland and northern England is vital to achieving this.

"It's great news that the UK Department for Transport has now confirmed up to £5 million towards feasibility work to explore the potential to extend the Borders Railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle. We look forward to working with deal partners as the feasibility work progresses.

"The UK Government is focused on delivering our Plan for Change to turbo-charge economic growth and deliver a decade of national renewal and opportunity for all. This includes investing nearly £1.4 billion into important local projects across Scotland over the next ten years, including the borders."

Councillor Euan Jardine Leader of Scottish Borders Council

"Thanks to the unwavering support of the Borderlands Partnership and their tireless campaign, as well as the crucial funding and commitment from both the Scottish Government and the UK Government, we are making significant strides towards the Borders Railway

extension.

"We have already seen the positive impact the Waverley line has brought to the Borders. This collaborative effort demonstrates the power of partnership in driving positive change and transforming our region for the better."

Councillor Scott Hamilton Executive Member for Economic Growth and Developing the Borders

"With the confirmation of funding from both the UK Government and the Scottish Government, we are thrilled to see work looking at the proposed extension of the Borders Railway moving forward.

"This landmark project represents a significant step in improving connectivity and economic growth for our region. We commend the commitment shown by both governments and the relentless efforts of our community and partners in making this a reality. It is time to get moving and bring this vision to life for the benefit of all residents in the Scottish Borders and communities in the south of Scotland and north of England."

(Copyright and acknowledgement: The interviews are extracts from an article in The Glasgow Herald 1st March 2025)

TICKET VENDING MACHINES

TICKET VENDING MACHINE UPDATE

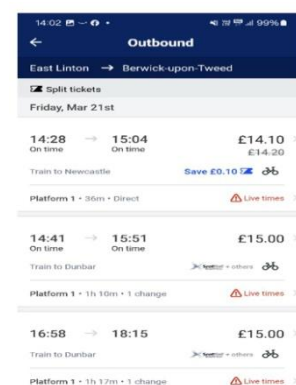
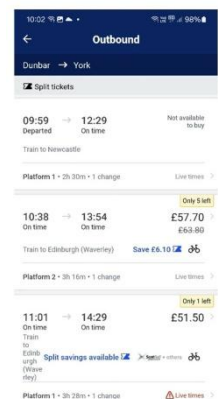
I visited Dunbar Ticket Office on 18/03/2025. I had a few minutes to spare before my train arrived and noticed the very expensive single fare of £77.00 to York available as a 'walk-up and go' fare from the ticket vending machine (RHS picture, top). I decided to check the ScotRail app on my mobile phone for the same fare and was surprised to find that I could have purchased a single ticket as a 'walk-up and go' fare almost £20 cheaper (RHS picture, upper middle).

Likewise, a trip to East Linton on 21/03/2025 revealed a similar story for a 'walk-up and go' single fare from East Linton to Berwick upon Tweed. The TVM fare was £28.20 (RHS picture, lower middle) compared to the fare of £14.10 (RHS picture, bottom) on the ScotRail website.

RAGES have highlighted this issue to our area MSPs. and ScotRail. ScotRail have explained that the TVMs do not have access to the back-office reservation system for advance purchase tickets, while online systems and their ticket offices do. Paul McLennan's office has

also contacted ScotRail for an explanation. The reply to Paul's office was *"Thank you for your email, feedback of this kind is always helpful. The purpose of the Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) home screen is to feature the most popular journeys made from the stations they are situated at. The purpose of the popular fares screen is to offer up the most commonly purchased walk up and go tickets rather than the cheapest ticket which in some cases will be an Advance fare. Our online and ticket office retailing systems have access to reservation compulsory Advance fares which will typically be better value for those buying in advance. We are currently in a live procurement for retail systems and are exploring the possibility of advance purchase fares being retailed via our TVMs in the future. I hope you find this information to be useful."*

It looks as though ScotRail are working to align their TVM and back office booking systems.



MARKLE CROSSING

MARKLE LEVEL CROSSING REPLACEMENT PROJECT

As far as **RAGES** can tell, Markle Level Crossing has been in continuous use since 1846 when it was part of the North British Railway. Various upgrades have taken place over the years. The crossing was controlled by a signal box to the south of the crossing on the southwest

side of the line. The signal box closed in 1965, and the crossing has been automatic in operation since.

The level crossing will close permanently in May and the new bypass and overbridge will open a few weeks after.

The indicative cost of the project in 2021 was £7.4m. The final cost is estimated to be in the region of £12.5m.

As expected with a project of

this type, there have been a few delays. Originally there were delays in achieving project consents and obtaining completion of planning conditions; and more recently with the discovery of uncharted buried services directly within the bridge construction site.

Prior to the commencement of the project an archaeological survey was carried out in 2023. The construction started in March 2024 and is due for completion in the next few months.

RAGES WELCOMES NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

As part of the committee set up, **RAGES** has a representative for most of the stations in East Lothian and the southeast of Scotland. We had two vacancies for our group - a Dunbar representative and a Drem/North Berwick

representative.

Harald Vox our **RAGES** representative for Drem and North Berwick decided to retire from the committee after many years of sterling service. We are delighted to inform you that Matt Cuthbert and Pat Hanson have joined our group

filling the roles of Dunbar representative and Drem/North Berwick representative respectively. Both Pat and Matt bring experience to our group and are already offering interesting insights relating to commuter issues and station facilities.

OBITUARY - JOYCE MCLEAN

It is with sadness that **RAGES** have lost a very staunch member, Joyce McLean.

Joyce passed away on the 8th December 2024. Joyce was a personal friend of mine and was with Tom Thorburn and myself when we took

the petitions to the Scottish Parliament in 2002 for Reston Station, and helped in **RAGES** membership and campaigning.

Barrie Forrest
Chairman, **RAGES**



*above: Joyce with **RAGES** members and MSPs presenting petition to Scottish Parliament for the re-opening on Reston station on 3/10/2002
(Photograph: T. Dickson)*

RAGES works to

- Improve the rail service between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed.
- Re-open the branch line from Longniddry to Haddington.
- Improve the level of service to North Berwick.
- Consider the implications with regard to car parking and bicycle storage at stations between Waverley and Berwick-upon-Tweed.
- 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.
- The group, being environmentally minded, will actively strive to encourage rail travel within its geographical area.



RAGES needs your support

RAGES (Rail Action Group, East of Scotland) is the rail users campaign group for the area between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed, including the North Berwick service.

Our aim is to persuade the Government, both at national and local level, train operators and **Network Rail** to improve the level of service to stations in our area and to re-open the branch line from Longniddry to Haddington.

Please join us to lend your support.

Membership will give you a say in how we influence the rail companies to improve local train services. Additionally you will get up-to-date information on significant changes in rail matters, and a regular newsletter.

The annual subscription is £4 for individual membership or £10 for corporate membership, such as community councils and organisations, and is renewable on 1st April each year.

Please send your completed form with your remittance (made payable to Rail Action Group, East of Scotland) to:

Tom Dickson
Membership Secretary (RAGES)
44 Kirk Park
Dunbar
EH42 1BJ

I enclose my first RAGES membership fee of £4 / £10*. (* Delete as applicable)

Title Surname Forename(s)

Company

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Email