

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

www.kylemore.btinternet.co.uk/rages.htm

Limited Issue - May 2004

The sign of trains to come

As reported in the last issue of *The Rages Rag* sent out very recently, ScotRail invited RAGES committee members to view the new loco-hauled rolling stock which is being prepared for the North Berwick service. These are due in service on 24 May 2004, when the summer timetable also starts.



The ScotRail logo on a mark 3 coach

Along with three members of the Rail Passenger Committee for Scotland and a SPOKES representative, four of the RAGES committee met at ScotRail's headquarters in Caledonian Chambers in Glasgow on 12 May.

Iain MacDonald of ScotRail, who is masterminding the project of preparing this latest rolling stock for the North Berwick service, explained the background to it and described the stock in detail.

As we all know, he said that the current Class 322 stock had to be returned south in April for other use with another franchise. There had been several options of multiple units, both electric and diesel, but the final decision was a set consisting of a Class 90 electric locomotive with four ex-Virgin mark 3 standard class coaches and a driving van trailer (DVT). The latter does not carry passengers. As implied in the name, the DVT does not have any motive power, but is used to drive the set when it is heading for North Berwick. This is the same situation as the GNER 225 sets.

However, the class 322s are being retained until the start of the summer timetable as timings need to be slightly altered.

Four of these sets will be commissioned with three needed to run the service and one being maintained. This will be a Monday to Friday arrangement with diesel multiple units

running at the weekends, to enable ScotRail drivers to retain their route knowledge.

The coaches and DVTs will be maintained by Alstom at Polmadie Depot just outside Glasgow Central station. The Class 90 locomotives will be supplied by EWS as will the drivers.

Iain explained that with all of these different companies involved, it was quite a complicated project to manage. It had started in December 2003. Just before Christmas as was reported in the January Rages Rag, one of these sets had been proved on a Sunday when it performed several rostered runs from Waverley to North Berwick.

He outlined the main points of the new stock:

- 20% more passenger seats
- at least 6 cycles to be carried in the DVT, where there are special racks to attach them to. This number might be extended in the future
- two toilets per coach - passengers are reminded not to flush these when the train is at a station
- plenty of luggage space
- air-conditioned coaches with automatic vestibule doors
- central locking doors - a good safety feature, but these need to be manually opened and closed by passengers after being unlocked by the guard. As suggested by RAGES, a label is being attached to the doors asking passengers for their assistance in closing the doors as they will have got out of the habit on the 322s
- room for two wheelchairs at the end of the coach nearest to the DVT - where the ramp will be stored. The DVT will always be at the North Berwick end of the train.
- one disabled toilet on one set only - at present?

The interior of the coaches, as seen overleaf, are in good condition as they have been recently refurbished, but the vestibules and toilets are in need of a makeover. This was taking place when we were touring Polmadie, but not all of the sets will be spruced up by the time they enter service. These will be done as time permits when they are back at Polmadie for maintenance.

These sets are to be seen as a stop gap measure until a more permanent replacement is found. The timescale for this is not clear at this time due to several imponderables such as the renewal of the ScotRail franchise and the availability of suitable units. However, it is seen that multiple units would be the most suitable and loco-hauled stock is considerably more expensive to operate.

Leaflets will be placed on the Class 322s from 17 May to



Interior of a mark 3 coach



Wheelchair place

give passengers advanced information about the changes.

We were then ferried to the Glasgow Traincare Centre at Polmadie to see the sets in the flesh. Alstom is responsible for the maintenance and current refurbishment of the coaches and DVTs.

Derek Swanson of Alstom gave us a comprehensive presentation of the work that they carry out at Polmadie. They clean and maintain ScotRail sleepers, GNER sets and Virgin Voyagers and Pendalinos. They are well-versed in the maintenance of mark 3 coaches which the North Berwick service is to receive.

We had a tour of sets being refurbished and changed to become ScotRail with their logo on the outside and the Scottish station map inside. The Virgin colour scheme will remain.

Derek also showed us the train washing facilities, their production office and the well-stocked stores. He also advised

us that he, and ScotRail, would be happy to receive any comments for improvements or any defects which would then be programmed into the next maintenance schedule. It would be acceptable to channel these via RAGES (rages@btinternet.com). Defects should note the location, e.g. the nearest seat number, and the unique coach number which can be found on the outside of the coach.



Tom Thorburn in front of a DVT being refurbished

RAGES came away from Polmadie with the confidence of a well-managed project and the fact that ScotRail and Alstom were working as a team to produce a reliable set of rolling stock to replace the Class 322s. It is to be recognised that both these companies took time out to inform us of what they were doing done and the fact that RAGES was invited at all shows the regard with which they treat our input.

This is a limited issue of *The Rages Rag* and is only being distributed to members likely to use these new sets. It is also the first in colour, but as it is the editor's printer, it may be the last. If you think that colour photographs would be an enhancement to our newsletter, let me know your opinion. Colour would inevitably mean an increase in your subscription! A shorter version will appear in the next scheduled Rages Rag for the interest of our other members.



Our guides for the day - John Yellowlees, External Relations Manager; Iain MacDonald, both of ScotRail; Derek Swanson and Mark Toner of Alstom