



Why are we waiting?

Dennis Fancett, Chair of SENRUG

need to be included in the overall franchise contract with the train operator. In the past SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett has met 2 different Secretaries of State for Transport and both times was told the scheme could not progress without clear local authority support, which is why SENRUG has been working tirelessly behind the scenes over the last few years to ensure

Photo credit: John Brierley

After having been held in a siding for 6 months, waiting for the Council to fill a key senior post in its Transport Strategy team, there is hope that the new year has once again brought an amber, if not indeed a green light, allowing the ABT re-opening campaign to start moving forward once more.

SENRUG Chair Dennis Fancett met Barry Rowland, newly appointed Corporate Director of Local Services at NCC on 4th February. The meeting was both positive and constructive. Barry reiterated the Council's commitment to and prioritisation of the scheme and said that his team would be meeting Network Rail shortly to progress the GRIP 3 study [that meeting should have happened by now]. Barry also confirmed commitment to the Council leading a Stakeholder consultation group pulling together all the interested parties, which is an idea SENRUG has been promoting for some time. Nevertheless, SENRUG remains concerned at the amount of time it is taking to get the GRIP 3 study signed off, let alone completed. There is increasing evidence that central government will release more money for rail infrastructure projects such as this, but the projects need to be "shovel ready", fully costed and with the GRIP 3 complete. Many SENRUG members and indeed other supporters from wider afield often contact us and urge us to "go it alone" without waiting for the Council. Attractive as that option may seem, it is difficult to see how it could work in practice. As with all local railway lines the ABT will, once re-opened, ultimately

that support is there and that the requirement is fully documented and prioritised in the Council's Local Transport Plan.

Notwithstanding this, SENRUG understands SELRAP, the group campaigning to re-open the Skipton – Colne line, a much more ambitious project on a completely disused route, has recently announced they will be proceeding with their own GRIP 3 study without local authority support. This will be an interesting case for SENRUG to watch closely and see what we can learn from their experience.

Meanwhile we remain cautiously optimistic the Council will finally commission the GRIP 3 study from Network Rail, and hope that as the ABT Re-opening Campaign pulls slowly out of the siding, it can quickly gather momentum with Council, SENRUG and all the other stakeholders driving it forward at full main line speed.

NB: GRIP stands for Governance for Rail Investment Projects and is an internal Network Rail acronym. For more details see <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/aspx/4171.aspx>

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Guy Dangerfield explains what Passenger Focus does for rail users.

What Passenger Focus Does



Passenger Focus is the independent Passenger Watchdog, and describe their mission as to get the best deal for passengers. With a strong emphasis on evidence-based campaigning and research, PF ensure that they know what is happening on the ground. Guy Dangerfield explains:

One of Passenger Focus's key priorities is to improve the way train companies handle service disruption. We have researched passengers' needs in this area extensively and continue to encourage the rail industry to implement the resulting recommendations. All our research can be found at <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/key-issues/disruption>. The following messages sum up what passengers tell us they want done better: "Treat me with respect"; "Recognise my plight"; "Help me avoid the problem in the first place"; "You got me into this, help get me out"; "Act joined up"; and "I am 'always' delayed, do something about it!"

It is striking that this amounts really to a desire for basic customer service, even common courtesy, when something has gone wrong with 'the product'. The need for a "think passenger" culture, whether within 'Control', at a station or on a train, is one of Passenger Focus's principal messages. Otherwise, operational culture will tend to focus on recovering the service, with the interests of passengers already 'in the system' ignored. Building a strong customer service ethos within the railway's DNA is key to improving the low ratings in this area within our twice-yearly



The "Duchess of Hamilton" waits for the road at Hepscott on October 1st, 2010. The ABT line hosts an average of one steam trip per year – an incredible record for a line closed to passengers!



National Passenger Survey (NPS). The latest results show a six percentage point increase, to 44%, of passengers feeling that train companies handled a delay "well". This is welcome and, perhaps, reflects the first fruit of train companies' renewed energy in this area since the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) strengthened the Licence condition around passenger information. But 44% "handled well" is still not very good and examples continue to emerge showing why. For instance, on 19 February 2013 when the 23:30 Kings Cross to Leeds was cancelled and around 200 passengers were stranded overnight in London (our letters about this can be found at <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news/articles/>).

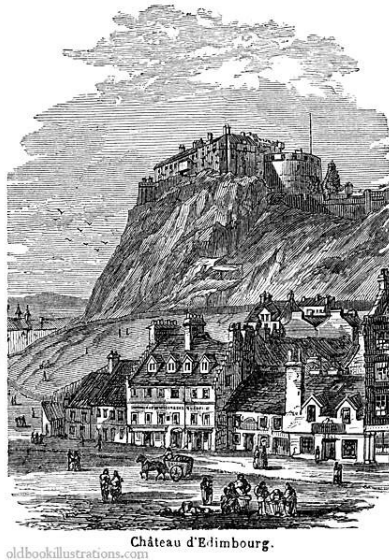
But as well as championing customer service culture, Passenger Focus engages with the industry over specifics – often about information, which is so critical to a passenger's experience during disruption. Among lots of issues, the need for train companies to monitor their own and the National Rail Enquiries website with a "is this accurate? is this useful?" mindset; to measure the usefulness of their communications and not just whether an internal message was updated every 20 minutes (as required by their code of practice); and to make sure it is second-nature for train crew to acknowledge an unscheduled halt within two minutes – it sends a powerful psychological message to passengers "I have noticed we've stopped, and I care enough to pick up the PA". Passenger Focus also has ticketing arrangements during disruption in its sights. We have asked for minor changes to the National Rail Conditions of Carriage and the terms and conditions of Advance tickets to give better protection for passengers in the event of disruption.

In summary, there are signs that things are starting to improve, but there remains a long way to go. Passenger Focus will keep up the pressure for change.



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Meanwhile, a situation not uncommon to residents of Morpeth and surrounding areas has inspired our chairman to poetry...



An EastCoast Ballad

In which our Heroine is Stranded in Inverkeithing and Finds
Herself Whisking Through Morpeth at a Rate of Knots...

DUNFERMLINE TO MORPETH BY TRAIN

The King Sits in Dunfermline Town
Drinking his blud-red wine
"O where can I find an East Coast Train
To run on these tracks of mine?"

The Queen sits at Margaret's halt
Planning out her day
"To Inverkeithing first and then we change
Is what the web doth say."

The Scotrail train, she comes on time
To Edinburgh she goes, with luck
But if our East Coast runneth not
At Inverkeithing, we'll be stuck

Inverkeithing comes, tis cold and wet
No buffet or place to wait
And whilst our East Coast train doth run
Tis 75 minutes late.

Alas, alas, the East Coast web
A poor routing did provide
Best, to Edinburgh with Scotrail go
And wait there, warm, inside.

In lesser time than we would wait
A train to York is due
Which even stops at Morpeth town
A better route, tis true.

We think these thoughts as we do wait
In Inverkeithing's snow and ice
"Booked train only" our ticket said
No staff to give advice

The restrictions that are thus imposed
Work well if sun doth shine
But not knowing what the rules might be
We dared not risk a fine

Explanatory Note: The advance ticket was for travel on 26th January 2013, departing Dunfermline at 16.32. The East Coast web gave a routing of changing at Inverkeithing and Newcastle, arriving Morpeth at 19.58.

That's fine when everything is running correctly, but services were disrupted due to heavy snow. Had our passenger remained on the Scotrail train to Edinburgh, although her booked East Coast train was running 75 minutes late, she could have got the East Coast train due one hour later, which actually stops at Morpeth, eliminating the problem of the missed connection at Newcastle. But because the ticket was endorsed "Booked Train Only", our passenger thought she would be charged again if she did not take the exact routing provided.

We wait and wait in freezing cold
As senses slowly dim
But lo, I sense there is hope yet
At last, East Coast pulls in

We climb aboard for first class treats
To thaw our freezing frame
But no, the hot food's off again
Each weekend the same

At Waverley we sit quite still
No need to change once more
On to Newcastle proceeds our train
With Scottish kilts galore

Morpeth comes, we rush through fast
No chance to get off yet
In the car park awaits my car
Alone in snow and wet.

At Newcastle we sadly leave
The Londoners to their fate
To platform 2 we now must go
For northbound train to wait

Hot food though we first must find
Though barrier gates would bar
But see, no staff do man the gates
And so they're left ajar

Our scheduled train has long since gone
So now, how will we fare?
But look, the kind CrossCountry man
Doth say we're welcome there.

Gratefully, we climb aboard
And speed off into the night
And then, just 15 minutes more
At Morpeth we alight

The lifts are here, but not in use
A few more weeks to wait
And maybe too the C. I. S.
We still await a date.

Through the subway to my car
I hurry all alone.
And yes, she starts, despite the snow
And so, to safely home.

Delightful Destinations 2: Glasgow Museums

by Trevor Watson

When my children were younger we enjoyed trips to Glasgow by rail visiting the many museums and gardens in the Strathclyde area. The rail service in Clydeside is efficient and frequent. Now the Bathgate to Airdrie rail service has been restored, there is a fourth rail route linking Edinburgh with Glasgow, with four electric train services per hour between the cities. At Coatbridge there is Summerlee, The Museum of Scottish Industrial Life, which is a 22 acre site adapted from a former iron works. The museum has a large exhibition hall with working exhibits and a cafe. Outside is a short tramway which gives rides to the coal mine and miners cottages, there are also railway locomotives and a children's play park. The museum backs onto the railway line at Coatbridge Sunnyside station, the entrance is a five minute walk, which is signposted and follows the road to Coatbridge Central station. Suggested train from Morpeth is the 0748 Crosscountry to Glasgow alighting at Edinburgh Waverly at 0904. At 0921 the Milngavie train departs arriving at Coatbridge at 1016.



On the web it seems cheaper to purchase the journey in two parts, splitting it at Edinburgh. Return to Sunnyside station, after say two hours and purchase a Strathclyde PTE Roundabout Ticket for a cost of £6.30 adult and £3.15 child, this ticket can also be purchased from on train ticket staff, so you could purchase this on the train from Edinburgh to Coatbridge. The ticket covers you for a large part of the greater Glasgow area and is valid on the Glasgow underground system. At Sunnyside station return to the same platform and board any train, there are now six per hour and after about half an hour alight at Partick. This is the station for the Riverside Museum, Scotland's Museum of Transport and Travel opened in June 2011. There is a dedicated signposted walking

route from the station taking about ten minutes. Return to Partick station to the opposite platform which is number one and at 10,29,40 & 59 minutes past the hour board a train calling at Bridgeton, the end destination for these services is Motherwell first two then Lanark and 59 minutes is Coatbridge Central. Bridgeton is only 12 minutes from Partick and is the station for Glasgow Green and The Peoples Palace. From the station follow James Street towards the River Clyde, turn right at the next road junction and you are on Glasgow Green. Continue in the same direction towards a large glass domed building which is the Winter Gardens, this is directly connected to The Peoples Palace. Walk back into the centre of Glasgow, you might like a meal before heading to Queen Street station. Go to the low level part of the station to catch the 1900 train to Edinburgh via Bathgate arriving at 2014. Return to Morpeth on the 2100 departure to Leeds arriving at 2225. These times are for Monday to Friday only. All the museums mentioned are free admission. More details and more museums are on the web at www.glasgowmuseums.com

Update on Seaton Delaval

Further to the article in Issue 19, we are pleased to see that Northumberland County Council's planning committee has approved the revised plans for the proposed petrol station and supermarket near the potential site of Seaton Delaval station on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line.

Following a successful meeting with the developer; Storeys Edward Symmons, Seaton Valley Cooperative Society and SENUG, the development now includes provision for pedestrian and vehicular access should a station be sited next to the supermarket. Furthermore, the developer provided more detailed plans demonstrating how additional station car parking could be provided on the land managed by Network Rail by the tracks; which are adjacent to the development.

SENUG believes this is the first development along the ABT line in recent times that includes provision for the re-introduction of passenger services – hopefully this is an indicator of the increased awareness of the possibility of reintroducing passenger services on the ABT in the local community.

What would you like to see in the SENUG Newsletter? Would you like to contribute to the next issue?

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