

## **NORTHAMPTON RAIL USERS' GROUP [www.northamptonrug.org.uk](http://www.northamptonrug.org.uk)**

### **Minutes of meeting held 5<sup>h</sup> September 2009 at the Guildhall, Northampton**

Present: ;Colin Bricher, Simon Butterworth; Julie Chambers; David Cheney; John Ellerby (NCC); Shaun Hope; Gyde Horrocks; Sally Keeble MP; Den Law (L-M); Nigel Langford (L-M), Simon Mitchell; Paul Minton; Patrick Rawlinson; Roy Sears; Paul Smith; Peter Smith; Tom Welsh (UoN); Geoff Steel; Cllr. Paul Varnsberry (NBC).

**Apologies** Michael Barlow; Mitzi Latham (L-M); David Trill; Daniel Smith; Elisabeth Townsend

**Minutes of last meeting** Accepted

#### **London Midland Report** (Neil Langford)

The Sunday working issue was discussed at length. The issue first arose under Silverlink and resurfaced 6 months into the L-M contract, it stems around relying upon volunteers for Sunday rostering. NRUG emphasised the requirement for this to be a 7 day railway and the need for rosters to cover 7 days and not be subject to lack of volunteer working.

The problem is a lack of train drivers – too few volunteered to run a reasonable service and rather than run a few trains but have stock out of place for Monday morning the decision was taken to cancel all services. The problem stems from different working conditions for the old Central and Silverlink franchises, the merger of which was already a difficult task. Whilst a temporary arrangement had been put in place L-M feel they can no longer afford this and need to renegotiate a new position. L-M has recruited more drivers to enable 6 day running without overtime which should make it easier to roster Sundays in the future.

NRUG asked about L-Ms franchise obligations but there was no clear answer to this. NRUG also expressed concerns over charging train fares for bus replacement.

Tom expressed concern for students arriving at UoN if the Sunday cancellation was repeated. Concerns were expressed regarding disabled passengers and the problems poor English speakers will have negotiating their way around this problem.

NRUG (Secretary) will write to the MD of Govia to express our concerns, register our bitter disappointment at the lack of service and inability to resolve the issue of 7 day rostering and emphasise that there must be a resolution. Sally will write to Jim Harker to ask him to express our concerns to DfT, John will see that NBC do so and for NRUG Sally will contact the DfT.

A question was raised about the Euston ticketing offices: they are operated by Virgin but LM tickets can be bought at any machine. 2 dedicated LM ticket machines will be installed.

Electron and Maestro cards are not accepted; this is an ATOC decision and not a LM one and applies everywhere.

In response to a question about the travel centre being shut LM said they prefer floor walkers

The first day of the school holidays saw bad queues at the ticket windows where only 2 desks were open, NRUG expressed they felt better planning ahead for obvious peak times should be made.

NRUG expressed their dismay at the increased car park charges and object to this set of increases. LM responded that there would be lower afternoon and weekend charges, that the decking was not a permitted development as originally thought

(WNDC issue) and that they are aware of the obligation to provide more spaces.

Other points: Taxis- LM and NBC will take this on to resolve; the question of tables or window shelves for the new Desiros was brought up again, and the Dec 2009 timetable has yet to be seen – new pre 0800 Euston arrival? LM is working on on-board announcements.

The new LM MD is focussing on performance.

### **Other Service Issues**

Network Rail closures and frequent infrastructure failures are a concern, both for NRUG and L-M. since this is for NR and not L-M. Action - get NR to the next meeting.

Virgin is still running the Voyager – need to find out why we have not got the Pendolino back. The 23.10 from New Street not always stopping at Northampton as timetabled is a big issue since it is the last train. Take up with James Kennedy and invite Virgin to next meeting.

The Joint Planning Unit appears to be proposing a rapid link to Bedford as part of the Emerging Core Strategy – PAM to find it and comment for NRUG, including the need to look at future needs and plan for future stations and capacity.

HS-2: concerns that HS-2 might affect the fast intercity train position for Northampton, there is a risk of everything going into delay.

NR maintenance staff cuts - for NR at a future meeting.

### **New Station**

This is moving forward with WNDC, we should organise a report back. Sally will write to WNDC re new station and service levels.

### **ATOC Response to Connecting Communities Response**

The Secretary submitted a response, in outline: NRUG supports connections to Daventry, but not at the expense of being used as a counter argument for better Northampton services; route and site safeguarding for Bedford and Market Harborough links and improved connectivity. The ATOC response was: Daventry did not score well on cost/benefit ratio, Rushden did; one factor that did emerge was generally the lack of stations in Northampton, and connectivity was beyond the scope of this review.

Gyde had heard that ATOC were supportive of looking at Market Harborough and Rugby/Leicester, but silent on Bedford, the implication being that ATOC have decided routes via Bedford are not attractive but other links via Rugby and Leicester could be. The question is how to support the ATOC view to lever for more services. Paul Smith said he would ask ATOC to one of our meetings to further this line of thought.

Next Meeting: 3 October 2009

NORTHAMPTON RAIL USERS GROUP

Secretary: Paul Minton, e-mail pamin100@aol.com

Liaison Officer: Elisabeth Townsend, e-mail elisabeth-townsend@lineone.net

**Agenda for meeting on**  
**Saturday 3rd October 2009**

**at**

**THE GUILDHALL**

**NORTHAMPTON**

**at 10.00 AM**

1. 10.00 - Attendance and apologies
2. 10.02 - Minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> September meeting and matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda
3. 10.05 - London Midland Report
4. 10.30 - Virgin Report
5. 10.40 - Network Rail
6. 11.10 - Timetable & Service issues and campaigns
  - service usage figures etc
  - cancellation statistics etc
  - MKRUG meeting
  - New station
7. 11.40 - AOB (Please notify the Chair before the meeting of any items of AOB to be discussed.)
8. 11.45 - Meeting closes

**Date of next meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2009**