

NORTHAMPTON RAIL USERS GROUP

Minutes of meeting held 9th February 2013

Those Present: Brian Binley MP, Paul Anderson, Michael Barlow (Bus Users Group), Colin Bricher, Cllr J. Caswell, Cllr Don Edwards, Cllr Stephen. Hibbert, Shaun Hope, Gyde Horrocks, Alan Jones, Sally Keeble, Stuart Kirkpatrick, Cllr P Larratt, Paul Minton, Simon Mitchell, Patrick Rawlinson, Paul Smith, Geoff Steel, Cllr Winston Strachan, David Trill, Timothy Webb, Chris Garden of WNDC, John Dickie of Friends of Northampton Castle, Cllr Tim Hadland (NBC Cabinet) and Stephanie Steward of Northampton Chronicle and Echo .

1. **Chairman** opens meeting at 10am, welcomes all present and discussed a) letter to Minister about franchise performance, HS2 'connectivity' and the European network and b) proposed 5 year plan from Office of Rail Regulator who will meet with the Group after the plan is produced.
2. **Apologies:** Dan Smith
3. **Minutes** of meeting held on 8th December 2012 agreed as amended .
4. **Matters arising** from the minutes. Put back to later in the meeting.
5. **Presentation from WNDC re the new Railway Station.** Chris Garden (CG) reported on the ongoing exhibition at the Grosvenor Centre which was a "very useful public engagement exercise" and producing valuable input on design.

Plans were produced of the highway layout at Black Lion Hill, development plans and floor plans. Online 'national' information services will identify as "Northampton Station" but CG confirmed that the project was still working towards being identified as "Castle" station locally.

CG then took the group through an on screen presentation and confirmed that the Innovation Centre project opposite would also start in the summer of 2013. CG presented an overview of the Station project. £20m maximum cost. 2500 square metres over three storeys. Work to start in Spring 2013. New station open by May 2014. Demolition of old station completed by Autumn 2014. Later phases at a cost of £7m could include 28000 square metres of community development and a 1270 space multi storey car park. Pedestrian access from Black Lion Hill directly to first floor level and to footbridge and platforms. Drop off point and Bus Stop at Black Lion Hill. Vehicular access from St Andrews Road. The programme over the next few months was – February 2013, next phase of archaeology investigations and prior approval of planning submissions. May 2013, main construction commences.

Questions were put to CG by the Chairman about connectivity to other transport including taxis. It was confirmed that there would be improved access to St. Andrews Road and that representations had been made by Taxi drivers. There were 13 spaces for Taxis. London Midland manage arrangements with Taxi drivers. The Chairman commented that the "holding rank has got to be big enough to service the needs of the users of the station". CG will raise the matter further and come back to NRUG.

Sally Keeble raised questions about pedestrian access. This was not just about disabled access but concerns about people with heavy luggage and or with children. Sally wanted “access for everyone” and noted that there were twelve steps to the main entrance so that the “least mobile people have to walk further to the Black Lion Hill entrance”. Cllr Hadland questioned why there was not a level entrance from the road to the front of the building and queried long term disabled parking. CG commented that all points had been made before, were on board and will be addressed with the Architects and with London Midland.

Patrick Rawlinson queried why there was not a drop off point in both directions on Black Lion Hill, would there be a left turn from the Hill in to St Andrews Road and how would this function off the cross roads. CG confirmed there would be a left turn into St Andrews Road.

Cllr Caswell raised questions about a platform lift. Geoff Steel argued that the access was seriously flawed and would produce a ‘pinch point’ at the area leading on to the footbridge after passing through ticket barriers. Cllr Larratt asked about the capacity of the lift and what alternatives were planned if the lift was not working. Gyde Horrocks was concerned about the multiplicity of management facilities.

Mike Barlow asked about access from the bus stop on the opposite side of Black Lion Hill. CG confirmed not quite as passenger friendly as would hope but this was a short term view and that the County Council were looking at a longer term solution for this complex and busy junction.

Paul Anderson commented that the station was designed for London Midland and not for passengers.

Paul Minton raised conservation and environmental issues.

CG talked through loss of parking during construction and Geoff Steel expressed concerns about temporary arrangements.

John Dickie queried the widening of St Andrews Road for access and CG confirmed none was planned at this point. It formed part of the discussions for further phases of the development.

There then followed a discussion on archaeology. Chairman spoke of the importance of balancing the various interests. John Dickie observed that the archaeology investigation was ‘fluid’ and was concerned that important discoveries were “not shoved under because of time scale”. Cultural and artistic endeavours should be incorporated in the Station. CG confirmed that Archaeology issues were very important to the project. Chairman thanked Friends of Northampton Castle for their input. Northampton “was the sixth most important mediaeval town in England and a major, major royal site”.

Cllr Strachan raised the issue of connection between the new bus interchange and the station. Chairman was concerned that the service from the interchange would have facility

for storage of cases. He asked that the County Council Councillors present get involved now and report back to NRUG.

CG confirmed there was a dedicated website for the project where questions could be put to him.

Thanks were given to WNDC for their continued support of NRUG and the Chairman observed that the presentation had been immensely useful. "Go back to WNDC, use us as a sounding board, NRUG members have a lot of experience and connections". In particular the Chairman still hoped for a fourth platform.

4. **Returning to matters arising from minutes.** Geoff Steel asked about the letter to the Chief Executive of London Midland and Chair confirmed it had gone.

6. **AOB.** Patrick Rawlinson raised the issue of an inter city service. Geoff Steel raised the issue of London Midland Project 110 phase 2 and will email the Chairman with details. John Dickie asked about canal basin access to the new Station as this was a real tourist opportunity. Cllr Strachan gave his apologies ahead of the next meeting. Paul Minton raised the issue of aggressive driving by taxi drivers on the station forecourt.

7. **Next meeting.** Confirmed as 9th March 2013, it is hoped that a representative of FOCUS will attend and that the Chair would be able to present details of a proposed meeting with the Minister.

Meeting closed at 11.25 am.

THE NORTHAMPTON RAIL USERS GROUP

www.northamptonrug.org.uk

AGENDA for the meeting on Saturday 9th March 2013

Time: 10am The Guildhall Northampton

- 1. Chairman's opening remarks**
- 2. Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of meeting held on 9th February 2013**
- 4. Matters arising from minutes**
- 5. Any Other Business**
- 6. Dates of future meetings –**
 - Next meeting Saturday 13th April, 10am, Guildhall**
 - Dates of future meetings**