

NORTHAMPTON RAIL USERS GROUP

Minutes of meeting held 12th January 2013

Those Present: Brian Binley MP, Colin Bricher, Cllr J. Caswell, David Cheney, Cllr Stephen. Hibbert, Shaun Hope, Gyde Horrocks, Sally Keeble, Paul Minton, Simon Mitchell, Patrick Rawlinson, Geoff Steel, Cllr Winston Strachan, David Trill, Timothy Webb, Iain Andrews and Duncan Harper of WNDC, John Dickie of Friends of Northampton Castle, Chris Wragg of the County Council, Dan Romberg of Sustrans and Stephanie Steward of Northampton Chronicle and Echo .

1. **Chairman** opens meeting at 10am, welcomes all present and wishes them a happy new year. Thanks everyone for their kindness in response to news of his illness.
2. **Apologies:** Paul Anderson, Paul Smith, Paul Varnsvery
3. **Minutes** of meeting held on 8th December 2012 agreed .
4. **Matters arising** from the minutes. Geoff Steel commented that cancellations and short form trains continued into the New Year despite promises from London Midland representatives at the last meeting. Chairman had sought a letter from the Chief Executive of London Midland on the subject of the poaching of staff by other Companies but without response. He will write again. Chairman to arrange meeting with the Minister – Chair and other members of NRUG to attend. Geoff Steel commented that the 4.9% increase in season tickets was the highest rise in the Eastern region. Northampton was being harshly treated. Paul Minton, Vice Chairman, to draft letter to the Minister.
5. **Presentation from WNDC re the new Railway Station.** The Chairman reported that a formal announcement on planning and construction is to be made in the next two weeks or so and asked the Press to treat today “as a trailer”. Duncan Harper reported on archaeological findings from the initial trench that were “exciting all round”. There were further planned phases of excavation so that the whole of the station footprint was explored but the matter was not straight forward. The first stage covered the short stay parking area and then moving on to further targeted areas where required. Excavations would start mid February and take approximately 2 months. The Chairman asked was there “evidence of the greater historical significance of Northampton?” John Dickie commented that the “Victorians didn’t tear up everything”. Findings had gone beyond mediaeval and into Saxon. The potential was enormous and it was hoped that finds would be incorporated into the new build. Iain Andrews acknowledged that a clear lineage was sought between the station and the heritage gateway.

Construction had been put out to a competitive tender process. There is a preferred contractor but this had still not been formalised. Artists impressions were produced, passed around the Group and discussed but it was acknowledged that they were subject to a further detailed design process. A dedicated website for the development would be up and running by the end of January 2013. A public exhibition was planned for the Grosvenor Centre at the beginning of February. The Chairman acknowledged that WNDC would keep the Group informed but noted the Group’s particular concerns with disability access, platform layout, traffic flow planning and asked for early sight of such plans. Sally Keeble, Geoff Steel, Patrick Rawlinson, Gyde Horrocks, David Cheney, Cllr Strachan and Paul Anderson all contributed to the discussion. WNDC to produce detailed plans for the next

meeting on February 9th. Cllr Caswell will organise equipment for the power point presentation. Target dates were given as April May 2013 – start, completion of new build by May 2014, then proceed to demolish existing station with all finished by autumn of 2014.

Thanks were given to WNDG for their continued support of NRUG and the Chairman expressed the Group's genuine appreciation for their close involvement in the project.

- 6. Spatial effects of High Speed Rail.** An evidential report presented by the County Council to the Independent Transport Commission had previously been circulated to the group. Chris Wragg addressed the key points and context of the report. Northampton was the only area showing a negative effect on “economic impacts”. Releasing capacity to the West Coast Main Line will benefit Northampton and Milton Keynes. The Chairman asked for a short paper specifically on the benefits of release of capacity. Chris Wragg acknowledged that there was “pretty good consensus on what Northamptonshire needs” in relation to rail strategy. It was necessary to mobilise all local partners to emphasise points and raise the profile with the Minister. NRUG can encourage response to consultation. The Chairman stated that this “all fits in with the proposed meeting with the Minister” and asked Chris Wragg to provide a 1 page A4 report with an “outline of need for Northampton”.

The Chairman introduced a discussion on linking HS2 to Europe, reporting on an article in the current issue of ‘Today’s Railway UK’. Patrick Rawlinson commented that he saw an enormous advantage of linking HS1 to HS2 through Stratford instead of current proposals which impacted on Euston Station. Geoff Steel observed that there was a challenge to integrate with the international high speed network and that domestic high speed services needed a terminus in London. The Chairman acknowledged that there was a lot of “heavy thinking to be done” and that the Group should look at this in more detail in February.

The Group continued to discuss HS2. Contributions from Geoff Steel, Sally Keeble “we have to make sure that there is a good range of contribution to the consultation from Northampton”, Paul Anderson “we must get across the adverse impact on Northampton of doing nothing”, Patrick Rawlinson “spending billions to save minutes on a journey” and Gyde Horrocks highlighting the increased sales of high value properties in the area as a measure of Northampton’s increasing importance and growth.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Geoff Wragg for the presentation and for agreeing to produce a paper to present to the Minister.

- 7. AOB.** Cllr Caswell confirmed that signage of the town centre from the station had been flagged up for discussion with the County Council. Chairman to provide Sally Keeble with details of an NRUG poster to be put up at the Station and for Sally Keeble to pursue with London Midland.
- 8. Next meeting.** Confirmed as 9th February 2013, 10am at the Guildhall. It is hoped that a representative of the office of the Rail Regulator will attend. Anthony Smith of Passenger Focus to be reminded to attend a future meeting (March?)

Meeting closed at 12 noon.

THE NORTHAMPTON RAIL USERS GROUP

www.northamptonrug.org.uk

AGENDA for the meeting on Saturday 9th February 2013

Time: 10am The Guildhall Northampton

- 1. Chairman's opening remarks**
- 2. Apologies**
- 3. Minutes of meeting held on 12th January 2013**
- 4. Matters arising from minutes**
- 5. WNDC**
- 6. Any Other Business**
- 7. Dates of future meetings –**
 - Next meeting Saturday 9th March, 10am, Guildhall**
 - Dates of future meetings**