

## **NORTHAMPTON RAIL USERS GROUP**

Minutes of Meeting held 14<sup>th</sup> April 2012

**Those Present:** Paul Anderson, Brian Binley MP, Colin Bricher, Joy Capstide, Cllr. J. Caswell, David Cheney, Brian Crutchley, John Ellerby, David Hugheston-Roberts (NCC), Penny Herell (NBC), Shaun Hope, Gyde Horrocks, Sally Keeble (President NRUG), Cllr. David Mackintosh, Paul Minton, Jonathan Nunn (NBC), Paul Taylor (UoN), Winston Strachan, Paul Smith, Tom Welsh.

**Apologies:** Alan Jones, Liz Cox, Daniel Smith, Patrick Rawlinson, Geoff Steel, Paul Varnsverry.

**Minutes of Last Meeting:** Apologies for the confusion over ending out a draft and final. Patrick Rawlison asked that some corrections were made as follows:

Northampton –Rugby line: the future line speed would be unlikely to exceed 85mph. This is because the current development at DIRFT might result in 8 freight trains per hour (normally 75 mph maximum) using the route, and that optimum line capacity is achieved when all trains travel at the same speed (source: Network Rail)

### **Chairman's Update.**

Brian reports that from conversations he has had with Eric Pickles and Justin Greening regarding financing for the station he has reason to be optimistic, but as yet there is no decision.

Brian asked if everyone could please send their address to [binleyb@parliament.uk](mailto:binleyb@parliament.uk). Brian's office will construct a new address book for the group.

Brian suggested that Rail reform was part of next month's agenda.

### **Trent Valley Line**

To make better the case for maintaining our services we need passenger numbers – can we get the passenger numbers for TVL to make a case.

The case for running the 350s through Weedon seems strangely contrary to the “speed blocking” oft quoted for the rest of the WCML up to now.

### **Town Centre Plans**

The rest of the meeting was slightly off-topic for rail users but was a very informative session explaining the vision for the town centre, including the new Castle Station, and we thank Peter Mawson for his frequent appearances at our meetings on this topic. Peter explained the objectives of a number of aspects representing a common interest and vision for Northampton and highlighted the opportunities presented by the Innovation Centre, and healthcare sector.

A “fly through” video was shown.

There was some comments made of the “Northampton Alive” website, but in fairness this is a new site, and the comments should be taken as constructive user testing. We do request however that rail gets a better showing on the site.

As ever, NRUG emphasise accessibility and disability as a key issue for any scheme involving or connecting to the station.

The need to find USPs to attract employers was made by Sally. She also felt protection needed to be given to the river front to ensure public access is given.

Other topics raised were: airport capacity and connections; road access from the west/M1; the need for water supply, both for population growth and high tech manufacturing, and the risk of flooding.

### **Finances**

Shaun reported that we have ~£500 in the bank.

### **Meeting topics for 2012**

The program for the remainder of the year is:

- 12 May: tickets and pricing, rail reform
- 9 June: London Midland and Transport Plan (NCC)
- 14 July: Network Rail/maintenance
- 8 Sept: Franchising, ORR & AGM

### **Action Items**

1. Arrange NR to attend – PAM
2. Arrange NCC to present at 9<sup>th</sup> June meeting – John Ellerby

**Northampton Rail User's Group**

**Agenda for Meeting to be held Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012  
The Guildhall, Northampton**

10.00 – 10.05: Minutes of last meeting and AOB

10.05 – 10.15: Chairman's Remarks

10.15 – 11.00: Tickets & Pricing

11.00 - 11.15: Rail Reform

11.15-11.30: AOB.

11.30: Meeting Closes



Rail Reform command paper oral statement – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012

Rt. Hon. Justine Greening MP

Transport Secretary

### **Opening remarks**

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on railways.

Our rail network matters... to our quality of our life... our national wellbeing... and our country's future prosperity.

For this Government it's a simple equation... good transport equals good economics.

But, too often, we find ourselves frustrated and disappointed when the cost, punctuality or comfort of rail travel don't come up to scratch.

I believe that Government and the rail industry can and must do more for passengers and for taxpayers.

Of course, investment has a huge part to play.

That is why we've been investing in our transport infrastructure... because that's one of the best ways to support business, generate growth and create jobs.

And, for rail, that has meant the biggest modernisation programme since the Victorian age with £18 billion invested in this spending period.

But Mr Speaker, it's not enough only to invest in them... it's also vital to make sure they are set up for success.

So today, I am setting out our plans to do precisely that, with the publication of our Rail Command Paper, entitled 'Reforming our Railways: Putting the Customer First'.

### **Efficiency Gap**

Mr Speaker, I have taken the 'Ronseal' approach to the name. This strategy will do what it says on the tin: put the customer first.

The hallmarks of our railway must be high standards **and** low costs... a railway that offers the best services **and** the best value.

That means a rail network which is efficient, effective and affordable.

Nevertheless, in his Rail Value for Money Study, Sir Roy McNulty concluded that our railways are among the most expensive in Europe... and that's in spite of the strong and steady growth in the number of passengers using them.

Sir Roy identified inefficiencies worth £2.5 to £3.5 billion-a-year... and the people picking up the tab for this costly efficiency gap are passengers and taxpayers.

So reform is long overdue.

**Passengers** rightly want to know that we have a plan to end the era of inflation-busting fares seen over recent years.

And **taxpayers** rightly want to see railway subsidy reduced to help us tackle the fiscal deficit.

My message to everyone today is very clear. The days of spiralling and unjustified rail costs are coming to an end.

Under this Government, the rail industry will only be able to compete for future investment if its long-term cost issues are addressed, and if it can earn the right to grow.

I'm pleased to say that Network Rail is already due to deliver £1.2 billion of efficiency savings by 2014 with at least a further £600 million expected by 2019.

But, as Sir Roy so clearly set out, we need to go further. The railway **as a whole** needs to become less dependent on Government subsidies. That's why we want the industry to fully close the efficiency gap of £3.5 billion per year identified by Sir Roy, by 2019.

Managing and reducing costs. Balancing budgets. Targeting investment where it can drive long-term growth and jobs, delivering more capacity and better service for the investment that goes in.

### **Government's response – the Command Paper**

The time is right for reform. I believe we are in a good position to build on recent efficiency gains to further improve the performance of the industry – and to improve the passenger experience.

The programme of work that will decide rail outcomes and funding for the five-year period from 2014 is now well under way, and this sits alongside a period when we will see the biggest round of re-franchising since the privatisation of the industry. Both represent a further opportunity to really change our railways for the long-term better.

Today's Command Paper sets out our ambitions for Britain's railways and the agenda for change that both Government and industry will follow in the months and years ahead.

By reforming the industry, we will achieve substantial savings. Those savings will allow us to cut and then abolish above-inflation rises in average regulated fares... and it will ease the burden of the railway on the broader public purse.

Taken together with my decision to limit the most recent increase in regulated fares I believe this will have a positive long-term impact on household budgets.

### **Closer working between industry parties**

For reform to really be effective there needs to be closer collaboration between the infrastructure managers, in other words Network Rail, and those who provide passenger services, generally the Train Operating Companies.

Only through better joint working will we reduce costs and improve the customer experience.

The industry is already pushing for better alignment between track and train.

We look to them to bring forward partnerships equipped and incentivised to deliver not just better services, but also better value.

The rail industry, led by the Rail Delivery Group, has also declared itself willing and able to respond to the strategic and operational challenges that the railway faces.

Such leadership across the industry will be essential if we are to get the most out of our reforms.

### **Franchises, fares and ticketing**

Rail franchises will be reformed with greater transparency around costs and efficiency... again to ensure best value for fare-payers and taxpayers.

Franchises will be longer, giving train operators the flexibility they have been asking for, more time to make the biggest investments – to deliver what passengers want, within a sustainable budget.

We will also move to a more transparent, modern and flexible approach to fares and ticketing. We are launching a consultation today to take views on how these key aims can be achieved.

It's time to bring fares out of the 1970s and into the 21st Century.

We will expand smart ticketing to give more passengers the kinds of benefits that travellers in the capital already enjoy with Oyster cards.

Working with industry we will roll out smartcards across England and Wales and across different operators, increasing convenience for passengers.

Smartcards are also pivotal to introducing a more flexible system tailored to customers, with a wider choice of tickets and season cards, recognising the reality that not all journeys take place five days a week during rush hour.

## **The rail workforce**

Mr Speaker, if we duck the reform challenge then it won't just be rail users and the public purse that pay the price... ultimately the rail industry and the wider economy will suffer too.

So we want everyone working in rail, be it management or front-line, to help make these reforms work.

By reducing costs and increasing demand set alongside this Government's huge investment in railways there is genuine potential to boost jobs across the industry.

## **Network Rail**

It's important to reform governance too.

Network Rail is giving greater decision-making powers to its regional Route Directors, making it more responsive to local conditions and increasingly focused on day-to-day train operations at the local level.

We welcome Network Rail's efforts to find new and more efficient ways of managing its assets, including long-term concessions to third parties for the management of parts of the network.

Network Rail is rightly taking steps to reform corporate governance... including its management incentives package... so that it is more accountable to passengers and freight customers.

I would also like to welcome its sensible decision – to be announced shortly – to voluntarily appoint a Public Interest Director, who will ensure the concerns of taxpayers are fully reflected at board level and help strengthen the role of members.

## **Decentralisation – local authorities and the ORR**

Mr Speaker, it's time to give communities more control over local services.

So today we are also consulting on devolving decisions about the railway to sub-national bodies.

And our joint consultation with the Office of Rail Regulation on a greater role for the ORR in regulating passenger franchises closed recently. With a smarter regulatory approach, our aim is to remove Government from day-to-day industry involvement by adopting a more unified regulatory structure for the railways.

We will publish our conclusions in due course.

## **Concluding remarks**

Mr Speaker,

Facing up to reality... saving farepayers and taxpayers £3.5 billion a year... reforming our railways... putting the customer first. That's what this Command Paper is all about.

And, by working together on this package of reform, I believe industry, regulator and Government can generate the savings and the change we need.

Lower costs, better services and ticketing offering greater choice and flexibility.

A rail industry built to last because it's efficient, effective and affordable.

That's what this Command paper will deliver and I commend it to the House.

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