

MINUTES Meeting July 13th 2006, Held at The Lounge, Green Dragon, Hereford

Present: Gerald Dawe (chair), Nick Jones, Janet Shott, Michael Hughes, Chris Shott, Derrick Downward, Michael Sullivan, Becky Roseff, John Fancourt, Owen Morgan and Mrs Morgan, Ronald Gow, Peter Harding

1. We discussed the **complaint against Mark Lawton**, Worc Station Manager, who failed to take a number of actions that would have lessened the pain for travellers when trains were cancelled due to buckled rails. Janet S to write to Central Manager to ask about the correct procedure when this happens.

2. The letter Cllr Wilcox wrote in response to our concerning the **station approach**, while it had some actions, namely a letter to Owen Williams the Council's contractor to open negotiations with the station towards improvement, was we felt it inadequate. Much could be done and rather than do it excuses were offered. The council don't own the station forecourt, the land at Rockfields is private land (Rockfields is not the issue, Morrisons is), double decker buses cant stop under the station awning etc etc. Nick to do a follow up letter, including emphasising Safe Routes to School and the Three Choirs.

3. **The West Midlands Central Trains Franchise** is to go out to tender and comments in by August 6 2006, we will send in some comments. It can be viewed at www.publications.dft.gov.uk – West Midlands Franchise June 2006

The franchise begins Nov 2007, it combines Silverlink County, Euston to Northampton, Bedford, Bletchley, Watford Junction to St Albans Abbey with West Mids service, for 7 yrs 10 months. Central demand has risen at 4% p.a. over four years to 28m in 2005 and passenger to £68m in 2005. Trips into Bham have been growing. It will no longer come under the jurisdiction of Centro, only the DfT. Centro currently have a crowding policy, broadly, no more than 10% standing. In recent years 30 class 350 Desiro trains recently bought for Central and Silverlink costing £150m. The new franchisee will be the station facility manager for 149 stations.

Fares are expected to be capped at RPI + 1%. The aims of the DfT for the franchise are, to reduce subsidy, improve performance, 'manage demand', e.g. encourage off peak travel, improve customer satisfaction, e.g. cycle-rail, integrated transport, access and make the best of what is there e.g. the new trains, the WCML

We agreed that we should write stressing the following:

- **Make sure the franchisee agrees to finish train journeys through to Hereford**
- Sunday service to be compulsory (not voluntary as at present)
- Extend the evening service

- Bikes on trains – you recommend larger car parks at stations, this not consistent with aim of integrated transport. Better to invest in some re-design of trains to take more bikes, and to look at through bus ticketing, better bus information and connections.
- Good connections with Arriva Wales
- Four carriages at peak hours, crowding means demand is suppressed, this maybe why the franchise has grown only at 4% p.a., less than elsewhere in the country
- Waiting rooms at Malvern closed, they should be open
- Stress population growth of Hereford, in part based on presence of rail. The Para Olympics and population growth means that a currently congested line will get worse. The double line was only singled in 1982, it now runs down the centre of the track bed, but a passing loop should be possible.
- Withington included as new station for term following this one (!)

The letter to be copied to the council.

3. Some more **Summer Day Trips** were offered, to be sent (and have been sent) by email for the website.

4. Discussion of **poor response from FGW** following an hour + delay. Gerald said would take up as the Customer Champion.

5. Owen brought up the question of **costs of laying new track**. In Wales short stretches of new lines have been opened, but at a huge cost. E.g. a 6 mile stretch of re-laying track on an already established line was predicted at £27m and came out at £70. The Rotherwas Access Road is 3 miles and predicted to cost £13m.

6. Some items for Newsletter No 5 were submitted.

Next Meeting: September 14th 2006, The Lounge, Green Dragon, Hereford. ***We will miss the Aug 10 meeting*** as the Green Dragon will be full of 3 Choirers. After that Oct 12, Nov 12, Dec 14