

Thursday May 10th 2007 All Saints, Hereford, at 7.30pm

Talk by Ian Baxter, Senior Commercial Scheme Sponsor, Route Enhancement Team, Network Rail Western

Present: Naomi Bell, Gerald Dawe (Chair), Max and Teresa Houghton, Margaret Howell, Becky R, Derek D, Janet C, Gillian B, Michael S, , Paul White, Chris Shott, David Plowman, Lawrence Goddem, Rachel and John Allan, Mike Hughes

- We had a short business meeting. Gerald announced he was now a Councillor and hopefully will be able to influence other Cllrs to think more about rail.
- Michael S reported on the FG Western meeting in Reading. Much of the talk was about matters outside the region, but he was able to raise issues about FGW train terminations and the need for a policy about taxis, the need for guards to uphold the quiet carriage rules and feet on seats.
- The HLF bid for posters, newsletters and speakers has been sent in, we will hear within two months, David P, Tony Shoring and Richard Birt helped Becky put it together.
- Janet reported that Shrewsbury station is going through a £1.3m uplift with money from Welsh Assembly and David P described impressive station improvements at Newport.

Ian introduced himself. He began his working life as a social worker, his interests in trains led him eventually to be Chair of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group for several years. He is still a working member of the Severn Valley Railway and occasional guard on mainline services. From the CLPG he went to work for Chiltern Rail for several years and then to Network Rail.

His main message is that nearly everyone working in the rail industry want things to go well and improve. But they have been handed a difficult task. Since the break up of British Rail, the service is very, very complicated. Nothing is easy.

Network rail was established in 2003, following the collapse of Railtrack post Hatfield, when it went bankrupt (!). Railtrack managed contracts, not very well. Network Rail is a not for dividend organisation, it was not originally set up to enhance the railway but to improve the service. In 2002 79% of trains were nationally arriving 'on time' (five or ten mins), in 2006 it was 86% (93% for Chiltern). However FGW is 76% and the Cotswold line is the worst at 71.4%. This may have led to the improvements planned (see below).

The SRA was abolished, maintenance brought in house and 15,000 employees taken on. TOCs and tasks are defined by the DfT. They have had four years of accident free service since, up to the Virgin crash recently.

After the Railways Act there was the ability to develop and co-ordinate enhancement of track. Funding is usually joint, Railtrack and a partner. Prior to the Act only two people worked on enhancement projects in the whole Western Region, now there are ten. The guidelines followed are GRIP, Guide to Railway Investment Projects.

Basically you have to prove you have a business case; what do you want, why, and evidence for it.

Current projects are Reading improvements (£160m) – which will help Hereford as Reading is a bottleneck, and doubling of Worc-Oxford and Swindon-London lines. The Worc-Oxf doubling will help Hereford. The objective is to raise the Cotswold Line to 90% reliability with an hourly service to Paddington from Worc. Currently £150k has been allocated for a feasibility study.

Ian has meetings in Hereford with Council Officers, for example next Wed they are discussing the Arriva Trains contract. Gerald will find out who is attending and if they are briefed.

Next Meeting: June 14 2007; 7.30-8.30 p.m. **Note: in the Green Dragon.**