

Milton Keynes and Bletchley Rail User Group
Minutes of the Meeting of Tuesday 6 December 2005

Present: Nicky Simpson, Louise Green, Alan Francis, Sean Hickey, Robert Prosser, Andrew Couldrake, Peter J Smith, Graham Smith (Department for Transport), Daniel Roodt (Silverlink Trains)

Apologies: Philip Lawton, Stuart Nightingale, Philip Lawton, Robert Webb, Paul Bryan (Silverlink), Steve Leyland (Virgin)

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
2. Virgin Passenger Loads
 - Steve Leyland had emailed regarding passenger loading on the 1752. A copy of his email was circulated at the meeting. Although the loading is lighter earlier in the week, Virgin will not open up this service to commuters.
 - Robert Prosser asked if the 17.50 Silverlink service could be changed to first stop MKC. Julian Drury had responded to this suggestion by email. He explains that removing the Leighton Buzzard stop would leave LB commuters with only an all-stations service at 17.34 followed by a semi-fast service at 18.04. Silverlink cannot run an additional service at 17.50 as they have no further spare units at that time.
 - Graham Smith stated that the service we currently have will not change greatly until 2008. The 2008 timetable is being discussed now and he emphasised the importance of writing to Tony Francis at the DfT now, outlining our aspirations.
 - Robert Prosser also stressed the importance of influencing the selection of the new franchise which will be awarded in 2008. This can also be carried out via the DfT.
3. Alan Francis – Update on Meetings with NR, DfT etc.
 - The extra fast track at MKC will technically allow trains to run on the fast line all the way from Euston to MKC. Whether this will happen in practice is another matter.
 - A presentation had been given about the regeneration of Bletchley town centre. Some of the ideas outlined included relocating the station entrance to the Queensway side. Parking would probably then be in a newly built multi-storey car park. The platforms on the fly-over must be two to three hundred yards south of the existing platforms as they have to be sited on a flat piece of land. Alan confirmed that he will be contesting this. Access to the new platforms would be from a path sited between the slow and fast tracks.

- Alan had raised the issue of the footbridge at CMK and was told that there are no plans to change it. Daniel Roodt confirmed that Silverlink are looking at ways of improving the surface of the footbridge, particularly in wet weather when it becomes treacherous. The Council are looking at various plans for Station Square but nothing has been decided yet.
- A suggestion has been made to house the Bedford Bay at MKC at part of Platform 1. This would also include a loop. However, despite the fact that this suggestion is technically viable, the Council and Milton Keynes Partnership would need to fund it at a cost of around £2 million. Bletchley would also contribute. The various parties are considering this and no decision has been made.
- There is still no news on the funding for the re-modelling of MKC. Graham Smith stated that the DfT is quietly confident.
- Nicky Simpson asked what the blockades were likely to be when the re-modelling work goes ahead. Graham Smith confirmed that the detail had not yet been decided but there would almost certainly be weekend closures. There is no plan to close Rugby during the week as this would cause major disruption to the whole of the West Coast main line.

6. Ticket Machines

Daniel Roodt confirmed that the new ticket machines should be installed by January 3rd 2006. The Blue machines will remain. He explained that there had been serious staffing problems. After the London bombings, revenue dropped and Silverlink withdrew overtime. The situation is now improving and Daniel hopes to be able to put staff back on overtime, and introduce an earlier start time. This should help alleviate queues at the ticket office, particularly on a Monday morning.

7. Penalty Fares

Andrew Couldrake pointed out that Clause 10 on the new Penalty Fares leaflet seemed harsh. Daniel Roodt confirmed that Silverink has records of all Season Ticket holders and it should therefore be possible to obtain a refund.

8. New Format Agenda

Nicky Simpson asked the Committee for their views on the suggested new format for the Agenda. The Committee approved it and it will therefore be used in the future.

9. RUG Publicity

Nicky Simpson stated that it was important for the group to raise their profile. The minutes should be copied to Phyllis Starkey and Mark Lancaster. Louise Green will do this. Posters should also be displayed at stations. Daniel Roodt confirmed that Paul Bryan had the printing facilities to produce posters. The

Group's web site is <http://www.geocities.com/mkbletchleyrug>. It was also suggested that the group contacts The Citizen with details of the web and email address. The group should also respond to letters to the editor concerning rail travel.

10. Any Other Business

There was none.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 10 January 2006 at 19.30 at **Wetherspoons (the one nearest the station) on Midsummer Boulevard.**