

Milton Keynes and Bletchley Rail User Group

Minutes of the Meeting of Monday 3 July 2006

Present: Louise Green, Andrew Fisher, Peter J Smith, Sean Hickey, Alan Francis, Steve Leyland (Virgin Trains), Annamaria Izzard (Silverlink Trains), Chris Wright (OBRAC)

Apologies: Robert Prosser, Andrew Couldrake, Bob Dolley (Virgin Trains)

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Annamaria Izzard confirmed that the text for the poster had gone to Head Office for approval and she hoped to return this to Louise Green for the final go-ahead soon. **Action: AMI**

2. Update from Silverlink Train Services

Annamaria reported that the PPM stood at 90.5% and the charter figure was 95%. A new depot has opened at Northampton and is now in use. This will service Desiro and 321 trains. Most rolling stock will be stabled at Northampton although some will remain at Bletchley.

Alan Fisher raised the issue of Silverlink's refund policy which appears to be hit and miss. Some commuters receive their refunds, other do not. Annamaria confirmed that there had been problems as refunds are administered by a contractor. She will let the Group have the name of a contact at the company so we can write to them outlining our concerns. **Action: AMI**

The issue of lost property was discussed and in particular the fact that the staff dealing with lost property at Euston do not answer their phones. Annamaria will enquire about this although she was fairly certain that this area does not come under Silverlink and is handled by a contractor for Network Rail. **Action: AMI**

Louise Green asked if it would be possible, during hot weather, to have the doors on trains opened when they are in the sidings during the day. The 321 rolling stock has been unbearable in the latest heatwave. Annamaria will pass this request on. **Action: AMI**

3. Update from Virgin Train Services

Steve Leyland reported that their figures had dropped a little recently but were back up this week to 90%. He informed the meeting that the proposed 2009 timetable introduced a new hourly semi-fast service to Crewe, using Desiros. There will be an hourly Birmingham, Manchester, and Chester service but it is unlikely that MK commuters will be permitted to use them during the peaks. These services will, however, be useful for business commuters travelling to and from Milton Keynes.

Alan Francis asked if it would be possible to have a second Birmingham service as this is a very large market and there is a demand. Sean Hickey confirmed that the business community would also find this useful, in particular the links to the Birmingham International and the airport. Steve urged the group to push for these services and for Silverlink to regain the Birmingham route.

4. Press Enquiries

Sean Hickey explained that he had recently received a request to talk on the radio regarding rail issues but he felt that he was responding not just as a member of the Group but also as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce. He is concerned that there may be a conflict of interest and he suggested the group nominate someone to deal with all press enquiries. Louise Green volunteered and the meeting agreed. Steve Leyland offered to enquire whether Virgin's Communication Department have any material that might help Louise deal with such enquiries. **Action: SL**

5. Response to West Midlands Franchise Consultation

The committee discussed what the Group's response should be to the West Midlands Franchise document. It was agreed that comments should be included with the franchise letter already drafted and about to be mailed. Two trains per hour to Birmingham should be specified together with support for the extension to Milton Keynes Central of the Bedford to Bletchley service. It was also important to stress that improving services should be the main target for government, and not saving money. The restrictions on tickets should also be highlighted specifying that no new restrictions should be introduced. Alan Francis will add these points and send the letter. **Action: AF**

6. Stations Group

Alan Francis reported that consultants have now been appointed for the design work for the track changes and signals at MKC. There have been talks about a second multi-storey car park.

Alan reported that his proposal for line layout at Bletchley was not rejected out of hand and he senses a change in attitude.

Chris Wright reported that a new study on the East/West Rail Link is to be published next week. This study cost £300k and is therefore more detailed.

7. Group Administration

There was no group administration to discuss.

8. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that there would be no meeting in August. Our next meeting will therefore be on **Tuesday 5 September 2006** when we will need to discuss the AGM.