

MK Rail Users
Minutes of Committee Meeting
3rd June 2008

Present: Philip Lawton, Andrew Couldrake, Alan Francis, Rupert Lodge, Chris Wright, Louise Green, Steve Barker, Jill Hope, Stuart Nightingale, Andrew Fisher

Apologies for Absence: Alan Francis, Robert Prosser, Paul Bryan

Not Present: Peter Smith

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** were agreed

It was noted and welcomed that LM staff had asked cyclists to fold cycles before passing through the barrier to exercise care with their cycles. Unfortunately this has not been consistent. It was also noted that the cycle shelter had not yet been repaired.

2. **Report from London Midland** was unavailable due to incident at Bletchley.

3. **Report on Stations Improvement Meeting 29/4/08** attended by Robert Prosser

(Report taken from published minutes).

a) MKC – on target with platform 6 due to open (temporarily called platform 5) in June as 5 will close temporarily.

Work on platform 1 progressing.

Station Square and new multi storey car park proposals are being developed.

b) Virgin Trains had discussed growth of MK and suggested new ICE trains could help solve need for MK services to use fast lines.

c) EWRL is progressing to GRIP4 with discussions with Network Rail and Dft. Eco towns may impact on the project.

d) Wolverton Station has planning permission and work should start in February. New car parking provision is being planned.

Similar topics had been discussed at MK Joint Transport Delivery Team -22/4/08 (an MK Council/MK Partnership group), whilst Sustainable Transport Working Group (16/4/08) had discussed Station Square.

4. **Report on MK Transport Partnership Meeting -21/5/08** -attended by Steve Barker

Steve engaged with the London Midland directors and raised a number of issues including capacity at barriers and staircases and pressure on train capacity.

Key points covered during the presentations/questions were:

- A suggestion was made that MKC could be likely to receive £1m from National Station Improvement Plan funding.
- Improvements plans highlighted by MK Council/Partnership included:
 - Station Square: The “V” plan being presented
 - Pinnacle: A major office building that will house Deloitte. This development is based upon the fact that there is good rail access to both Birmingham and London from MKC.
 - Car Park: Mention of the proposed multi-story car park for MKC.
 - Station Gateway: A plan to redevelop the area between and including the National Hockey Stadium and Toys R Us. It was suggested that there would be 1 million square feet of office space available if the plan went ahead.
- MKC Station will be subject to a London Midland re-branding exercise during July 2008
- MKC will be the initial station for the introduction of Smart Cards by LM.
- Wolverton new station and parking progressing.
- Northampton– MKC–Euston was recognised as a key route by London Midland.

- LM recognise that the 2008 timetable was complete but see it as a basis for future improvements.
 - London Midland expect 19% increase in rolling stock as a result of their allocation from the High Level Output Specification. As a result they will aim for 12 car sets during peak hour service. Without this increase in capability LM asserted that capacity would run out in 2013.
 - The introduction of the IEP is scheduled for 2014. The 10 car train sets, when introduced, will be equivalent to the current 12 car sets used by London Midland
 - Bletchley track upgrading is scheduled for 2010 including provision for Bedford service to extend to MKC (but possible stock issues relating to effluent discharge on WCML were cited).
 - **ACTION:** Meetings with Alex Hynes (Commercial Director, already in pipeline), Mike Haigh (Operations Director) and Ged Burgess (Community Manager) planned.
5. **Update on East/West – Chris Wright**
Progressing to next stage (GRIP4) but need to decide on service level and allow for NR/DfT plans for freight use and impact of Eco towns. OBRAC met Dr Starkey MP who is optimistic and supportive. OBRAC now looking east of Bedford with EWRC report due.
6. **Press contact procedures – Unanimously accepted by those present**
Philip highlighted a couple of recent incidents where a) media had problems getting in contact with MK Rail Users, and b) where a member of the committee quoted the MK Rail Users name (albeit incorrectly) without having the mandate to do so.
As a result of the above, Jill Hope was confirmed as key contact for **ALL** press/media contacts.
ACTION: All Enquiries addressed to MK Rail Users should be referred to Jill. No member should either answer on the groups behalf or answer on their own mandate if the initial enquiry was to the group. No member is to link the name of MK Rail Users to their own thoughts or agendas
Jill had produced a series of Display Posters which were warmly welcomed and accepted by the committee.
ACTION: Jill to progress and forward to Paul Bryan.
Business Card-size cards promoting MK Rail Users were suggested, and the idea was accepted by the committee.
ACTION: Louise would ask Coffee Bar Franchise holder at MKC if could they would be willing to sponsor the cards.
7. **Strikes and Disruption Compensation**
Rupert reported on contact with Alex Hynes, LM Commercial Director. He confirmed they did no more than comply with National Conditions of Carriage.
Concern was also expressed at the use of vouchers for refunds rather than cheques and lack of awareness of procedures by public.
ACTION: Jill to produce press release. Using Rupert's letter to PS as a basis, Philip to write to MPs to seek support for changes in government policy. In meetings with LM Directors, to seek improved lead time on communications for alternative arrangements at times of strikes and improved communication generally when the system falls down
8. **Future Stakeholder Meetings**
Stuart Baker (DfT) had referred group to liaise with Matt Dillon to discuss improved commuter services and longer term, ICE stock. There may be scope in 2009/10 for LM take the initiative. Meeting penned for July. He had confirmed that there was no scope for improved VT services for many years to come. It was noted some freight services operated in peak, delaying slow line services.
ACTION: The chairman is to meet DfT and Mike Haigh of LM to discuss further.

9. Direction, Aims, Responsibilities and Strategies of MK Rail Users

Following exchanges regarding the role of MK Rail Users, it was unanimously agreed that the role of MK Rail Users is to press for improvements for MKC and BLY irrespective of the impact those changes may have on other areas like Northampton and Leighton Buzzard. Clearly, MK Rail Users would seek to share common ground where that exists.

10. Any Other Business

- a) Pocket Timetables had been re-introduced and this was welcomed. Idea of ticket size timetable to put in ticket wallet received via web felt not to be feasible.

ACTION: Philip to write to thank LM.

- b) A rail user has contacted Steve to ask MK Rail Users to request that LM include a table of Season Ticket prices on their web-site, which he has done. Philip contacted Rachel Webster to raise this matter with LM management. Steve also tried to contact the phone number given on the LM web-site for Season Ticket price information. In short the, voice-response system does not provide what we want. Philip has also raised this with Rachel.

ACTION: Philip to continue his contact with LM regarding this matter.

- c) LM MD Update covered Bletchley depot closure and staff transfer to Northampton and recent disruption.

- d) From December 2008 Southern to extend Watford – Clapham to be extended MKC - East Croydon. This was welcomed but it was regretted that Gatwick is not served in view of MKC business plans.

ACTION: Philip to write to Southern and DfT to welcome and pursue extension to Gatwick.

- e) Steve highlighted the fact that at present he is both creating and publishing content. For the web-site to be successful contributions are required from other committee members. As a start, Steve requested FAQ contributions WITH answers. Also, a new page will be added to the website to encourage travellers to send photos (taken on mobile phones) showing their travelling experience (both good and bad). Philip has written an article reflecting on his six months as Chair, which will appear on the site soon.

ACTION: - Committee to send in contributions.

11. Next Meeting: Tuesday 1/7/08 – 7.30pm MKC Station