

MK Rail Users
Minutes of Committee Meeting
6th January 2009

Present: Philip Lawton, Alan Francis, Chris Wright, Stuart Nightingale, Andrew Fisher, Steve Barker, Louise Green, Rupert Lodge, Lynne Button, Daniel Hopwood, Paul Bryan (London Midland), Youssef Cockbaine (London Midland)

Guests: Norman Dennis

Apologies for absence: Jim Middleton, Jill Hope

Not Present: Peter Smith

1. Welcome

Welcome to Youssef Cockbaine LM Stakeholder Relations Manager, prospective Committee members Lynne Button and Daniel Hopwood and guest Norman Dennis. Lynne & Dan were elected to the Committee, proposed by Steve and seconded by Andrew.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- a) Accepted
- b) Cyclist issue had arisen again with a complaint about our stance. Philip had provided full explanation but as actual complaint relates to Northampton, complainant was referred to NRUG. Key issue is safety of passengers
- c) New website launched and warmly welcomed. Site seen higher traffic level resulting in increased contact from public. Paul agreed to display posters (based on Cherwell Valley RUG version) when forwarded by Steve.
- d) 2009 AGM to be held at CentreCom on 15th October (22nd not available).

3. VT Off Peak Rules

Restrictions have been changed with the introduction of the new timetable. Off peak now only applies to trains arriving at Euston after 10:55. This has placed pressure on LM services. Issue has been referred to Passenger Focus.

4. London Midland Report

New timetable has seen some initial problems and LM issued public apologies. Station staff convey information as available. Problems arose from infrastructure problems, sickness levels, crewing issues, Xmas WCML closure and reduced service level. MKRUG had received copy of email from LM to Passenger focus explaining service breakdown.

MKRUG raised concerns over

- delays over new timetable availability
- overcrowding on 4 car sets on Xmas Eve
- Lack of information at Euston on train set lengths
- Xmas timetable information was very poor – late, no leaflets, staff unaware, website showed 2007 timetable. This was despite LM pledges to improve on 2007. MKRUG to inform Youssef of issues so he could follow up and LM could improve in 2009.
- Communication issues are a key problem -Andy Thomas is to attend next meeting
- VT off peak changes were causing overcrowding on related 4 car LM services- LM is reviewing options
- Season ticket holders compensation for poor performance is automatic on renewal. LM follow Passenger Charter and consider compensation –performance for 2008 is being collated. Can claim for each delay. Concern was expressed that annual and monthly seasons are dealt with differently. LM stated there is a set formula but Youssef would follow up if Andrew provides background. MKRUG consider customer awareness could be improved.
- Trent Valley Reservations were available for Birmingham and Crewe but it seemed Watford to MK had been given. Youssef to check rules.
- LM were holding an event on 29th January to commemorate completion of station upgrade and inviting a MKRUG representation. Philip and 3 others. Names for consideration to be put forward.

5. Response to Lynne Button by Steve Banaghan

This had been circulated to members and it was noted that it did not respond to each issue. Sight of Station risk assessments and need for accessibility policy to address disabled would be of interest. Recent events had highlighted the issues further – a driver unable to contact station staff, communication at stations, problem of deaf who cannot hear announcements. Philip would forward details of questions asked and answered received to Youssef to follow up.

6. Meetings Attended

No developments since last meeting. Alan will be attending Station Square workshop on the 4th February. Station Travel Plan, Alan reported that the survey results were on website and draft plan is due mid-January

7. Northampton RUG

Philip had attended their last meeting and had informed them of our work. He felt that there is scope for joint working and reported on inconsistent responses from Dft to each group.

8. Passenger Focus

Philip had been in contact on a number of issues

- Attendance at WCML Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) consultation
- Virgin off-peak restrictions
- Assistance to rail user groups who can apply for funds for surveys
- Role of LM Passenger Panel.

9. Bletchley

MKRUG had taken up with LM issues of the recent lack of gritting of car park and unlit lights and were pleased that these had been speedily addressed. It was also noted that some clocks displayed different times for which no solution was given by LM.

10. Delay / Repay

It is apparent that Delay / Repay system is not widely known amongst the public. Delay/Repay information and help was available at www.traindelays.co.uk which members may wish to explore. LM Forms need to be readily available and customers made aware of the system

11. Future Direction

Further discussion on the need for a MKRUG strategy and priorities with a lead member was undertaken. This would help identify the impact of MKRUG and be a performance/success measure. Topics focus on the customer experience -journey times (including fast trains), 2009 timetable, fares and refunds, reliability, VT franchise, overcrowding, station conditions, RUS, connectivity (eg North and Watford), AGM, publicity, consumer survey, health and safety (inc special needs)

This will involve identifying skills of members, networking, campaigning, website and publicity and a need to consider membership issue

Rupert agreed to peruse the LM Franchise Agreement

Chris would try to draft a Strategy Plan and offered to act as Membership Sec, accepted.

Louise offered to help form a customer focus group and Rupert also offered help

12. Website

New website launched and Steve with assistance from a 'trained' Philip to bring it up to speed. Blogs will be a helpful development and press news updates. Articles still awaited from Chris, E-W, Andrew, summary of relevant Rail press articles and Rupert, report on performance and current issues. In addition Andrew has information on fares.

13. A.O.B

Skills survey of committee to be undertaken – Committee to inform Chris of background and skills.

Membership fees are due

14. Next Meeting: Tuesday 03/02/09 – 7.30pm MKC Station