

Alnmouth Rail User Group

MINUTES OF AGM and Public Meeting held at St James's Church Centre, Alnwick, Northumberland On Thursday 10th June 2010

The meeting was chaired by Murray Davies. Invited attendees were Sir Alan Beith, MP, Neal Smith (East Coast) and Erika Allen (Northern Rail). Committee members present were: Kirsten Wolff (KW), Mel Whewell (MW), Arthur Leewis (AL) and Jean Barr (JB).

AGENDA ITEM

PART 1: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1 Introduction and Welcome

MD opened the meeting by welcoming those present and thanking them for their support during the past year.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Charlene Kane (East Coast), Ian Brown, Paddy Conway, Roger Jermy, Chris Dobson, Vera Murphy, Marge Bolton and Gill Edwards

3 Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2009 had been posted on the website and were taken as read.

4 Chairman's Report

MD presented his report outlining some of the work undertaken by ARUG volunteers over the past year. A lot of time had been spent on the 2011 timetable including attendance at several stakeholder meetings where we fed into the process and also liaised with Sir Alan Beith on this.

Following pressure from ARUG, when a ticket is not available at Alnmouth, it is now possible to buy a Xcountry reduced price ticket at the barriers in Newcastle where previous only the higher priced ticket was available.

Following severe disruption caused by occasional cancellation of the 7.47am service, KW followed this through with Xcountry. When the 7.47 has been cancelled since, Xcountry have put an additional stop on the next train at 8.10.

We attended an Access for All meeting. There are plans to introduce lifts to the northbound platform.

5 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer presented his report. After paying for the hire of the hall, there is £170.64 in the kitty. There has been little movement during the year. Meetings attended were at our commuter destinations in Edinburgh or Newcastle so no additional cost was involved. There are no plans to ask members for further subscriptions at present – MD is considering fundraising as an alternative.

6 Election of ARUG Volunteers

No new nominations had been received for the committee. The serving volunteers were re-elected en bloc:

Chair: Murray Davies, Vice-Chair: Ian Brown

Treasurer: Arthur Leewis, Webmaster: Kirsten Wolff, Secretary: Jean Barr

Committee: Peter Groves, Mel Whewell, Paddy Conway

1 PART 2:

Sir Alan Beith, Neal Smith and Erika Allen joined the meeting at this point.

2 Current Timetable

MD noted that the 20.58 north from Newcastle had been dropped from the latest timetable – this train now terminates at Newcastle. XCountry had been asked to comment on this and whether it is temporary or permanent. MD to chase for a reply.

Neal Smith was questioned about the gap in the morning timetable for trains to Newcastle - 4 trains

between 7.03 and 7.47 then none until 8.56 - this will be looked at in the 2011 review.

Peter Hignett (PH) voiced his request for a return train from Edinburgh to Alnmouth during the Edinburgh Fringe and Festival – to fit in with events. NS agreed to take this back with him and respond. Ian Atherton (IA) congratulated East Coast on their provision of extra trains during the Rugby International with good value tickets.

NS

Northern timetable error (1801 arrival from Newcastle showing as a Berwick rather than Alnmouth stop). **Update since meeting –**

The error was noticed immediately after the timetables were printed and distributed and the Northern commercial team produced information posters, which were sent to Alnmouth and Newcastle (these are definitely in place.) There is no error in the timetable posters or A-Z posters. Northern do not plan to reprint for a single error as this would incur a significant cost.

3

May 2011 Timetable

NS reported on the substantial changes to the 2011 Draft Timetable. He thanked Sir Alan Beith and ARUG for their strong support and feedback during the past year. He noted that Alnmouth's response to the Eureka Roadshow in January had been exceptional. Constructive talks had taken place between EC Chairman and Sir Alan. One result is the addition of a southbound weekday train leaving Berwick at 5.59, Alnmouth at 6.20, Morpeth at 6.36, Newcastle at 6.52, arriving London 9.59. Additionally, there is to be an Express train departing Edinburgh around 5.30, Newcastle at 7.01 and arriving London at 9.40. The timing would allow Alnmouth users to change at Newcastle and get into London for 9.40. A weekday evening train from London would leave London at 19.30, arriving Newcastle approximately 22.45 and Alnmouth at 23.12.

Other notes on the 2011 timetable:

XCcountry will have a service at 16.39 from Newcastle which will stop at Alnmouth, relieving the anxiety of Alnmouth Users over the loss of the East Coast 16.32 departure.

A 13.30 train from London is not possible. There are direct trains from London at 1130 and 1530 and a change of trains at Newcastle is possible on the 1300 departure from London .

Timetablers still working on weekend timetables but this will not hold up publication of weekday timetable. After publication, East Coast to meet with ARUG and other stakeholders to discuss. NS to keep ARUG advised of progress and future consultation meetings.

NS

Martin Murphy (MM) asked for information on southbound problem of providing two trains every two hours (rather than one train per hour). NS to respond to MM.

NS

NS was thanked for his comprehensive and informative summary of the Draft Timetable amendments.

EA advised that Northern Rail would hold a Stakeholders consultation meeting on 26th July at Centre for Life. Their timetable plans have to wait until mainline services are resolved. The local services to Chathill will still continue, though times may change from current to fit around the revised express train times. EA to ensure ARUG are invited.

EA

4

Alnmouth Station and Car Park

Matters Discussed:

- a) Latest estimate for the new Car Park being available is late August – this would help disabled access which is still causing difficulties.
- b) Opening Hours – an extra hour or so at night was suggested to cover later trains and again assist with disabled access. EA to investigate feasibility
- c) Electronic customer Information System requested. EA to investigate feasibility and funding provision.
- d) Ticket Machine discussed - to enable passengers to pick up tickets bought on-line and to buy tickets when staff are busy. EA to investigate feasibility
- e) Currently we cannot buy an advance ticket until after 9 am – why? EA to discuss with staff and ARUG.
- f) Are there plans to improve / extend the station? EA to investigate feasibility and funding provision. Note there is a commitment for all Northern stations to be repainted during the length of the franchise.
- g) During January cold spell, platforms often untreated. (Gritters could not access Alnmouth because of

the weather!)

h) No-smoking areas extend to the Platform. OK to smoke in Car Park.

EA agreed to take points b), c), d), e), f) back to Northern and respond where relevant but explained that there were technical and financial reasons why Northern could not provide an electronic information system or ticket machines. .

EA

Updates since meeting

c) & f) There is currently an NSIP tranche 2 scheme for Alnmouth, which is looking at replacing the current waiting shelter on the North bound platform, provision of CIS screens and CCTV. However, with the current spending review by the new coalition government, this tranche is currently on hold. Indicative estimates to provide a brick built waiting shelter and larger ticket office are £150k and £250k respectively.

d) There is a technical problem due to incompatibility between the ticket vending machines (used to collect /purchase tickets) and the ticket machines in Northern ticket offices. The ticket machines in the Northern ticket offices can not link to the database with tickets purchased via the internet. It is really about not making customers even more frustrated if there is a machine problem (both during and out of office hours) and being seen to offer an "unreliable" service.

5 **Friends of Alnmouth Station**

Elizabeth Jones (EJ) of Friends of Alnmouth Station reported to the meeting on their plans. The intention is to enhance the appearance of the station and they will start with introducing, filling and maintaining plant containers. Further involvements depends on funding - funds needed for materials and for insurance. (Could Northern help here? – EA to add this to her list.)

6 **Service Reliability and Additional Stop Notices**

NS explained that there was really no possibility of additional stop notices being reintroduced. East Coast working with Network Rail on devising a performance improvement plan.

7 **Fares**

Inconsistency of fares discussed – tickets bought on-line, by advance booking or manually issued. NS explained the reasoning behind fare prices. They try to encourage a spread of passengers so there is a price disincentive to encourage passengers to travel on different trains. EC have launched several new offers.

8 **Other Business**

EA announced the appointment of a new Northern Stations Manager – Paul Henry will take up post on 12th July

The meeting closed at 9.30pm. No date was set for the next meeting.