

**RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY LTD**  
**Unapproved minutes of the 9<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Held at the Town Hall, Durham City on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

**Present, apologies for absence and proxy votes received:** See appendices.

*The AGM was sponsored by ‘Business Durham’, the organisation charged with bringing new investment into County Durham.*



## **MORNING SESSION**

### **1. CHAIRMAN’S WELCOME**

The Chairman, Dr David Berman, opened the AGM. He introduced Ms Fiona Hall, MEP, who, in the unavoidable absence of the Mayor, welcomed delegates and guests to Durham.

### **2. Ms FIONA HALL, MEP**

In her address Ms Hall referred briefly to the North East’s immense railway history. She emphasised, however, that it was the future that mattered and congratulated Railfuture on securing Andy Rogers, Project Manager of Hitachi’s Inter-City Express Programme, as one of the keynote speakers for the day. Ms Hall told delegates that there had been tremendous competition from across Britain to secure the contract to build the new trains. She claimed it had only been through close cooperation among local politicians and the tenacity of Durham County Council that had persuaded Hitachi to come to Newton Aycliffe.

Dr Berman now handed the chairing of the meeting to Peter Wood, a former chairman of North East Branch and currently a member of the Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority.

### **3. GUEST SPEAKERS**

Peter introduced the first of the three keynote speakers, Alex Nelson, Station Master at Chester-le-Street. Alex’s address was entitled: “**The Chester-le-Track story**”.

(a) Alex claimed that basically Train Companies (TOCs) do not tell customers the most economic way to travel. It was this factor that had been the chief driver for establishing his Chester-le-Track project ten years ago. He had set up his administrative centre and booking office within the previously derelict buildings at Chester-le-Street Station (located on the ECML between Durham and Newcastle). With a series of striking examples (some quite bizarre) Alex showed how complicated the present fare structure has become. “Even railway booking staff could not always understand it,” he said.

Chester-le-Track now employs seven people with a second booking centre recently opened at Eaglescliffe Station near Darlington.

The second keynote address was provided by Dennis Fancett, Chairman of the South East Northumberland Rail User Group (SENUG). It was entitled: “**Ashington, Blyth and Tyne – campaign for a passenger service**”.

(b) Dennis emphasised that SENRUG was NOT a nostalgia group. Founded in 2004 it had from the outset engaged with the community and had been pro-active in helping influence the pattern of train services on the ECML through Northumberland. But the development of its campaign to have a passenger service reinstated over the present freight-only route from Newcastle to Ashington was now its primary focus. After describing the route, Dennis emphasised that essentially the business case for a passenger service rested on getting people to and from work and reducing traffic congestion. Dennis observed that if congestion charging were introduced in Newcastle then the financial advantages of the rail service would be greatly enhanced. He also noted that recently £6m had been spent on creating one new roundabout in the area. Conversely £20m would be sufficient to pay for the revamping of fifteen miles of railway!

SENRUG believed that the money was now available to finance a GRIP 3 assessment by Network Rail. He expressed optimism about the likelihood of his vision being realised.

The third keynote address was delivered by Andrew (Andy) Rogers, Project Manager, Hitachi Trains Ltd. It was entitled: **‘Inter-City Express Programme (IEP)’**.

(c) Andy described the current sphere of the Hitachi operation in GB. This included working in tandem with Network Rail on Crossrail and the introduction and maintenance of the 395 ‘Javelin’ fleet. He briefly described the ‘supply chain’ for the Javelin project which had been delivered exactly on time.

IEP – a partnership between DfT and Agility Trains with the latter charged with introducing the new rolling stock and depots. Hitachi responsible for the main delivery of the project which involved 359 vehicles for Great Western Main Line (2017/18) and 287 vehicles for East Coast (post 2018). Mix of electrics and bi-modes: five-car sets would provide 350 seats, ten-car sets 627 seats.

Anticipated IEP will provide increased speeds, larger capacity, better reliability and improved energy performance than existing fleets. Top speed 125mph, but with a built in capability of 140mph for utilisation at a future point.

The trains will be equipped with ‘state of the art’ electrical ‘mod cons’ (wi-fi etc.), catering facilities, bike storage and a “driver only” capability if required. Energy monitoring features also included. There will be flexibility over the interior layout of carriages. Hitachi well aware of issues around, for example, luggage space, legroom and access for disabled people. Wooden mock-ups of the interiors will be available by Autumn 2013.

Now in process of selecting suppliers in Continental Europe and in UK. Some contracts already signed with a significant proportion of work to be sourced in the North East.

The Newton Aycliffe factory will not only assemble and ‘support’ IEP, but will in time compete for train building contracts in Europe. Expects to turn out twenty-five IEP carriages per month, could be ‘upped’ to 35 per month if necessary. Estimated that 720 new jobs will be created with an emphasis on training up groups of young apprentices. Production at Newton Aycliffe to start late 2015. The first train for testing will actually be built in Japan and is due to arrive in GB in Spring 2015. Depots will be created (for Great Western) at North Pole, Bristol and Swansea, and (for East Coast) at Doncaster and Aycliffe.

After a short question session Peter Wood adjourned the meeting for the lunch break.

## AFTERNOON SESSION –ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### 1. WELCOME

The Chairman, Dr David Berman, briefly welcomed those present. He then called on Peter Wakefield to pay tribute to Clara Zilahi, a long-standing member of the East Anglia Branch and a former Director of the society, who had died since the 2012 AGM. A minute's silence was observed. Clara was described as "a railway devotee par excellence" and as a tireless campaigner on behalf of cyclists.

### 2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the 2012 AGM had been circulated in advance to members. Roger Blake proposed and Ben Walsh seconded their acceptance. Agreed.

### 3. MATTERS ARISING

- a) Item 11 (a). Resolution concerning numbers of rail front line staff at customer interfaces. Letters had been sent to Secretary of State and her shadow, relevant Vice-Presidents, ATOC, TOCs and Unions, but no replies received.
- b) Item 11 (b). Emergency resolution concerning industrial dispute at EMT. Acknowledgement received from ASLEF, but nothing from EMT.
- c) Re paragraph 12, Chairman's report. Ref increasing membership and changing age profile. Number of on-line applications had increased, but marginal progress in recruiting more young people. Whilst the range of benefits of joining Railfuture were not always apparent, the modest subscription of £21 represented great value for money. [*Post AGM Note: The National Board introduced a voluntary discount to the subscription of £18 for new and existing members from 1 January 2014 – see [www.railfuture.org.uk/join](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/join)*] Attention was drawn to experimental offer to members of Friends of Settle & Carlisle Line whereby for £9 per annum individuals could become a 'supporter' of Railfuture, a status that offered receipt of *Railwatch* and an invitation to attend both local and national meetings. Use of Twitter, YouTube and 'targeted' literature (e.g. in libraries) should be considered in trying to establish better rapport with the under 40s. Railfuture needed a more proactive approach to the 'classic' media outlets and to this end a better-organised network of media reps was required. Perhaps more publicity should be given to the various papers we prepared in response to national consultations? Dennis Fancett, one of the morning's keynote speakers, gave an example of how a press report engineered by SENRUG and which appeared in a NE regional paper had caused DfT to postpone introduction of revised timetable for ECML by six months, and subsequently to incorporate improved train stopping patterns at principal stations in Northumberland. Mr Fancett had, incidentally, concluded that Transport Scotland, was more actively interested in train services in Northumberland than was the London-based DfT!
- d) Re paragraph 12, Chairman's report. Ref need for changes in the Railfuture (national) structure and governance, and need for greater transparency. Asked to comment on progress made in last twelve months, Chairman advised that the national 'committees' had become 'groups' as part of a 'streamlining' process whilst both he and the Vice-Chairman had begun to publish details of their expenses. [*Post AGM Note: All Directors will publish their expenses on-line from 1 January 2014 – see [www.railfuture.org.uk/expenses](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/expenses)*] Plea for members to contact Chairman directly with their thoughts about organisational structure etc.
- e) Re Item 3(c) – Simon Norton's paper on integrated transport. This had long since been passed to CBT, but to date no formal response received. Could the document be passed

to other organisations, Bus Users UK for instance? Chairman considering possibility of trying to establish a national transport forum. His thoughts at a very early stage however.

#### 4. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS – CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

Christian first considered how the railway was making out, and then how Railfuture was performing.

The railway – he recounted the railway scenario of twenty years ago when national government was asking if it was actually worth investing in the industry. In fact, Christian claimed that privatisation had really been about how to get rid of the railways. Situation today totally different: none of the political parties at Westminster are opposing railways and now recognised that they are a key part of our economy. This represents a big sea-change, and Railfuture has to play its part in sustaining the new era.

But Christian warned of three pitfalls he could foresee:

- a) Franchising – following the collapse of the franchising programme post the WCML debacle, DfT now negotiating extensions with single companies. This would mean delays to investment decisions, and would also result in significant cash shortfalls for DfT since much of the anticipated premium money won't materialise. This in turn will impact on finance available in CP5 and may lead to cancellation of some planned projects. Beware McNulty recommendations being used to justify some of these cancellations.
- b) Fares – RPI + 3% probably now a dead duck – achievements of rail users in thwarting this favoured formula to be welcomed. Role of former Secretary of State Philip Hammond in relation to fare policies had not been helpful.
- c) The Network Rail debt. This now stands at £25b (plus interest payments) and is not sustainable. Christian believes the matter must be addressed soon. Likely to be painful exercise for the industry.

Now Christian turned to Railfuture. He commended David Berman and Jerry Alderson for their efforts to reform the organisation.

He referred to Railfuture's move over the last two years from 'restoring' railways to 'building' railways – to ensure their growth and their greater accessibility, as opposed to recreating the 'Agatha Christie' railway. He emphasised need to choose winnable campaigns such as Ashington, Blyth. "If you achieve the achievable, the unachievable might happen" he commented. He urged Railfuture to embrace Twitter: in his view every Rf Branch should have an official 'tweeter'.

Christian concluded with the news that he was going to attempt to get himself adopted as the Labour candidate for Mayor of London in 2016 election.

Question subjects raised with précis of Christian's replies:

- a) Fares – distinguish RPI from CPI. [CPI is measure of inflation without taking into account housing costs such as mortgage payments and is applied to calculate increases in most pensions and benefits. RPI includes housing costs and is used by Government to calculate fare increases. CPI is generally 1% lower than RPI]
- b) Reopenings – the economic benefits of new train services should be emphasised.

- c) HS2 – in itself a good idea, but the danger of worsening services on ‘classic’ routes must be addressed and dealt with. Issue of cities not going to be served by HS2 – was the Minister minded to include more stops on HS2?
- d) Complexity of the fares structure. Present set-up was quite socially discriminatory in that it excluded those people who did not know how to ‘work’ the system. Ticket sellers should be obligated to advise the cheapest possible journey option. Need for Railfuture to flag up the most bizarre fare anomalies and communicate these in a coordinated manner to the TOCs for their attention. Evident some TOCs not aware of specific anomalies on their ‘patch’. Plight of people who found themselves with the ‘wrong’ ticket on the ‘wrong’ train and who then faced huge penalty fares. Noted that some fare rates become more incomprehensible when journeys traverse routes covered by more than one TOC. Would the German approach (single fares half of the equivalent return) work here? [*Post AGM Note: See new Rail User Help page – [www.railfuture.org.uk/rail+user+help](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/rail+user+help)*]

## 5. ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(a) Annual Report - As this had been circulated in advance Dr Berman said he did not propose to read it out. But he did note that this was the first year in which Branches had contributed their own Annual Reviews to form part of the Chairman’s document. Proposed by Ben Walsh that the report be adopted. Agreed.

(b) Financial statement and reports - Presented by Jerry Alderson (Finance Director) in absence of the Finance Officer, David Harby.

Details of Chairman’s and Vice Chairman’s travel expenses published this year for first time together with details of venue costs for national events. [*Post AGM Note: All Directors will publish their expenses on-line from 1 January 2014 – see [www.railfuture.org.uk/expenses](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/expenses)*] Railfuture did not make a profit as such – this year’s financial surplus mostly from legacies, raffle receipts and Tesco dividends. Subscription income barely covers essential outlays. Tight financial monitoring therefore crucial. Noted that the ‘pay pal’ facility seemed to have been successful in getting some people to act on impulse and sign up. Increased postal charges were now impacting.

Jerry explained that any legacies were automatically allotted to the ‘Fighting Fund’ unless wills contained specific requests. He urged Branches to make more use of this fund.

Issues raised in questions included the possibility of making more use of email, creation of a credit/debit card payment facility and clarification of “stocks” in the accounts – this supplied.

H Trevor Jones proposed, and Keith Dyall seconded, a motion that the Annual Financial Report be accepted. Agreed nem con.

## 6. REPORTING ACCOUNTANT’S REPORT

The Reporting Accountant, Tony Sheward, referred the meeting to his written comments at page 5 of the Annual Report and Financial Statements. He advised that the accounts had been drawn up in a manner consistent with the requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006.

The Chairman proposed and the Vice Chairman seconded the appointment of Tony Sheward as Reporting Accountant for 2013/14. Agreed nem con.

## 7. ELECTIONS

Chris Precey presided for this item.

Since there had been no other nominations for post of Chairman, Dr David Berman was unopposed and duly declared elected.

Directors: six nominations for four vacancies. 368 valid voting papers had been received and three others had been ‘spoilt’.

To serve for three years:

Allison Cosgrove	235 votes
Roger Blake	228 votes
Chris Hyomes	207 votes

To serve for one year:

Andrew Millward	196 votes
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Ian McDonald received 188 votes and was not elected.

A sixth candidate had been disqualified.

## 8. APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENTS

(a) By acclamation Christian Wolmar was re-appointed as President.

(b) All existing Vice-Presidents were re-appointed, again by acclamation.

## 9. MEMBERSHIP TRENDS POST 1993

A presentation by Jerry Alderson.

Salient points:

- a) Vital to recruit more women and young people.
- b) Membership had peaked in 1999 at 3500: by 2013 had fallen to just over 2000: small upward trend noted in 2005 when Railfuture had employed an administrator for six months.
- c) Loss of members had been running at approx. 100 per annum, though the size of loss had been reduced over past two years.
- d) Advertising in *Modern Railways* had proved disappointing – *Rail* magazine more productive.
- e) Evidence that new people recruited since 2005 only staying on average for three or four years after initial enrolment. Should recruitment be led by the Branches rather than via ‘national’ efforts?
- f) Some members surveyed had suggested Railfuture should major more on “big” issues such as climate change and air quality.
- g) Railfuture must become more radical if it is to attract new members. For instance, could Railfuture do deals with the TOCs to pass on to members? And maybe Railfuture should consider recruiting jointly with other organisations such as Bus Users UK?

## 10. RESOLUTION

Keith Dyall and Norman Bradbury proposed that Stewart Palmer (former managing director of SWT) and Alan Williams (columnist in *Modern Railways*) be appointed as Vice Presidents – both had agreed to serve if appointed. Carried unanimously.

Mike Crowhurst suggested that Dan Snow (journalist) and Philip Benyon, MEP be considered for the future. Jerry Alderson asked that more women be invited to become VPs.

## 11. CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF THE AGM AND LOOKING FORWARD TO THE YEAR AHEAD

Dr Berman confirmed that further reorganisation of Railfuture will ensue. He foresaw that the ORR determination on Network Rail's proposals for the CP commencing 2014 and the progressing of the HS2 project would be among the major features that would exercise Railfuture during the coming year. He asked members to try to offer more help to the national officers and to the various Railfuture national work groups.

He thanked everyone for their attendance at this conference and issued a reminder about the event at Taunton on 22 June and the Rail Users Conference at Oxford on 2 November. The 2014 AGM would be on 10 May at the Quaker Meeting House, Sheffield.

The meeting closed at 16.10

*(Notes compiled by Peter Walker and Tony Walker of Rf North East and others)*

APPENDIX 1

Present: 67

Also Attended: 25

APPENDIX 2

Apologies for absence: 155

APPENDIX 3

Proxy votes registered: 122

Proxy Votes cast: To accept the Annual Report – For 114, Against 3, Abstentions 5. To appoint a Reporting Accountant – For 114, Against 3, Abstentions 5. Chairman to vote on motions at his discretion - Yes 74, No 4, Another member 1, Abstentions 43.

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