

## Minutes of the ABFLY Members' Meeting and AGM

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2016, 7:30pm

Held at the St Stephen Parish Centre, Bricket Wood

### **Present:**

David Horton (Chair), Trevor Gurd, Robin White, John Burke, Kevin Ambrose, David Charlton, Cllr. Nicholas Tyndale, Laveen Ladharam, Sanjay Kulkarni, Mike Chandler, Robert Yorke, Robert & Iola Bilson, George & Caroline Wheatcroft, David Parry, Nichola Routledge, Nick Horscroft, John Hyde, Ian LaRiviere, Paul Humphrey, Mike Webb

### **Apologies:**

Tim Holman, John Cadisch, Frank Guest, Richard Haywood, Roz Devlin, Kate Simmons, Nick Dodd, John Lepley, Robin Hall

### **London Midland (LM) report – by Steve Helfet (SH), Head of West Coast Services**

- Performance on West Coast Mainline (WCML) gets hit by big incidents.
- There is good strong working relationship between LM, Network Rail (NR) and Siemens (train maintainers).
- WCML Public Performance Measure (PPM) average is c. 85% but 'lumpy'.
- Abbey Line PPM average is c. 95-97% but again not totally consistent – hit low of 87.3% in autumn 2015 (leaf fall season and issues with class 319 rolling stock) but hit high of 99.8% in latest period.
- Passenger numbers – 335k to 373k (11% growth) in last year.
- Direct Award contract (DA) includes benefits for Abbey Line:
  - extra funding for Community Rail Partnership (CRP)
  - additional late evening Abbey Line service from Dec 2016 (Mon-Sat 2220 ex WJ and 2243 ex SAA, Sun 2304 ex WJ and 2326 ex SAA)
  - new card-only Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) at all stations – but enabled for contactless payment
  - new performance regimes and financial incentives for customer satisfaction.
- Other DA improvements include free wifi on Class 350s, more standby and customer service staff based at Euston and Northampton to tackle delays, more cleaners.

## **Q&A for Steve Helfet**

- Q: Could the connectional policy be further 'flexed'. A: Will ask the question but it's always a trade-off between benefiting one set of customers at the expense of another.
- Q: Can we have a commitment that introduction of ticket machines at stations will not mean reduction of on-train staff? A: There is no known plan to reduce staff and there should not be, but will take it away to confirm.
- Q: What are the plans to extend the service into the evening? A: Extra evening train from Dec 2016 (see above) but future extensions will be a matter for the next franchise.
- Q: Can first train be re-timed to leaf fall schedules so that connections to cheaper Euston service can be made? And can the information on Customer Information System (CIS) be made more useful? A: Will take away the suggestion and also the feedback about CIS. The CIS is an area where we are already discussing what could be done with NR.
- Q: Glad to hear current ticket inspector is being retained – “she is the best thing you have going!”. But can guards be made to inspect tickets too? A: Senior conductors should be checking tickets through the day, although the design of the train doesn't make it easy for them to get through consistently. They are always available to assist customers where required.
- Q: Can the 2 or 3 peak hour terminating services at Watford Junction be extended to St Albans Abbey? A: Not easily, many factors including 8-Car train length and that currently the class 350 rolling stock is not permitted to operate on the Abbey Line. Not sure whether anyone's looked at operating an 8-Car service on the Abbey Line in recent history. Personal view – with no supporting evidence - is that through-running could make the Abbey Line less reliable as well, so this approach may not be desirable anyway.
- Q: Could Sunday service be made into weekday service for the two special events (cycling and station-to-station) A: Probably too late now, but these things can be better planned in future when new CRP Officer is appointed.

## **CRP / Herts County Council (HCC) report - Trevor Mason, Team Leader – Rail Strategy and Liason**

- Janet Tyndale ex-CRP Officer left in December.
- Hosting moving from HCC to new host – new host now in place, to be announced shortly.
- In the meantime work has continued.....
- CCTV installed at Garston.
- Mini-timetables being printed.

- Two initial funding bids have unfortunately been unsuccessful – Bricket Wood Station restoration and Harry Potter marketing (810k people p.a. catch shuttle bus at WJ to go to Warner Bros Studio Tour – could they be encouraged to spend second half of their day in ‘historic St Albans’, taking Abbey Line to get there?).
- CRP responded to WCML franchise – official CRP / HCC and ABFLY responses were very well aligned.
- CRP/ABFLY-commissioned survey showed a demand for higher frequency service – this was fed into the DfT consultation response.
- Station-to-Station Queen’s Celebration event taking place on 12<sup>th</sup> June – cakes, stands, band, model railway, ABFLY will be invited to have a stand.
- Sustainable Travel Transition Year (STTY) bid submitted for a dedicated shuttle bus service between St Albans Abbey station – City Centre – Thameslink station, awaiting results.
- Finalised Rail Strategy – main outcome of Summer 2015 consultation is re-statement of the desire to see frequency increase through rail-based solution including passing loop. Note: about 50% of responses to consultation were about Abbey Line. The Rail Strategy is intended to be a statement about short to medium aspirations for rail services in Herts.
- “Transport Vision” – separate document looking at transport needs and interventions long-term (2050). Consultation out this summer.

**Q&A to Trevor Mason:**

- Q: What has happened to proposed Crossrail-WCML link? A: All has gone quiet on that, though there is provision for it in HS2 bill currently going through House of Lords, but not being actively promoted (this link was not a ‘Herts’ project).
- Q: Is restoring the link between Abbey and City station being pursued? A: Not a current scheme, but on the ‘Long List’ of schemes for Transport Vision.

### **AGM actions / outcomes**

1. Dave Horton elected as Chairman (unanimously approved)
2. Roz Devlin elected as Treasurer (unanimously approved)
3. Robin White elected as Membership Secretary (unanimously approved)
4. Dave Horton formally thanked Tim Holman and Paul Ebbens for their efforts as Treasurer and Membership Secretary over the years.
5. Trevor Gurd elected as Vice-Chair (unanimously approved)
6. Financial statement circulated with no comments. Audited accounts to be prepared before Treasurer handover.

### **Open forum**

- ABFLY needs to attract and retain new members in order to be taken seriously as a campaign group.
- Can we do more to increase numbers and widen the demographic? Visits to schools and colleges?
- What does ABFLY offer in exchange for membership fee? Could it offer more e.g. social events?