

Alnmouth Rail User Group

MINUTES OF MEETING held at The White Swan Hotel, Alnwick, Northumberland On Thursday 18th June 2009

AGENDA ITEM

The meeting was chaired by Chris Dobson (CD). Committee members present were: Kirsten Wolff (KW), Murray Davies (MD) and Jean Barr (JB). There were no TOC Representatives present on this occasion

1 **Introduction and Welcome**

CD 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 members John Taylor, Ian Brown, Harry Chrisp, Paddy Conway, Roger Jermy, Andrea Brown and Peter Groves. TOC Representatives unable to attend and who tendered apologies: Stuart Henry (XCountry), Phil Cooke (Northern). Others who would have attended but stood down to await advice of a rescheduled Autumn/Winter meeting were: Tom Hanham (National Express) and Kerry Williamson (Passenger Focus)

3 **Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January had been posted on the website and were taken as read.

Rover Tickets:

Kerry Williamson (KW) of Passenger Focus had sent in her findings on the query from January re Tyne & Wear Rover Tickets. Northern had advised her that the best option was "Alnmouth Plus Bus, for the time being. Plus Bus is advertised on Northern's website and in timetables. The current Alnmouth Plus Bus fare is £2, 00, using Newcastle as an example, an Anytime Day Return fare from Newcastle to Alnmouth would cost £10.30 plus £2.00 for the Alnmouth Plus Bus add on for travel to Alnwick."

Discounted Annual Season Tickets:

KW had also been asked to investigate the fact that the Public Health Trust purchased travel tickets for staff at discounted prices. This did not apply to annual season tickets, for which they were considering adding an administration charge. The PHT advised that it was not Government Policy to discount annual season tickets. KW advised that she is still trying to get clarity on this point but will pursue it on our behalf.

Passenger
Focus

Other Action items from the January meeting had been assigned to the TOC representatives, none of whom were available for comment.

4 **Alnmouth for Alnwick**

Timetable:

Current future timetables were discussed. Liz Wood, representing the tourism trade in Alnwick, asked if anything could be done to provide a train between 8.56 and 11.05 am, going south on weekdays. As a regular traveller, she reported that the 11.05 was a very busy service, which she feels is a reflection of current train timings. There is a similar 2 hour gap in the afternoon, which she feels could be improved upon. Lack of flexibility in train times does not encourage travellers to leave their cars at home and to take the train.

Murray Davies (MD) requested that we chase up XCountry re the possibility of stopping another mid morning train at Alnmouth instead of the withdrawn ex 09.09. As an Edinburgh commuter, MD is aware that a southbound HST from Newcastle regularly waits for several minutes before departing.

Could this leave Edinburgh a few minutes early and have the stop reinstated at Alnmouth? MD noted that on Saturdays this HST does stop at Alnmouth.

MD also raised queries on the NXEC timetable from December 2009, which he believed would be a main revision. He requested assurances that the number of trains stopping would be roughly the same.

The meeting agreed that ARUG needed to ensure that the TOCs involved us in timetabling discussions. Murray Davies hoped to attend forthcoming stakeholder meetings.

ARUG

Car Parking at Alnmouth:

Martin Murphy (MM) updated the meeting on plans for the car park at Alnmouth. Failure to secure anticipated funding and change of local authority set-up had resulted in changes of plans. He assured members present that the project was to continue. Phase 1 had recommenced in the last few days and is now going ahead. Phase 2, was planned for Summer or early Autumn. The County Council are still looking for external funding and are making applications. They are committed to providing the new car parking facilities - completion is likely to be early 2010. MM reported that he believed there was to be no charge for the car park.

Ticket Prices:

Ticket pricing was discussed and the possibility of ticket prices coming down if inflation goes down. National Express had reduced some fares – eg Alnmouth to Edinburgh price had gone down.

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Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report was presented to the meeting. Do we need to collect subscriptions for 2009-10? The meeting felt this would be advisable. There had been little usage over the past year because committee members had been unable to attend meetings. It was hoped to rectify this in coming months. An annual payment is made for the website.

ARUG

Website:

CD thanked Kirsten Wolff for her excellent work on setting up and maintaining the ARUG website.

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Election of ARUG Volunteers

Chris Dobson advised the meeting that, due to other commitments, he would be standing down as chairman. He was thanked for his work over the past year and prior to that. The following members were elected to ARUG committee:

Chair: Murray Davies

Vice-Chair: Ian Brown

Treasurer: Arthur Leewis

Webmaster: Kirsten Wolff

Secretary: Jean Barr

Committee:

Peter Groves

Mel Whewell

Paddy Conway

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Any Other Business

Future Meetings:

The possibility of rescheduling future meetings was discussed. ARUG committee should contact the TOCs to find out what would be the best time to hold meetings in order to influence them in their planning for the next year.

ARUG

Items for Agenda/ raising with TOCs:

ARUG

XCountry Trolley Service – Trolleys often packed away early and no food available on initial stages and/or final stages of journey. Credit cards not accepted. Often do not have change so will not accept notes.

Ticket Checking – Why do tickets often go unchecked – especially so on National Express.

Alnmouth Station – requires updating – particularly on north side where the shelter is inadequate

(Note: At this point, MM advised the meeting that the DfT's Access for All funding is still in the pipeline. This would deliver lifts on both sides, possibly a new footbridge, perhaps linked into the old booking office. Scheduled to be delivered 2012 – 2015 but could come a good bit before this.)

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Date of Next Meeting

To be arranged