

railfuture northeast

Minutes of committee Meeting 6pm Wednesday 29th January 2020.

Venue: Good Space, Floor 2, Commercial Union House, 39 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle NE1 6QE

Present: Keith Simpson (Chairman KS), Peter Walker (PW), Dave Shaw (DS), Dennis Fancett (DF), Damian Bell (DB), Trevor Watson (TW), Tony Walker (AW), Ian Walker (IW -note taker)

Guest visitor, Alison Cosgrove from RF Scotland (AC).

- 1 Apologies** received from Martin Murphy & Peter Wood
- 2 Notes of previous meeting** (Wednesday 6th November 2019)
These had been previously circulated and were agreed.

3 Matters arising

i) There was much discussion over broadening the branch profile via the use of either 'Twitter' or 'Facebook' DS had done some work prior to the meeting looking at how other groups used twitter and their success (or otherwise) in terms of the number of followers that they had attracted. DS's detailed notes had been pre-circulated to Committee members.

He advised that **any** medium **must** be active and up to date. If we decided to use Twitter we must have useful things to say such as highlighting specific transport issues covered in the press. Or we might flag up interesting information coming in from the RUG's. Some form of over-riding editorial oversight felt to be desirable.

DF warned that things that appeared on Twitter might be taken as representing RFNE's (corporate) view. Also Twitter links to press articles could give the impression that RFNE was backing what the Press were saying when in fact the opposite might be the case. AC said RF Scotland had found Facebook more useful than Twitter.

DF felt there was an urgent need for RF to attract 'millenials' if it was to survive. Whether we used Facebook or Twitter our aim should always be to link the content back to the theme of joining RFNE and pointing to the relevant section of the web-site. But must be made clear that people do not become members of RFNE simply by following the Branch on Twitter or by 'liking' the Facebook page. Rather there has to be a definite signing up process to be completed.

It was requested that IW contact Jerry Alderson to confirm that there would be no objection to the Branch setting up a Facebook page. DS offered to assist in getting something under way on a 'test' basis.

ii) AW had previously advised the Chair that he was stepping down as Editor of the Branch Bulletin primarily due to pressure of time. (Latest edition had been published in December). AW was thanked for his work as Editor, as was DS for his assistance with photographs, and general design work. Agreed it was important the Branch maintained some sort of newsletter (probably on a smaller scale) so as to keep the membership informed of what was happening. DF circulated a four page newsletter (A4 size including photographs) from

SENRUG published four times per year. (Our current Bulletin had come out twice yearly).

Decided we should establish a sub-group which would consider what had been said at this meeting and then recommend a best way forward. (One idea mentioned was the possibility of establishing a sort of small co-operative of members who could share in the editing and production of possibly four newsletters/bulletins per year). Agreed that KS / DS / IW would meet and hopefully report back with their recommendations to next Committee meeting.

4. Branch matters

i) There will be no branch meeting before the AGM on 25th April. IW to follow up for meeting early June onwards. Stephen Hopkinson – Regional Director East at Northern was suggested as guest speaker.

ii) IW will get in touch with Adrian Shooter (the AGM speaker) to confirm details - presentation title etc.

iii) IW advised that following the AGM he wants to stand down as Secretary, certainly for a 12 month period, partially due to his current work situation. He would still assist were possible. All other committee members present indicated they were willing to continue in their present roles, though DF would be pleased if someone was prepared to take on job of media rep.

iv) The branch has agreed to attend the Model Rail exhibitions at N Shields in July and the Aln Valley event in September. Hoped enough people would come forward so that our reps would each only need to do one half day session (AM or PM). This was agreed and a rota will be put together in time for next Committee meeting.

v) Distribution of new RFNE leaflets to selected local stations confirmed. DF will bring more leaflets to next meeting.

vi) Recent meeting with XC's Stakeholder Liaison Manager Alex Bray. Though RF reps tried to move progress on making some changes to current XC services in the NE, Mr Bray emphatic that nothing could alter until either the current franchise was re-let or Williams allowed ad hoc modifications to be made. Brief discussion re relationship between Transport for the North and Transport for the North East! DF and KS spelt out their understanding of the respective roles.

vii) Date of next meeting is **Tuesday 17 March at Commercial Union House, Newcastle**. Note-taker to be PW. AC announced that RF Scotland AGM would be at Balloch on Saturday 18 April. Members of RFNE would be welcome to attend.

5 Freight on Metro

Email received prior to the meeting from Jeff Screeton, Managing Director of InterCity Freight, regarding possibility of light freight being transported on T & W Metro. It was thought he should be advised to contact North East Joint Transport Committee. **IW will reply accordingly.**

6 Rail in North East/Local Issues

(i) Concerns expressed about Network Rail attitudes to Northern aspirations both in the region (use of Stillington Line & associated paths) as well as across the Northern network. Some sympathy expressed for Northern in the fact that not all the issues were of their own making. Agreed that that the Operator of Last Resort was probably the most sensible option. Highlighted that improvement to connectivity through the region was probably more important

than more high speed services to the south. Realised that there are capacity issues on the ECML that need managing.

(ii) Brief updates from SLUG, Coastliners and SENRUG: plus mention of another new freight flow from Teesport to Doncaster.

Unfortunately lack of time meant we were unable to deal with remaining items. Meeting terminated at 8pm prompt.