

MID-CHESHIRE RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION
MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on THURSDAY 17TH JULY 2008
in the TATTON ROOM, KNUTSFORD CIVIC CENTRE at 7.45pm

1. Notice convening the meeting.

The meeting opened at 19.47 with the secretary reading the notice convening the meeting. As well as the formal notice in the spring *Rail Report* No.74, the details of the meeting were included on the MCRUA website.

There were 24 persons present; all members.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Capt. Peter Frier and Mrs. Frier, Mr John Hill, Mrs Elaine Sancto, Mr Ian Lowe, Mr John Hulme, Mr Dave Roberts and Mr Roger Parkin.

3. Approval of the minutes of the 2007 AGM.

The minutes of the 2007 Annual General Meeting were approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters arising from the 2007 minutes.

No items were raised.

5. Chairman's report.

John Oates said the last 12 months were a time of consolidation and laying foundations for the future. He listed the following highlights:

- The Association's finances are now in a healthier state.
- He was pleased that Arthur Sancto, who had been inactive for much of the year through illness, was now recovered. He noted Arthur had decided to resign as secretary, but retain his website duties. He thanked him for his hard work. Harry Boardman had agreed to take over.
- Membership had increased, now being its highest ever at over 650.
- Thanks were given to John Hulme for all his hard work and professional knowledge he put in to make the steam train and Cheshire Year of the Garden such a success, as well as Mark Willcox.
- The May railtour to Minehead had been a success and it was a tribute to MCRUA that it had been able to be involved with the steam trains and a railtour with 6 days of each other.
- The Middlewich Campaign had been successfully relaunched with Stephen Dent as secretary of the reformed Steering Group.
- A successful programme of music trains had been started by Mike Ross.
- We had developed a closer relationship with the MCCR. Phill Banford of Vale Royal BC is now chairman and John Oates has accepted the invitation to be vice-chairman.
- One problem area was keeping CRP station notice boards up to date, since the Community Rail Officer had insufficient time to do this. Members are invited to help with their regular updating.
- Train performance was now good. However, the organisation of replacement 'bus services is in need of further improvement.
- For the future, the December 2008 timetabled terminations at Stockport is a major concern. We are working with Northern, Passenger Focus and GMPTE on this issue.

- Roy Beacham has collated our passenger counts. This has been invaluable in making representations to Department for Transport. Our evidence has also encouraged Northern to put more resources into revenue protection
- *Rail* magazine recently published a letter from the chairman about the local effects of the December 2008 timetable. There were many letters in *Knutsford Guardian*, *Northwich Guardian* regarding the train service from different individuals.
- As well as the special 20th *Anniversary Newsletter*, two other *Rail Reports* had been published this year. Thanks were given to Andrew Macfarlane, Malcolm Roughley and John Hulme for these.
- Patronage on mid-Cheshire continuing to rise, up 14% in the last year. The peak trains are full and off-peak relative to full peak loading is probably the highest in the area.

6. Treasurer's Report

John Hanson presented the audited accounts.

Tim Wood asked whether saving could be made by e-mailing the *Rail Report*. John Hanson replied that this was under consideration; influencers are already being circulated this way. A poll in the room confirmed 14 people were happy to receive their *Rail Report* this way.

John Legg questioned whether we received a refund for the Cardiff trip. John Hanson replied that we had received £2,000 in respect of the Network Rail problems and after giving a discount to those Cardiff passengers who joined the Minehead trip, the balance of £1,226 was added to the Cardiff result.

7. Adoption of Accounts for the Year to 29 February 2008.

This was proposed David Miller, seconded John Legg and carried without any objections.

8. Subscription rates.

John Hanson explained the proposal to increase these as follows:

Single membership from £5.00 at present to £6.00

Family membership from £7.00 at present to £8.00

If carried the new rates would be effective from 31st March 2009.

John Allen suggested that at a time of rising personal costs that it was not appropriate to raise subscriptions. John Hanson replied that large outlays like the initial financing of the Railtour and our contribution to the MCCRCP leave us low in funds. We need to ensure MCRUA is properly funded to meet all its obligations as they arise.

Tim Wood asked how these rates compare with other groups. John Hanson replied he had surveyed three similar local ones and we were in the middle.

Andrew Macfarlane commented that as our CRP payment was going down plus we may be sending the *Rail Report* by e-mail, then costs were reducing.

With no further points raised, Harry Boardman proposed adoption of the revised subscriptions, Tim Wood seconded and the proposal was carried 20 in favour, 4 against.

9. Other Officers Reports (Secretary, Membership Secretary)

Arthur Sancto, Secretary reported as follows:

- He reiterated what had been written in the last *Rail Report* that he had been unwell with heart trouble for a significant part of the last year which had limited his activities for MCRUA. He thanked everyone for their good wishes. Whilst he was much better, the need to devote more time to personal commitments had led to his decision to give up the position of secretary. He was pleased that Harry Boardman had agreed to take over and believed he would make an excellent secretary.
- He commended the MCRUA committee for the enormous work they done in representing user's interests whilst taking the load off him.
- Last August a meeting was held to recruit more helpers. He was pleased that two of them were co-opted to the committee during the year. Roy Beacham who has done a tremendous job in compiling statistics for train ridership on the line, better he believed, than those collected by Northern; and Harry Boardman who has done a very professional job in writing up and circulating the committee meeting minutes and representing MCRUA on the reinvigorated Middlewich Campaign group.
- The other task which he was performing for MCRUA was in maintaining the website. This has taken a backseat in the last year and he apologised for this, but nevertheless hoped it has proved useful facility. He planned to continue with this work. He explained it had been decided that now that the Community Rail Partnership website (www.midcheshirerail.org.uk) had been launched, the MCRUA website should be revamped to have common features with the aim of associating in the public mind our common objective of promoting the mid-Cheshire line.

Peter Davies Membership Secretary reported:

- Total membership had increased and now exceeded 650 members
- Our database of members, influencers and people interested in our railtours now contains 2170 entries.
- He was attempting to get an e-mail address for everyone on the database.
- Thanks were given to all those (an increasing number) who paid their subscriptions promptly.

Andrew Macfarlane asked whether we had recruited any new members from both the steam train and the Minehead trip. Peter Davies replied there was no noticeable increase. Mark Willcox said steam train website had obtained e-mail addresses which could legally be used for MCRUA purposes.

John Legg asked if Direct Debits could be used. John Hanson replied this was something we were looking at adopting; we would also consider credit cards.

10. Election of Officers: Nominations have been received as follows:

- 10.1 Chairman – John Oates
- 10.2 Secretary – Harry Boardman
- 10.3 Treasurer – John Hanson
- 10.4 Vice-chairman - Peter Davies
- 10.5 Membership secretary – Peter Davies
- 10.6 Publicity officer
- 10.7 Minutes secretary
- 10.8 3 Committee members - Roy Beacham, Andrew Macfarlane, David Miller,

Arthur Sancto.

John Oates announced that John Hulme and Malcolm Roughley, who were members of the 2007-8 committee, were also willing to serve again. This makes the number sufficient to fill committee total of ten elected members and the meeting agreed that all these persons should be elected to serve on the committee for the next year.

11. Any Other Business

Andrew Macfarlane thanked John Oates for all the work he had done for MCRUA during the year. Regarding the Pathfinders trip to Pwllheli, he asked how it had helped to achieve MCRUA's aims and objectives and also suggested it would have been better if the trip had been approved by the committee. In response, John Oates said that the trip was from the around the Cheshire area and that he was under the impression that the Special Trains Working Party had the authority to agree such things. The exercise had made £250 for MCRUA; our mailing list was not disclosed.

John Whittingham pointed out the state of the MCRUA station notice boards giving examples of Knutsford and Chester which have no boards, and Mobberley and Cuddington with missing/out of date information. John Oates replied that as he had mentioned in the chairman's report, there were insufficient MCRUA volunteers to maintain them; we could do with more help. Where we knew them, station adopters were able to do this. At Knutsford the board provided had been vandalised and at Chester there was a problem with the station being a listed structure and also the responsibility of Arriva Trains Wales, not Northern. John Allen commented he had applied to be station adopter at Knutsford, but had not received a reply from Northern. Arthur Sancto said he understood from the station staff that there was one, but that he had not given them his name. Mike Ross suggested that an approach to Karen Kimber station manager at Chester might now be fruitful there. Andrew Macfarlane commented that Navigation Road did not have a wall for mounting a board. Mark Willcox said this was something that John Kitchen was trying to resolve before he left and he would look into it.

John Allen asked about line closures in June. Could something be done to keep service running. During the recent Sunday bridge work at Knutsford, the whole of the mid-Cheshire line had been closed. Dave Vaughan was confirmed that work was also being done at Northwich at the same time. Generally it did appear that Northern is trying to maintain train services with shorter 'bus replacement sections during maintenance work than hitherto.

John Whittingham asked whether posters advertising the RHS Tatton Park show were to be put up. Mark Willcox said whilst there was a delay in their provision, it was intended this should be done.

With this, the formal business of the meeting concluded and the meeting closed at 20.45.

(Following the Annual General Meeting, Mark Willcox, Mid-Cheshire Community Rail Officer spoke on the topic of the 'Mid-Cheshire Line's part in the Cheshire Year of the Gardens', followed by questions from the floor.)

Arthur E. Sancto
9 August 2008