

**MID CHESHIRE RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION**  
**MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**held on THURSDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2009**  
**in the TATTON ROOM, KNUTSFORD CIVIC CENTRE at 7.45pm**

**1. Welcome to the meeting.**

The meeting opened on time with the Chairman welcoming members to the meeting. As well as the formal notice in the summer *Newsletter* No.77, the details and a copy of the Agenda were available on the MCRUA website from the 9<sup>th</sup> July.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Bert Ellery, Tim Wood, Malcolm Roughley, John & Pauline Boardman, Andrew Macfarlane and John Hill.

**3. Approval of the minutes of the 2008 AGM.**

The minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting were approved as an accurate record.

**4. Matters arising from the 2008 minutes.**

There were no items raised.

**5. Chairman's Report.**

*John Oates* said that as everybody would have read the Rail Reports he would cover the highlights since the last AGM:

The December 2008 timetable change whilst bringing some benefits to Mid Cheshire Line services has had a detrimental effect in others, in particular the schools traffic to Knutsford and from Stockport to Altrincham. Despite lobbying at the time by GMITA, Cheshire County Council, Northern Rail and ourselves the main thrust by the government is to provide high speed inter city services and the local suburban services like ours are forced to fit in with this. We continue to monitor passenger numbers and provide useful information through the spreadsheets produced by Roy Beacham to Northern Rail, GMITA and Network Rail. We will continue to lobby for improvements during the process for the December 2009 timetable through Stakeholder Meetings etc.

The MCRUA Financial position is sound and the Treasurer will say more on this in his report.

We have seen the best train running performance figures since our records began in 1998, and these are still being closely monitored to keep it that way.

Last year I said that the Middlewich campaign had been successfully re launched. An update on where it is up to will be included in the Secretary's report as he is a member of the Steering Group.

Following on from last year's initial Music Trains we have built upon this success and are now running regular monthly trains from Manchester and Chester to the Golden Pheasant at Plumley between May and September. These are organised by Mike Ross to whom many thanks are due.

We ran a very successful rail tour to Peterborough, Ely and Cambridge in May thanks to the members of the Special Trains Working Party and are now looking at an 18 month window for future rail tours and another steam special on the Mid Cheshire Line. There will be more on this in our forthcoming Rail Reports.

Over the last year we have produced three good Rail Reports. Our thanks are due to Andrew Macfarlane for pulling all the information together and Andrew, Peter Davies and John Hanson for arranging the circulation to our members and influencers.

The MCRUA website has been completely revamped under John Hulme's control and now contains a lot more information than the previous one with still more developments to come.

The rail replacement bus service has improved over the year but there is still more to be done and we are continuing to monitor the service.

We do have regular mentions in the Press, particularly in Knutsford and Northwich. More details of this in the Secretary's report.

The Community Rail Officer has moved on and work is now in progress to recruit a replacement. Amongst his notable achievements was a vast improvement in the state of Knutsford station, achieved with much help from Northern Rail and others. We would hope to have his replacement in post during September.

We now have a strong positive working relationship with Northern Rail. At our open meeting in February held at The Zone in Northwich they gave an excellent presentation on what they are striving to achieve with their franchise. They gave an honest appraisal of the situation opposite the trains they are forced into leasing by the DfT and the steps they are taking to make them as acceptable as possible to rail passengers. They were also very positive about their role in station improvements. More details of this in the Secretary's report.

Our working relationship with GMITA/GMPTE has been revived but there is still more to do in obtaining satisfactory answers on inter-availability of tickets between Northern Rail and Metrolink, particularly on to the Eccles line and in other aspects.

Through the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership we now have a strong working relationship with the new Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire East Councils. We are also pleased that Trafford Borough Council has now become a supporter of the MCCRCP.

I would like to thank my fellow Committee members for their great support, all of whom have put significant effort in over the last 12 months. Indeed we have a full committee and everyone working hard to further the aims of MCRUA.

In closing I would like to express condolences on behalf of MCRUA to Elaine Sancto on the recent passing away of her husband Arthur our previous Secretary. He was a well respected and knowledgeable member of our Committee. In memoriam we are in conjunction with Northern Rail installing a bench, flower troughs and a railway picture in a corner of the Chester bound platform at Knutsford Station over the next few weeks. Elaine thanked MCRUA for their kind words on his passing and the lasting tribute that was being provided for Arthur at a place he had fond memories of.

## **6. Treasurer's Report.**

*John Hanson presented the audited accounts.*

The accounts for the year to 28 February 2009 were adopted by the members present without any objections.

There will be no change to the subscription rates for the forthcoming year.

## **7. Secretary's Report.**

*Harry Boardman, Secretary reported as follows:*

### ***Committee Meetings***

These are now on a 6 weekly pattern. This has helped in progressing things better with pre-meeting report updates circulated so leaving more time for detailed discussion. The minutes are usually circulated within 24 hours of the meeting.

### ***Correspondence Log***

A Correspondence Log is maintained and during the last year I have dealt with 159 items of correspondence. These have been split between 64 postal and 95 emails. Wherever necessary these have all been replied to by either post or email or circulated within the Committee or to external bodies such as Northern Rail, Network Rail, GMITA as appropriate for comment and/or information. The correspondence has consisted of publications, notification of events, comments when renewing memberships, complaints, requests etc.

### ***Press Cuttings***

There have been over 90 references, articles and letters, in the press; local press including Guardians/Chronicles plus (Cuddington Round Tower, Plumley Village News), national including the Guardian and Private Eye, and major rail magazines. These are circulated internally within Committee and externally where appropriate. The topics covered have included: Condition of trains, services/timetable changes, Knutsford Station/RHS, Music Trains, Rail tours, Middlewich, vandalism including a major incident on the WCML.

### ***Mid Cheshire Line Stations***

One area where we can work very effectively in conjunction with Northern Rail is in keeping the stations a good hospitable and secure environment for rail passengers. Since the open meeting with Northern Rail back in February a number of improvements have already been made and there are more in the pipeline. Regular progress meetings are held between MCRUA Committee members Roy Beacham and Peter Davies and Stephen Bradley of Northern Rail.

One of the major improvements is with station lighting which is now almost 100% perfect on the line for the first time for many years. Recent improvements at Northwich have included the installation of CCTV and pigeon preventative measures. In conjunction with the MCCRCP local schools are being involved in station gardens and providing artwork at Delamere, Northwich and Knutsford and just recently at Hale managed by MCRUA Committee member Malcolm Roughley. When the new CRO is appointed we need to revisit Delamere and Northwich stations to put a programme in place to maintain the initial good work. For the recent Mid Cheshire Music Festival Day new bedding plants were put in at Plumley and the flags were put out along the station platform thanks to the support of local villagers.

If anybody wants to find out what is going on or planned for their local station or indeed have any suggestions please contact me by post or at [enquiries@mcrua.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@mcrua.org.uk)

### ***Middlewich***

As mentioned at last year's AGM the Steering Group was re launched in early 2008. A proposal document was sent to consultancies in October and The Railway Consultancy was chosen in December to produce a Feasibility Study into the reopening of the Northwich – Sandbach railway line to rail passengers and the building of a station at Middlewich. The final report which shows that re-opening the line to passengers is potentially viable has now been submitted and is to be formally unveiled at the Middlewich Transport Festival on the 18<sup>th</sup> July with press releases during the following week. There is still a lot of work to do to over the next few years to now turn this into reality.

### ***Baguley Halt***

Despite setbacks and rejections from GMPTE the local action group are still pursuing their case for the building of a station on the Mid Cheshire Line at Baguley especially now that the Metrolink expansion has been given the go ahead. They want to see an interchange at Baguley at Southmoor Road.

### ***Crewe – Liverpool Line***

After exchange of correspondence with the London Midland Client and Stakeholder Manager about shortcomings in their timetable for Saturday evening and Sunday effort is now being put in to trying to reform a MCRUA sub group to discuss and service improvements on this line.

## **8. Election of Officers: Nominations have been received as follows:**

- 8.1 Chairman - John Oates
- 8.2 Vice-chairman - John Hulme
- 8.3 Secretary - Harry Boardman
- 8.4 Treasurer - John Hanson
- 8.5 Membership Secretary - Peter Davies
- 8.6 Publicity Officer -
- 8.7 Minutes Secretary -
- 8.8 Committee Members - Andrew Macfarlane, Malcolm Roughley, David Miller, Phillip Bamford, Roy Beacham, Michael Ross.

As there are sufficient nominations received to fill the total number of committee places available it was proposed and approved by the members present that all nominations be declared elected en-bloc to enable the work of the unfilled officer posts to be shared by all the individuals who have offered themselves for election.

## **9. Any Other Business.**

*John Allen* mentioned that he felt the weekday service was now running reliably and asked what changes there had been to passenger numbers on a Sunday now that services are running every 2 hours and through to Piccadilly. *John Oates* in reply said that Sunday passenger numbers had seen an increase of 400%.

*Elaine Sancto* asked where she could find publicity on the Music Train. In reply *Mike Ross* said at present it is put into the local weekly newspapers, displayed at stations on the line, unfortunately not at Knutsford at the moment as we are waiting for the installation of a replacement notice board which is imminent, and on the MCRUA website. He added that this is an evolving issue and consideration is being given to other forms and places for advertising the trains. He gave out the dates at the meeting for the rest of the year for the remaining Music Trains.

*Peter Frier* asked if there would be any strengthening of trains during the Metrolink closure in August. *John Oates* said in reply that Northern Rail had a shortage of spare units available due to the allocation they are allowed by the DfT and as a result there would be no additional units available for strengthening the trains though they were looking at using larger units than Class 142 Pacers where they could.

*David Martin* asked what has happened to the Western Link to Manchester International Airport. *John Oates* replied that this is still on the books and is being considered as part of the Manchester Hub project. The rail distance from the Mid Cheshire Line at Mobberley to the Airport is about four and half miles.

**The formal business of the AGM concluded at 8.45pm and the meeting closed.**

Following the AGM there was a Mid Cheshire Line themed slide show presented by David Miller and Harry Boardman.

*Harry W Boardman*  
*Secretary*  
*17 July 2009*