



SERUG, A CASE STUDY

Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users Group

How to win Friends and Influence People!

Personal view of SERUG by Stewart Palmer
presented at Railfuture Summer 2018 conference
(Official website <http://serug.co.uk/>)

Background

- I, Stewart Palmer, am not a member of SERUG but I know its Chairman well and keep a close eye on how it operates. These are my observations on “what good looks like”
- It’s all about relationships and communication with key players
- Empathy, not confrontation, be a “critical friend”

What SERUG has done (1)

- Developed a long terms strategy for the route, based on economic and social need
- This is data driven, e.g. County and District plans, house building targets, existing rail usage and growth rates etc. Not “we want XXXX because we like trains”
- Shared the strategy with the TOC and Network Rail who both acknowledge it is a quality piece of work

What SERUG has done (2)

- Given a copy of their strategy to all MPs (eight) on the route and followed up with individual meetings
- Got all eight MPs to meet the Rail Minister with SERUG presenting to the minister
- Got local rail staff involved who help distribute newsletters and provide vital local intelligence

What SERUG has done (3)

- Got a small active committee who do things
- Produce a very good quality 4 times a year newsletter which does not blame or point fingers. It focuses on the issues THAT AFFECT PASSENGERS and what SERUG are doing to improve things for users by incremental steps
- Work with local station groups, LEPs, Councils to make sure the messages are consistent

What SERUG has done (4)

- Set up a website with regular updates on it
 - <http://serug.co.uk/>
- Organised member events with good speakers to both inform existing members and to help attract new ones
- Built constructive relationships with the Network Rail Route team and the TOC Stakeholder team
- Targeted experts on rail matters to assist them with likely costs, timetabling issues etc.

Running an Effective Campaign - Summary

- Need a core of committed people who do things
- You have to work within the system, righteous indignation and shouting gets you nowhere
- Build alliances
- Keep your supporters informed
- Think long term and be patient