

Minutes of Railfuture North East Branch Committee Meeting held Tuesday 18th January 2022

In attendance – Keith Simpson [KS], Damian Bell [DB], Tony Walker [AW], Dennis Fancett [DF], Dave Shaw [DS], Malcolm Chainey [MC], Peter Walker [PW], Peter Wood [PWD], Ian Walker – note taker [IW],

1) Apologies

Received from A Cosgrove,

2) Notes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 16th November 2021

Already circulated and accepted by all as a true record.

3) Matters arising

i) Output from ECML Timetable working party

The report of the ECML timetable working party has now been completed and distributed to Branch Committee members. Following discussion it was decided that wider distribution to MP's in the region would be via email as a 'Word' document with a covering email. Committee members would email their constituency MP, with the Chair & RUG officials contacting further MP's with whom they have a working relationship. Any outstanding MP's will be captured by the Chair.

Subsequent to the meeting a suggested cover letter (which can be amended) had been distributed to Committee members by DF.

ii) Possible meeting with Sedgefield MP P Howell regarding Ferryhill Station & Leamside

It was decided that a further meeting would be worthwhile but would be held back until after the next committee meeting.

iii) Branch Website

The website will be updated by DS with details of the North East Rail & Metro Strategy which impact on a number of RFNE campaigns.

4) Branch Matters

i) Next Branch Meeting

This is now confirmed as 1100 on Saturday 19th February 2022 via Zoom. The speaker will be D Gittins, Head of Heavy Rail at Transport North East. There are several IT issues to be overcome beforehand. A further pre meeting in the week prior will take place to iron these out.

ii) Branch Budget

The budget has been submitted to HQ by DB for approval and allocation of the subvention. (IW)

iii) Update on the latest NEJT Committee Meeting by DS.

The budget & Metro & Rail Strategy issues were not discussed due to illness of a council member and the fact that a further meeting was required about budget matters. Leamside & South of Tyne Loop line were discussed however, and there was considerable support from councillors for both. Washington is one of the largest towns in the country with no rail connection. It was made clear that any Metro link onto Leamside would still permit heavy rail use of the line. Electrification would be to heavy rail standards whilst Metros would use battery power. Mention was also made of reinstating Bensham Curve which would allow services to run via Team Valley to ECML on a reinstated 3rd line.

Massive bus service cuts are envisaged due to funding reductions. Reckoned a loss of £7million+ in bus support funding within the region. Some changes will be made to secured services in the NEXUS area.

DS felt there has been some progress with regard to Railfuture input to NEJTC. He said it would be beneficial if Railfuture could be involved in deliberations before they become public. To this end he has been able to speak with Tobyn Hughes. DS also advised he had had some informal discussion with the official Chronicle reporter who covers NEJTC matters. Hopefully will be able to achieve some publicity highlighting *Railfuture* input into work of the JTC?

Concern was expressed about funding and how substantial amounts will be needed merely to keep Metro operational. Money from City Region Fund could possibly be obtained to fund Leamside?

Going forward there are some missing items that RF would like to see added to the plan with clarification needed on certain points.

Following the meeting number of next steps as a way forward that RFNE would like to see has been produced by DS. These are outlined below :-

- List the ideas/proposals that are missing from the document and think about why they should be included - using the structure given to us in the document
- Identify which ideas/projects we want to see clarified
- Start from the position that we agree with a lot of the strategy and that we've made a useful contribution
- Talk to TNE about how we can help them to develop the strategy and how we can have an ongoing relationship with them
- Ask for further details including some of the project outlines
- Use local press to make points public - and get some publicity for our work
- Think about how we can get them to do further work on some of the high level ideas - work that might get a better outcome. The example used I think was about providing a heavy rail service to the Airport.
- Set out our own vision

iv) Next Committee Meeting

Tuesday 15th March at 6pm on Zoom. No minute taker appointed tonight, but subsequently AW volunteered.

5. Rail in the North East / Local Issues

i) Wider 'Rail Vision for the North East'.

This would have to be consistent with RFNE views through other documents. DS has offered to assist in production of a RFNE vision. This would be a relatively concise document. Would be the same material as the response to the Metro & Rail Strategy.

ii) Update from RUG's & A B & T

Not discussed.

iii) Reinstatement of pre-Covid Timetables

It is expected to vary from operator to operator and dictated by DfT. Northern expected to return to a full pre Covid timetable in due course. Pointed out that Metro reported as having recovered well especially with regard to the leisure market.

6. AOB

This meeting closed at 2015.