**MINUTES OF THE HVRUG AGM**

**12th June 2019**

*Election of Officers*

The following were elected unopposed:

*Chair* Kath Aspinwall

*Deputy Chair* James Shuttleworth

*Secretary* Peter Gait

*Treasurer* Mike Pedler

*Members*

Kay Allinson

John Anderson

Andrew Dyson

Linda Grainger

Chris Morgan

Rosie Olle

David Palmer

John Stubbs

Peter Townsend

Derek Phillips

Gill Wood

**SECRETARY’S REPORT**

*Peter Gait* reported that we now have 97 members on our circulation list.

**TREASURERS REPORT:** presented by Mike Pedler

**HVRUG FINANCIAL REPORT**

**11 JUNE 2018 – 12 JUNE 2019**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **INCOME** | **£** | **EXPENDITURE** | **£** |
| Balance at 12.6.18 | 143.60 | Room Hire (14.6.18)AGM | 30.00 |
| Collection 14.6.18 | 93.65 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| INCOME in this period | 93.65 | EXPENDITURE in this period | 30.00 |
|  |  |  |  |
| **BALANCE as at 12.6.19** | **207.25** |  |  |

**TREASURER’S SIGNATURE……………..** (M Pedler) **DATE** 12.06.19

The low rate of expenditure is because all correspondence is by email and committee members have free passes from Northern to attend railway meetings. It was agreed that there would be no membership fee for this year.

**CHAIR’S REPORT**

Kath Aspinwall introduced her report by saying that HVRUG has been in some degree of limbo in the year since the last AGM. The Capacity improvement Scheme has been approved, but nothing has actually happened. HVRUGs principal aim of an hourly service stopping at each station has been achieved, in as far as it can until the line has been upgraded. The train company that will take take over northern leg from Nottingham of the East Midlands Norwich to Liverpool route has not yet been confirmed, although we understand it is likely to be TransPennine. On the positive side there is now an active Friends of Station Groups for every station in the Hope Valley as well as Dore & Totley. Things are rather different from where HVRUG started its campaigning all those years ago.

The points covered in the report are:

* The Capacity Improvement Scheme
* Local issues – TVMs, parking charges, Guards, Pacers.
* HVRUG and the FoSGs
* Transport for the North TfN
* Hope Valley Line 125 (HVL 125) celebrations
* Reports from the Friends of Station Groups (FoSGs)
* Rethinking HVRUG’s aims.

**Capacity Improvement Scheme/Upgrade/loops**

The Capacity Improvement scheme was accepted by the DfT on 11th February 2018. At the Northern Transport Conference in Manchester in the Autumn Chris Grayling said:

'But let us also remember that the North is not just about cities. It also has some of the most stunning countryside in Europe. And a very important rural economy. That’s why we’re also supporting local railways like the Hope Valley line. Network Rail is proposing to modernise sections of the railway between Bamford station and Jaggers Lane Bridge in Hathersage. And around Dore and Totley station.

KA subsequently wrote to him saying how pleased we were to hear this. She reminded him that the line also links Manchester and Sheffield and asked him to make starting work on the improvements a priority. She then forwarded this message to all the Sheffield, Hope Valley and central Manchester MPs and asked them to please keep the pressure up.

In response, George Lindars-Hammond, parliamentary researcher for Gill Furniss, (MP Brightside and Hillsborough) has informed us **that the Sheffield MPs** discuss this issue together. He has sent KA extracts from Hansard re questions about when the Scheme will start from Gill Furniss, Jared Omara and Clive Betts and two from Dan Jarvis, MP for Barnsley Central and Sheffield City Region’s Mayor. In all cases the answer was a somewhat vague ‘the decision is expected later this year’. One of Ruth George’s team (High Peak) is attending Community Rail Partnership (CRP) meetings. Andrew Dyson, Chris Morgan and KA were also invited to a meeting with Dan Jarvis about rail issues on the 11th March. He expressed particular interest in the HV line and says he is in regular contact with the DfT about it.

Patrick Mcloughlin (Derbyshire Dales) wrote to Chris Grayling in November. The reply he received included:

‘I am pleased to inform you that Network Rail has allocated resources for the development of a procurement plan to deliver the scheme, and is undertaking pre-construction planning to enable it to be delivered as quickly as possible.’

And concluded,

I thank Ms Aspinwall and the Hope Valley Rail Users Group for their significant work to raise the profile of this important route.

There is no definitive statement about when we may expect the Scheme to be put into action. The most helpful information has come from Tom Drury (Network Rail) who says that the Scheme has made its way through the series of hurdles established by the DfT and is at the final one - the approval and release of funds. Funding is available and the Business Case is in good order. Network Rail and the DfT fully expect the scheme to go ahead, and be "ticked off" in the next few months. NR is currently putting together a contracting strategy for the delivery of the scheme but it’s difficult to give any clear dates at present, as the different contracting strategies under consideration could give different answers.

*New Civil Engineer* reports that ’Network Rail has launched its search for a contractor to carry out major improvement works on the Hope Valley line’ and that Network Rail anticipates that work of this kind will take 2 years. (see attached)

All this sounds hopeful but not entirely conclusive. HVRUG will be watching the situation carefully

Once it is decided which train company will take over the second fast train service through the valley, we will be in contact to raise again the issues of the getting one fast train an hour to stop somewhere in the Hope Valley. This will be more likely after the upgrade when there should be three fast trains an hour

**LOCAL ISSUES**

We tend to hear more complaints about the service than praise:

*Ticket machines* are sometimes out of order and don’t dispense some kinds of tickets such as the Derbyshire Wayfarers. The promise to pay option doesn’t explain that is covers the situation when suitable tickets are not available. It isn’t made clear that passengers who can’t get suitable tickets will be refunded for overpayments. These problems are compounded by the threatening notices about penalty fares.

*Parking -* Parking charges have been introduced at several stations with the consequence that lots of people park on nearby roads either because they don’t want to pay or because the machines are sometimes out of order and they don’t want to be fined. This greatly annoys local residents. Hathersage Parish Council has responded by planning to introduce double yellow lines to stop this happening. It will be interesting to see what happens when they do. They are meeting with Pete Myers, Client and Stakeholder Manager Northern, about this matter shortly.

*Guards* - There are still complaints about the non-appearance of conductors who don’t always patrol trains, check passenger welfare, sell tickets, give passengers information, help passengers alight, announce stations clearly, oversee accuracy of automated displays announcements and frequent fail to check or issue tickets on the train. The issue of strikes on Saturdays seems to have been resolved but seem to have been replaced by cancellations on Sundays.

*Complaints* - A recent report in Which revealed that rail companies seem to make this a very time-consuming process but Northern rail came last or in the bottom three of 18 British train companies in every aspect of the complaints process studied. However, a message circulated to HVRUG members from Robert Cumber, Sheffield Star and Telegraph, asking about any experiences re-claiming compensation elicited very few replies. This lack of response was repeated in the much wider survey he also carried out.

*Pacers* are still in commission, although Northern is still saying they will be gone by the end of the year. There seem to rather a lot of them on the HV line. Passengers will be glad to see them go as they are uncomfortable especially when crowed. However, they are better than no or fewer trains.

*Support re Community Rail*

The one part of Northern that HVRUG and the FoSGs find to be generally helpful is their support for community Rail activities. Northern’s Community Rail conference in the Autumn reported on an impressive the variety of local initiatives. We’ve found the Regional Community and Sustainability Managers, Richard Isaac and Becky Styles, helpful and responsive. but they are working to some extent against the odds. What passengers want is a service that is regular and reliable with reasonably comfortable and not too overcrowded trains. If all of these are available then the station enhancements and activities are seen as a welcome addition but if they are not enough to compensate if essential aspects of a good service are lacking.

So, HVRUG welcomes Northern’s commitment to community rail activities but worry that the difficulties listed above in effect conspire to put people off using the train.

**Transport for the North TfN**

On 11 February this year saw the official launch of the Transport for the North (TfN) Strategic Transport Plan, which outlines TfN’s vision for transport investment in the North of England over the next 30 years. TfN is England’s first sub-national transport body; it brings together 20 of the North’s local transport authorities, business leaders, politicians, Network Rail, Highways England, and HS2 Ltd to work in partnership with Central Government. With offices in Manchester and Leeds, TfN has statutory status and a mandate to advise Government on transport priorities. However, it is dependent on the Government for its funds, expected to be £60–£70 billion by 2050.

The Plan outlines some of the problems the North of England faces. Road and rail transport links are inadequate. Despite a lack of investment, rail passenger numbers have increased substantially over the last 20 years and as a consequence, the network is suffering from severe congestion and overcrowding. Journey speeds are slow and punctuality poor. The network lacks the capacity for more growth. Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) is a major strategic rail programme, designed to transform connectivity between the key economic centres of the North.

The Strategic Plan is presented in a long document covering road and rail across the whole of the North of England. There are a small number of references to the Hope Valley Line and the Peak Park. The improvements to the Hope Valley Line are referred to as ‘an important early element of the Northern Powerhouse Rail programme.’

You can read more about this in Today’s Railways UK (attached)

The Plan is available at <https://transportforthenorth.com/stp/>

**Friends of Station Groups** KA expected that everyone will have noticed new things appearing at their local stations, flower beds planters, information and more recently an outbreak of bunting to celebrate the 125th year of passenger services in the Hope Valley. All this is the work of the 6 FOSGs, who work to improve the stations, provide information, encourage visitors to use the train rather than the car and together with each other endeavour to raise the profile of the line and build a Hope Valley brand. These are independent organisations but they are represented on the HVRUG committee. HVRUG sees our role as being supportive of these groups in general and in their joint activities in particular.

**HOPE Valley 125**

The main joint activity the FoSGs have undertaken this year is a joint celebration of the 125th anniversary of the first passenger train to stop in the Hope Valley. The 5 stations Grindleford, Hathersage Bamford, Hope and Edale, along with Dore & have planned a series of coordinated but flexible events over the summer of 2019. Where appropriate or possible these are attached to activities already taking place in the valley e.g. well dressings and Galas.Funding has been given by both the CRP and Northern - £1,000 from each**.**

Events throughout the valley include:

***An Exhibition*** of the history of the line and its stations.

***Talks***by Ted Hancock about the history of the line and its stations

***Walks –*** station to station walks linking, where appropriate, Transpeak Walks and Peak & Northern Footpaths Society (PNFS) which is also celebrating its 125 anniversary this year.

***Schools*** –Schools are also offered an illustrated talk for pupils about the building of the Totley tunnel, the arrival of the first train and a trip on the train through the tunnel. On the 25th June 1894, the children from Hathersage school went to Edale on the first ever passenger train to stop in the valley. Year 5 from Hathersage school will be repeating that journey on the same day this year. They will be greeted at the Edale by a small band of children from Hope who will lead them to the school. Northern is providing free travel for each of these events. (Events Calendar attached)

**REPORTS FROM FOSGS**

***Dore & Totley***

Chris Morgan reported "Our focus is dominated by the single track through the station and the Hope Valley Capacity Improvement Scheme where we pursue all avenues to press for the work to be completed asap. TfN, SCR, SYPTE, TPE, EMT, Northern, Transport Focus, Network Rail we'll be trying to get an oar in. This is the biggest single factor restricting any improvements to the Hope Valley services.’

After 3 years of effort, the long-awaited canopy was finally completed last month and has been baptised almost daily. It has been greatly welcomed, especially now the ticket machine is under cover. They'd hoped it would be ready before the winter, then by Christmas, and then by Easter. Then maybe so that they could have an opening ceremony in June to coincide with 125 years from the stopping service starting. Now it is hoped to be on 19th August with Dan Jarvis, SCR Mayor.

The Hope Valley 125 bunting is up and displays of old pictures are in the old shelter.

The Dore & Totley to Grindleford walk will be on Saturday 29th June.

CM pointed out that Northern are undercutting TPE on fares which is adding to overcrowding at weekends. TPE can charge almost 4 times the Northern fare for trains leaving only 3 minutes apart. It's, therefore, hardly surprising Northern trains are carrying through passengers from Sheffield to Manchester and the Airport. At weekend westbound passengers are sometimes unable to board at D & T, and possibly up the valley as well. Longer trains but that won't happen until platform extensions are completed - supposedly by November. (Dan Cole has still not replied to the latest request for info.)

The Planters are being spruced up.

The station now has Northern's prototype Amazon collection point box, which seems to have been named Peak"

***Grindleford***

Liz Bailey reported the following activities:

FoGS has held its AGM

Platform 1

* Garden maintained
* Armistice centenary display included Soldiers, poppies, poetry, prose and information display

Platform 2

* Help from PPCV & Grindleford High school
* Clearing, herb garden and bug hotel

HV125

* History Boards
* Mannequin in period costume
* Saturday 22 June 10:00– 16:30 Grindleford to Hathersage 11-mile strenuous walk led by Elaine Hawthorne.
* Saturday 29 June 10:15 (Dore) – 14:30 ‘Under and over’ 7 mile walk from Dore and Totley Station to Grindleford Station.
* Saturday 20 July 11:00-13:00 Jazz Brunch at the Grindleford Station Café. Delicious food accompanied by ‘John’ jazz trio and the Grindleford Singers
* Saturday 27 July 14:30 Fundraiser £5 - Digital presentation at the Sir William Hotel by Ted Hancock on ‘Grindleford and the coming of the Railway Line – and forward through the 20th Century. Tea / coffee and cake
* Saturday 17 August 14:00-16:30 Exhibition on 125 years of passenger trains in the Hope Valley, on display at the Grindleford Horticultural Show at the Bishop Pavilion

Grindleford School events

* Mon 24 June Kath Aspinwall visiting school assembly and talking about how life was in 1894 and the impact of the coming of the railway
* Fri 28 June afternoon walk from the station to Bolehill quarry with 23 year 3 & 4 pupils
* Mon 1 July Class 3- about 19 pupils walk from Longshaw to air shafts on Totley Moss. Kay Allinson and Chris Morgan (Dore & Totley) leading these walks.
* Tues 2 July train journey, for whole school (70 pupils and 7 adults) from Grindleford to Dore, a 20 minute wait at Dore with a browse around the station then return from Dore to Edale. Picnic at the Edale Moorland Discovery Centre there before returning to Grindleford.

With Longshaw

* Info board in time for Jazz Brunch
* Additional Longshaw information displays following platform extension

***Hathersage***

John Anderson noted the station platforms are very narrow. This somewhat limits possibilities, but there is a planter with a trellis on each, along with a flower arrangement on a narrow pallet construction which provides a waterfall of colour. There are also bulbs and flowers around the car park which remains largely empty since the introduction of charges.

The group would like to tidy up the bank between the path to platform 1 and the line. Network Rail and Northern have agreed to this but it requires the provision of a gate to access this area which has not yet materialised.

There were some initial difficulties with the ticket machine which lacked the button to press for the ‘Promise to Pay’ option but this has been rectified.

*HVL 125*

* The group, along with Edale, is managing the Hathersage school re-enactment of the first passenger train in 1894. Northern is providing free tickets for this.
* Ted Hancock and the exhibition will be in the Memorial Hall on the 3rd July
* The exhibition will feature at the Gala on 13th July.

***Bamford***

John Stubbs listed the group’s activities this year:

1) maintaining planters/flower beds, wild bird feeders, and community noticeboards

2) awaiting development license from Network Rail to do some land improvements at the vehicle entrance to Bamford Station.

3) HV125 - decorates station with bunting

- installed historic photos of Bamford Station in passenger shelters

- village well-dressing to have theme of HV line opening

- talks on the history of the line to be given by Ted Hancock in the Bamford Institute.

***Hope***

Gill wood reported that Hope feels they ‘are still new kids on the block but now the Hope Station Group is beginning to keep up the pace with our friends along the Line.’

They now have four very smart planters, courtesy of Hope Valley Rotary Club and the Parish Councils of Bradwell, Hope and Castleton and are very thankful to Jenny and Dorothy who are going to keep the plants alive just in case there is another hot summer.

They are building strong associations with the Primary schools in the three villages that use the station. The children from these schools provided art work at Christmas and again this spring to decorate the station for the 125 celebrations. So, the community links are developing.

Plans for the future include building raised beds on the land between the car parking area and the station fence. They also hope to have picnic tables in this area by next spring. In addition, more seating is needed along the platform as this is a very busy station

Carbolite are going to plant some hedges along their land which is against the Manchester platform so this should greatly enhance the look of the station.

Hope is very keen to recruit new members for the group.’

***Edale***

Derek Phillips said that these are exciting times in Edale.

* The Panoramas are up on Platforms1 and 2 as is all the Bunting
* Team Edale helped in Country day erecting the travelling exhibition display and procuring 60inch TV set and stand.
* They have excellent contact with the Edale Church and their Women Asylum Seekers connection in Manchester.  Northern helped with travel vouchers for two parties of 25 members - Derek and Naomi brought them over from Manchester Piccadilly.  Their Choir provided entertainment in the Marquee and in the field Stage.
* Edale School is acting as host on 25 June - when Hathersage School will arrive by train to re-enact how it was 125 years ago to the day.
* Edale Station Friends is hosting the travelling exhibition in first part of September and organising the walk to Chinley Station. (Date to be established soon.)

**Revisiting HVRUG Aims**

HVRUG’s aims are:

1. *One train each hour stopping at all stations, all day, every day, including Saturdays and Sundays*
2. *Earlier and later weekday arrivals in, and departures from Sheffield and Manchester i.e. before 06.30 and after 23.00 respectively*
3. *One fast train each hour to stop at Chinley, Hope (or somewhere in the Hope Valley) and Dore & Totley (D&T)*
4. *More robust ticket collection/more accurate measure of passenger numbers*

It was noted that these are focused on improving the quantity of service and that although they have not yet been fully achieved, there has been progress. The meeting concluded with a brief discussion on whether the time has come for some re-thinking of our role and purpose in the light of what is happening. It was agreed that a meeting will be arranged for members to discuss this matter later in the year.

KAA 16.06.19