

SPALDING & PETERBOROUGH TRANSPORT FORUM

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

www.spaldingtransportforum.co.uk

Held 28th April 2005 in the Council Offices
Priory Road Spalding

Present: George Scott, Chairman;
Kathy Lewis, Secretary;
Nilla Short, Treasurer,
Rob Short, Eunice Pollard and Peter Chapman, (Committee.)
Trevor Fenwick, Operations Manager GNER;
Tom Hanham, Marketing Manager GNER
Nigel Carlisle, Operations Manager Central Trains;
Peter Bishop ACORP; Tony Cross, LCC;
John Hayes, M.P. for Spalding;
Bruce Wakeling Spalding Town Forum Manager;
Graeme Clark RPC;
Steve & Delia Williams SHDC Councillors;
Robert Bester;
Christopher Smith and Jon Morris (Website Finalists)
30 Members of the Public.

Apologies: Jonathon Biggadyke, Conservation Officer.

Chairman introduced everybody who had been invited and briefly went through what was on the Agenda for the evening and saying that there was a lot to get through on the night. The two finalists for the website competition would give a small demo of their ideas to the audience but as the Council IT dept had forgotten to leave out the projector it would have to be on the laptop to the Panel of Judges.

Matters Arising From AGM 2004

Park Road Footbridge
8.05 Spalding to Peterborough train platforming
Car Park Charges
Letting of rooms and Café at Station

Mention was made that the Forum had been going for two years and had achieved various things but were hoping a lot more could be done: trains have improved; cold drinks machine installed in booking office and procedures implemented when train breaks down or there are problems.

Points raised:

- ☒ Security CCTV not adequate when station closed at 2.30pm
- ☒ Café put back till later in year
- ☒ Representative on Town Forum changed to Peter Chapman
Peterborough Station
- ☒ Zebra crossing lines at both ends outside of station.

- ☒ Ticket office improved in corporate colours and more fast ticket machines installed.
- ☒ Front of station to be re-organised as per plan by Don Goodman.
- ☒ Car parking to be increased by use of some spaces in Staff car park and better use of organising use of empty spaces for Leisure travellers.

Central Trains Franchise

The Forum decided to award Nigel Carlisle a 'Certificate of Appreciation' for his help with issues raised. Photographs were taken by the Lincolnshire Free Press. Central Trains' is franchise up next year, to find out about it, contact SRA and D O T for input.

It is not known who will be taking over from Centrals Trains' franchise but we need to be able to give some input on what is needed for our Community. Spalding is the 4th largest growing town and needs better transport facilities. The station is the focal point and is the first thing people see when they come into town and needs some more improvements as it does not give a good impression of the place. We will pressurise appropriate authorities to improve it.

There does not appear to be any form of integrated transport in the LCC plans from what we could see. With so much congestion of the A1073 and the A16 the train would be the ideal alternative to driving and we must encourage more people to use it to Peterborough. Until we have an earlier service to Lincoln we won't have people travelling as they would be unable to get back unless they left Lincoln at 4pm. We therefore also need a later train or trains to enable people to travel to our County's primary city.

We need to involve the Bus and Coach Operators as they are an essential part of the service.

Councillor Delia Williams was given poor information by Peterborough Ticket Office when she enquired about the Spalding Train and was told she would have to wait for over an hour for the next train as the service was very irregular and she decided it would be easier for her husband to collect her than wait for a train.

Trevor Fenwick to check with ticket office, to find out why incorrect information given out.

8.05 Spalding to Peterborough

Timetable gives trains time as approx 30 mins when it actually only takes 20 mins but train sits outside the station to await platforming when it could go in to platform 3B.

Chairman had discussion with Trevor Fenwick and Nigel Carlisle but no answers as yet to problem. Answers currently rest with York.

Nigel Carlisle said 8.05 had been referred to the Planning Dept. to retime and awaiting GNER and WAGN to sort out platform with stop sign for Spalding train.

Planning need to investigate problem, again and sort out. Forum displeased.

Graeme Clark said Forum should contact Dyan Crowther as it is a Network Rail problem.

The Chairman said he prefers to take the train in preference to the car. Last year we had no problems as the train went in on platform 3B everyday and was in at 08.25 giving people who were travelling to London the chance to catch the 8.30 train. At

the moment we have to wait 10 minutes every day which makes 50 minutes per week and a number of people are made late for work because of this. More people are now using the train as Spalding is growing and will grow bigger as more housing is planned which in turn will bring in more people who may also want to use the train. The Companies concerned need to get together to sort this problem out as they are losing revenue.

Question was asked 'on peak times why only one train? If there were more trains more people would use them as Spalding and surrounding areas is set to expand further bringing in more people who might use the train. If there was a shuttle service between Spalding and Peterborough during peak hours it would be very helpful.

Steve Williams asked if the Peterborough side would improve when the station moved. Trevor Fenwick replied that nothing as yet has been finalised as plans in very early stages

Moving on from that point, mention was made that we would like to see a zebra crossing outside the station to cross over to Sainsbury's. A Work study supposed to have been done a month ago.

Tony Cross Head of Transport with LCC said that this point had been raised and discussed but was not considered sufficient for crossing. A central refuge has been considered and was thought to be helpful. Also the lights in Winsover Road were being looked at.

GS asked why rail transport was not in the LCC transport document. Tony Cross replied that it was there as the Council were working with the SRA for community lines and but the focus was on the Skegness line. Forum said it would like to see a Lincoln to London service in the near future going via Sleaford and Spalding. As the Spalding to Lincoln line was designated as Trans-Europe line point raised with SRA to see if it could be changed to a Community line as there would be more scope to improve through Community Rail. Skegness to Grantham is a pilot scheme and if successful will be rolled out to other services. Lincoln is also in favour of the line. There could be an option to run the line via Nottingham but the Forum was keen to see a service to London which could bring benefits all round and the Forum is keen to see improvements to the Spalding line. Rural lines don't feature in SRA plans but People need transport. Spalding needs to join to Sleaford on rail link. Forum needs to be involved with consultation for what rail users want.

There has been no investment for many years and the line was designated as Trans Europe many years ago. Why? Why could it not be a Community or Rural railway?

GNER successful with their bid to continue working the ECML and have been give eight years plus two further if they meet their targets. While there isn't the money now is the time to get lobbying.

Question was asked, 'What are the criteria for re-opening a station?

As some people have to travel quite a way to get to the nearest one and it would seem logical to re-open one that was closed where there are lots of new houses going up. Public need decent service and land use is changing there could be potential for siting one at **Deeping St Nicholas** (near Littleworth signal box).

Peter Roberts replied that there was a lot of work involved in re-opening a station but they have a document they can circulate regarding costs of approx **£1m to do the job.**

Tony Cross said SRA had published a guide which should have been titled 'How not to open a Station. He also went on to say that Sibsey was referred but Central trains refused to stop there.

Problem with Deeping St Nicholas and many people under impression it was re-opening. Rob Short said he couldn't believe that it took that amount of money. Figures were being bandied about i.e. footbridge costs huge amounts of money to put in as it had to be to a very high standard.

Meeting went on to ask how people felt about the Spalding station improvements.

Bruce Wakeling said that because we are a Rural Community we need cars but we also need buses and trains. Station needed improving as it is a focal point for Spalding. We need to build on Tulip Festival. We need infrastructure put in place to have a better service i.e. for the Flower Parade.

People would like to see a better service and more people would use it if we had more trains to Lincoln – earlier and later than at present. With present Government there were no plans to extend and no plans to upgrade the line south of Peterborough.

Member of the Public said that the railways were the only ways to travel as many people didn't have cars. Students have problems getting back to College if they come home as there are no trains on Sundays at Spalding. The train in the morning (8.05) is usually a single carriage and sometimes gets very crowded with Passengers having to stand especially when there is a school party. People would like a Sunday service to get to Peterborough and or Lincoln. How can we encourage Tourists to visit us if we don't have good Transport links? There is a demand for the service. Nigel Carlisle couldn't answer and George Scott said that Central needed to have the foresight to try and get trains. Cost of getting Network Rail to re-open line on Sunday prohibitive. Has Central done a survey? The Forum did a survey and it showed that **98%** wanted Sunday service. We are trying to provide a decent service for people and there is always the cost issue.

We are fighting and campaigning for improvements.

Nigel Carlisle replied that it was down to costs because of the Hatfield disaster.

However he would flag it up for further meetings.

Is it possible to have a better help system than what we have now? Often when there are cancellations people at Spalding are unaware of what has happened.

Would it be possible to have loudspeaker system set up?

Member of the Public said he had to turn down many invitations because he can not return home when he would like to as the trains finish early evening.

Station Rooms

Central have given ACORP the remit for letting out rooms at various stations over the area they cover. Previously David Hill, now Susan Miles in charge of this area.

Peter Roberts described ACORP and its role as a National Organisation for Community projects helping Central to lease rooms at its stations for modest rents

in Sleaford Stamford and Spalding and others in the Central area. There have been 19 enquiries over all the stations.

There will be three letting units at Spalding and the first of these is expected to be in use by the autumn. There has been a lot of interest in Spalding rooms and there is a brochure available.

They have been given only one project officer and because of interest in Spalding it was pushed up the ladder. Catering was one of the considerations but this has been put back.

George Scott said the forum is a good organ for encouraging things.

We need a waiting room especially in the winter as after 14.30 the booking hall is closed and people have to wait on the station in all weathers.

Park Road Footbridge

This is now redundant and we would like to see the lower section opened up so that people can use it to gain access to the town rather than using their cars and driving round. Network Rail said it was not out of the question but the problem is the station is a conservation area.

Jonathon Biggadyke has said that Town Forum recommends this to be done.

Chairman wrote to the Leader of the Council as we want to use station as a joining point. A Complaint was made that when the improvement works were carried out there were various pieces of equipment in use during the night and why weren't the local residents informed about the works taking place.

Chairman said that the Forum didn't know the exact date when the work was taking place but it was Network Rail and the contractors who should have been more conscientious and informed people of their intentions either by mail shot or in the local paper or on the local news.

With regard to the bridge, as far as we were aware, the builder wanted to take the bridge down and waited for someone from the Council to come along, but decided when they didn't to block off the access at ground level and first floor level. The key point is that it should not have been blocked off. There are now problems as the bridge is becoming derelict and is falling into dis-repair.

Member of public said that some passengers used the grassed area on the Park Road side to have food and drinks and left all their rubbish behind them he knew they were passengers because he found tickets amongst the bits.

If we have the facility it will mean that there will be more people able to use the access and Security cameras will need to be put in place.

Committee

Current Committee we re-elected for another term and Louise McGuinness joined as new committee member.

Proposal was made to change name to Spalding & Peterborough Transport Forum as there was not one at Peterborough to deal with issues. The benefits of including Peterborough may be influence with the Peterborough Council if we want to be a voice and be able to have a say in transport issues. Bus operators do not recognise us but they too may realise we have issues to be solved. 40-50 people attend the

Whittlesey meetings, so why is Peterborough so poorly attended? The reason may be that they have no issues to deal with as the service is good and there are usually no problems.

Graeme Clark said good idea to have links. RPC will encourage groups to talk to each other.

At the GNER meetings they have people from the Council, Network Rail, Bus Operators and WAGN.

Car Parking

Central trains have been looking at stations where there are no charges. By bringing in charges they would be increasing their revenue. A Company would be employed to monitor car park.

A survey was carried out and it was found not to be viable but the Marketing department decided that it could be. This could mean that rather than travelling to Peterborough by train people would drive as this would be the cheaper option and Central would lose more passengers than it gained in revenue.

Graeme Clark said that the RPC said under no circumstances should passengers pay to park.

Member of Public said that he had a problem at Peterborough when he wanted to travel by train. He could see spaces but the sign showed car park full sign. On querying with station staff he was told that some spaces had to be left for season ticket holders. Trevor Fenwick said that they have to honour season ticket holders spaces but after 10 am they don't get priority,

He also said that this has been managed poorly and he will speak to staff about improving the system. There is also the possibility of the Nene Valley Railway coming in to Peterborough so people can travel in from that direction. There are lots of changes and it is a difficult time at the moment.

Transport

John Hayes regards the forum as useful for dealing with all transport issues and we keep him very well informed of what is happening. It also seems very effective in getting messages across which is proved by us having clout very high up in GNER. We face many challenges in getting the sort of transport we want but John Hayes can give us support i.e. with the footbridge.

In terms of big challenges we have woefully inadequate rail link that we have discussed over the years. When John Hayes' mother-in-law uses the train she often complains regarding connections and poor stock. He would use the train himself if there were trains after 8.30pm.

With Spalding growing this is getting to be a bigger issue and we can't end up with a onehorse train. It was mentioned that according to the railways Spalding Opens after 7am and closes after 8.30pm. Other issues with transport need to be tackled and we need to see more integration with other services so that passengers don't have to wait for too long for connections.

Graeme Clark said that for the RPC groups like ours will be very important and can influence and lend voice to the issues and speak to the RPC.

We are trying to improve things so that Central & GNER make money. Since five years ago more people were using the trains. Improve the service more and more people will use it.

We need to be told about issues because if we don't know about it we can not be blamed if things go wrong. We want a good service, we want longer hours of travel and we want communication from people to tell us what is happening.

The Government says get out and use Public Transport but how can we if the service finishes early?

With all the problems for Spalding the question was asked 'What would be the procedure for having our own trains? Trains for Lincoln Sleaford and Peterborough are to be included.

Cost would be a problem but if people wanted it, they could run a private service but it would need planning.

Trevor Fenwick said he would find out about the private service.

WEBSITE COMPETITION

Whilst the last item was being debated the Judging Panel were viewing the finalists to decide whose idea would be uploaded onto our website and updated for a year.

After deliberation and viewing each of the websites the Panel decided to award first prize to Christopher Smith and the runner up Jon Morris.

Peter Hanham of GNER Marketing awarded Christopher four first class tickets between any two GNER stations. Nigel Carlisle awarded Jon Morris a Family ticket for travel between any two Central stations. Photographs had been taken a little earlier of the two contestants and the certificates that John Hayes presented to them as the photographer had to leave.

GNER franchise has been awarded for 8 years with two years extra if they reach their targets.

They hope very much to be able to improve their services but it will be costly. Central were only given two years contract and were unable to commit to any major improvements. Train Operating Co needs to have at least eight years to be able to achieve anything. We feel Central haven't had a fair ride. If you get bums on seats it pays. We need to provide a decent service for people. We would like to have input to discuss with the Operator who is to take over from Central. We will be consulted on transport by LCC as taxpayers pay for the service.

RPC will be changing there will be Passenger Link Managers and there will only be two offices – one in London and one in Manchester. ACORP will be more consultative.

Nigel hopes to still be here next year.

The Website will be up and running from May.

Next Meeting 23rd June.

Chairman thanked all for coming and closed the meeting at 10.20 pm.

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