

# **BEDFORD COMMUTERS ASSOCIATION**

## **MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

Present:	Arthur Taylor	Chairman
	Steve Floyd	Treasurer
	Alison Crompton	Committee
	John Henderson	Committee
	Mark Spurgeon	Committee
	Martin James	Committee
	Howard Pile	Committee
	Tom Moran	Thameslink
	Peter Lane	Thameslink
	Andy Chillingworth	Thameslink
	Patrick Ladbury	Thameslink
	Julien Edwards	EMR
	Andy Commons	EMR
	Mick Taylor	EMR
	Gavin Crook	NR
	Neil Middleton	APTU

There were 7 members and 4 non-members also present.

Apologies: Melanie McCleod Jim Allwood

### **1. Welcome & Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM and the representatives from Thameslink, EMR and NR introduced themselves. The Chairman thanked the speakers for attending and agreeing to give presentations and answer questions later.

### **2. Minutes of 2018 AGM**

The minutes of the 2018 AGM were considered and accepted by the meeting.

### **3. Chairman's Report 2018/19**

The Chairman's report was attached to the agenda. The Chairman briefly outlined the main issues over the past year and the committee's priorities for the coming year. The meeting agreed the Chairman's Report

### **4. Treasurers Report & approval of Accounts from 1.9.18 to 31.8.19**

The treasurer explained the income and expenditure over the last year. He also explained the issue with the depreciation for the 2 BCA Banners that were purchased several years ago. The meeting agreed the Treasurers Report.

## **5. BCA 2018/19 Officers & Committee**

All the present Committee Members agreed to carry on for a further year. Courtney Lee said she was prepared to become a committee member. The Officers and Committee was then agreed by the meeting as per list below:

<u>New Committee:</u>	Chairman:	Arthur Taylor
	Treasurer:	Stephen Floyd
	Membership Secretary:	Alison Crompton
	Other Committee Members:	Mark Spurgeon, John Henderson, Howard Pile, Martin James, Courtney Lee

## **6. East Midlands Railway**

Julien Edwards MD EMR gave the East Midlands Railway presentation of which the main points were as follows:

EMR Franchise is for 8 years with the option of a further 2 years.

New fleet of trains for the MML Inter City services from 2022.

Big changes to the MML timetable from December 2020.

Reintroduction of Peak Time calls at Bedford and Luton

6 trains per hour to/ from St Pancras, 2 fast to Sheffield, 2 fast to Nottingham and 2 trains to Corby.

Bedford will be served by the half hourly St Pancras to Corby service. No Inter City services will call at Bedford. Travellers for Leicester and the north will need to change at Kettering and Leicester.

The St Pancras services will be provided by Class 360 electric trains.

Journey time to Bedford will be 42 minutes at peak times and 41 minutes at off peak times.

A public consultation on the December 2020 timetable will commence shortly.

Electrification of the MML is on schedule for completion next summer. This will allow for driver training ready for the start of the December timetable.

The Class 360 will be refurbished in 3 phases:

Phase 1 – re-gearred to allow them to run at 110 mph initially north of Bedford then south of Bedford on completion of power upgrade work which is expected to be completed by 2023.

Phase 2 – internal refurbishment to provide 2+2 seating, tables, wi-fi, power sockets and CIS.

Phase 3 – external re-livery.

Kettering Station will be improved with better facilities.

## **7. Thameslink**

Tom Moran MD Thameslink and GN gave the Thameslink presentation of which the main points were as follows:

Train services has improved but needs to improve further.

There have been some big issues over the last couple of months with the Infrastructure. Are working with NR on a detailed plan for improvements.

There has been a big increase in Suicides and trespass incidents recently. Staff are being trained for suicide prevention.

There will be changes to the Thameslink timetable from December 2020 that will see the original May 2018 introduced.

The software fault with the class 700's that caused 30 of the unites to be demobilised as a result of the National Grid power outage last August has been fixed.

Passenger Benefit Fund now at delivery stage. Will be undertaken in 2 tranches. Bedford will have its toilets refurbished in Tranche 1.

Are addressing Anti-Social behaviour at Bedford.

## **8. Network Rail**

Gavin Crook Principal Programme Sponsor gave the NR presentation of which the main points were as follows:

Electrification work is on schedule with 4/5 months of construction work remaining.

Power Upgrade work ongoing at Sundon north of Luton to provide the required level of power initially north of Bedford then south of Bedford by 2023.

Bromham Road bridge the last bridge to be reconstructed. Has now been demolished. Still on schedule to complete on time.

Possible further electrification north of Kettering to Market Harborough as a second power connection is to be made at Market Harborough. new

Platform 4 at Bedford is being extended along with a platform at Wellingborough.

Kettering station being upgraded. Market Harborough station platforms has been straightened and the car park upgraded.

Gary Walsh is the Route MD for this area.

## **9. Questions & Answers**

There followed Q&A session where questions were put to the Thameslink, EMT and NR representatives.

**Q1** How many changes will be necessary with the 2020 timetable to get from Bedford to Derby?

**A1** 2

**Q2** Kettering will not provide cross platform interchange which Bedford can provide?

**A2** That is correct and something worth thinking about which should be raised in the timetable consultation.

**Q3** Will the class 360 be fully disabled compliant and be provided with corridor connections on the driving cab slab end when refurbished?

**A3** Yes they will be fully compliant but corridor connections on the driving cab slab ends will not be provided due to cost.

**Q4** Why are class 379's not being cascaded across instead of class 360'?

**A4** For two reasons, they are not available and too expensive.

**Q5** At weekends services are very busy so please run 8/12 car trains, not 4 car trains?

**A5** This will be noted when drawing up the timetable. At peak times 12 car trains will operate but will need to strike a balance.

**Q6** Will peak trains be reinstated at Bedford?

**A6** Yes.

**Q7** Will there be consultation events or be just On-Line?

**A7** There will be both and face to face meetings at stations.

**Q8** Please hold some consultation at MK as some people travel to MK and get a train from there?

**A8** Yes.

**Q9** There is demand from Bedford to travel northbound however fares are very expensive compared with journey lengths on other routes. Does this suppress demand?

**A9** Fares are set by the DfT but we will look at this to ascertain if there is any flexibility. This also needs to be fed back via the consultation.

**Q10** Will EMR honour Group-save tickets as GTR does?

**A10** We will note this.

**Q11** Should there be a Stakeholder Conference to discuss suicide prevention including station design?

**A11** Yes there will be.

**Q12** During times of disruption information is very poor. There is no certainty about refunds for taxis and what staff training have you in place?

**A12** The priority is to improve the Three Bridges operation and better integration with GTR/NR. Better information for staff using technology is required so they know when the next train is coming.

**Q13** On train announcements need improving. You can wait 20 minutes at a red signal with few announcements as to what is happening?

**A13** Drivers should make announcements if waiting for more than one minute, but they are inconsistent.

**Q14** There are considerable issues with access to both stations and trains. Level access to trains is needed at stations. NR agree not all areas are fully accessible and there is technology that can be used. When will access improve?

**A14** Its likely to continue as access funding is provided by the DfT. Patrick said the CBC had submitted a £1M bid for access for station infrastructure funding which is not enough for lifts. He would update Arthur with details as and when he hears from CBC.

**Q15** Is there a strategy for travellers including the vulnerable for situations like the national grid power outage?

**A15** Yes. Hotels were paid for and staff are proactive in saying you should make a claim.

**Q16** Regarding the PBF are Bedford and Flitwick in Tranche 1?

**A16** Bedford is in Tranche 1 and Flitwick in Tranche 2. Water Fountains and Defibrillators will be provided at every station.

**Q17** The wi-fi on the class 700's is unreliable?

**A17** Not all class 700's at present are fitted with wi-fi but on those that it is fitted on do need the reliability to improve.

**Q18** With the introduction of the EMR electrics will GTR still run their semi fast services?

**A18** Yes, they will continue to run to the original stopping pattern for the May 2018 timetable. The Thameslink Express services will no longer run as the fast services will be provided by EMR.

**Q19** You have created a market for the Thameslink Express for fast services into the core which will now be slower?

**A19** We appreciate this, but the service will now be as originally intended from May 2018 with EMR providing fast services to St Pancras for onward connection to stations in the core.

**Q20** In emergencies all trains become all stations, but this causes gross overcrowding and many Inner London stations have alternative means to get there so why stop GTR trains at these stations. Also, the App does not show trains stopping at all stations?

**A20** The point is well made.

**Q21** When will Sundon come on stream?

**A21** It will be commissioned in summer 2020 ready for the December timetable.

**Q22** Are there any plans to provide a 5<sup>th</sup> platform at Bedford so platforms 4/5 can be dedicated to EMR?

**A22** At the present time No, however it may be considered by the East West Railway team.

**Q23** Can Platform 4 be made bi-directional like platforms 1/2/3?

**A23** No, as this would cause capacity issues at Bedford. With the number of trains using Bedford increasing the December 2020 timetable needs to be robust which it is if all is operating correctly.

**Q24** Could the entrance to Bedford station be enlarged as at present it is not fit for purpose?

**A24** Patrick will look at this and will be meeting Bedford Council shortly.

## **10. Any Other Business**

There was no AOB.

The meeting closed at 21.30