

Held at:

7.15 pm, Walkden Legion Club

Attendees:

Gary Abernethy (GA, Northern Rail)
Eric Almer (EH, Friends of Hindley Station)
Peter Aust (PA - Chair)
Mark Barker (MB, Northern Rail)
Andy Barlow (AB)
Derek Bedford (DB)
Frank Bridge (FB)
Anne Broomhead (ABr)
Paul Burgess (PB)
Michael Carney (MC)
Barbara Carney(BC)
Elizabeth Charnley (EC, FRECCLES)
Mark Charnley (MC, FRECCLES)
Angela Critchley (AC)
Preva Crossley (PC, Friends of Hindley Station)
A. Davidson (AD, Friends of Hindley Station)
Doug Ewen (DE)
Alison Gardner (AG, Salford City College)
Peter Hope (PH)
Robert Hope (RH)
Keith Ingram (KI)
Tracy Jacobs (TJ, Salford City Council)
Nina Keshishian (NK, Friends of Patricroft Station)
Kathy Knowles (KK)
David Lindley (DL)
Cllr Iain Lindley (IL)
Harry Merrick (HM)
Prof. Paul Salveson (PS)
Jennifer Reynolds (JR)
Dennis Reynolds (DR)
Dave Robinson (DRo)
PC Maxine Southwell (MS, British Transport Police)
Graham Spencer (GS)
Neil Stapleton (NS - Minutes)

Apologies:

Stephen Clark, TfGM
Barbara Keeley MP
Cllr Karen Garrido
Cllr Robin Garrido

Agenda

Item	Subject
1	<p>Chair's Welcome & Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies for Absence <p><i>Apologies received from the people listed above.</i></p> <p><i>A specially prepared bulletin from Barbara Keeley MP was distributed in her absence (on Westminster duty).</i></p> <p><i>A special welcome to first-time visitors and our guests from Northern Rail, BTP and Salford City College.</i></p>
2	<p>Question and Answer Session</p> <p>PH: when will a lift be installed at Walkden to enable disabled access ?</p> <p><i>GA: the site has been surveyed 3 times by contractors and concluded the Booking Office will have to be moved and 2 lifts installed to cope with the layout of the station entrance. There are no immediate plans to install these lifts.</i></p> <p><i>MB: Walkden is in Transport for Greater Manchester's (TfGM) top 4 stations for creating disabled access. We understand (MB is not able to speak for TfGM) there are no funds available at present but serious preparatory work is being undertaken to put TfGM in position to react quickly when funding becomes available.</i></p> <p>BC: are there any plans to install a "Harrington Hump" to reduce the step between platform and trains ?</p> <p><i>MB: Network Rail have some money to install more humps and will be approaching Northern Rail for suggestions on where they are most badly needed. There are stations in Cumbria with bigger gaps, but probably used by fewer people. Walkden's passenger numbers are high but the problem of the gap has been mitigated somewhat by the new platform extension which is at a slightly higher level. MB offered to check the "stopping point" guidance given to drivers with a view to ensuring the new (higher) section of platform is utilised.</i></p> <p>PB: Could a handrail be installed down the centre of the stairways (as at Wigan Wallgate) to improve safety for elderly or frail passengers ?</p> <p><i>GA/MB: hard to comment but will investigate</i></p> <p>IL: Will the Sunday service be continued after May?</p> <p><i>MB: This is due to be discussed at TfGM next month.</i></p> <p>HM: Any plans to extend Sunday service or improve connections at Wigan and Manchester ?</p> <p><i>MB: If approved it will be continuation of existing service – Northern have not been asked to plan for extending the operation. It has been very successful in its present form.</i></p> <p>PC: Can more be done to tackle fare evasion ?</p> <p><i>GA: At Walkden we have the opposite problem – people complaining that the Ticket Office cannot handle the volume of customers requiring tickets at busy times.</i></p> <p>AC: Can the platform planters be moved back to their correct positions ?</p> <p><i>GA: this should be done by Network Rail contractors this week [NS: this was done]</i></p>

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	<p>PH: Is the signal box still planned for closure ?</p> <p><i>GA: Not sure of Network Rail's plans.</i></p> <p><i>IL: Closure would be sad for the signalmen and box but should result in better quality of service.</i></p> <p><i>HM: Signalling won't improve quality of connections at Salford Crescent – it's the timing of services at fault.</i></p> <p><i>MB: Timetables in busy areas like Manchester are a compromise built around platform and junction capacity etc. There is no opportunity to move trains back or forward by a few minutes. There could be an opportunity in 3-4 years time when the timetables are replanned around the Northern Hub.</i></p> <p>FB: Why has a new cable been installed at the front of the station ?</p> <p><i>GA: I will find out and tell NS [NS: Gary has emailed to say "a junction box has been put in by NWR. It is to power a communications mast for the signal box hope this helps"]</i></p>
3	<p>Guest Speaker: Prof. Paul Salveson</p> <p><i>Prof. Salveson gave a very interesting talk surveying the state of community rail and transport development plans at national, regional and local level. Some key points were:</i></p> <p><i>Walkden station is enjoying a renaissance – in the late 60's the line was on the brink of closure.</i></p> <p><i>Friends groups around Manchester are doing really well. Those groups that have a positive and supportive outlook tend to get more support from Northern Rail.</i></p> <p><i>A Government "Command Paper" on rail strategy is expected imminently but some good news has already been announced including electrification of more routes, new trams for TfGM, the "Ordsall curve" allowing direct trains between Victoria and Piccadilly – but still no prospect of replacing the "Pacer" units with more modern trains.</i></p> <p><i>There is likely to be a consultation period following the Command Paper which Friends' groups should engage with: there is a risk that local services on some lines will be displaced to allow more express trains through.</i></p> <p><i>TfGM may get more powers to participate in rail service planning – but that could also mean more powerful lobbying from several authorities for Northern to deal with.</i></p> <p><i>In other parts of the UK (Scotland and Wales) devolution of transport planning has been very successful with several new routes having been built or returned to use after years of disuse.</i></p> <p><i>In summary more regional power should be good for accountability and informed decision making, but questions remain over the level and sources of funding.</i></p> <p><i>FOWS are a good example of a group working with community and rail company to improve their local station and services. Sometimes community rail groups concentrate too much on rail and not enough on community. Understandable but groups need to reach out and involve the community in the railway more.</i></p> <p><i>Microfranchising of services by community groups is taking off in Europe but is a long way off in Britain.</i></p> <p><i>Tip for engaging with rail companies: your local knowledge is your special contribution which can open up ideas that centralised railway planners cannot conceive without local insight.</i></p> <p><i>On the Settle & Carlisle line complementary businesses have been started by community rail groups (e.g. Skipton station café). There is lots of support within Northern Rail for ventures like this.</i></p>

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	<p><i>Franchising system is not fit for purpose: there is too much instability making long term planning and investment difficult. Would like to see more services brought back into the public sector.</i></p> <p><i>Biggest lesson from community rail is the importance of getting the right people with lots of enthusiasm involved (for example, see Patricroft and Handforth).</i></p> <p><i>Good Luck to FOWS and keep up the Good Work !</i></p> <p>Prof. Salvesson kindly donated several copies of his books for sale to raise funds for FOWS.</p>
4	<p>Review of the Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary (NS) <p><i>NS presented a review of the main events and developments over the last 12 months, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2011 was second year of Sunday service operation</i> • <i>April: Re-organisation of GMPTE into TfGM</i> • <i>April: Pam Williams replaced by Gary Abernethy as Station Manager</i> • <i>June-Aug: track relaying, including slight lowering of track level through the station (in Wigan direction).</i> • <i>Sept: Additional CCTV cameras installed by Northern</i> • <i>Oct-Mar: reinstatement of disused length of platform to accommodate 4-carriage trains</i> • <i>Nov: FOWS annual passenger count reveals 20% annual rise to 717 passengers using the station between 0600 and 1330.</i> • <i>Dec: 2 extra carriages provided on 1 morning and 1 evening peak service.</i> • <i>Dec: 4 carriages on most Sunday trains, but severe over-crowding on Saturdays</i> • <i>Dec: Electronic passenger information screens and HelpPoint installed.</i> • <i>Jan: Annual fare rises: most popular tickets from Walkden (to Manchester, peak and off-peak) rose between 7.3% and 9.4%</i> • <i>Feb: Card-only ticket vending machine installed in Booking Hall</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Improvement & Campaigns (AB) <p><i>AB attended the Northern Stakeholders Meeting and TfGM Rail User Groups meeting to discuss the Dec 2012 timetable. AB submitted several suggestions to improve connectivity e.g. tweaking services like the 0912 that misses a connection to Piccadilly and the Airport by 1 minute.</i></p> <p><i>There is a possibility that from Dec more services from Walkden will be extended to Stalybridge which could be an opportunity to introduce some direct trains from Walkden to Piccadilly.</i></p> <p><i>At this point TJ had to leave but wished to say that FOWS work really hard and our efforts are widely appreciated in the community.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardens (AC) <p><i>AC explained gardens suffered from theft at the start of the year (subsequently much reduced by the installation of CCTV cameras), the winter cold, and damage sustained during Network Rail platform works.</i></p> <p><i>The gardens have recently been weeded and tidied (with thanks to BC and KK) and AC is preparing an application for a grant from Salford City Council to re-stock the beds and planters. If sufficient money can be found FOWS will install more planters</i></p>

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	<p><i>on the new section of platform.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website & Blog (NS) • <i>Blog</i> <p><i>NS reported fewer posts on blog this year (80) but visitor numbers level with previous year (averaging 17 visits per day).</i></p> <p><i>NS re-iterated other members are welcome to contribute to blog (provided no party political or offensive material is posted).</i></p> <p><i>There is no cost to FOWS for hosting of the blog.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Website</i> <p><i>Domain registration cost £7 for 2 years (to April 2013). Hosting cost £72 for 1 year to May 2012.</i></p> <p><i>Average 109 page views per day (approx. 30% are "robots" i.e. not actual users).</i></p> <p><i>Most popular pages are Along The Line, Walkden Today, Signal Box History and Station History.</i></p>
5	<p>Treasurer's Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of Accounts March 2011 to date <p><i>From 02/03/2011 to 07/03/2012 FOWS total funds have grown from £193.66 to £218.78</i></p> <p><i>Membership subscriptions for 2011 were £52.</i></p> <p><i>The full Treasurer's Report is attached to these minutes.</i></p> <p><i>AC provided a summary of the financial position and confirmed the accounts for the previous year have been audited by JR</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership Subscriptions for 2012 <p><i>AC reported 26 members joined FOWS in 2011 (up on the previous year).</i></p> <p><i>Subscription fees for 2012 will be £2 again.</i></p> <p><i>AC expressed thanks on behalf of FOWS to PC and Friends of Hindley Station for organising the buffet at December's Xmas Social.</i></p>
6	<p>Election of Officers: Chair/Secretary/Treasurer/Service Improvement Officer.</p> <p><i>The following people were re-elected to the Committee of Officers unanimously:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Neil Stapleton (Secretary)</i> • <i>Angela Critchley (Treasurer)</i> • <i>Service Improvement Officer (Andy Barlow)</i> <p><i>Peter Aust retired as Chair. PC and IL offered to serve: PA thanked PC for his kind offer but suggested a local resident would be preferable.</i></p> <p><i>IL was reluctant to take the post permanently as he believes it is more difficult for a community group to progress with an elected politician as their Chair (the outside perception can be tainted by perceived bias), but was persuaded to serve in a caretaker role until a permanent appointment can be made.</i></p> <p><i>NS thanked IL for this offer and stressed to the membership that an unaligned member of the local community is needed to Chair the group.</i></p> <p><i>IL was elected unanimously as Chair in a temporary capacity.</i></p>
7	<p>Election of Auditors</p> <p><i>JR was willing to serve as auditor again and unanimously re-elected.</i></p>

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8	<p>Planning and Objectives for 2012</p> <p><i>IL suggested potential objectives for 2012:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Input to Northern re-franchising and timetabling consultations</i> • <i>Disabled access</i> • <i>Sunday services</i> • <i>Gardening and environmental services</i> <p><i>PA added Car parking and a Waiting Room.</i></p> <p><i>AB suggested plans for a Waiting Room would depend upon the location of lift(s) which will presumably be installed to facilitate disabled access in the years ahead.</i></p>
9	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freccles AGM <p><i>EC advised that FRECCLES AGM will be held on 26/03 at 7.15pm</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artwork <p><i>AG noted the art work that had been produced at Eccles by the students of Salford City College and asked what themes would people like to see depicted at Walkden (for example local history or places served by the train ?). This is a good time of the academic year for FOWS to engage with the college on art schemes.</i></p> <p><i>NK and EC offered to lend the benefit of their experience of art projects at Patricroft and Eccles respectively.</i></p> <p><i>FB, PH, NS and AC to form a working group for Art projects at the station.</i></p>

Summary of Actions

Who	Action
MB	To check the "stopping point" guidance given to drivers with a view to ensuring the new (higher) section of platform is utilised.
MB/ GA	Investigate possibility of a central handrail being installed on stairways to improve customers safety
FB PH NS AC	Form a working group for art projects at the station.