

## Harborough Rail Users 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Meeting held at 13:00 on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021 online on Skype

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Steve Jones, as Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming all present and thanking Anne Pridmore for arranging to host the meeting on Zoom. However, there appeared to have been a widespread system failure on Zoom, so Jonathan Byron kindly set up an alternative meeting on Skype. The meeting therefore started late at about 13:30.

1. **Present:** Steve Jones (Chair), Stephen Abbott, James Bourne, Jonathan Byron, Terry Kealy, Angela Maxfield, Tim Murray, Anne Pridmore, Patrick Wolstencroft.

**Apologies:** None.

2. **Minutes of last AGM - 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

These were formally approved.

3. **Matters arising**

None.

4. **Chair's Report**

Presented by Steve Jones. It has been another unusual year because of the coronavirus pandemic, starting in lockdown but seeing a resumption of much normal activity as the year went on. EMR have worked hard to resume, for the most part, the full timetable despite numerous difficulties, not least of which is staffing problems. Work looks set to start imminently on the new toilets and waiting room at the station, though details remain unclear. The meeting discussed the specification of the disabled-accessible toilets; these should ideally be of the 'changing places' type but it is not known whether the project scope includes this.

Electrification of the line from Kettering is getting under way, and the Government has recently announced the electrification of the remainder of the Midland Main Line.

Harborough Rail Users has been busy throughout, maintaining regular liaison with EMR, Network Rail, the local MP and councillors, plus participation in relevant consultations.

The HRU Committee were thanked for all their help and support throughout the year, especially the Treasurer, James Bourne, for his continued patience with changing the HRU bank account.

The report was accepted.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

Presented by James Bourne. The balance in the bank account as at the date of the AGM was £361.51, which takes account of expenses to be reimbursed totalling £72.00, associated with the website and domain registrations. There was no income during the year, though £54.00 in cash has been paid into the bank. Assuming similar expenditure next year for the website, the projected balance in November 2021 is £289.51, but that assumes no income. HRU relies solely on donations; there is no membership fee or other income.

There is no cash in hand and there are no other assets or liabilities.

James outlined HSBC's announcement in October that it intended to charge HRU £5 per month just to have the account. As this is excessive for a small voluntary community group, the HSBC account has been closed and the money withdrawn and paid into a new Lloyds Bank account that does not incur such charges.

The report was accepted.

6. **Election of Officers: 2021-22**

Committee member Angela Maxfield took the chair for the election of the post of Chair. In the absence of any other nominations, it was proposed by Jonathan Byron, seconded by Tim Murray and carried that Steve Jones be re-elected as Chair. We noted that the duties of Secretary are in practice mostly carried out by the Chair; email meaning that this is not onerous.

Steve Jones proposed that James Bourne be re-elected as Treasurer. This was seconded by Angela Maxfield and agreed nem con.

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In the absence of any nominations or resignations, it was agreed nem con that the existing Officers and Committee be re-elected en bloc. This is subject to confirmation by those not present of their willingness to continue.

Also agreed was that Steve Jones would continue as HRU's representative on regional transport user forum TravelWatch East Midlands.

Subject to the above, the Committee for 2021-22 is as follows:

Post	Appointed
Chair	Steve Jones
Secretary	(vacant)
Treasurer	James Bourne
Committee members	Jonathan Byron
	Michael Hargreaves
	Angela Maxfield
	Tim Murray
	Anne Pridmore
	Cliff Taylor
	Steven Taylor
	Patrick Wolstencroft
TravelWatch East Midlands rep	Steve Jones

Anne Pridmore raised concern that women are under-represented within HRU. This point was acknowledged by the meeting. It was accepted that this is far from ideal, but the group is entirely dependent on those who come forward and get involved. There followed a discussion of HRU's profile and an agreement that we ought to use social media. We did have a Facebook account, but it has been moribund for years. We discussed Facebook and Twitter; it was agreed in principle that Twitter is the most appropriate platform. It was also agreed that any postings on Twitter must reflect the policies of HRU and should be confined to matters of principle, associated with campaigns, etc, as opposed to personal opinions or complaints relating to day-to-day problems such as a particular train being late. Social media and the need to attract wider participation are to be on the agenda of the next Committee meeting.

*(Post-meeting note: Anne Pridmore has since resigned from the Committee.)*

### 7. **Campaign Topics for the forthcoming year**

The meeting reaffirmed the previous campaign topics:

- (1) **Train services.** We shall remain alert to developments in the timetable, including the risk of any reductions, though EMR have given no hint of any intention to reduce services. Though the May 2021 timetable change established the essential service pattern for the Midland Main Line for the anticipated future, we continue to press for an earlier start of service northbound on Sundays,  
We shall take part in any consultations about future timetables.

- (2) **Rolling stock.** Pending the entry into service of the new Hitachi 'Aurora' Class 810 bi-mode trains from 2022-23, our services will be provided chiefly by 'Meridians', supplemented by four of the broadly similar Class 180s. As traffic has recovered in recent months, overcrowding has returned as a concern, though it is mainly because of short-formed trains. EMR have promised greater resumption of double-unit workings (9 or 10-cars, in place of 4 or 5-cars) from the December 2021 timetable. They are also reducing two of the present 7-car Meridians to 5-car to release vehicles to strengthen the present 4-car sets to 5-cars. This will mean a more standard fleet and will be a precursor to the Aurora trains, which are all 5-car.

We noted that the Meridians are getting shabby. EMR have reported that an interior refresh is to be carried out.

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- (3) **Electrification.** This is not really a 'campaign' topic as it is already getting under way from Kettering, with the rest of the line to Nottingham and Sheffield recently given the go-ahead in principle under the Government's *Integrated Rail Plan*. We shall maintain a watching brief, noting also that quite a lot of engineering work is scheduled in the next few months.
- (4) **Market Harborough station.** This is the principal topic for HRU over the next year, on account of the further improvements that are planned or sought. These include:
  - The long-awaited new toilets.
  - The new waiting room and other shelter. The lack of platform canopies makes the station very exposed to weather. People shelter on the covered steps of the footbridge, sometimes causing an obstruction.
  - The forecourt, including the lack of short-stay parking and the potential conflict between pedestrian and vehicle movement. The forecourt can be chaotic! We shall also continue to draw attention to the need for more - and sheltered - cycle parking for casual users.
  - The lack of short-stay car parking, both in the forecourt and at the main car park entrance.
- (5) **Northampton Line.** Though not an active campaign, we shall continue to maintain a watching brief on the proposals that emerge from time to time for the reopening of the Northampton Line. We shall participate in any forthcoming consultations by England's Economic Heartland. We noted that, when completed, East West Rail at Bedford will provide greatly improved connections towards Oxford and Cambridge.

### 8. **Any Other Business**

- (1) Tim Murray reported on imminent serious reductions in services in CrossCountry services between Birmingham, Leicester and Peterborough, and between Nottingham and Birmingham, because of staff shortages. This is especially concerning because these routes were already covering for some station calls no longer provided because of separate reductions in EMR Regional services.
- (2) Tim Murray raised concerns about coordination of replacement buses with diverted trains when there is engineering work, plus emergency timetables during the continuing industrial dispute. In both instances, however, it is acknowledged that the indicative timetables are not yet finalised.
- (3) Future meetings: Tim Murray suggested a mix of meeting formats over the next year, with winter meetings on Zoom (perhaps a mix of evenings and lunchtimes), and summer 'open air' meetings at the station. This was agreed as a good way forward.

**Next meeting:** A meeting on Zoom, either in January or February 2022. This will be an open meeting, details to be agreed.

The meeting closed at 15:00.