

MINUTES OF 2015 ALUA AGM

**Tuesday 29th October 2015 at The United Reformed Church, South Street,
Farnham**

Chair of meeting: John Eddleston

Minute-taker: Jonathan Riddell

Present

ALUA committee: Chris Campbell, Barry Jones, Paul Barber, Jonathan Riddell, Mike Roberts, Diane McKay, John Eddleston, Simon Parton

South West Trains and Network Rail:
Chloe Clarke - SWT Suburban Network Manager
James Beveridge - SWT Alton Line Manager

Other: 13-15 ALUA members/non-members

Apologies

David Jones (Chairman), Daniel Hill (Web editor).

Minutes of AGM held on 16 October 2014

Accepted and approved as a true and accurate record. No matters arising.

Chairperson's report

As ALUA's chairperson, David Jones, was unable to attend due to ill health, Chris Campbell read out the chairman's report below

Mr President, Ladies and Gentleman,

When this time last year I accepted the Chairmanship of ALUA I said that I would do so, providing I received the support of the Committee and the work load was spread out as I am not getting any younger.

That support has been very much to the fore in recent weeks and I very grateful to our Vice Chair John Eddleston and Jonathan Riddell for getting everything together for this AGM
Where does one start a report with the positive intention of keeping it as short as possible when there are so many things to say?

I will start with Changes, and I must say that in my opinion the breaking up of the Alliance was a retrograde step. Having been involved with Right Time Railway Groups not only at its formation but also for a year or so locally in this Division. I thought it was good to have everyone singing from the same Hymn Sheet which benefitted Passengers and staff alike, but now the lack of communication on our line at the times of disruption has gone out of the window. It is easy, to make decisions at Woking Control and I have watched this happening to good effect but

sometimes without consideration that they will have on our end of the line. When we had the signal boxes we had problems and we still do despite the millions spent on the hash of re-signalling the line, but then sensible decisions were made and passed directly to the platform staff in good time.

On the subject of change I feel that we have always worked well and got on extremely well with the new group area and local managers concerning our line, but I think we have had our fair share of changes in management over recent years. It would be good to have more continuity and I am sure this goes for all the station staff as well.

I have to mention the car park at Farnham as I said at our last AGM our main goal this year was to make progress with double decking of same with better access and consideration given to bicycles and motor bikes as soon as possible not only for the benefit of our members but for local residents as well. Despite denials from all directions for most of the year, we are now being told that Farnham is now priority and like us and local councillors, we wait to see the plans in details. We have asked to be kept informed so that we can give input from the passengers' point of view and raise any concerns. I must mention the Alton Station Bridge, which is part of the station heritage, we did point out to Managers well over three years ago that it was in a poor way and because nothing has been done over the years, it has got worse. We can only offer our support to the Friends group who are keeping in touch with the plans for it.

I would like to mention the new Franchise as it does bring home to us that our railway is not a privatised railway at all. As Nigel Harris says in Rail Magazine, "The railway we travel on is publicly owned and is let by the DFT into franchises or very tightly framed management contracts"

What we have is a publically owned railway privately delivered. The big question is who is going to offer the DFT what they want and how much do we as stake owners come into the equation.

Finally I think the list of our key requirements for the new franchise have been put before you and I have no need to refer to them again. I would like to thank James Beveridge, Steve Hennell and Cloe Clarke who I have yet to meet for all their help and would apologise for my non-attendance and thank all of you for being so understanding during my illness.

Brief Report from Vice-Chair John Eddleston

I would like to report briefly on some of the meetings which we have had this year.

In February, Mike Roberts and I attended a presentation in London by Network Rail on Wessex infrastructure plans for the next few decades. Although there are many grand concepts, this all depends on treasury financing. (These schemes include further electrification, completely new platforms at several major stations and two new flyovers.) However, the expansion of Waterloo is definitely going ahead with more and longer platforms. Other plans such as Woking flyover may come later. Responses to the Wessex plans were invited and I produced a document on ALUA's behalf.

On 8 September 2015 there was a meeting between South West Trains and ALUA. Among the topics discussed were Sunday services, evening delays to certain trains, signalling problems and shortage of Sunday drivers. Also infrastructure issues including car parking and footbridges and waiting rooms. These are ongoing issues.

On 13 October 2015, Mike Roberts and I attended a SWT Stakeholder Conference at Basingstoke. Presentations by SWT senior managers included customer satisfaction surveys, the tragic issue of suicides on the railway, a business overview by Tim Shoveller (SWT MD), station improvements and an update on the franchise, which is to go to tender shortly.

On the subject of the SW franchise going to tender, we had a brief meeting with a representative from another TOC (Arriva), who travelled the Alton branch and asked us what we wanted form a new franchise.

We have put together a document of ALUA's Key Requirements for the New Rail Franchise, with thanks to Jonathan Riddell of the Committee for the latest draft version.

There are fuller reports on most of the above meetings if any member is interested.

Treasurer's report

Barry Jones, presented the financial statement for the period 1 April 2014 to 31March 2015. The statement was approved by the meeting (see attached).

Election of committee

The following persons were elected to serve on the committee: Chris Campbell, Paul Barber, Diane McKay, John Eddleston, Graham Titterington (Alton); David Jones, Simon Parton, Jonathan Riddell (Farnham); Mike Roberts, Barry Jones (Aldershot); Daniel Hill (Ash Vale).

David Jones was elected Chair of ALUA.

John Eddleston was elected Vice-Chair.

The following officers were also elected:

Treasurer: Barry Jones

Secretary: Paul Barber

Minutes secretary: Jonathan Riddell

Q&A with SWT guest speakers

The following issues were amongst those raised with the question and answer session with SWT guest .

- (i) Why does SWT not make it much clearer when railcards can be use, SWT staff could not give precise information as to when different railcards could be used, no doubt because they do not use them
- (ii) Why is that SWT claim that there is no room for rail replacement bus services to call at Bentley station when the school bus is able to so. Stopping in the village might benefit some but is no use for those whose cars are still at the station.

- (iii) Why are the level crossing gates at Farnham shut for such long periods? Has this been made worse by closing Farnham signal box as the signalmen now have others work to concentrate on so leaving the level crossing gates down too long?
- (iv) It was appreciated that carriages now show the carriage number on the internal electronic displays but there are still problems with information.
- (v) Why is the Waiting room on Platform 2 always closed? Particularly since it has been redecorated in the spring. James Beveridge said there was no reason it should be closed and would look into it.
- (vi) On trains with single doors, it is much harder for disabled and wheelchair passengers to easily and safely access the train? Has thought been given to this when designing new stock?
- (vii) Why are there so many pointless announcements?
- (viii) Does SWT have robust plans to get trains moving in times of disruption? Are they giving enough thought to the danger of overcrowded platforms?
- (ix) Will the car park at Farnham be designed to be able to take a third deck if needed in the future? Why are SWT not sharing the plans of the proposed new carpark with passengers at Farnham? James Beveridge responded that we will be able to see the plans once they are finalised (this was felt to be too late) and that the work should start Spring 2016 and could take between 16-24 weeks to complete. He was unable to say what existing users of the carparks should do whilst work was being carried out.
- (x) Why has the entrance to the platform at Alton been blocked off? This is so that work can be carried out on the footbridge.

Some of these issues were covered in the Q&A session that followed.