



“ONTRACK”

WALTON ON NAZE, FRINTON ON SEA KIRBY CROSS & THORPE LE SOKEN RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

(Affiliated with the Essex Rail Users' Federation)

Serving the passengers of the Walton-on-the-Naze and Clacton-on-Sea lines for over twenty years.

MINUTES OF MEETING OF 13th MAY 2017 AGM

Committee Present:-

John Smock (Chairman)

Dave Bolton (Secretary)

David Payne (Treasurer)

Tony Baxter (Past Secretary)

David Bryant (Asst. Treasurer)

1. **Chairman John Smock** opened the meeting at 10.30 and welcomed members and guests. **Apologies were received**, from David Foster (Frinton in Bloom), David Grace (Lib Dem Parliamentary candidate for the Clacton constituency) and Eric Rowley. (Note Email Apologies also received Cllr Anne Platt, David Grace Lib Dem Parliamentary Candidate Clacton)
2. **The minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 21st MAY 2016:** Were read and agreed unanimously except for item regarding Hythe station which does appear on internet sites but re-naming to “Colchester – Hythe” would enable this to be displayed alongside “Colchester” and “Colchester Town” when entering “Colchester” into an internet search site
3. **The Annual Report:** was read and accepted unanimously except for the addition of a reference to the Association being invited to the launch of the refurbished class 321 “Renatus” unit in December 2016.
4. **The Treasurer's Report:** showed the financial position as at 31st December 2016 and was accepted unanimously. Chairman thanked David Payne for his stewardship.
5. **The Secretary's Report:** -a verbal report was given
6. **Election of Officers:** The committee stood down but made themselves available for re-election. There being no nominations for any of the posts, the committee was re-elected unanimously. (Co-opted Andrew Wilson, David Bryant)
7. **Current Issues.** The proposed closure of ticket offices was overviewed by the Chair and the potential problems encountered when purchasing tickets, particularly involving “card only” ticket vending machines was discussed. A report from RAIL magazine was read out in respect of the legal position passengers who have cash only when faced with Card only machines.
8. **Railfuture guests:** Peter Wakefield (Vice Chair) and Nick Dibben, having arrived after a lengthy journey from Cambridge, were welcomed and Peter Wakefield was invited to address the meeting. He commented that Railfuture had met with Abellio and pointed out to them that it was considered that the number of toilets on the new Inter-City trains would be inadequate and had also noted concerns regarding 2+3 seating and the standard of seat proposed for the new suburban trains.

Peter also provided information concerning the new ticket vending machines: these are to accept cash or cards and will be able to issue tickets for journeys to/from any station including advance tickets; in case of difficulties it will be possible to speak to a remote operator who will be able to take over the transaction and issue the ticket remotely. He also passed on the information that a host would be always

available at Thorpe-le-Soken and Harwich international/Dovercourt.

In addition, in a meeting with Paul Oxley (Greater Anglia) Railfuture had been informed that the operator intended to attempt to increase passenger numbers in order to provide an acceptable business case for half-hourly services in Tendring.

9. **“Question Time”:** The Chair welcomed the three candidates for the Clacton constituency who were able to attend; these were Natasha Osben (Labour), Caroline Shearer (Independent) and Giles Watling (Conservative). Questions were invited from those present; the points raised included (Note each candidate given 2 minutes to respond):
 - **How can London journeys be improved?** It was agreed that journeys were far too slow, Giles Watling noting that infrastructure needed enhancement before building took place while Natasha Osben felt that the railways should be renationalised with the profits used to provide additional trains. Caroline Shearer felt that rail staff were important and that revenue is being lost.
 - **Tendring (District) is under-resourced – how can government be persuaded to redress the situation?** “Vote for the right party” was Natasha Osben's reply while Caroline Shearer considered that money is available but it never filters through to Tendring. Giles Watling stated emphatically that a constituency MP is required to “bang the drum for Tendring” and that there should be better management of the railways.
 - **What does Tendring offer to Government to deserve that investment?** It was generally agreed that tourism is of prime importance and that growth in this area is essential with Natasha Osben proposing cycleways in Tendring to extend the season, preferably to all the year round. More industry was also seen to be important with Giles Watling noting developments taking place at Harwich port.
 - **Will “Norwich in 90” delay Clacton and Walton trains on the main line.** All candidates professed themselves inadequately knowledgeable in rail operations to be able to respond.
 - **Should train operators compensate passengers for poor service (Times article of 12th May)?** Giles Watling stated that the Government needs to manage the rail network properly, with Caroline Shearer agreeing that operators should be fined for poor service. Natasha Osben also stated that better management was needed and that the railways would be better if nationalised, referring to East Coast as an example.[
 - **Question to Chair – were other Candidates invited?** Yes but some had not replied (*Green Party, UKIP which had had a late change of candidates*) or had given apologies asking for questions to be emailed (*Liberal Democrats*); *Candidates present seem to agree that all of them being present showed commitment to the area*
10. Chair thanked guest speakers for their contributions and closed the meeting at 12.10.