

## Oxford Rail Protest Meeting

19<sup>th</sup> December 2006

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*Attendees:* Susan Westlake, Kate Anderson, Rob Watson, Alison Mathias, Paul Mylrea and Zahra Akkerhuys.

*Apologies received from:* Steven Hill, Emma Hawksworth, Darren Webster, Edward Knighton, Peter Hughes and Stuart Taylor.

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### 1. Welcome and introductions

Everyone introduced themselves and their old trains

**Action: SW** to circulate contact details to all.

### 2. Name of group

After some deliberations, the name Ox Rail Action was chosen – this was felt to be short and snappy, to get across a feeling of 'doing something'.

### 3. Petition/ e-mails

The petition currently has 250 signatures. Although it is no longer a current method of campaigning, it is still a useful source for collecting signatures of people who are regular travellers and feel strongly about losing their trains.

**Action: SW** to continue to lift e-mails off this petition and add them to the general distribution list after an initial expression of interest.

SW has received over 80 e-mails from people who would want to come to a public meeting and are interested in the campaign – these people have been formed into a general distribution list.

It was decided that we now all use the saveourtrains e-mail address as a central e-mail

**Action: PM** to post e-mails at googlemail address to show others how to use it!

Interesting e-mails have been received from a FGW train driver, from people with ideas for campaigning, from people offering help.

**Action: SW** will transfer all e-mails across to the googlemail account, so that everyone can access these ideas and past e-mails.

### 4. Timetable and seat analysis

The timetable analysis shows the large gaps that now exist in the timetable. Ideally, we would campaign to get these gaps filled.

All agreed that the seat analysis was the best type of statistic to use in our campaign – i.e. % of seats lost. However, the current figures need to be re-worked slightly so that they encompass the correct times of the morning rush hour.

It was agreed that the key time to focus on will be **6am-8.30am**. It was acknowledged that trains after 8.30pm are still important in terms of frequency, but to give our figures some more oomph and to make sure we all stick to statistics about the same time frame, it was decided to stick to just 6 to 8.30am.

**Action: SW** to rework seat analysis to include the correct times, and calculate correct percentage.

**Action: AM** to contact commuter who works for National Audit Office to check our stats.

### 5. What do we want to campaign for?

- FGW will not lose their franchise in the next 10 years – we are stuck with them.

- FGW have been told to reduce congestion at Reading by the government and so have reduced numbers of trains.
- The frequency of services has therefore gone down, but FGW will just blame this on the timetable imposed by the government, and the government will blame FGW for not adding to the timetable – no win situation.
- But... we *can* campaign on the fact that the new timetable has caused severe overcrowding – this breaches FGW's franchise agreement.
- By campaigning against overcrowding, this will force FGW to add longer trains or add more trains.
- After this short-term goal has been achieved, we can continue to campaign for increased frequency of services before the timetable changes in December 2007.

We therefore need to campaign on only three points:

1. Overcrowding on trains is severe and dangerous.
2. We have lost 90% (roughly) of our seats from Oxford.
3. We demand immediate action.

..to the Strategic Rail Authority, the Office of Rail Regulation and the government – all will then put pressure on FGW who will have to alter their timetable.

In addition, we would like to campaign for better consultation (FGW will *not* consult passengers before the December 2007 timetable changes) and better passenger representation (so far, the response from Chris Bates, FGW customer panel member for Oxford, and the Passengers Rail Council has been appalling)

#### 6. How are we going to campaign?

##### *Evidence*

We need to collect evidence of the 'severe and dangerous' overcrowding – encourage passengers to take photographs, describe journeys and make notes of any incidents such as people fainting.

**Action: SW** to include this in e-mail to distribution list

##### *Media*

We need continued media coverage from BBC Oxford and The Oxford Mail – see contacts below. Make sure we emphasise the 90% figure and the points above. Need media coverage of recent government questions.

We need a website – Steven Hill has offered to do this and will be contacted to begin

**Action: SH** to set-up initial website. Possibly like to sites such as Flickr and YouTube to help compile images of overcrowding.

We need coverage of the recent government questions and give out the name of the groups and our aims to the media (particularly BBC Oxford and the Mail).

##### *Simon's meeting*

One commuter, Simon Eaton, has been invited to a meeting with Alison Forster on Friday – he is to be told to emphasise the three points above to ask for one thing specifically:

*We, Ox Rail Action, would like to invite Alison Forster and others from FGW to travel on the 6.30am, 7.05am or 7.44am train from Oxford to London on Monday January 15<sup>th</sup>, talk to passengers and experience the nightmare that is our morning commute. We would then like her to be at Oxford station that evening, between 6.30pm and 8pm to meet passengers and listen to their concerns.*

It was felt that this was a reasonable request, that by mid-Jan numbers of passengers would be at their normal level after Christmas, and that this would ram home to FGW exactly the overcrowding levels.

**Action: ZA** to contact Simon with this request before Friday.

### *Communication with travellers*

A e-mail needs to be sent out to all who are currently on the distribution list. This needs to report back on the meeting, to tell everyone the name and the new e-mail address, to announce our key messages, to give out contact details for people to lobby and to highlight our successes so far. Also it will request more help – from people with internet skills, campaigning skills, legal skills, knowledge of statistics and general ability to help (e.g. leaflet trains). Pass the message on about the group too. Also highlight slight dip in activity due to xmas holidays – not a sign that the campaign is over – only just beginning! In the meantime – collect evidence of overcrowding and incidents/ announcements on trains and any feedback you receive from MPs and FGW.

**Action: SW** to send e-mail to distribution list.

### *Other campaign ideas*

It was felt that it would be good to contact several organisations:

#### ASLEF and the Oxford station manager

It was felt that the staff both at the station and on the trains are being unfairly treated due to the new timetable changes – they must be receiving daily abuse and problems from passengers for something that they were not consulted about. We can write to both the union and the Oxford station manager praising the way in which their staff have deal with the situation so far, and telling them about our protest.

**Action: ?** to contact ASLEF and station manager.

#### Oxford Chamber of Commerce

It was felt that people from the Oxford Chamber of Commerce would be interested in our campaign and should definitely be invited to any public meetings – in the meantime we can contact them and let them know about the campaign.

**Action: ?** to contact Oxford Chamber of Commerce.

#### Freedom of Information Act

It was felt that an FoI request, asking for details of meetings and conversations between FGW and the government about the timetable, should be put in, using the quotes from ministers in parliament on the 19<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Action: AM** to put in FoI request

#### SRA and ORR

We need to find out contacts and get in touch with the Strategic Rail Authority and the Office of Rail Regulation.

**Action: ZA** to find out contact names and get in touch.

### *Public meetings*

It was felt that we shouldn't have a public meeting immediately after Christmas, as sometimes these things don't actually get us anywhere. It was felt that Alison's visit to Oxford would be more helpful, and that once the campaign is fully underway, perhaps by the end of January, we could hold a large public meeting. To this we could invite:

- all commuters – would need serious leafleting
- MPs for area
- Oxford Chamber of Commerce
- representatives from FGW and DfT

In the meantime, we need to continue lobbying MPs and FGW for changes.

### 7. Roles

The action points above have been randomly distributed, but we will need to set up some sort of main campaign committee, with various members. It was agreed that SW should continue with any media images as one face is better than several. Once the e-mail has gone out asking for particular skills then a committee may be formed.

No date has been set for another meeting but if people could use the contact list within the googlemail account to pass any information or developments around the group that would be great!

**SW**  
**20<sup>th</sup> December 2006**