

Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership (MEMRAP)

16th January, held in Matlock at RG's Home

Meeting No.1

Attendees

Roger Greenwood, Robin Lumb, Stephen Chaytow, Mike Hancocks, Dave Shaw, Sally Hall, Stuart Hall, Roger Jackson, Sid Navid, Rodney Thorne, Ian Clark, John Harpur, Derek Bodey, Peter Stanton

Wider interest was expressed, with various apologies received, including from Robin's neighbour and two from Railfuture East Midlands branch.

Background

The group gave brief introductions, together with their diverse backgrounds and reasons for attendance and interest in the project.

Robin Greenwood Briefing

RG explained the initial English Regional Transport Association (ERTA) meeting last August in the Wetherspoons, Matlock. This was followed by a meeting at RG's house.

In a subsequent meeting with Paul Tomlinson and Martin Gadsby (both Peak Rail), RG learned that:

- The Buxton quarry owners (see Appendix 1 for listing), are concerned that the coming Hope Valley upgrades and beyond that, HS2 needs will block access to the line for their freight
- With their long-haul businesses threatened, the southbound use of the Derbyshire Dales route via Matlock was needed

RG then met with Simon Spencer of Derbyshire County Council, who said that the council have no position on the line. They are content to support leisure use, but that he imagined that the quarries would be central to anything that might happen on the line and that we should talk to them. RG enquired about this through his Longcliffe Quarry contact, but he is not long haul, so could offer no further input, but may provide other contacts for MEMRAP.

Stephen Chaytow Briefing

1. RG and SC had received various suggestions and named the group MEMRAP, with the project to be known as the Derbyshire Dales Link project.
2. SC discovered that an EU funded survey concerning the carbon impact of various use options for the route could be undertaken by Institute for Innovation in Sustainable Engineering (IISE) in Derby. IISE needs an organisation tax reference, prior to commissioning
3. SC has written to HMRC, to describe the organisation and ask for a UTR ref for MEMRAP
4. SC drafted a press release, with an agenda prepared (circulated prior to this meeting)
5. Enquiries made to Transport for North (TfN), East Midlands Trains and Midland Connect – no responses yet received
6. SC had a phone call with Peak planning director, John Scott. JS had met with Peak Rail but had concerns over the Monsal Trail treatment. He welcomed MEMRAP's willingness to fully evaluate issues but said any new line would need to be of national strategic significance.
7. SC visited SELRAP (Skipton to Colne re-instatement) which is likely to go ahead in 2019

8. Along with 3 other MEMRAP attendees, SC attended the FDVL meeting. They wish to align effort and their chair agreed to investigate a webpage page for MEMRAP on the FDVL site.
9. SC received support messages from Railfuture East Midlands branch, including their chair
10. SC drew a schematic for the route based on SELRAP guidance, (attached to these minutes)
11. Next step – 24th January, SC has meeting with Tarmac at the Tunstead Quarry site. The agenda is MEMRAP introduction, scope discussions and to set expectations. Dave Shaw said that such a meeting was positive, in line with Tarmac’s community engagement policies.

Outline of Peak Rail / Quarry Company Proposals

Caveat – SC notes to be confirmed with Peak Rail to ensure completeness etc. Paul Tomlinson disclosed details of proposed private re-opening at Dec 2018 meeting, MEMRAP noted the following:

1. Combination of TfN Hope Valley improvements followed by HS2 scheme threaten Buxton quarries long term freight access to national rail system.
2. Quarries propose re-instate the link from the Buxton freight “triangle” to Matlock, giving southbound freight exit from Buxton unavailable since 1968.
3. Side note - short Blackwell Mill Junction to Buxton link apparently not included in scheme, but Network Rail (NR) have agreed to relay this to complete the layout.
4. The plan follows a 2-year feasibility concerning the track and route
5. Private re-instatement, to be funded (entirely or part?) by the quarries
6. Matlock to Ambergate, currently single line, will be re-laid as double track
7. Between the quarry line Buxton triangle, via Millers Dale to Matlock plans are for single track only with long passing loops
8. Tunnels in future will only permit single track as modern loading gauges are no longer wide enough for double in the old Victorian era designed tunnels
9. NR have secured the necessary freight paths for the quarries from Derby southwards for Heathrow, HS2 and other major construction projects.
10. Some conflict over planning rights in Buxton itself, where Peak Rail retains land rights and other planning permissions have been granted
11. Peak have retained Light Rail and other rights over many years and are now able to bring all this to the project, for maximum 25mph running, though Parliamentary Orders could change this, if required.
12. Infrastructure needs updating, some bridges have weight limits, A6 at Rowsley (new bridge) will need an enquiry

General Discussions

- TfN commissioned doubling of remaining single track on Hope Valley at Dore. Hathersage freight passing loop recently completed. However, current use changed by advent of HS2
- Quarries need to deal with this threat to a long-term premium business
- Track ownership freehold is Derbyshire Dales Council, not the county council
- Meeting felt that public need access to scheme due to poor infrastructure. County Council are unlikely to take the lead, but the A6 is clogged, polluting and dangerous
- An example of Belper was offered. When the station became viable for commuting again, usage climbed quickly. The same could happen here. Buses are a poor option.
- Local population will wish to be informed and involved.
- Councils, councillors and MPs to be lobbied, especially DDDC, but also the National Park, county
- How should this work be undertaken?
- Mix of “bottom up” and “top down” approaches to combine in a unified, MEMRAP approach.

- It was agreed that FDVL have different aims from this group and so MEMRAP needs to stay separate, but in close collaboration to get best results. MEMRAP is appreciative of the input and support from the FDVL attendees at the meeting. Obvious benefit would be track doubling, enabling enhanced service, even on the branch as it is today.
- It was noted that MEMRAP should seek to build a similar relationship with groups at the Buxton end of the rail “gap”.
- Some concern was expressed that MEMRAP should not become a public face of Peak Rail to do only their difficult consultation work, but maintain its own, separate public rail agenda. However, the reality of that project should be incorporated.
- Concern was also expressed that the public rail aim of MEMRAP might cause difficulties or not be relevant to the Peak Rail and quarries scheme.
- General direction for MEMRAP is to establish fully, from next meeting, then seek funding, a web and publicity front, prior to organising initial public meeting. Much then depends on the level of public engagement attracted at the initial event(s).

Next Steps

RG requested that to avoid lengthy awkward elections and process, MEMRAP now seeks volunteers to step forward from this group plus from any who had been unable to attend, for roles that MEMRAP will require to fully mobilise.

Action: SC to prepare minutes, circulate other papers

Action: MEMRAP attendees agreed to send emails to RG robin@om-shanti.org.uk , cc SC schaytow@gmail.com with suggestions /volunteering SC suggestions for skills needed include Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Website, Social media, Publicity, Campaigning Lead, Public meetings, Research, Fundraising.

Action: SC note: This list is suggested, but not exclusive – for example, the group will need to hire meeting space in future. Early offers of help for locations / funding will facilitate public meetings, as a minimum in:

- Matlock
- Buxton
- Bakewell

Action: Constitution and Bank Account needs to be set up, following next meeting. Mission and aims to be discussed. After the meeting RG and SC floated the following:

"This group advocates the return of public rail to the Derbyshire Dales"

Action: RG to continue with funding search locally, but other input and sources welcomed.

Next Meeting: Wednesday 20th February at RG’s house. Timed to start at 6.40pm, to allow attendance from the 6.26pm arrival at Matlock.