



Arun Valley Rail Users Association

Putting Passengers First

NEWSLETTER

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FRANCHISE RENEWAL

Southern's franchise will be renewed in 2009 but it is by no means certain that the present incumbent, Govia will retain it. Southern have achieved many things introducing excellent new trains, on time performance up to 90% and better customer service with friendly, well trained staff. The dark days of Connex are thankfully long gone.

As part of the franchise process, we will be working with Passenger Focus to draw up a wish list of improvements. Some of these ideas will hopefully be included by the DfT in the new franchise.

DID YOU KNOW?

Southern's Electrostar trains have a weighing device which enables the train to calculate the number of passengers on board throughout its journey. Not sure what happens if several large Americans board at Gatwick but for the first time Southern can make future plans knowing how many passengers are using their trains.

ORR publishes annual passenger numbers for every UK rail station. Find out which is the busiest AV station at <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1529>

There are four Sussex coast routes using the Brighton Main Line. Trains go to Brighton, Eastbourne, Littlehampton and Arun Valley. Of these Brighton trains are the busiest but AV trains have the fewest passengers. Despite this, it can still be a problem for Redhill passengers to find a seat on AV trains and it's usually standing room only between London and East Croydon.

RUS UPDATE

The Brighton Main Line RUS has been finalised by DfT and Southern will take over the Gatwick Express from May 2008. Some GE trains will be extended to Brighton in the rush hour.

There will be no changes to AV services except those below. The suggested faster trains for AV will not be happening so we will still be trundling through Redhill.

DEC 2007 TIMETABLE

On December 9th, Southern will begin a new timetable on AV and West Coastway. The highlights are:

- Faster trains between Chichester, Barnham and London by splitting trains at Horsham instead of Barnham.
- Increased frequency to half hourly from Bognor Regis and Littlehampton to London.
- Increased frequency to half hourly between Chichester and Southampton.

The downside is that AV stations between Christ's Hospital and Arundel will have slower **off peak** journeys to London by 5-10 mins and will lose the direct service to Chichester/Portsmouth, with passengers having to change at Barnham. From Horsham northwards, there will be **no change** to journey times.

Most of the AV peak services remain the same, although the 07.19 ex Bognor and 18.21 ex Victoria will have longer journey times to AV stations.

Whilst the new timetable will benefit many passengers from Chichester, longer journey times will inconvenience AV passengers. We have asked Southern for fare reductions to reflect this.

ANSWERS

Q Can quiet zones be introduced on trains?

Southern We recently asked passengers for comments on the possibility of introducing quiet coaches onto our network. Respondents were divided with no majority in favour of introducing quiet coaches. Implementing this on busy peak time trains may prove difficult and it is felt that the flexibility to use mobile phones or laptops wherever passengers can find a seat should be maintained.

Avrua Quiet coaches exist on Inter-City trains and would be suitable for Sussex Coast. However, the problem is that with such busy trains, stopping people from sitting in a particular area when it is standing room only would prove to be an unpopular move. With no clear majority in favour maybe the idea of quiet zones should be left alone.

STATION IMPROVEMENTS

Passengers at **Pulborough** can now wait in comfort due to a revamp of the station's waiting room. The area maintenance team sanded and varnished floors and the room was given finishing touches with comfy sofas and plants. No TV I'm afraid. Look out for similar improvements at Billingshurst and Arundel stations in the coming months.

Three Bridges has a smart new ticket office with automatic doors, new floor and new walls. **Horsham** has had new lifts installed for disabled access.

Hopefully by the middle of 2008, equipment will have been installed by Network Rail to enable train doors to open quicker at **Victoria** and the extended southbound 8 car platform to be put into use at **Billingshurst**. Only 3 years late then.

MEET THE MANAGERS

Southern will be holding "Meet the Manager" sessions at Chichester on 15th November am and Horsham on 27th November pm to explain the Dec 2007 timetable changes.

This is the first time these sessions have taken place at AV stations so please speak to Southern managers and make AV passengers' views count!

Avrua has regular quarterly meetings with Southern to discuss passenger views. Recent topics have included timetable changes, customer service, fare rises, bad weather delays and full car parks.

CONGRATULATIONS

At the recent National Rail Awards, popular Crawley platform assistant Su Patel was highly commended in the 'Outstanding Personal Contribution' section for 37 years of service in the railway industry. Don't worry he tells me he won't be retiring just yet!

THE BOSS

Chris Burchell is managing director of Southern. Aged 33 he is the youngest managing director of a train operating company and is responsible for 3,500 staff, 1,750 services a day and 11% of all rail passengers in the country.

He doesn't have much time for small talk but is perfectly welcoming. You can tell he's serious, intense, reserved. Burchell wanted to be a diplomat but after leaving university, he joined Railtrack as a management trainee progressing rapidly to area production manager for the Western region.

He moved to Thames Trains to become operations director and then to Southern in the same job, when Govia lost the Thames franchise. When Charles Horton left Southern in 2006, Burchell was promoted into the top job.

He inherited a new train set and improved performance. He sees the future as "sustaining that progress with small incremental improvements. The key now is to invest further in our people giving them customer service and leadership skills to do the job."