

WEST SUSSEX RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER No 2: SEPTEMBER 2015

In this Newsletter there is (at last!) the formal notice of our AGM, some more detail on the timetable changes in December, an update on the now merged franchise, some better news on performance and a request for unpaid 2015 subscriptions. Most members will receive this Newsletter by e-mail. If you have received it by post and have an e-mail address that we could use in future, please let me know by e-mail to wsrua@btinternet.com. This will save us postage costs and you will get Newsletters a few days earlier.

Annual General Meeting

As you may remember we postponed the AGM initially because of changes in the Committee and the then impending change that took place in July when Southern joined Thameslink and Great Northern in the TSGN franchise as Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). Added to our problems was the non-availability of the Studio in the Capitol at Horsham during May and June. In our last Newsletter, we said that we expected to hold the AGM in late September or October, but again we had problems in securing the Studio and I can now tell you that it will be on **Wednesday 4th November at 7pm**. We did ask for members' views on whether they preferred the meeting to take place on a Saturday morning or on a weekday evening. Only about a third of members responded to this and the consensus was (just) for a weekday evening and we have gone along with this. The formal notice is:

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will be at **7pm on Wednesday 4th November in the Studio of the Capitol Theatre, North Road, Horsham, RH12 1RG**. The Capitol is a few minutes' walk from the main entrance of Horsham Station in the direction of the town centre. Refreshments will be available for purchase from the Capitol's own kiosk.

This year our guest speaker will be David Scorey, Passenger Services Director, Southern Mainline and Coast. Mr Scorey will address us after the formal business of the AGM has been completed and there be ample time for you to ask questions on Southern's recent performance and other matters.

The formal business of the AGM will be the Chairman's report, approving the accounts already circulated, banking mandate changes and the election of the Committee. Our co-opted Chairman, James Marchant will be stepping down and so far there has been one nomination for Chairman, Tony Cash, currently representing Christ's Hospital. The other existing Committee members seeking re-election at the AGM are: Treasurer and Membership Secretary – Trevor Tupper (also representing stations on the West Coastway *other than* Chichester and Bognor), Roger Leat (Bognor Regis), Jake Clausen (Littlehaven), Paul Brady (Amberley), Valerie Webb (Pulborough), Moira Tracey (Crawley), Peter Bulling (Barnham), Roger Keyworth (Chichester), Michael Gill (Arundel), James Marchant (Billingshurst) and Kevin Gordon (Website). Several of our stations are now unrepresented and we are seeking asking members to represent Horsham, Ifield and Littlehampton. We also need to fill the post of Secretary and we would be grateful for nominations to fill this important post. Nigel Denton is our representative on Rail Future.

The Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR)

Southern joined Thameslink and Great Northern in the GTR on 26 July and this franchise is the largest in the UK. There have been some management changes but David Scorey has remained at the helm of our part of Southern. The franchise runs for 7 years and has been let by the Department for Transport (DfT) as a management contract reflecting the complexity and scale of the Thameslink Programme infrastructure works. Ticket revenues estimated at £12.4bn will be passed directly to the government, while Govia will be paid around £8.9bn to cover operating costs and a small margin allowance. There is also an incentive regime based on service quality targets including punctuality, customer experience and revenue protection, along with extra payments for the delivery of 'key performance milestones.' We understand that under the contract, DfT specify the services that GTR is required to run, the length of trains and the timetable. If GTR wish to change the timetable or change the number of carriages in a particular train, they need to reach agreement first with Network Rail and then DfT and our understanding is that the case for change

should, in general, make a saving or be cash neutral, and not unduly disadvantage train users. So changes such as those in December mentioned below have gone through this procedure and the process has taken many months. So there is little prospect of any radical change to the timetable before 2018.

New trains, older trains – and who gets what

The first of the new class 700 units for Thameslink has reached the new Three Bridges facility for testing. These units, 60 with 8 cars and 55 with 12 cars, are being built by Siemens in Germany and will be delivered to GTR over the next 3 years. In the meantime, 26 new class 387/1 units have been built and are in use on Thameslink releasing some of the older 319 units which have been transferred to Northern Rail for services out of Manchester. As the 700s become available, the class 387 units will move to Thames Valley services out of Paddington during 2016/17 and the 377/5s and 377/2s originally built for Southern but now working on Thameslink will move to Great Northern for services from Kings Cross to Cambridge. There are no plans to replace the wretched class 313s on Coastway services before 2020, although there is a possibility of getting a few of the 377s released by Thameslink. Finally, during 2016, 27 new class 387/2s with wifi will be delivered for Gatwick Express and most of the class 442s currently in use will be withdrawn. Apart from these 387/2s there are no plans to equip any of our trains with wifi.

Performance

This has improved markedly in recent weeks and this improvement can be seen in the September update to the joint (Southern, Thameslink and Network Rail) improvement plan. This can be read at: <http://www.southernrailway.com/improvementplan>

There are still problems with short formations and cancellations due to train failures and shortage of drivers. Southern do try to give some notice of these on their Twitter and it is worth keeping an eye on this. If you are delayed by more than 30 minutes because of a cancellation or late running because of train or signal problems, you may be entitled to make a claim under the delay repay scheme.

December 2015 off-peak timetable changes

There will be significant changes to our off-peak services from 14th December but no further changes to peak services. The off-peak services include the services throughout the day on Saturdays. There are no changes to our dismal Sunday services despite pressure from your Association.

The main change to the off-peak services is the removal of Horley and Redhill stops from those trains running to and from Victoria to Bognor Regis, Portsmouth Harbour and Southampton Central. There will be a reduction in journey time of around 5 minutes in each direction together with removal of frequent overcrowding north of Redhill. Exact timings are still awaited but we understand that the current 02 and 32 minutes past each hour from Victoria will become 06 and 36 with, presumably, little or no change to current arrival times south of Gatwick. There will be no loss of fast services to and from Redhill as the existing services from Tonbridge and Reigate to London Bridge will be diverted to Victoria running fast to East Croydon from Redhill. Horley and Redhill passengers will have two Thameslink services an hour on the trains currently running from Three Bridges to Bedford. There will also be a slightly faster service to Worthing and stations on to Littlehampton with the removal of some intermediate stops between Haywards Heath and Worthing. Full details on this and planned blockades at London Bridge and elsewhere for Christmas 2015 and during 2016 will be given in a Newsletter later this year.

Membership Renewal

Our membership year runs from 1 March and subscriptions for 2014-15 are now due. Many members have already paid their subscription either directly or by standing order. If you have not paid, a renewal form is enclosed. The subscription remains at £2 and can be paid by cheque through the post, by cheque or in cash at the AGM, by direct bank credit or by standing order, the renewal form gives details of all these options. A few did not pay their subscriptions for last year and rather than deleting them as members, we are asking them to pay for 2 years and for those members the payment slip shows £4.

Trevor Tupper
Membership Secretary