

WEST SUSSEX RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

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In this newsletter there are details of membership renewal, Easter timetable changes with lines blocked at Victoria and Pulborough, restrictions in opening hours for ticket office for seven of our major stations, a current performance report from GTR and future timetable changes in 2017 and 2018.

Membership Renewal

Our membership year runs from 1 March and subscriptions for 2016-17 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, 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 subscription 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.

Easter Timetable changes

A major junction renewal at Battersea Park and continuing work on the Network Rail infrastructure at Victoria means there will be no Southern services to and from Victoria from Good Friday 25 March up to and including Easter Monday 28 March. All Southern services will run to and from London Bridge. In addition, Network Rail will be undertaking essential works to a bridge over the River Arun at Pulborough with replacement buses running between Billingshurst or Horsham and Arundel all weekend. Journey times will be extended by up to 60 minutes. Also, all weekend there will be replacement buses from Victoria to Clapham Junction.

On Good Friday 25 March, Saturday 26 March and Easter Monday 28 March there will be a train every 30 minutes from Billingshurst to London Bridge. These will leave Billingshurst at 12 and 42 minutes past each hour and Christ's Hospital at 18 and 48 and Horsham at 30 and 00 (both with an 8 minute wait at Horsham). Journey times from Billingshurst are 75 minutes on the 12 minutes past and a whopping 96 minutes on the 42 although this can be reduced to 74 minutes by changing at Gatwick. The connecting buses for Billingshurst leave Arundel an hour earlier at 12 and 42 minutes past each hour, Amberley 25 and 55, and Pulborough 40 and 10. On Friday and Saturday there will also be an hourly service at 20 minutes past each hour from Horsham to London Bridge via Dorking; on Monday this train will run from Horsham at 14 minutes past each hour to Clapham Junction. Those travelling from Barnham, Bognor and Chichester are advised to travel via Worthing at 00 minutes past each hour from Chichester (change at Worthing) and 24 minutes past each hour (change at Worthing and Haywards Heath) with a journey time to Chichester to London Bridge of around 120 minutes. Bognor passengers will need to change at Barnham into these services.

In the down direction, there will be a train every 30 minutes from London Bridge to Billingshurst, then a bus to Arundel where there will be two services each hour, one to Portsmouth Harbour and one to Southampton (except Saturday when there is yet another bus from Woolston to Southampton). On these three days, the trains from London Bridge will be at 27 and 57 minute past each hour and will call at every station south of Purley and taking 73 minutes to Horsham and 83 minutes to Billingshurst. A faster journey is possible on a Brighton train at 12 and 42 minutes past each hour from London Bridge and changing at Gatwick. On Friday and Saturday there will also be an hourly service from London Bridge at 26 minutes past each hour to Horsham via Dorking; on Monday this train will run from Clapham Junction at 14 minutes past each hour to Horsham. Those travelling to Barnham, Bognor and Chichester are advised to travel from London Bridge via Worthing at 17 minutes past each hour (change at Worthing) and 47 minutes past each hour (change at Haywards Heath and Worthing) with a journey time to Chichester of 123 minutes. Bognor passengers will need to change at Barnham.

On Easter Sunday 27 March there will an hourly replacement bus leaving Arundel at 06.15, 07.15, 08.22 and then at 22 minutes past each hour calling at Amberley 06.28, 07.28, 08.35 and then 35 past each hour, Pulborough at 06.43, 07.43, 08.50 and then 50 past each hour, Billingshurst 06.58, 07.58, 09.05 and then 05 past each hour, Christ's Hospital 07.17, 08.17, 09.24 and then 24 minutes past each hour. These will connect into the Horsham to London Bridge trains leaving at 06.28, 06.56, 07.37, 07.53, 08.44, 09.00 and then at 00 and 44 minutes past each

hour. For those travelling from Barnham and Chichester the normal Sunday service at 08.15 from Chichester, 08.24 from Barnham and hourly thereafter will run via Worthing to London Bridge. Bognor passengers will need to change at Barnham from a connecting bus into these services.

In the down direction there will be a train every 30 minutes from London Bridge to Horsham via Gatwick at 02 and 34 minutes past each hour. The 02 train will take 59 minutes and the 34 will take 73 minutes – this can be reduced to 62 minutes by using the 45 minutes past each hour Bexhill service and changing at Gatwick. The 02 train will connect at Horsham with an hourly replacement bus to Arundel and then an hourly train to Barnham for connecting trains along the Coastway, but for those travelling to Bognor there will be another replacement bus. For those travelling to Barnham and Chichester there will be an hourly service from London Bridge to Littlehampton and Chichester/Portsmouth via Worthing at 15 minutes past hour and taking 109 minutes.

I hope that this is helpful. Please contact me if you have a problem with the details above. For more specific enquiries please consult the Southern or National Rail websites, or their telephone contact centres.

Ticket Offices at Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Barnham, Bognor Regis, Chichester and Worthing

Southern are proposing changes in the way tickets are sold at these stations with ticket offices opening only on Mondays to Fridays in the morning peak. Outside these hours Southern propose to relocate the ticket selling equipment to a station hosting point so the staff are available on the concourse for most of the day and at weekends, in excess of current ticket office hours. At these stations they propose moving staff out onto the concourse as ‘Station Hosts’ and apply to close the ticket office at off-peak times but have it open and staffed at peak times. These Station Hosts will be visible and available from first service until the last, which is longer than current ticket hours in many cases. The Hosts will be trained in customer service and able to sell tickets and provide information using a new handheld device. We have been told that one of these devices will have the same capability of the ticket office machines and will be able to issue advance tickets and reservations off the GTR network and railcards. The Hosts will also help passengers use the ticket machines.

We have been assured by Southern that this is not a staff saving exercise and the aim is to improve customer service. We are keeping an open mind on these proposals and we will be monitoring ticket queues to ensure that passengers are not disadvantaged by the new arrangements when these are introduced later this year.

Performance

As members will know, performance before and immediately after Christmas was dire. At last, there are signs of improvement and this is reflected in the latest update to the Joint Improvement Plan put together by Network Rail, Southern and Thameslink. This can be downloaded at <http://www.southernrailway.com/your-journey/performance-results/performance-improvement-plan/>.

The poor performance is also reflected in the latest Passenger Satisfaction figures published by Transport focus. These show the highest ratings at First Hull Trains (97%); Heathrow Express (95%); Grand Central (93%); Merseyrail (93%) and the lowest ratings Thameslink (73%); Southeastern (75%); Southern (78%). The figures reflect reality but the comparison is somewhat flawed as it is mainly between Operators with very few services, or services over lines with no conflicting Operators, and those such as Southern with a huge congested network.

GTR recognise the poor performance and at a Southern Stakeholder Forum on 7 March we were given figures showing that 60% of delays are down to Network Rail with failures and other problems with their infrastructure, 35% are down to GTR mainly from train failures and staff shortages, with the remaining 5% down to problems caused by other Operators. GTR are making inroads into the train crew shortage with 84 new drivers completing their training since January 2015 and a further 91 under training. When these are in post, there will be 10% more drivers than the 1,000 or so in 2015 and this will help to avoid drivers having to work on their rest days.

Timetable

There are no timetable changes in May. There may be some tweaks in December 2016 (which will come into force in January 2017 when much of the Southern side of London Bridge is completed) allowing some of the trains taken out of the timetable in February 2015 to be restored. The next major timetable change will be in 2018 and consultations on this will begin in June this year. We will, of course, be involved in this consultation.

Trevor Tupper
Secretary