

WEST SUSSEX RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

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Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Association will be at 10.00 am on Saturday 26th May at 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 (currently via the temporary footbridge) 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, Franchise Improvement Director of Southern. 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.

The formal business of the AGM will be the Chairman's report, receiving and approving the accounts and the election of the Committee. Our Chairman, Jane Cobb will be stepping down as Chairman and we are still without a Secretary. It is imperative that we get nominations from members for those willing to fill these two important posts. 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, Bosham and Bognor), Monica Edmonds (representing Christ's Hospital and developing our links through the website and Twitter). Roger Leat (Bognor Regis), Jake Clausen (Littlehaven); Paul Brady (Amberley), Valerie Webb (Pulborough), Moira Tracey (Crawley), Jane Cobb (Horsham), Peter Bulling (Barnham), Roger Keyworth (Chichester), Michael Cover (Bosham) and Kevin Gordon (Website). We are looking for new Committee members to represent Arundel, Billingshurst, Ifield, Littlehampton, Angmering and Worthing. We hope that volunteers will come forward at or before the AGM to fill these vacancies.

May 2012 timetable changes

There are no changes to our weekday services when the summer timetable starts on 19th May. On Sundays the hourly service from Portsmouth Harbour to Brighton will be run 9 minutes earlier and will no longer wait at Hove in each direction to connect with the Portsmouth to Victoria service. This will mean that there will now be 2 separate services an hour from Portsmouth, Chichester and Barnham to Brighton as a shuttle will be provided between Hove and Brighton to connect with the Victoria train.

New franchise

Last December, the Government announced that the process to let the Thameslink passenger rail franchise had started. The new Thameslink franchise will include all services that are currently operated by the First Capital Connect (FCC) franchise from September 2013.

Sometime between April and December 2014 the franchise would be expanded to also include some services currently operated by Southeastern railway. These services would be all those that are jointly operated by FCC and Southeastern at present, and some further current Southeastern services which may be transferred to enable the implementation of the full Thameslink service operations. Finally, from July 2015, the new Thameslink franchise will be further extended to include all the services operated by the current Southern railway franchise.

The new franchise would cover a huge area and will, of course, eventually include all our services. The franchising process will include public consultation on the specification for the franchise in which we hope to be involved either directly or through Passenger Focus.

In March, the bidders for Thameslink franchise were announced by the DfT. These are:

- Abellio Thameslink Limited (NV Nederlandse Spoorwegen);
- First Thameslink Limited (FirstGroup plc);
- Govia Thameslink Railway Limited (Go-Ahead Group plc and Keolis SA);
- MTR Corporation (Thameslink) Limited (MTR Corporation Limited);
- Stagecoach Thameslink Trains Limited (Stagecoach Group plc).

These potential providers will receive the Invitation to Tender which is anticipated will be issued in October 2012. It is anticipated that the successful bidder will be announced in May 2013, with the contract commencing in September 2013. The length of the franchise will be a minimum of 7 years, with pricing also required for a potential extension of up to 2 years at the discretion of the Secretary of State.

WSRUA has the opportunity to shape the franchise and as in the past, your Committee hope to have a dialogue with each of the bidders. We will report on this in future Newsletters and on the website.

Southern paying the Treasury

We understand that the growth in passenger numbers on Southern has increased revenues to such an extent that our services are no longer subsidised by payments to Southern from DfT, and that there is now a flow of cash from Southern to the Treasury. This flow was envisaged in Govia's franchise bid and it is good to see that it has been achieved.

Fares discounts

Southern has extended the discounts of up to 34% on on-line bookings of advance tickets and the 10% on other off-peak tickets within the Southern area and these offers are now available for booking up to 13th May. As tickets can be bought up to 3 months in advance, this means that those who can plan ahead can take advantage of these discounts for travel up to early August.

Horsham Station

The redevelopment of Horsham continues and if you have time, it is worth looking at the plans exhibited around the main entrance.

Recent performance

Performance has generally been good but marred on several occasions by incidents outside Southern's control. There have been several bridge bashes by lorries, a vehicle wrecking the level crossing at Ford, suicides and a lightning strike outside Victoria that disabled signalling for several hours. Where some criticism is warranted is for the services provided at weekends when parts of the line have been closed for engineering work. For example, in March the line was closed between Chichester and Littlehampton for work at Ford and possible other locations over a couple of weekends. Buses replaced trains between Chichester and Littlehampton on the first weekend and these ran via Bognor with just the one stop. But although the buses were quite quick passengers for Victoria were delayed by an hour. But half of this was down to waiting time at Chichester, Bognor and Littlehampton. With a swifter departure from Chichester it ought to have been possible to reach Littlehampton to connect with the train 30 minutes earlier. The following week the buses were between Barnham and Littlehampton and every one stopped at Ford which meant a 4 mile diversion in each direction down a narrow road with cars parked on both sides and a very difficult reversing movement at Ford as the level crossing there was closed. The buses went past Arundel station but no stop was booked and the drivers refused to stop even at the bus stop on the A27. So Victoria bound passengers, who could have alighted there and saved 30 minutes had the joy of another 15 minutes on the bus to Littlehampton and a train, which for them, was an hour later than it should have been.

Coffee - Starbucks

The coffee from our trolleys is now Starbucks and is pretty awful stuff. To add to our misery the price has gone from £1.60 with the previous provider to £2.10. Please let me know if you share my view of the taste. We will be raising the price increase with Southern.

Eyewitness

Southern's Eyewitness initiative was covered in some detail in our last Newsletter. This allowed passengers who use Southern services between Arundel and Crawley to report low-level crime they have seen. Eyewitness is now being extended to cover the West Coastway line, initially between Brighton and Worthing with the rest of the line coming within its scope later in the year.

Finally, station usage figures comparing 2010-11 with 2009-10 have been published. We will put the figures for our stations on the website but here is a brief extract with passenger numbers in thousands.

<u>Station</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>Station</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>
Arundel	269	275	Crawley	1,819	1,953
Barnham	895	983	Horsham	2,361	2,515
Billingshurst	421	437	Pulborough	422	450
Bognor	1,133	1,191	Three Bridges	2,475	2,702
Chichester	2,984	3,144	Worthing	2,408	2,551

Trevor Tupper
Membership Secretary