WEST SUSSEX RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

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Annual General Meeting and membership renewals

Our AGM took place on Saturday 31st May and minutes of this will be available in due course. Your new Committee was elected at the meeting and the officers are: Chairman, Michael Cover (representing Bosham) and Treasurer/Membership Secretary, Trevor Tupper (also representing Fishbourne and stations between Nutbourne and Emsworth). The other Committee members are: 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 Gill (Arundel), James Marchant (Billingshurst), Nigel Denton (Littlehampton and Angmering) and Kevin Gordon (Website). Nigel Denton is also our representative on Rail Future. A renewal form is enclosed/attached for those members who have not paid their subscriptions for 2014.

London Bridge redevelopment and August Bank Holiday timetable changes

There will be no Southern or First Capital Connect trains into or out of London Bridge between Saturday 23 August and Sunday 31 August 2014. A revised Southern service will operate across the network during this period. First Capital Connect trains will be diverted away from London Bridge between East Croydon and London Blackfriars. Southeastern services will operate as normal.
Southern has produced a booklet of its planned service by route between Saturday 23 August and Sunday 31 August and this should be available at stations or it can be downloaded from their website at:

http://www.southernrailway.com/download/31831.8/changes-to-southern-services-23-to-31-august/

The booklet shows only service intervals rather than specific trains. But looking at it, the services on our lines on Saturdays 23rd and 30th, and Bank Holiday Monday 25th August appear to be the normal Saturday service but with Horsham to London Bridge trains diverted to Victoria. On Sundays 24th and 31st August there will be a normal Sunday service. Between Tuesday 26th and Friday 29th August there will be essentially a Saturday service but with some variations to some of the early morning services. All Arun Valley services will run through to Victoria. I am sorry that I cannot be more specific and my advice is to check the Southern website for up to date information if you intend to travel in the morning peak.

On Monday1st September, normal services will be resumed. At London Bridge, new platforms 12 and 13 will be brought into use and existing platforms 10 and 11 taken out of use. There will some timetable changes from that date. The only significant change affecting our lines will be the withdrawal of the 07.52 from Horsham to London Bridge from the existing timetable.

There will be a further blockade at London Bridge from Saturday 20th December to Sunday 4th January 2015. After that date no Thameslink services will serve London Bridge and all Southeastern services to and from Charing Cross will be unable to stop at London Bridge for a period of 18 months from 12 January 2015. More about this, and December timetable changes, in our next Newsletter.

New franchise

The new franchise operated by Govia starts next month with the take-over of services currently operated by First Capital Connect. Southern services will come into the new franchise in July 2015. The new franchise will trade as Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) although the existing brand names will be retained for Southern, Gatwick Express and Great Northern. FCC will disappear and Thameslink will re-emerge and will be used for the new Siemens built trains that will start to appear in 2016.

There will be a major re-cast of the timetable in December 2015 and one of the proposed changes is to remove the Horley and Redhill stops from the Portsmouth/Southampton/Bognor services to and from Victoria with a reduction in overall journey times of around 5 minutes. Redhill will, instead, by Thameslink trains. There will be alterations to Brighton Mainline services with two Gatwick Expresses being extended to serve Brighton and with some reduction in journey times between London, Worthing and Littlehampton. New trains for the Gatwick Express are expected by the end of 2015.

The new Gatwick Express trains will be equipped with wifi. There are no plans to fit wifi to existing trains but Network Rail have plans to install lineside beacons that will eventually provide a wifi service on all trains. GTR plan to install wifi at 104 of their busiest stations. There are also plans to provide station staffing from first to last services at the 101 busiest stations on the GTR franchise, one of those mentioned specifically is Crawley. We hope that their plans will result in improved manning of ticket barriers at stations such as Chichester where barriers are often left open, even in the peak.

As the new Thameslink trains come into service, the existing class 319 trains used by FCC will be redeployed on lines being electrified from Manchester to north-west England. We are sure that Blackpool and other places will love them! Some of the FCC class 377/5s technically built for Southern and Southern 377/2s loaned to FCC will be redeployed to Great Northern services between Kings Cross and Kings Lynn and some will be returned to Southern. But nothing will come in the short-term and so we are stuck with the awful class 313s on the Coastway, probably to the end of the GTR franchise in 2021. Needless to say we will be pressing Southern and GTR to get these units of the Portsmouth to Brighton trains as they are totally unsuitable for this important inter-urban service.

The new franchise makes no mention of the provision of the so-called Arundel chord and, so far as we are aware, Network Rail has no plans for this chord. The chord would be a new line south of Arundel allowing trains to run directly from the Arun Valley line towards Worthing and Brighton. The chord would provide a faster diversion route when there are problems on the Arun Valley line as well linking, for example Worthing with Horsham. We see some value in the Arundel Chord and we will be pressing Network Rail to give it further consideration in a future planning period.

Over the past few years we have asked Southern to consider designating part of each 377 unit as a quiet area. We have made no progress and elsewhere in the UK existing quiet areas are being withdrawn as they have proved difficult to police. What do you think about this? Should we press Southern to look at provision again or are you content not to have these areas set aside for those who prefer not to be in earshot of mobiles and personal sound systems. Please let me have your views on this.

Trevor Tupper
Membership Secretary