

WEST SUSSEX RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

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Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Association will be at **10.15am on Saturday 8th June 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, Performance 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 on Southern's recent performance and other matters.

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, Monica Edmonds is willing to stand for a final year as Chairman and the other existing Committee members seeking re-election at the AGM are: Secretary – Moira Tracey (also representing Crawley), Treasurer and Membership Secretary – Trevor Tupper (also representing stations on the West Coastway *other than* Chichester, Bosham and Bognor), 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. Many members of your Committee have been in post for several years and we need an infusion of younger and fresher blood especially to face the changes of the new franchise. If you are willing to join the Committee in any capacity including "shadowing" the offices of Chairman and Treasurer, please let me know either before, or at, the AGM.

Membership Renewal

Our membership year runs from 1 March and subscriptions for 2013-14 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. You can, of course, pay your subscription at the AGM

May 2013 timetable changes

There are no changes to our weekday services when the summer timetable starts on 19th May. The 5-year programme to completely rebuild London Bridge has started with some reductions in the number of platforms, but our daily service has survived with timings unchanged. There will be some tweaking to other services with a view to improving the punctuality of the up train and we will be keeping an eye on this to see whether an on-time arrival at 08.41 becomes the norm rather than a rarity. A copy of the new timetable should now be available in stations, but in case you cannot get one, I attach a pdf of the one covering the Arun Valley line.

Recent performance

We have had a terrible start to 2013 with almost daily problems. We had the snow in mid-January, several suicides and what seems to us an inordinate number of infrastructure problems with points and signal failures at critical parts of the Network. These infrastructure problems are the responsibility of Network Rail (NR) as is snow and ice clearance and, as such, have been outside Southern's control. But there have been a number of train failures that *are* down to Southern. Three members of your Committee recently discussed these problems with David Scorey of Southern and he explained the problems encountered and what action was taken with NR to recover the service. Rather than go into detail here, come along to the AGM on 8th June when you will have the chance to listen to David and to put questions on these past problems and what Southern are doing for the future. We will also ask David to tell us more about the Key, Southern's smart card, which has recently been extended to cover the Arun Valley stations.

New Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern Franchise

The process for awarding the contract for the new franchise is still on hold. A franchise procurement process map was due to be published on 25 April and a franchising competition process guide will be published on 25 June. A Rail Franchise Overview will be published in July 2013 and we expect this will re-open the process. As yet, there is no indication of when the 5 bidders (assuming all are still in the frame) will start negotiations with the Department for Transport (DfT). In the meantime, the DfT has announced that First Capital Connect's franchise will be extended by 12 months to September 2014. After this date a new franchise will be let which, in July 2015, will then incorporate rail services currently operated by Southern.

As your representative, WSRUA has the opportunity to shape the franchise and your Committee will re-open the dialogue with each of the bidders. We have asked Michael Cover to take the lead on this will report further on the attitudes and aspirations of each bidder to rail services for West Sussex in future Newsletters and on the website.

Fares discounts for on-line bookings

After the January fare increase, Southern has continued to offer a discount of 10% on off-peak ticket and super off-peak tickets within the Southern area.

Arun Valley Line resignalling

Work on the Arun Valley line between Christ's Hospital and Amberley has started with completion expected in late 2013. The line will then be controlled from the existing Three Bridges Control Centre. The scheme will renew all the signalling between Christ's Hospital and Amberley with modern colour light signals that will not only increase route capacity but also improve headways, increasing reliability in this area of the network. Inevitably this scale of this work will require the railway to be closed on some weekends and we expect Southern to work with Network Rail to keep closures to a minimum. The timetable impact during the works and the possibilities for permanent timetable amendments are still to be confirmed at this time, however we will be urging Southern to speed up our services.

Your Committee

Your Committee has been active in many areas. Apart from our meetings with Southern, we have attended presentations on the London Bridge modernisation programme organised by Network Rail and we have been to Stakeholder Forums arranged by Southern and First Capital Connect. We attend and contribute to several meetings of a Horsham District Council Committee dealing with concerns around disruption to rail services in bad weather. We have also attended meetings Chichester District Council and West Sussex County Council where matters concerning rail services and station security have been discussed. We continue to support the Arun Valley Community Rail Partnership and the Partnership's co-ordinator Pene Mather. Their next big event is Arundel 150 on 17 August when there will be celebrations at the station and in the town to mark the arrival of the railway in August 1863. WSRUA will have a stall at the station and we will be contributing towards the cost of the event. Similar celebrations will be taking place at Littlehampton and Amberley although we are not involved with these. We hope members and their families will visit Arundel on 17th August and encourage other rail users to do the same. It is not only the 150th celebrations on that day, but also the first day of the Arundel Festival.

Refreshment trolleys

There is still no news on the re-introduction of the trolley services. We will continue to press Southern on this failure of one of their franchise commitments and we have urged Southern to look at the innovative model now operating in East Sussex which highlights local produce.

Other News

- WSCC and HDC have plans to restrict parking at Littlehaven, however HDC have opened a new cheap car park in a disused site in Foundry Lane Horsham that costs a mere £3 all day.
- Southern plans to have no staff at the down-side barriers at Chichester that are used by up to 1,000 passengers an hour in the peak. We consider this could be dangerous and have brought our concerns to the attention of local and senior management.
- We have told Southern umpteen times in the last 5 years that the ticket machines at Pulborough are unreadable in sunshine and have asked for one to be sited out of direct sunshine.
- Southern are planning to increase substantially cycle parking at Horsham and Chichester.
- We have attended WSCC meetings with bus operators and urged that bus and train times be co-ordinated. Everyone agrees it's a good idea but not enough effort is being made by Southern or some bus companies.

Trevor Tupper
Membership Secretary