

WEST SUSSEX RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

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Annual General Meeting

At the AGM on 11 November in Horsham the following were elected Officers and Committee elected for 2018-19:-

Chairman - Roger Keyworth; Secretary/Treasurer - Trevor Tupper

Committee members James Marchant, Michael Gill, Valerie Webb and Kevin Gordon

Clive Pritchard was appointed as Accounts Examiner for 2017

The minutes of the meeting including the Chairman's and Treasurer's report will be circulated at a later date.

After the formal business our guest speaker, Angie Doll, Southern's Passenger Services Director, spoke about the history of the franchise and the progress since the take over from Connex in 2001 with the huge growth in passenger numbers. She also brought us up to date on the industrial relations position pointing out that Driver Controlled Operation (including drivers closing doors as well as releasing them) was in operation across the franchise on those trains fitted with the appropriate equipment, but there has been no resolution of the dispute with RMT. GTR will continue their efforts to find a solution as they have with the ASLEF drivers. Angie then answered questions from members on a variety of subjects many of which were around poor communication when there are delays.

Industrial Relations

Just when it looked as though it was all over, the RMT has announced yet another strike of Southern conductors. The planned date is Monday 8 January (the 39th day of strikes) and will coincide with similar action on South Western Railway, Merseyrail, Arriva Northern and Greater Anglia. Let us hope that the effect on our services will be negligible as it was on the 2-day strike in November.

Fares Increase

The Government has confirmed that regulated rail fares will rise by 3.6% in line with the RPI measure of inflation in July 2017. The increase will be from 2 January. Regulated fares are seasons, anytime returns and singles, and what used to be called Savers – now off-peak returns valid for one month. Train operators are free to vary the prices of other tickets including off-peak singles and day returns, and advance tickets. The large increase reflects the increase in inflation in recent months; in recent years up to January 2017, increases were between 1% and 2% reflecting the lower inflation in those years.

December 2017 Timetable Changes

As many members already know the 05.57 from Littlehampton to London Bridge no longer runs south of Horsham and that no notice was given by Southern for the change. The main effect of this late notice change is to those who use the 05.57 for local journeys and those travelling to Gatwick either for flights or to connect with the 07.04 Gatwick Express. Southern apologised for the failure to notify us and the local stations affected and arranged for large posters to be displayed on the stations affected, announcing the change and giving the reason for this, but no apology for the late notice. The reason is that from Sunday 10 December 2017 certain trains are now being operated by Thameslink as part of the Thameslink Programme and the continued introduction of new Class 700 trains. This included the 06.33 from Horsham to London Bridge which had been the 05.57 from Littlehampton. Several other services from Horsham to London Bridge have been taken over by Thameslink as well as some peak services from Littlehampton to London Bridge via Hove.

2018 Timetable

We are still waiting for final details of the planned changes to the 2018 timetable although we know that there will be the extra London Bridge service on Mondays to Fridays. The two London Bridge services will have a portion from Portsmouth and this will join the Bognor portion at Horsham. We are still awaiting confirmation that the 06.36 from Victoria will run to Chichester rather than Bognor as shown in the first drafts. This train conveys students and workers from Arun Valley stations to Chichester arriving 08.46 and forcing these passengers (around 150-200) to change at Barnham into an already crowded 3-car train from Brighton is unacceptable, especially as it would result in a 10 minute later arrival.

We have now seen the details of Saturday and Sunday services. The Saturday services replicate the weekday off-peak services, but Sundays will be different with the Portsmouth to Victoria services via Hove replaced with an hourly Portsmouth to Victoria service via Horsham. This will be a 4 car portion attached at Barnham to the existing Bognor to Victoria service and somewhat faster than now as it will only stop at Redhill between Gatwick and East Croydon. The departure times for these Arun Valley times are different from weekdays and the current timetable. For example, the first Sunday train is at 07.26 from both Bognor and Chichester, all stations to Horsham 08.18 and on to Victoria 09.15. There is then an hourly service from 08.31 to 21.31 with the departure times for the first of these given as an example – Chichester and Bognor 08.31, Barnham 08.44, Ford 08.48, Arundel 08.54, Amberley 08.58, Pulborough 09.05, Billingshurst 09.12, Christ's Hospital 09.18, Horsham 09.22, Crawley 09.31, Three Bridges 09.35, Gatwick 09.40, Redhill 09.49, East Croydon 10.01, Clapham Junction 10.11 and arrive Victoria 10.18. We have one outstanding point with the GTR team on the Sunday timetable. Southbound, the Arun Valley train will leave Victoria at 07.32, 08.32, 09.35 and then hourly until 22.35. This final train will not have a Portsmouth portion – it will be leaving Victoria 32 minutes later than currently and arriving Barnham 28 minutes later at 00.09 and Bognor 00.17. The current 22.02 currently offers a Chichester connection leaving Barnham at 23.46 arriving Chichester at 23.53. This connecting train will leave Barnham at 23.51 in the May timetable and will not offer a connection from the Victoria service. We have asked GTR to look at retiming this train (22.47 from Brighton) to restore the connection from Barnham.

Christmas and New Year Services

The October Newsletter set out the planned changes to services over Christmas and the New Year. The main points to note are that there will be no Southern, Thameslink or Gatwick Express train services on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. On Christmas Eve, Sunday 24 December, services will shut down early from 20.00. On Wednesday 27 to Friday 29 December a Saturday service will operate and it will be necessary to change at East Croydon for London Bridge services.

There will be closures and major service changes between 23 December and New Year's Day over much of the network as Network Rail carries out engineering work. The details of changes for this 10-day period are: Firstly, there will be no train service at Coulsdon South, Merstham, Redhill, Reigate, Earlswood, and Salfords or at stations between Redhill and Tonbridge. Buses will serve these stations. Secondly, there will be no Thameslink cross-London service. Please use the Tube and London buses to complete your journey. Thirdly, Southern and Thameslink services to and from London Bridge and London Blackfriars will be busier owing to significant alterations to Southeastern services which will not be serving many London stations, and finally, between the above dates, Southern services to/from Southampton Central will be diverted to Portsmouth & Southsea. Customers for stations between Cosham and Southampton should change at Fratton and use Great Western Railway and South Western Railway services to complete their journey. On New Year's Day, there will be services in the early hours of the morning of Monday 1 January between London Bridge and Three Bridges. For the remainder of the day a Sunday service will operate.

Finally, we wish all members a very merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year.

Trevor Tupper
Secretary/Treasurer