

WEST SUSSEX RAIL USERS ASSOCIATION

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Passenger Benefit Fund

We have been consulted by GTR on how some of their £15m Passenger Benefit Fund might be spent on the 30 or so stations that WSRUA represents. The £15m is the amount GTR was fined for the 2018 Summer timetable debacle and has now been returned by Department for Transport to be spent as on schemes that will benefit passengers - see <https://www.passengerbenefitfund.co.uk/> for more details. We are consulting GTR and seeking ideas from members on how the Fund could be used to benefit passengers using GTR trains and stations. GTR are consulting other rail user groups, MPs, local councils and other interested parties.

Each of our stations has been allocated £30,000 with more for those directly affected by the lack of Thameslink trains after the timetable change. Here stations like Littlehaven, Faygate, Ifield and Three Bridges have been allocated £80,000 and those partially affected such as Horsham, Crawley and all stations Littlehampton to Shoreham £50,000 each with a total of £1.11m. It has been made clear that cash allocated to particular stations can be spent elsewhere if there is a justified need (my interpretation). Neither can it be spent on major projects such as new lifts.

We have looked at all the stations on our “patch” and put together a preliminary list of items that we and rail users we have spoken to have suggested. These 31 stations are:

Coastway West - Warblington to Southwick including Chichester, Barnham, Bognor, Littlehampton, Angmering, Worthing and Shoreham (strictly Emsworth, Warblington, East Worthing, Lancing, Shoreham and Southwick are outside our area but we have adopted them for this exercise).

Arun Valley – Arundel to Three Bridges including Horsham and Crawley.

Those rail users to whom we have spoken have criticised the metal seats on most of our stations as uncomfortable, tatty, too low, lacking armrests and insufficient in number. In recent months Southern has replaced seats in most waiting rooms with 4-seater wood and metal with armrests and some of these are also on platforms, notably Bognor, Arundel and a recent addition at Amberley. We consider that all existing platform seats (about 110) should be replaced with these 4-seater type with additional seats provided at most stations. We estimate that some 225 seats will be required at a cost of around £200,000. On top of this there have been requests for more platform shelters with proper seats at Barnham, Horsham (2) and Arundel (£100,000). Additional ticket vending machines at Bognor and Arundel, additional customer information screens for Southbourne, Arundel and Billingshurst. We

have suggested that water bottle fillers are installed in the ticket areas of our larger stations to save plastic. These are not cheap as they require mains water and refrigeration but there is a need and we are suggesting installations at Chichester, Bognor, Littlehampton, Worthing, Horsham, Crawley and Three Bridges at a ballpark estimate of £50,000. Examples of these fillers can be seen at London Bridge and Charing Cross. We are also suggesting that the cycle racks at Bognor station are moved onto Platform 4 there to improve security. Finally, the fund can be used to improve toilet facilities where these already exist. It has been suggested that toilets currently locked “after hours” could be fitted with locks that GTR’s Key cards would open. We would welcome views on this.

Now you have seen what we have done so far, it is up to members to suggest anything they think will benefit passengers and falls within the scope of the Fund as set out in the GTR information mentioned above. Time is short on this and so could we have your thoughts on your stations by the end of June. Please send these to me by e-mail or by post. You are also free to criticise what we have already suggested.

GTR Angie Doll appointed Managing Director of Southern

You may have seen that Angie Doll, currently Passenger Service Director of Southern and Gatwick Express and a good friend of the Association will become Managing Director of Southern and Gatwick Express on 1 July. Angie has attended all of our recent AGMs and we look forward to working with her in this new role.

Advance notice of Coastway West Line Closure over October half-term

Over the autumn half-term and the following three weekends, there will be line closures and bus substitutions when Network Rail undertake works to complete a multi-million pound upgrade of the lines between Barnham, Chichester and Havant. This work will be over 9 days, from Saturday 26 October to Sunday 3 November, and the following three weekends, to lay 2.3km of new track and replace life-expired equipment at 4 level crossings in Chichester and Bosham with new, more reliable technology. The work will improve the reliability of rail services on the line and the reliability of the level crossings, reducing delays for both rail passengers and motorists.

On weekdays from Monday 28 October to Friday 1 November 2019 buses will replace trains between Havant and Chichester. On the following weekend dates the line between Barnham and Havant will be closed, with buses replacing trains between those stations on each date affected; Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 October, Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 November, Sundays 10 and 17 November, Saturday 30 November and Sunday 1 December. Throughout the work, Southern trains to London and Brighton will still run from Bognor and on the Monday to Friday of the half-term week, trains to London and Brighton will also run from Chichester. We will update the information on this nearer the time.

Trevor Tupper
Secretary/Treasurer