

SEVENOAKS RAIL TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Annual Meeting –October 28th 2004

Present: Mr M. Holden, M.D. of South Eastern Trains (SET); Colin Mather, Area Manager; Clive Gray, Station Manager; 7 of the SRTA Committee and 22 members of the public.

1. Annual Meeting

- The Minutes of the 2003 Annual Meeting (9th October) were approved.
- The existing Committee (Drs Houghton, Canet and Johnson, Cllrs Clayton, Parry and Gulliver and Messrs Benford, Dolby-Gray and Ryan) was re-elected, together with a new member Mr G. Everett.
- The Accounts for 2003 were approved.
- Dr. R. Johnson, chairing the meeting, thanked Dr B. Houghton for all he had put into being Chairman of the Association for the past three years.

2. Train Services.

An incident had occurred during the afternoon, in which the hand of a boy (4) had been injured. The Chairman expressed his sympathy to his father who was present, and then introduced Michael Holden (MH). The main points of his talk were:

- The SRA will issue the 'Invitation to Tender' before the end of the year and the new franchisee will take over in about a year's time.
- The SRA had approved the purchase of 30 (6-car) units for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, which was expected to start operating in 2009.
- The maintenance of 375 stock was being carried out at Ramsgate depot, where only £3M had been spent, compared to >£100M by Govia and SWT for new depots. Reliability of 375 stock was still poor, but improving and better than Networkers.
- 7 units of the new class 376 (suburban) stock were then in service, releasing the first Networkers for 'refreshment'.
- Punctuality had improved due to timetable changes made in September 2003 and operating managers concentrating on timekeeping.
- Train running information was now integrated with the train control centre in London.
- SET had improved graffiti cleaning on Networkers and 'turn round' cleaning at London termini. There was room to improve 'deeper' cleaning of main line stock. 93% of toilets worked each morning, but MH wanted to get this figure up to 100% by the end of the year.
- SET had limited stock and train paths, but was fine tuning the 2005 train plan, which he would discuss with SRTA when the 2004 Census figures were available. Timetable adjustments would be possible in January, June and September 2005.
- SET was learning to use the information system, had improved station maintenance and increased station staffing.
- 2004 revenue was up, thought to be due to more efficient revenue protection.
- MH was looking forward to the 'refreshed' Networkers, to the end of Mk.1 stock and to remote control of platform CCTV systems. He recognised that car park management, the handling of complaints and late night train security were areas that SET had still not improved.

The questions which followed covered subjects such as:

- SET finds there is little demand for early morning services on Sunday morning and couldn't run such services on the Maidstone East line without clearer evidence of demand.

- The existing stock has to be 'spread' over a longer period in the evening peak, than the morning one, and a number of services are run as only 8 car trains.
- The 3 seats on the High Density 375 stock allow room for more amply proportioned commuters than the 3 seats on Mark1 VEP stock.
- The Department for Transport's RVAR regulations were blamed for the lack of holds for standing passengers in 375 stock, but the later (series 8 and 9) units had better handrails.
- When it is built, Thameslink 2000 will solve the London Bridge 'problem' by providing additional lines and platforms at that station.
- Doors to separate First class seating from standard class would be very expensive.
- SRTA should send its proposals to extend the DLR to at least Hither Green to DLR Ltd.

3. Station Matters

- The Station Manager explained his problems with loudspeakers (local people complain if they're too loud) in response to a question that announcements were inaudible at the south end of the platforms.
- The help point at Dunton Green was not working.
- There was a vacancy for a booking clerk at Otford and when filled, he would need 3 months' training. The station is currently operating on temporary relief staff.
- Car Parks. Andrew Thompson and Mark Thomas from CPS were present and responded to questions (both about No.1 car park):

The level of this car park is below that of the surface water sewer and the pump to solve the flooding problem needs Network Rail approval. Meanwhile tickets can be used in other car parks when spaces in No.1 Car Park are inaccessible.

Some cars are driven too fast through the car park. The footpath is difficult to use because of parked bikes and boots of large cars overhanging it. With the removal of the barriers, people are driving into the car park to drop off/pick up commuters. Another hump to slow down traffic was suggested.