

SEVENOAKS RAIL TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

Annual Report for Annual General Meeting 2009

1. Annual Meeting

The Association's Annual Meeting is on Tuesday 6 October at 8pm in the hall of Christ Church URC on the corner of London Road and Kippington Road. Our guests will include Mike Gibson (Southeastern Railway), Mike Smith (Route Enhancement Manager for Network Rail), Malcolm Spalding (Arriva) and Reg Oakley (Sevenoaks Cycling). The meeting will include updates on the Kent Route Utilisation Strategy and Network Rail's planned investment programme for Kent in the next 5 years and its plans to avoid a repetition of delays caused by the snow earlier this year. There will also be coverage of the December 2009 timetable changes and there will be an opportunity ask the transport operating companies about issues about current services. It promises to be a very interesting meeting.

We do not intend to hand out leaflets at Sevenoaks (and other) stations this year before the Annual Meeting. Instead we will rely on notices at the stations, emails to members and other contacts, and some coverage in the Sevenoaks Chronicle.

2. How do we see ourselves?

Sevenoaks Rail Travellers' Association (SRTA) represents the interest of all those who use Sevenoaks, Dunton Green, Bat & Ball, Otford, Kemsing, Shoreham and Eynsford stations. In the year to March 2008, nearly **4.8 million train journeys** began or ended at Sevenoaks station alone and there are more than **3000 daily commuters** from the Sevenoaks area.

The benefits of our lobbying cannot, of course, be limited to our members who support us financially. We are grateful to the members who help defray our limited expenses. (This report also goes to other supporters, who have given us their e-mail addresses in order to receive our reports. We would be glad if you, too, supported us financially. Our subscriptions remain £5 for two years and £20 for 'life', and these should be sent to the Secretary whose address is at the end of this report.)

3. Events since the last Annual General Meeting

Fares

Sevenoaks season ticket fares to London rose by 7.8% in January 2009 (6.7% in January 2008), while the average of regulated fares of London and South East area Train Operating Companies (TOCs) rose by 6.3% (5.2% in January 2008). SER justified this differential by saying that when they took over in April 2006, the subsidy, then at £140M a year, was to fall by £20M per annum with the object of their returning a premium to the Treasury at the end of the franchise period, and that they were aiming to recover this by both attracting more passengers and also exercising the provision to increase regulated fares by above the rate of inflation, based on an RPI + 3% formula. (This formula is more generous than that given to most other TOCs (who are generally subject to an RPI + 1% limit) in recognition of the additional investment expenditure associated with the introduction of High Speed One services.

Trains Group

Network Rail have published the draft of the Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), following the presentation given to the 2008 AGM. Unfortunately, as the work on the Strategy has progressed it has focussed on a 10-year forward look rather than a 30-year study originally envisaged, and so it has not really addressed the fundamental issues of constraints on capacity, which in some cases are the legacy of the Victorian infrastructure. The Association made a submission during the Strategy period, and has subsequently made a further formal submission on the consultation draft.

Since the Kent RUS had been limited to 2014, Passenger Focus, in consultation with London Travelwatch, had put together an initiative to look forward 30 years. This had been accepted by NR and the ATOCs and would look at London and the whole South East. The Association welcome this initiative and looks forward to making representations to it.

Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council are currently considering a draft Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport 2009-2026. The Association has submitted comments to the Councils on the draft. The Association has been very supportive of the emphasis in the Report on the need to improve links between rail services and public transport in the Sevenoaks town catchment area and of incentives to encourage cycling and other non-car use. However, in the area of train travel, the current draft has missed many of the main issues and the section and appendix on train travel are marred by a number of inaccuracies. As a result, the draft gives what we consider to be a highly optimistic assessment of future train services for Sevenoaks area commuters.

At the beginning of January 2009 SER abruptly withdrew 2 coaches from 6 heavily loaded peak trains – 07.18, 07.44, 8.04 and 8.29 from Sevenoaks and the 17.41 and 18.28 from Charing Cross. In the morning, leaving Sevenoaks each train has just 600 seats for well over 700 passengers. SRTA pressed SER for the immediate reinstatement of these coaches, and attracted the attention of the local media to the issue. SER quickly reversed their policy and re-instated the missing carriages to all the trains except the 07.18. We continue to press SER to restore this train to its full length as well, and keep a close eye on actual train lengths to ensure that the service is provided as intended.

Following the heavy snowfall on the night of 1-2 February, there was no train service at all at Sevenoaks on Monday, 2 February and only an emergency service on Tuesday 3 February. After initially denying that compensation would be paid, SER introduced a limited and unpublicised compensation scheme in respect of 2 February. The Association ensured that its members and supporters were aware of the scheme and had the relevant forms and instructions to claim. In addition, we took up a number of individual members' cases for compensation in respect of 3 February as well.

The timetable changes associated with the rebuilding of Blackfriars Station have introduced a through train service via Otford to Kentish Town, allowing for instance direct train travel to Kings Cross/St Pancras from Sevenoaks.

Timetable changes that take effect in December 2009 bring the promise of more Mainline and Metro morning services for Sevenoaks commuters. For journeys

commencing before 9.00 am, the current draft timetable includes 4 more Mainline services to Charing Cross and 1 more to Cannon Street. There will also be 2 slower Metro services to Charing Cross starting at Sevenoaks and an additional one to Cannon Street. Offpeak, there will be 6 fast trains an hour each way between London and Sevenoaks.

Stations Group

The Stations Group has continued to press issues of ticket queues, ticket vending machines, graffiti and station information and announcements with SER.

The Association is very supportive of the call for the better integration of transport services, including better provision for cyclists and better bus services to and from the Sevenoaks station. This would have economic and environmental benefits. In early 2009, the Association worked with the local cycling group to conduct a survey of home to station travel modes and what could be done to encourage the use of cycles; and the Stations Group has continued to press SER for better cycle storage facilities at Sevenoaks station.

Future challenges

The regulated fare system of RPI+3% may only give the train operating company an opportunity of a regulated fare increase of 1.5%. There will also be a loss of revenue due to lower employment. So there is a risk of unregulated fares and car parking charges being raised substantially to try to recover some of the lost income.

We will also be watching the impact of HS1 becoming fully operational and the impact on train loadings, where 'classic' Ashford line capacity is being reduced on the assumption that passengers from East Kent will switch to HS1 despite the premium fare.

The rebuilding of London Bridge, beginning in 2012, will undoubtedly bring disruption to train services and we will be pressing SER and NR to engage with us and other stakeholders at an early stage to ensure that the impact on current passengers is minimized. Employment patterns have shifted eastwards since the last major rebuilding of London Bridge and Charing Cross, and London Bridge is heavily congested even with the current volume of trains.

Membership

On 30 June 2008 the Association had 22 Life Members and 20 paid-up 2-year members. There was a renewal drive in early 2009 and, with the added help of the publicity associated with the Cycling survey, train shortening and the February snow disruption, by 30 June 2009 the Association's paid-up membership had risen to 36 Life Members and 34 2-year Members.

Dr. R. G. Johnson (Chairman)
9, Stanhope Way,
Riverhead,
Sevenoaks TN13 2DZ

A C Stott (Secretary)
PO Box 191
Sevenoaks,
Kent, TN13 2AW

22 September 2009

SEVENOAKS RAIL TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATIONS ACCOUNTS
FOR YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2008

2007		2008	Notes
	Income		
90.00	Subscriptions	94.00	2
5.00	Donations	0.00	
2.65	Bank Interest	8.66	
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97.65	Total	102.66	
	Expenditure		
30.00	Hire of Hall	37.50	
41.36	Photocopying	0.00	
9.79	Postage	0.00	
133.95	Advertising	0.00	
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215.10	Total	37.50	
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(117.45)	Surplus/(Deficit)	65.16	
212.45	Opening balance	95.00	
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95.00	Closing balance	160.16	
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	Balance Sheet at 31 Dec		
95.00	Accumulated Fund	160.16	
333.00	Subscriptions in Advance	314.00	2
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428.00	Total	474.16	
43.31	Current Account	105.50	
590.00	Investment Account	398.66	
(205.31)	Accounts Payable	(30.00)	1
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428.00	Total	474.16	

Notes

1. Cheque for 2007 hall hire not presented by 31 December 2008.

2. Subscription income of £94.00 for 22 Life Members and 20 2-year Members. Subscriptions received for 3 new Life Members and 3 new 2-year Members, total £75.00. Subscriptions in Advance = £333.00 + £75.00 - £94.00 = £314.00.