

SEVENOAKS RAIL TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Thursday 20 October 2016 at 8.00pm

Chairman: Tony Clayton
Attendees: 42 members, supporters and guests of the Association
Apologies: Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP

1. Chairman's introduction

The Chairman welcomed members, supporters and guests and presented the Committee's Annual Report for 2015-16.

2. Thameslink plans for services from 2018 onwards

Phil Hutchinson (GTR) said that 2018 would see the largest timetable change in a generation in the South East. The new Thameslink services would bring new trains with more capacity and more connectivity. There would be extensive consultation on the timetable, with Phase 1 (currently in progress) focusing on service structure and calling patterns and Phase 2 (in early Summer 2017) with the detailed timing of weekday and weekend services.

For Kent the new service proposals included:

- All day Maidstone East to City services (including restoring services lost in 2009), extended to Ashford at the beginning and end of the day. Otford to Farringdon would be 43 minutes, compared to 66 minutes at present.
- An enhanced service to the Catford Loop, with services from Orpington as well as Sevenoaks.
- Sevenoaks via Bat & Ball services would terminate at Blackfriars off-peak.

In response to questions he said that any change to Otford to Victoria services would be a matter for DfT and Southeastern and that folding bicycles only would be permitted in the peaks.

3. DfT plans for the 2018 Southeastern Franchise

Andy Brittan (Project Director, SE Franchise, Department for Transport) said that a decision on devolution to TfL was expected shortly. The Department also considered that the scheduled end of the existing franchise, in June 2018, was too close to the major May 2018 timetable changes and the existing franchise might need to be extended for a short period.

He said that the DfT's objectives for SE London and Kent services after 2018 were better customer experience, greater capacity, greater collaboration between train operators and Network Rail, support for employment and development in the region, environment and better connectivity, including synergies with Thameslink and Crossrail.

In response to questions he said that DfT were aware of capacity demands from housing growth and new developments, and while they were looking at the potential for more carriages there were other infrastructure constraints, including capacity at London terminals.

4. Network Rail

Mike Smith (Network Rail) said that work on the Kent Route Study was well advanced: it was planned to publish a draft in November 2016 and the final version in Spring 2017. The Study would look at the infrastructure and needs for investment beyond a single franchise period. It would include consideration of:

- Extending HS1 to Hastings
- Improving power supplies on the Hastings line south of Tunbridge Wells, which currently restricted the number of 12 car trains that could be run.

In questions the issue of the footpath through the Morewood Arch was raised and Mr Smith undertook to forward the issue to his colleagues.

5. Southeastern report

Diane Burke (Commercial Director, Southeastern) said that Southeastern recognised that its scores in the National Rail Passenger Survey had been the worst of any franchise. So Southeastern did not intend to stand still for the remaining two years of the franchise. She had been appointed to specify improvements to the customer experience and would be bringing in external service design expertise where necessary.

Among the steps planned were:

- A pilot at Charing Cross of more empowered staff to give a “human to human” experience to customers and to resolve issues at first contact.
- Greater collaboration with Network Rail, including improvement of collaboration at London Bridge.
- The launch in December 2016 of a ticket ‘smartcard’ that would allow season tickets to be bought online and uploaded onto the card at the gate or at a TVM.
- Other policies, processes, people and products were being reviewed.

In questions the following points were raised:

- Maintenance policies needed to reflect customer needs. It was not acceptable for a 12 car mainline train not to have any working toilets or for toilets to be out of action for three days running.
- The staff car parking places in Car Park 4 at Sevenoaks were not being fully used. The number of staff places was increased for the Olympics and had never been reduced to the original level.
- Southeastern were still publicising 0845 customer service numbers, in contravention of legal regulations and OFCOM policies.

6 Formal Business

- The Minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting were approved.
- The Annual Report for 2015-2016 was approved.
- The Accounts for 2015 were approved.

- Tony Clayton was re-elected as Chairman.
- The following were elected to the Committee: Ms Canet, Cllr Parry, Messrs Dolby-Gray, Houghton, Johnson, Ryan, Dodds, Crawley and Stott(Secretary).

Andrew Stott
Secretary
Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association