



MARSHLINK

THE 'OVERLAPPING SPLIT'

RICHARD MADGE of Bexhill Rail Action Group explains an alternative proposal for Brighton-Ashford 'Marshlink' services

The 'overlapping split' is an alternative proposal made by rail user groups in response to plans by Govia Thameslink Railway and the Department for Transport to replace the through Brighton-Ashford service with two separate services – a Brighton-Hastings train and a Hastings-Ashford train. This would involve through passengers having to change trains at Hastings.

This alternative proposal involves two overlapping services:

- a Brighton-Hastings four-car or eight-car electric service; and
- an Eastbourne-Ashford two-car diesel service.

ADVANTAGES?

What are the advantages? According to GTR's passenger survey in 2016, approximately 45% of passengers making journeys to/from the Marshlink are cross-Hastings journeys. Moreover, in Phase One of the consultation,

over 63% of individual respondents, and all rail user groups, indicated that they wished for the Ashford service to continue further west – either to Eastbourne, or to continue through to Brighton as now. Only 36% of respondents supported splitting the service at Hastings.

Under this counter-proposal, Eastbourne, Bexhill and St Leonards Warrior Square would maintain a through service to Rye and Ashford International, which is important for passengers travelling on HS1 services to St Pancras and onwards, as well as those making Eurostar connections; also for those making regional connections into Kent.

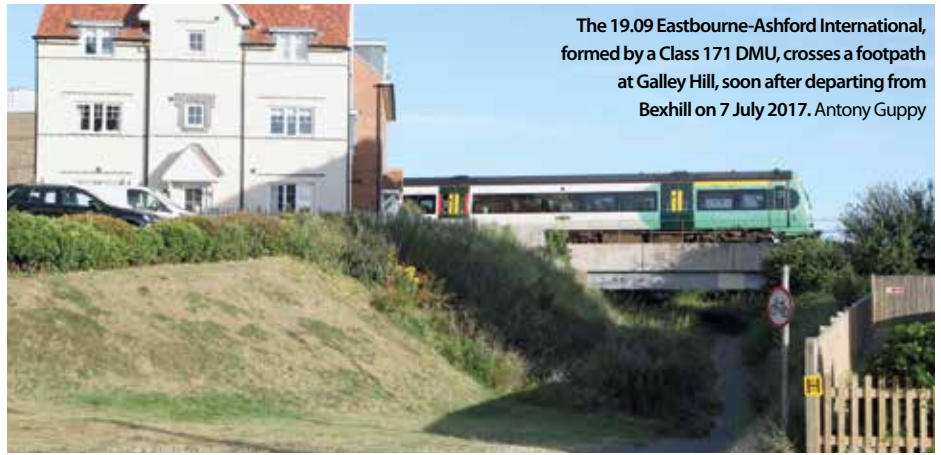
Conversely the planned new Brighton-Hastings electric service should in parallel eliminate the chronic local overcrowding which has been the cause of so many complaints.

Together with the two other planned services each hour – the Victoria-Ore service, and the hourly Brighton-Hastings stopping service –



Class 171 No 171728 approaches its Bexhill stop while working the 17.33 Ashford International to Eastbourne on 7 July 2017. Antony Guppy

this would give a total of four trains an hour between Hastings and Eastbourne and vice versa, creating a 'Metro' style service during the day.



The 19.09 Eastbourne-Ashford International, formed by a Class 171 DMU, crosses a footpath at Galley Hill, soon after departing from Bexhill on 7 July 2017. Antony Guppy

ROLLING STOCK?

Would this require any extra rolling stock?
No – in actual fact it would require one fewer two-car diesel unit than at present. An Eastbourne-Ashford service could be operated with four units (including one for the Rye shuttle), as opposed to five units being used to operate the existing Brighton-Ashford service.

GTR has already identified sufficient electric rolling stock to operate the proposed semi-fast Brighton-Hastings service, so this should not be problematic.

COST?


What would the extra costs be? The extra costs would be in terms of train and crew miles extending the Ashford service through to Eastbourne – or the Brighton service from Eastbourne through to Hastings, depending which way you look at it.

CAPACITY?

Does the route have the capacity to run an extra service each hour? Investigations by the rail user groups suggest it does. There will still be only one train per hour running on the Marshlink between Hastings and Ashford (plus the Rye shuttle) at peak times. The East Coastway between Hastings and Eastbourne is now wholly resignalled with modern three- or four-aspect colour light signalling, enabling trains to run with three to five-minute headways. Enquiries show that with some minor adjustments, the extra train can be accommodated in platforms at Hastings and Eastbourne, and through Bo-Peep and Willingdon Junctions.

WHAT NEXT?

So what has to happen? DfT has to approve and provide modest extra funding.

GTR/Network Rail are required to make necessary amendments to the draft timetable. 

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Railway Technical Tour
4-11 November 2017

to Portugal, Spain and Bordeaux

The Institution of Mechanical Engineers and the University of Birmingham are jointly organising a Railway Technical Tour that will introduce the participants to good practice in railway engineering and operations. The 2017 Tour will visit Porto, Lisbon, Miranda de Ebro, Bilbao, Besain and Bordeaux. The fee per person, £810 (shared occupancy) or £1020 (single occupancy), will include all train and local travel from Porto to Paris as well as B&B accommodation for six nights and one sleeper train journey. The programme will include visits to tram, light rail, metro and mainline railway operations, to rolling stock factories and to railway workshops. A detailed itinerary and further information are available from rail-tech-tour@talktalk.net. Travel from the UK to Porto and return travel from Paris are not part of the arrangements but may be included at an extra cost.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM **BCRRE** The University of Birmingham encourages equality of opportunity for all and offers railway systems engineering studies as part of its provision of higher education in a research-led environment.

The Technical Tour 2017 is organised and led by two well-travelled railway engineers from Britain. It is recommended for new entrants to the industry, as well as experienced professionals. The IMechE welcomes applications from young members for the James Bates Grant, which can be used to fund up to 50% of the cost of the Technical Tour.

Institution of MECHANICAL ENGINEERS