

London and South East Branch of *railfuture* quarterly newsletter

campaigning by the Railway Development Society Limited in London & the Home Counties - Kent, Surrey, Sussex, south Hertfordshire, south Essex, Bedfordshire, & Greater London

the independent campaign for a better passenger and freight rail network

Welcome to the second re-branded newsletter for our regional Branch. The format, and certainly the name, are still experimental in response to some feedback so more welcome.

Welcome too to the 'magnificent seven' new members in our Branch area who have joined the Society this year – Messrs Bell in Groombridge, Page in Sandhurst, Armytage in King's Langley, Davidson in Sittingbourne, Ghiassi and Washington in south-east London, and Johns from Ashford [not the International one].

After the previous issue's focus on Community Rail Partnerships, we start with a brief look at **Rail Users' Groups**. There are 76 RUGs listed on our regional Branch section of the Society's website. Some, just eight, are affiliated to the Society, so many others not [yet!] Some listed may no longer be active, others which may be active are not listed. Feedback welcome as the Branch wishes to have an accurate list of contacts ahead of next year's Rail Users' Groups national conference.

Meanwhile, '**Rail User Express**' is available from Tony Smale, Railfuture's Rail User Group Liaison Officer. Postal address: 63 Church Lane, Wool, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 6DD. Email address: ruglink@railfuture.org.uk

Abbey Line

railfuture response to DfT/Hertfordshire consultation on converting the Watford Junction to St. Albans Abbey Branch line to Light Rail/Tram operation [we hope to learn more at the Shoreditch conference]

Railfuture welcomes the Secretary of State's announcement regarding the proposed conversion of this branch to light rail operation. We have been concerned for some time that the branch has not been meeting the needs of the local populace and could not be made to do so without considerable expenditure. Infrastructure changes over the years preclude the through running of trains to London and in any case as has been stated there are insufficient paths on the main line for regular through running. In addition, the recent conversion of the main line services to Class 350 Desiro operation means that the rolling stock is no longer suited to (or indeed cost effective for) working over the branch. The necessity of keeping a small fleet of non-standard stock to run the service increases the cost of operation which must be a factor when considering the future of the branch.

There has been pressure for some time from the local authorities to improve train frequency which cannot be met because of limitations of the infrastructure, so that at best a 45 minute interval service was all that could be maintained. There is also a problem in that at neither end of the line is there direct access to the town centres and even at Watford Junction the branch platform is a considerable distance from the main station. In spite of these drawbacks traffic along the route has continued to grow so we conclude that there is considerable latent demand. We also note that roads between St. Albans and Watford are heavily used

principally the North Orbital Road and there must be potential for some of this traffic to transfer to rail given an improved service frequency.

Some years ago the County Council came up with a proposal to convert part of the branch to Trolley Bus operation which we vigorously opposed as we felt it was expensive and the benefits of limited value. We are also pleased to note that conversion to a busway is not under consideration as the two such busway schemes in the area do not convince us of success, or indeed cost effectiveness. The Cambridge busway is still not in operation and according to colleagues the proposed journey times are no faster than journeys over the A14. The Luton-Dunstable route is considerably changed since the Inquiry and what were described as two key objectives are no longer served. The likely usage is to be at peak hours only.

We are pleased to note that should it be desirable the Secretary of State has not ruled out extensions and we have noted our thoughts on possibilities for extensions in an appendix to this reply. We note that the Secretary of State has given latitude as to the purchase of stock and that we would favour the purchase of new-build off the shelf designs.

In the first instance we would not suggest additional stations, just the proposed passing loop at Bricket Wood. The construction of a footbridge with a second platform should be considered as access from the roads on both sides of the station is, we believe, desirable. However, we would suggest a couple of minor modifications at each terminal. Attempts should be made to try and ensure the trams terminate nearer the main station platforms at Watford. At St. Albans the trams should stop nearer the main road so that the bus stops are nearer and that there is more public awareness of the Tram. Presently the station is not obvious from the road.

There are benefits to increased frequency of service by having two platform roads at the current termini so that if multiple vehicle trams are used, then increased turn round time could be negated by having one tram leave as one arrives.

We are pleased to note that through tickets to the rest of the rail network will be available either from ticket machines or from conductors on the trams. We also believe that through ticketing on buses to the town centres and key places of interest is essential to improving the success of the scheme. We would strongly support fitting of ticket machines at all stations. The use of multiple vehicle trams would make seating capacity more compatible with the existing Class 321 trains, but would also make the on-board issue of tickets more difficult without additional ticket machine provision.

We would also very seriously suggest that the TfL Oyster Pay As You Go system be extended to the tram service to fully integrate it with existing TfL operated bus and rail services at Watford and the future extension of the Metropolitan Line to Watford Junction via the 'Croxley Link'.

If there are to be extensions to the route then the possibility of road running should be considered as lightweight trams and suitable lightweight track (such as produced by Trampower) should be considered to minimise potential road-works. This could be an option to be considered instead of second hand vehicles depending on the timescales of any further development.

Appendix - Extensions

We believe that it would be possible if the track were to be single to extend the line southwards at a slightly lower level and adjacent to the main line as far as the Radlett Road and then swing round through the open space and under the main line viaduct to Watford High Street. It would have to be at a higher level than the London Overground but with lightweight vehicles the infrastructure costs could be kept to a minimum. Further extensions might be possible along line of the River Colne and the corridor of the A4146 to Rickmansworth past the southern side of the Croxley Business Park and then along the A412 to Maple Cross.

In the east an extension could follow the line of the abandoned LNER branch to St. Albans from Hatfield as far as Smallford. Access beyond there over the old route is not now possible because of developments not least of which is the A1(M). From Smallford it would be possible to access Hatfield by running alongside the A1057 past the Business Park and near to the University of Hertfordshire as far as the Galeria outlet shopping centre and then by road running through the town centre to Hatfield station. A key element would be the siting of any Tramstop to the northern side of London Road in St. Albans so that it would be located under the Thameslink route with close access to St. Albans City Station.

The ribbon development that has virtually linked these four towns with heavily used roads joining them suggests that any extended light rail scheme linking them will be popular, well utilised and cost effective, passing as it does several major shopping centres, three business parks, and a university, and interchanges with four key main line routes out of London.

Such an enhanced scheme has a lot going for it in terms of cost effectiveness and environmental enhancement, and should be seriously considered by the local authorities and the DfT.

from East Coast

although lengthy, as is the route in question, here's the Society's response to the DfT's January consultation on the East Coast Franchise, introduced by Martin Murphy, Chairman of Railfuture North East who acted as co-ordinator of the six-Branch magnum opus and the process towards it. Note structure as well as content.

As always, not all of the firmly held views are shared by everyone but I hope that the result we have achieved is the highest common factor rather than the lowest common denominator! I hope that our submission will complement the Stakeholder Briefing that the DfT are committed to produce and that, together with the more detailed concerns of individual Branches, it will usefully support our discussions with the bidders who survive the short-listing process.

The submission is intended to concentrate on matters of strategy, policy and principle that might be included in the DfT's specification, rather than on the details of implementation in specific localities.

However, the process has identified some topics about which I think a little further explanation may help:

* *Timetable*: There are numerous problems with the published draft (Dec 09) of the proposed new timetable and the DfT have conceded that a new draft for consultation will be published. It will be up to all of us, therefore, to assess the new draft when it appears and then to press for any changes that we think necessary before it is incorporated into the specification.

* *Ticket gates*: Gates turn out to have strong proponents and equally strong opponents! Solomon had it relatively easy! The submission is intended to ensure proper operation of gates but make their retention subject to a thorough and objective review. I shall, however, be interested to see how gates and smart ticketing processes interact as the technologies develop.

* *Fares*: There are numerous views on what constitutes a simple system. To pick but one example, zone fares for destinations seem a simplification when viewed from the starting end of a long journey but are invidious for those making short journeys across zone boundaries. Zones will also continue to disadvantage smaller stations, whilst LENNON remains the basis for passenger use statistics. I hope the recommended improvement in the presentation of information will help at the point of purchase.

* *Car parks*: The only common thread on this topic is that there are too few places and that they cost a lot to use. The submission is concerned to ensure that parking provision is seen in the context of the area around the station and of the needs of both short and long distance travellers. This is certainly a topic on which RUGs with concerns for individual stations will have to lobby the franchise bidders (and ultimately the selected Operator), the local authority, Network Rail and the private providers.

* *Rolling stock*: The value for money review has blown a hole in what the DfT thought to be a major part of the specification. As most commentators seem to think the IEP/SET will not survive, we need to ensure that as Branches, we react positively and rapidly to the findings of the Foster review.

* *Investment*: The list of examples included in the submission is obviously not intended to be exhaustive but equally, it is intended not to include projects already in the Network Rail ECML programme. However, this is an ideal area for Branches to debate with bidders once they have been identified.

* *Stations*: There seems little evidence to suggest that stations operated by Network Rail are either better or worse than those operated by East Coast and its predecessors. I suspect that casual passengers judge 'ownership' from the uniforms in evidence at booking offices and information desks (Northern in Leeds? East Coast in Edinburgh?). There is certainly a huge amount of work on station quality to be done nationally and we might consider establishing a task and finish group to thoroughly understand the Green/Hall report and engage with its implementation.

Chapter 2 – Process and Timescales: Franchise Policy Review

DfT p.12: *consultees are encouraged to consider the length of the franchise and comment as to whether the proposed length is appropriate.*

* The proposal to increase the minimum franchise period to 10 years appears to be appropriate to deliver continuity of employment for staff, confidence in travel commitments for fare-payers, corporate investment-based growth and consolidation of new rolling stock procurement and operation (Super Express Train or otherwise).

* Longer franchises would be appropriate if supported by suitable investment programmes (See also **Investment** below) covering but not restricted to:

- ✓ Stations managed through and served by the franchise,
- ✓ Information systems on and off stations,
- ✓ Electrification of in-fill and diversionary routes,
- ✓ Rolling stock (to combat overcrowding and to enhance route coverage),

- ✓ Signalling to overcome operational difficulties,
- ✓ Seven-day railway facilitation,
- ✓ Improvements designed to enhance overall journey quality and experience.

The specification should require all such investment programmes to be developed in partnership with Network Rail, other Train Operating Companies (Operators), local and national government and other partners as appropriate.

- * Investment programmes should require implementation sequentially from the early years of the franchise (before 5 years) to contribute to a reduction in 'walk-away' risk.
- * To the same end, agreed investment funding should count towards any premium profile determined as payment in return for the right to operate the franchise.
- * The risk of franchise complacency should be managed by on-going monitoring and the introduction of contract break points at 5 year intervals, continuation being subject to the achievement of investment, operational and service quality bench marks.
- * Evidence to support the approach is provided by the Chiltern franchise and the associated Evergreen 1, 2 and 3 investment programmes. The Chiltern franchise started in 2002 and Evergreen 3 is just starting; the intention for Network Rail to buy back the Chiltern 3 investment is noted.
- * The bidding process must meet European Union rules but must also result in the selection of the optimum package, not simply the selection of the best base-line bid. To this end, the declared process must be transparent and show how the franchise life extension and investment components will be evaluated as a package, with benefit to both fare and tax payer being optimised.
- * The Secretary of State has told the Transport Committee that the franchise will not be re-let if the bids received do not represent good value for money (Reference: Secretary of State letter to Commons Transport Committee). To ensure transparency of the basis for this determination, the shadow bid obtained by the Department to facilitate the value for money comparison should be published at an appropriate stage.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Passenger demand forecasts

DfT p.25: Consultees are invited to identify any specific local factors they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand on the ECML.

- * Mode shift from car and air travel to public transport generally and rail specifically is clearly acknowledged regionally and nationally as a necessary component of the behavioural change needed to achieve the requirements of the Climate Change Act. The franchise specification should therefore require the franchise holder to use best endeavours to increase the rail market share throughout the East Coast Main Line corridor. The national trend in this direction is apparent from the figures for 2009 just released by the Guild of Travel Management Companies showing an increase of over 10% in business travel by rail with similar reductions in air and hire car travel. (See **Fares** and **Other matters**)
- * Planned investment in the Tyne & Wear Metro services and in the the Tees Valley Metro scheme will increase the use of Newcastle and Darlington as hub, and interchange stations. Similar investment by local authorities along the route will add to the growth in patronage.
- * Current issues with the proposed new East Coast timetable intended to operate from May 2011, if not adequately resolved, would significantly reduce access to the railway generally and specifically would impair the availability of numerous East Coast services at intermediate stations between London and Edinburgh.
- * A further consultation draft of the timetable is promised for 'mid-April' 2010, at which time the first draft of the weekend timetable is expected to be available. This being the case, it would appear prudent to amend the franchise process to ensure that the agreed seven-day timetable can be reflected into the franchise specification. Specifically, this consultation on the franchise specification should be held open to admit comment on the impact for the franchise, of the mid-April timetable draft within a reasonable time after its publication.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Fares

DfT p.26: The Department would welcome views on how the fares structure in this franchise could be made easier to understand and whether there are any changes that would give passengers greater confidence in the fares system.

- * Any requirement in the specification in respect of fares should be written to reflect both the Department's and the Association of Train Operating Companies' on-going reviews of fares. These reviews should include the management of surcharges for incorrectly presented advance purchase discount tickets. In preparing the specification, the Department should recognise that any rationalisation of the fares system must be applied simultaneously and in a coherent, binding way across all franchises. Moreover, any

rationalisation should be designed to increase the competitiveness of rail travel relative to travel by other modes (See **Passenger demand forecasts** and **Other matters**).

* The fares structure is not specifically a key issue; its application and its presentation are. East Coast have just introduced local discount fares thus adding to the notional complexity of the structure but with good marketing, bringing benefits to both fare-payers and franchise holder alike. Similarly 'add-ons' for local travel by PTE Metro, London Underground, Plusbus etc, increase the apparent variety of fares but are for the benefit of the fare payer.

* Walk-on fares are a key part of the success of rail travel and the franchise specification must require these fares to be retained at high value for money levels that will encourage a mode shift from car travel to help promote sustainable travel and meet Climate Change Act targets.

* Any requirement in the specification in respect of fares should not inhibit the franchise holder from deploying commercial and marketing expertise to the benefit of the fare-payer and operator alike. For example, it should be recognised that the widespread availability of some return ticket types for little more than the single fare is a) the result of historical discounts for day return tickets and b) a variation on the widespread marketing tool known variously as 'buy one get one free' and 'two for the price of one'.

* Operators should be encouraged to develop and actively market retail packages to include, for example station first class facilities, first class travel upgrade, catering and parking provision. All such packages should be equally available by all purchasing modes such as automatic ticket machines, telephone (mobile, text & land-line) and internet as well as at station booking offices and travel agents.

* The specification should require the information presented about fares and the automated sales systems (internet, ticket machines etc) to:

- ✓ Provide clear access to the designation of 'off-peak' for journeys on long distance services.
 - ✓ Display prominently in ticket machine and internet programmes, the availability of single franchise, walk-up fares.
 - ✓ Display prominently in ticket machine and internet programmes, the availability of single franchise, advanced booking discount fares.
 - ✓ Identify all the integrated ticketing options available at the various stations along the route
- This all in addition to requiring booking office staff to offer the best value for money ticket types to fare-payers.

* The specification should require the franchise holder to explore with local authorities and others, the possibilities of extending further, the availability of integrated ticketing with other modes, including but not limited to PTE Metro, London Underground, Plusbus (see above).

* Fare-payers would be given greater confidence in the fares system:

- ✓ If the specification required all publicity material on fares to identify clearly which fares are regulated by the Department.
- ✓ If the annual review of regulated fares by the Department were to be based directly on the retail price index (RPI) and not on the 'RPI+1%' formula currently used. Specifically, the reference used should be designed to promote mode shift from car and air to rail (See above and (See **Passenger demand forecasts** and **Other matters**))
- ✓ If any change in the matrix of fares were to be demonstrably designed to increase financial return through an increased sales volume rather than through an increased charge per journey.

As with understanding, confidence in the fares system requires a coherent approach across all franchises.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Fares

DfT p.26: Consultees are also invited to comment on opportunities to make better use of new technology.

* The specification should require the franchise holder to:

- ✓ Collaborate with local authorities along the route in the exploitation of smart ticketing processes such as the North East Smart Ticketing Initiative and the system planned for South and West Yorkshire.
- ✓ Help ensure that a standardised, widely compatible smart ticketing system is evaluated for potential further use along the route early in the franchise.
- ✓ Ensure that any deployment of new technology does not present a barrier or disincentive to less frequent or new users of the rail network.
- ✓ Ensure that 'package' promotions including reservations, catering and parking can be obtained by any electronic systems deployed.
- ✓ Continue the current practice of providing staff to assist passengers faced with rows of automatic or pre-booked ticket machines at major stations.

- ✓ Ensure that ticket gates, where installed, can 'read' email barcode, mobile phone and similar electronic tickets without delay.
- * Notwithstanding the commitment to exploit electronic technology, the franchise should oblige the holder to develop and improve continuously the ticketing and reservation facilities available for the many passengers who have no, or only limited, access to 'new technology' or who prefer face to face contact with skilled staff.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Revenue protection

DfT p.26: Consultees are invited to comment on whether the Department should require any specific revenue protection measures to be implemented by the new franchisee.

- * An active commitment to on-train ticket inspection should be required by the specification, not only to protect revenue effectively but also as a way of increasing the visibility of staff and hence enhancing journey confidence for passengers. Passenger experience along the route suggests that the introduction of ticket gates has had an adverse impact in this respect.
- * The franchise specification should require an independent review of the value for money of ticket gates at stations where they are installed along the route. Such a review should include at least the:
 - ✓ Efficacy of the use of gates as a revenue protection tool.
 - ✓ Impact of delays to passengers arriving on overcrowded commuter trains from local, un-staffed stations.
 - ✓ Management of train-side passengers, noting any effect of the common practice of leaving gates open and un-staffed in the late evening.
 - ✓ Need to duplicate retail facilities.
 - ✓ Image of rail travel including the opportunity to improve rail-side facilities and any loss of passengers to other modes as a result of gating difficulties (see below).
 - ✓ Cost of purchase, installation, maintenance and staffing of gates.
- * The franchise holder should be required not only to pursue the findings of the value for money survey but also to take initiatives to improve the user-friendliness of ticket gates (where fitted and retained), not just for high volume, low luggage commuter flows where time is critical but for families with small children, buggies etc, for shoppers and leisure travellers encumbered with bags of all sorts, for those needing to leave and then re-enter the train side of the station, and for all the other users of the integrated seven-day railway.
- * The specification should require the franchise holder to use gate-operating practices that conform to the revenue generation and protection policies of all Operators using the station, including those preferring and promoting on-board sales. Used tickets should be returned to the passenger who may need them as proof of purchase for a specific journey.
- * The franchise holder should be required to use ticket gates (where fitted and retained) at all times when the station is open, (unless an unpredictable staff shortage means they must be left open). This requirement will necessitate the deployment of sufficient staff to assist passengers and to ensure that neither exit from, nor access to, the train-side of the station is delayed by gate procedures or availability, including the sale of tickets to passengers arriving from un-staffed stations.
- * The franchise specification should contain an overarching clause to encourage the franchise holder to protect revenue cost-effectively by periodic, independent appraisals of the procedures deployed.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Initial service pattern

DfT p.27: Initial service pattern.

- * The initial service pattern for the franchise will be the timetable planned to be in operation from May 2011. The drafts of this timetable published to date are unacceptable for many of the intended passengers; numerous and detailed submissions have been made on the subject and the analysis of these submissions is awaited.
- * A further timetable draft for comment is promised for mid April 2010, although it is reported that the weekend timetable is unlikely to be fully developed by then. The franchise timescale should be adjusted to accommodate at least a good working draft of the final seven-day timetable in the specification; such adjustment should be coordinated with the availability of the Foster review of the Intercity Express Programme and the Super Express Train (see below).
- * The franchise specification should emphasise that the seven-day railway needs a seven-day train timetable, in the delivery of which the franchise holder is obliged to liaise closely with Network Rail and other operators to minimise the impact of engineering work and ensure alternative rail service provision is maximised during times of disruption, planned or unplanned.
- * Connecting services are of critical importance to the integrated, joined-up railway and the franchise. Hence, the specification should require the franchise holder to work closely with Network Rail and the other

Operators concerned along the route to optimise and sustain connections, particularly at intermediate core hubs such as Peterborough, Doncaster, York, Darlington and Newcastle. The specification should recognise that maintaining connections with first and last services and at other times when the service frequency is low is of particular importance. Effective connecting services require punctual arrival at hub stations and the support of clear information, good station signage, and staff available to direct unfamiliar passengers.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Service pattern changes

DfT p.29: The Department would welcome views on the priorities for additional services and any other train service issues that consultees believe should be addressed in the early years of the new franchise, including any specific aspirations for earlier or later trains in the evening or at weekends.

* Current issues and difficulties with the proposed new timetable, if not adequately resolved, will reduce access to the railway generally, to services relying on connectivity through Peterborough and to main line services in the North East of England.

* The new franchise holder should be required to facilitate an independent review, within the first year of the franchise, of the potential for earlier and later trains to serve the key intermediate stations, not just those operating to/from London or required for stock balancing movements.

*The franchise holder should be required by the specification to:

- ✓ Collaborate with Scotrail (First Group and any successor), Transport Scotland and others as appropriate to develop the local services between Edinburgh and Dunbar, and possibly further south, after their introduction in 2010.
- ✓ Collaborate with other Operators and Network Rail to ensure that paths, services and station facilities are available to restore and grow the Chester-le-Street commuter services put at risk by the current timetable proposals.
- ✓ Promote an integrated approach by all the Operators to timetable provision and customer service on the jointly operated sections of the route, eg Doncaster to Edinburgh.
- ✓ To work independently and with other operators on the route to overcome overcrowding where it is evident at peak times.
- ✓ Collaborate with Network Rail to reduce blanket possessions such as the closure of the route from Newcastle to Edinburgh from 22.00 every Saturday to mid morning Sunday, and in collaboration with other Operators, to improve the Saturday evening and Sunday morning service provision, all as part of the development of the seven-day railway concept.
- ✓ Work with other Operators to develop further connecting services, especially early and late, as a contribution towards reducing the need for car parking at hub stations and extending the availability of long-distance, same-day journeys.
- ✓ Operate special stop arrangements when services are severely disrupted regardless of the Operator directly involved.

*The franchise holder should be encouraged to respond imaginatively, in cooperation with other Operators, to major events such as the Edinburgh Tattoo and the Olympic games. Such events should be promoted not only for the benefit of those attending but also as show-cases for the railway.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Super Express Trains

DfT p.32: Consultees are invited to comment on the opportunities presented by the introduction of Super Express Trains and to identify their priorities for improving the train service offered by the ICEC franchise.

* It will be critically important to those bidding for the franchise to know whether and how the replacement train programme is to be taken forward. Consequently, the franchise timescale should be adjusted to reflect the timescale of the Foster value for money review (see *initial service pattern* above). The franchise specification will then have to reflect the value for money concept chosen.

* That new train fleets are needed is not in any doubt. However, any comment on service possibilities or interior layout would be speculative until the number and type of replacement vehicles is known, and the scope of any design, build, finance and maintain agreement is decided. Hence, when these options are defined, further consultation should be undertaken to assist in ensuring that the decisions ultimately taken on seating layout, toilet provision, refreshment vehicles and operational timetables reflect the needs of both fare and tax payers.

* In the shorter term, the specification should give guidance on the expected availability of the displaced HST 125 & 225 fleets for the franchise holder to upgrade and re-deploy on additional or strengthened services within the franchise. In the longer term, guidance should be given on the intended interaction with the proposed High Speed Rail services that it is currently suggested would be operating before the end of a 20 year East Coast franchise.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Super Express Trains

DfT p.32: The Department also seeks views on the extent to which it should secure aspects of the longer term train service pattern through the franchise specification.

* The longer-term shape of the train service pattern will depend on the extent of electrification achieved across the network, on the development of new places to be served by the franchise and the extent to which the seven-day railway is successfully implemented. All of these enhancements should be encouraged in the franchise specification. This could be achieved through links to the franchise duration and the associated investment programme proposed by the successful bidder.

* The contract specification should require collaboration with Network Rail and other Operators to develop enhancements to the timetable through a transparent timetable management process designed to deliver services that are in the best interest of passengers directly and by connection with services on other routes.

* When the replacement train programme has been determined, be it the InterCity Express Programme (Super Express Train) or another programme, the franchise specification should make clear that a full review of the timetable will be required to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the new rolling stock.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Catering

DfT p.33: The Department would welcome views on how it might protect an acceptable level of catering provision on trains whilst allowing the franchisee flexibility to meet emerging demands.

* Long distance trains operating within the East Coast franchise are used for a wide range of purposes, not just 'business' travel. All such journeys require, or offer the potential to market, high quality catering facilities. The style of provision will change over time and should not be specified; rather, the style should reflect the respective customs of the day.

* The franchise specification should require a catering strategy that includes the provision of a buffet on all trains at all times; a trolley service on most trains, most of the time and restaurant cars operating on all key trains including, subject to survey, weekend trains in support of regional tourism strategies. Enhanced provision for first class ticket holders should be a reliably available part of the marketing strategy for first class travel. Tour trains with full restaurant catering provision provide strong evidence of a good market for on-train high quality catering in the field of leisure travel.

* The franchise holder should be required to include positive marketing of all aspects of the catering service on and off the train, through, for example, package tickets and on-train promotions. The franchise specification should require catering facilities, including restaurant cars, to be available to both first and standard class ticket holders.

* The catering provision should be controlled by the contract through measures of the service provided, its profitability and its perceived quality, the last named being measured through the National Passenger Survey conducted by Passenger Focus or any successor organisation during the course of the franchise.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Stations

DfT p.35: The Department would welcome views on the priorities for improvements to stations within the ICEC franchise area, including any particular accessibility and security issues.

* The franchise specification should require the vigorous implementation of the station review findings (Better Rail Stations, Green & Hall) at all East Coast stations within the franchise. In implementing these findings, note should be taken of the station use figures for 2008/09 issued by ORR in March 2010. These figures show that rail travel is continuing to grow at a significant rate along the whole route but particularly in Yorkshire, North East England and Scotland, key areas served by the East Coast Franchise.

* The guiding requirement should be for the franchise holder to provide positively for the comfort and confidence of passengers who may have to wait for connecting services or appropriate departure times. Recognition should also be given to the need to provide for the comfort and confidence of those who may by choice or necessity be accompanying or meeting passengers but not themselves travelling. A minimum requirement should be a warm, supervised waiting area available from first to last train.

* A key requirement for passenger confidence is the provision of reliable information, both in normal operation and at times of disruption. To this end the franchise specification should require real time visual and audible information to be provided in suitable locations at all the stations served by the franchise holder. The specification should therefore require active and financial collaboration between the successful bidder, Network Rail and Northern Rail to secure the provision of such facilities at Alnmouth for Alnwick and Morpeth. Similar arrangements should be required for any other stations served where real time information systems are not currently available.

* Against the background of the foregoing requirements, the innovative development of station infrastructure and services should be required to reflect the findings of surveys of current users and potential users, particularly those inhibited from using the railway by the inadequacy of station facilities. Recognition should be required of the need to duplicate appropriate facilities where ticket gates make them inaccessible without passing through the gates.

* The franchise holder should be required to ensure that all station facilities are equally available to all passengers and those waiting, regardless of the Operator concerned. This requirement should extend not only to current passengers but also to the provision of travel information and ticket sales facilities. Key facilities such as ticket sales, appropriately supervised waiting facilities and toilets, should be available at principal stations from before the departure of the first train until after the arrival of the last train.

* The franchise specification should require the development and implementation of a continuous improvement programme at each station managed by the franchise, in full collaboration, not just by contractual arrangement, with all operators using the station. It is noted that Northern Rail operate most of the trains serving Newcastle station but to date provision for overcrowded Northern trains from un-staffed stations has led to unacceptable delays for passengers needing to buy tickets at the ticket gates. Other stations may be in a similar position.

* The franchise specification should also require the continuous improvement programme to be developed in full collaboration with the local authorities and passenger groups concerned. In this way a more integrated approach to the role of the station in the community would be facilitated. Indeed, some of the improvements required may be external to the station and more appropriately undertaken by the local authority concerned.

* The national trend (Figures for 2009, Guild of Travel Management Companies) shows an annual increase of over 10% in business travel by rail with similar reductions in air and hire car travel. The franchise specification should support and enhance this trend by requiring facilities for business travellers to be provided at principal stations.

* The franchise holder should be obliged to work collaboratively with the local authorities and bus operators, taxi providers and other stakeholders around its stations to improve access to the stations by sustainable means, whether through the Station Travel Plans as described in the Consultation document (DfT Page 34) or otherwise. This requirement should be seen not only as of direct value to passengers and as an important environmental contribution but also as part of a station access strategy that would include car park provision (see below).

* The franchise should require the provision of station car parks, their management and any charging regime to be developed in liaison with the requirements of all the Operators using the station, of the local authority, of passenger representatives and communities around the station, and of the major private providers responsible for parking in the locality. Working collaboratively, the franchise holder should be required to ensure improved provision at a daily and season ticket charge that protects railway facilities for railway users and at the same time identifies near-by facilities for passengers to use without encouraging indiscriminate on-street parking. Specifically, where access to the station by public transport is impractical, parking charge regimes should be developed that encourage the use of local rail services provided by any Operator thus helping to meet sustainable travel targets.

* Transfer of stations to Network Rail would remove an opportunity for franchise holder to invest in station service quality and dilute the customer focus. Priority should be given to passenger interests; public interest will follow from increased patronage.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Environmental considerations

DfT p.37: Consultees are asked to consider what environmental key performance indicators (KPI's) should be set within the franchise specification and whether it is appropriate to set particular targets or to require bidders to set their own binding targets within bids.

* Whilst key performance indicators have a useful role in the overall need to improve society's management of its demands on the environment, they would be inappropriate for the franchise; the bigger opportunities lie in in-fill electrification and the rolling stock provided.

* Investment in collaboration with Network Rail to implement in-fill electrification schemes such as York/Leeds, in diversionary routes and in rolling stock to minimise diesel operation would all make significant inroads into the reduction of environmental demands from the operation of the franchise and should be encouraged through the contractual links between franchise length and investment by the franchise holder.

* The bidders might usefully be encouraged by the specification to identify ways in which 'good housekeeping' measures would be adopted to reduce waste, encourage improved energy management practices and enhance recycling opportunities within the franchise and by others.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics games

* Important though they are in London and across the regions, the Games are a short duration event and should be managed by the railway in that context. The franchise will at best start only a short time before the Games and hence the specification might usefully envisage joint working with East Coast during the 'preferred bidder' stage of the negotiations.

* The franchise specification should encourage the successful bidder to see the Games not only as an opportunity to serve the market for travel to the main central and associated training and peripheral events across the regions but also as an opportunity to 'try the train' for those not in the habit of travelling by rail. The use of imaginative ticket packages developed jointly with the venues concerned to provide inclusive entry and travel tickets, accommodation etc to optimise the benefit to passengers and franchise holder alike would be a minimum requirement. As important would be a maximum effort to optimise service quality, maximise capacity, minimise overcrowding and deliver a punctual and reliable service.

Chapter 5 – The base case specification: Other matters:

DfT p.37: Consultees are invited to identify any other matters that should be included within the Department's base case specification for the new ICEC franchise.

* Whilst the statement of Objectives in Chapter 4 of the consultation document is generally welcomed, there is a need to define subjective terms such as *Value for Money* as they will be applied to the franchise bids. Similarly, economic benefits as assessed by the base case, should include wider economic and regeneration benefits within the community and not be measured simply as monetary returns to the Treasury.

* The process should encourage continuity of the franchise, value for money for the fare-payer and overall value for the community by treating funds invested by the franchise holder back into the railway not only as a condition of retaining the franchise but also as part of the premium to be paid.

* There should be a specified requirement to use best endeavours to continue to grow the railway. Whilst farebox revenue may be a commercial imperative, there should be a contractual requirement to conduct surveys, using Passenger Focus or others, to establish why those who travel by other means do not use the railway. The results would then provide a mirror for the Passenger Focus surveys of those who do use the railway and together provide a basis for improving the railway offer overall (DfT Page 17).

* The *Future of Franchising* makes clear the concern to prevent future franchise holders walking away from the contract, in order to protect parent company resources. To this end, the present franchise:

- ✓ Should not be let to a consortium or company of convenience but should be tied to the assets of the parent company or companies.
- ✓ Any performance or compliance bond should be tied to the turnover of the parent company or companies.
- ✓ Should not seek to maximise the direct financial return for the taxpayer but should more imaginatively optimise the benefits for the fare payer, tax payer and shareholder (above).
- ✓ Should exploit a longer franchise to ensure investment is committed early in the franchise to the later benefit of the franchise holder.

* Apart from those discussed above, aspects of service quality that should be managed by contract include in-journey cleaning of carriages and toilets, information provision in stations, eliminating overcrowding, all to be seen within the context of a keenly customer focused operation (DfT Page 17, 24, 32).

* The specification should require the deployment of market research to find out if service quality issues represent a barrier to those who do not currently use the train. If so, the franchise holder should be obliged to introduce effective measures to overcome the barriers identified.

* The specification should oblige the franchise holder to develop staff training programmes, locomotive and rolling stock provision and operational determination to maximise the use of diversionary routes to cover periods of planned maintenance work or unplanned service disruption in pursuit of the seven-day railway (DfT Page 33).

Chapter 6 – Variations from the DfT's base case specification: Investment

DfT p.39: The Department would welcome comments on the types and levels of investment or other commitments that might provide justification for a longer franchise to be awarded.

* Suitable investment programmes might cover but would not be restricted to schemes such as:

- ✓ Station infrastructure, services and quality at East Coast stations,
- ✓ Station infrastructure, services and quality at stations of other Operators served,
- ✓ Information systems on and off stations

- ✓ In-fill electrification (eg Leeds/York),
- ✓ Electrification of diversionary routes such as Northallerton/Stockton/Ferryhill,
- ✓ Extending the diversionary options such as re-opening the Leamside Line,
- ✓ New and improved rolling stock to combat overcrowding,
- ✓ New and improved rolling stock to enhance route coverage,
- ✓ Signalling enhancements to overcome operational difficulties,
- ✓ Providing four track access to York from the North,
- ✓ Seven-day railway facilitation,
- ✓ Development of feeder services,
- ✓ Improvements designed to enhance overall journey quality and experience.

* All investment proposals should be expected to be developed in partnership with Network Rail, other Operators, local and national government bodies and agencies and other partners as appropriate (See also **Franchise policy review** above).

Chapter 6 – Variations from the DfT’s base case specification: Increments and Decrements

DfT p.39: Local authorities and any other potential funders are invited to submit their proposals for any increments or decrements to Department’s base case that they would wish to see included in the specification for the new franchise.

* Any decrements must be subject to consultation with fare-payers and other interested parties such as Integrated Transport Authorities and other local government transport authorities

Chapter 7 – Major schemes

* The major schemes identified to the bidders should include the committed improvements at Kings Cross Station and the enhanced opportunities for integrated journeys to continental Europe via Kings Cross, the adjacent St Pancras International High Speed 1, the Channel Tunnel and the European high-speed rail network. The franchise specification should encourage the exploitation of the opportunities offered by this investment to increase the proportion of journeys to Europe made by rail.

..... to East Coastway

In June the Division undertook an all-day passenger count at Bexhill station, following the success of its previous count at Rye last September in generating valuable data to compare with the estimates from the Office of Rail Regulation. In both cases the observations broadly matched the ORR figures, but a later discovery was that both are also in the same Network Rail category ‘E’! Rye a ‘small staffed station’ yes, but Bexhill? A ‘D’ at least, if not a new ‘C2’. Southern are investigating!

STOP PRESS – Southern have let it be known that [the Three Oaks and Winchelsea stops are included in the December 2010 timetable on alternate Marshlink trains \(one station each train\) on Mondays – Saturdays.](#)

Kent Division - Annual Report 2009 - presented to April’s Branch AGM by Organiser Peter Collingborn

Quarterly meetings were held in Maidstone, Broadstairs, Rainham and Tonbridge. Average attendance was similar to last year at 9.5. Discussions featured the Kent RUS, the introductory service on HS1 and the impact of the full HS1-based timetable from December. HS1 meant much faster journeys for some, especially from Ashford and Gravesend, as well as better connectivity and easier journey opportunities across much of the south-east. However, the classic routes largely saw fewer and slower services, despite which fares were generally increased. The Thameslink works introduced further disruption to established travel patterns. There was much resentment among commuters, which was very evident at the Kent Rail Summit at County Hall on 24-3-10, which the Organiser attended. The RUS looked to future capacity needs, and relied on HS1 being a success. Otherwise, capacity would be maximised by extending most peak services to twelve coaches. HS1’s possible extension to Maidstone via the Medway Valley Line has a robust business case. In the medium term, possible new stations include Maidstone and Appledore Parkways to feed into HS1. The long-desired linkage of the Sheerness and Medway Valley Line routes might come about after East Kent resignalling. However, that has been delayed. Chris Fribbins prepared an excellent three-page summary of the RUS proposals. The division continued to press for better

Eurostar services from Ashford International to both Brussels and Paris. Greenhithe Station's rebuilding was not yet complete.

February's meeting contained a long discussion with representatives of the Branch's Coastway Division plus Branch officers regarding possible formation of a Kent-and-Sussex Branch, independent of L&SE, to provide shorter lines of communication and a more coherent focus. However, the meeting agreed to retain the existing structure, but with greater emphasis on two-way consultation.

The Organiser attended the RDS national AGM, the reopenings conference at Corby, and the Wealden Line Campaign annual walk and also its AGM. All these events were enthusiastically supported by near-capacity attendances. The WLC continued its vigorous refutation of the negative 2008 study into the Uckfield-Lewes reopening. Its Director Brian Hart promised a 'big surprise' in 2010. The District Councils continued to fund an independent appraisal of the route's prospects.

Branch Divisions' members' meetings – as established members know, we so far have three sub-regional Divisions, whose meetings are open to all Branch members.

Coastway – usually meet monthly in Lewes on the first Thursday at 18.00 – the next one will be 7th October in the Lewes Arms, then on 4th November. Contact Dick Tyler at richard.tyler@railfuture.org.uk or 27 Windsor Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN39 3PB or phone 01424 211500.

Eastern – usually meet bi-monthly in Stratford on the second Wednesday at 18.30 – the next one will be on 10th November. Contact Howard Thomas at howard.thomas@railfuture.org.uk or 24 South Primrose Hill, Chelmsford, CM1 2RG or phone 01245 496439, before 21.00.

Kent – usually meet quarterly on a Saturday afternoon in a different venue around Kent – the next one will be at 14.00 on 20th November at Earl's, Earl Street, Maidstone. Divisional Organiser is Peter Collingborn at 82 Burnham Walk, Parkwood, Rainham, Kent, ME8 8RX or phone 01634 364744; email contact is John Pitcher at john@ramblingrumbler.plus.com

National events – the next **AGM** will be held in Brighton, on Saturday 7th May 2011.

The next **national conference** will be in Hackney's Shoreditch Town Hall on Saturday 13th November, under the theme 'Britain's Growing Railway'. Railfuture member Chris Austin will chair the morning session. It is not too late to book – send a cheque for £25, payable to Railfuture, to Railfuture, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND. The venue is midway between the new Shoreditch High Street and Hoxton stations on the re-opened and extended East London Railway. It's also close to Old Street and Liverpool Street stations.

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This Branch Newsletter is published quarterly and is usually distributed with each edition of *railwatch*. The copy deadline for issue 110 will be 26th November. Please submit material through Branch Chairman Keith Dyal.

And finally, what's in a name [above]? Take your pick from the regionalised version of the now-superseded and geographically-biased 'railondon' viz. **railfuture in london** and the **south east**; or, [remembering why there had to be an 'e' in the Anglo-French **Concorde**] reflecting that we're the only regional Branch with direct **rails** to **europe**.

The railfuture mission: to be the number one advocate for the railway and rail users

Websites: www.railfuture.org.uk and www.railwatch.org.uk

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