

It's time to make life a lot easier for travellers to Gatwick Airport – remove the complexity caused by Gatwick Express

Railfuture is campaigning for changes to rail services between London and Gatwick Airport. That is because they are not working in the interests of passengers.

Travellers who choose Gatwick Express can end up paying 125% of the cost of the cheaper Southern service for a saving of no more than 2 or 3 minutes and possibly waiting whilst 2 or 3 Southern services arrive and leave before their train departs.

If you live in Surrey or Sussex:

“For those living near to Gatwick Airport a serious problem is the uneven loading of services – due to the excessive fare, many airport passengers do not take the services they are expected to (i.e., the Gatwick Expresses) but instead use the Southern services that to a large extent are intended to meet the needs of non-airport passengers. So those services, which includes local trains and those to the south coast, end up being over-crowded, an inconvenient and unwanted consequence of the current arrangement.”

So, Railfuture is campaigning for the following two changes to happen now:

1. Gatwick Express being abolished as a dedicated service and operator and instead becoming an integral part of Southern's services to the airport – all Victoria / Gatwick services to be operated by Southern, and branded Gatwick Express.
2. Fares rationalised and there being a single fare to/from Central London stations with direct services to/from Gatwick.

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We believe these changes are needed now and should not wait for the second runway at Gatwick Airport to be completed.

Neil Middleton, Railfuture Vice Chair said

“Because anyone with the necessary knowledge avoids Gatwick Express like the plague, the other services that passenger do use can get overcrowded – including the need to stand for the journey.

“But if you do not do your research, it is far too easy to end up choosing to travel by Gatwick Express – spending extra money for a journey that arrives later than an earlier, cheaper service. Gatwick does not have a ticket office, so getting answers to questions such as “What’s the cheapest ticket to London?” is much more difficult to answer.”

Charlie King, author of our Report on this issue said

“There are 14 fare options between Gatwick Airport and Euston station for example – with the most expensive (£35) more than three times the cheapest (£10.70). One wonders if this complexity is designed to bamboozle the uninformed to buy a far more expensive ticket than is necessary.”

Neil went on to say

“The current iteration of Gatwick Express is a misnomer – it is astounding that if you turn up at Victoria station at any given time in the hour, for 50 minutes of the time in that hour the fastest way to the Airport is to get the next Southern service

“And for the short 10 minutes in the hour when the Gatwick Express is the next fastest service, the saving of just a few minutes can easily cost double the price of the adjacent Southern service. We think it is time to end the fiction of Gatwick Express and integrate it with other fast services to London, all identified as Gatwick Express.

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“These changes will deliver a better service to current passengers now, with simplified ticketing offering best value for money. That will encourage more travellers to choose rail when accessing the airport and will enable better service patterns for both local trains operating to the airport, and London - South Coast trains, improving services for London when travelling to and from places such as Brighton and Eastbourne.”

How can I help to bring about this change?

Railfuture has written to the Minister of State for Rail, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill, as well as to the Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation, copied to relevant MPs and representatives of Network Rail and senior personnel of train operating companies. The letter and accompanying report is available on [our website](#).

Concerned members of the public can help bring about change by writing to their MP asking them to press the Department for Transport to end the current Gatwick Express ruse and absorb it into current Southern services, and to implement fare simplification.

Campaign Meeting

The London & South East Branch of Railfuture has 5 active divisions, all of which hold regular campaign meetings.

This issue is of such importance that the Surrey, Sussex and Metro Divisions have come together to hold their next meeting as a joint event at a location close to Gatwick Airport. The meeting will be held on 20 November, starting at 7.30pm, at Salfords Village Hall, 5 Honeycrock Lane, Salfords, Redhill RH1 5DG, a venue just a short walk from Salfords railway station.

All those with an interest in these issues are encouraged to attend this meeting. Directions can be found on page 2 of the attached [Rail South East Bulletin](#).

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Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services for both passengers and freight.

Railfuture's website can be found at: www.railfuture.org.uk

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