

Dear Member

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APTU / FCC annual meeting

Our annual meeting this year with FCC will be on Thursday 26th May (evening) in St Albans. It will be in the main hall/nave at Trinity Church (not the parlour, where we were a couple of years ago). Trinity Church is very close to the station.

More details in due course.

Harpenden Cycle Rack improvements / temporarily no storage

FCC have written to us to let us know that improvements are about to be made to the cycle racks at Harpenden, including an improvement in capacity. *However, whilst the works are carried out, there will be no official cycle parking.*

The FCC letter is as follows:

A major £57,000 project is about to start to replace the existing cycle racks and shelters in the cycle parking compound behind the station ticket office at Harpenden station. The project is being delivered by First Capital Connect in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council.

There are currently spaces for just 158 cycles. Demand has greatly outgrown supply and the new facility will have covered spaces for 260 cycles.

Two motorcycle rails will also be installed to enable motorbikes and motor scooters to be more securely parked.

Work is expected to commence on Wednesday 16 March and the project should be completed by Saturday 2 April.

Customers are advised that during this time, no cycle or motor cycle parking will be available within or around the existing cycle parking compound.

This is necessary to enable the contractor to get the work done as quickly as possible. As the station car park is full every weekday, it will not be possible to provide any temporary alternative area while the new cycle parking facilities are built.

Larry Heyman, First Capital Connect's Integration and Partnership Manager said: "The new cycle parking at Harpenden station will be welcomed by the many rail passengers who choose to cycle to the station. We hope that our customers will forgive the short term inconvenience and are sure they will be delighted with the improvements in store for them.

In response to my questions, Larry Heyman from FCC further commented:

I wrote to our Senior Commercial Manager yesterday asking him to brief NCP on the work at Harpenden. Here is an extract from that email:

"Please brief NCP that, while the new cycle parking is being constructed, it is likely that the displaced cycles may be chained to random fences and lampposts. Please ask them to be as lenient as possible."

Elstree & Borehamwood – Car park closed this weekend.

Roger Perkins, Thameslink Programme and King's Cross Communications Manager at FCC has written to me as follows:

A quick heads up that Elstree & Borehamwood station car park has to close on the weekend of 19 and 20 March for platform extensions to be delivered. The longer platforms will be installed in just the one weekend, being prefabricated in Germany.

The press release is available on the FCC web site - <http://goo.gl/XegQr> . The reference to December 2018 for 12 carriage trains is, I believe, a reference to the current completion date for the Thameslink Programme.

(For stations St Albans and north thereof, I am still expecting a limited 12 carriage to commence this December.)

Graffiti update

Following our article in last month's newsletter, we heard from London Travelwatch with an update on what they have been up to:

Dear APTU committee members,

Thank you for sending us a copy of your recent newsletter. I thought you would be interested to know that we have been raising the issue of graffitied trains with FCC and Southeastern for sometime, and your newsletter article was timely in reminding and convincing a number of parties of the importance of this issue – particularly when it results in the cancellation or short formation of trains.

The problem largely arises because the joint service with Southeastern requires the use of a number of carriage sidings at Bellingham, Orpington and Sevenoaks. That at Bellingham is by far the most vulnerable to graffiti attacks because of the ease of access via the station there, which does not have a staff presence on the platform, and restricted booking office hours. The station is also blighted by graffiti on adjacent non-railway buildings, uncleared rubbish that has built up on Network Rail property outside of Southeastern's lease, growth of buddleia and other trees and shrubs on Network Rail land and structures that obscures natural and CCTV surveillance, unoccupied redundant buildings on the station, and a large uncared for 'wilderness' behind the main platform.

This environment plus the limited service offered (only half-hourly off-peak) means that passengers are put off using the station and so it becomes more attractive to the graffiti gangs as they are less likely to be challenged.

We previously had contact with local organisations because of the proposed Victoria – Bellingham service. I used these contacts to raise the graffiti issue, and as a way of encouraging community involvement in the station to encourage usage, and also to persuade Southeastern that they should do something – they seemed to take the view previously that as they did not own or lease the trains themselves it was not their problem!

What we have done therefore is to :-

- Get Southeastern to ask BTP to step up their patrols of the area.
- Ask Network Rail to clear the outstanding rubbish from its land, and also vegetation obscuring the natural surveillance
- Get the local adjacent landowner (Phoenix Community Housing Association) to consider how it could help by managing its property better so as to reduce the ease of access to the sidings.

- Put together with Lewisham Council, SELTRANS, Southeastern and local organisations a 'community rail initiative' to take responsibility for the vacant buildings and the 'wilderness' area behind the London platform to encourage 'ownership' of the station and make the place more attractive to users. This would increase natural surveillance and increased usage would help justify an improved service frequency.
- So far a users group for the station or the 'Catford Loop' in general but this may be possible as a result of these initiatives.

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

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