

Dear Member

Firstly, an apology for a period of “radio silence”, caused mainly by a heavy workload where I work.



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...AND FINALLY: ‘WHAT’S FOR DINNER TONIGHT?’
THE COMMITTEE

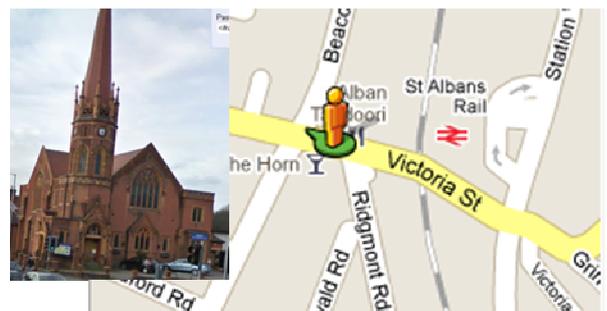
APTU / FCC annual meeting

Our annual meeting this year with FCC and Network Rail will be at 7:30pm on Thursday 31st May in St Albans.

At a minimum, it will be attended by Neal Lawson (Managing Director) and Larry Heyman from FCC and Martin Frobisher, Network Rail’s Route Managing Director, East Midlands.

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 at the junction of Victoria Street and Beaconsfield Road:

- From platform 1 (main entrance), turn right, go up steps to road bridge, turn right, go across railway and past shops. At the traffic lights, Trinity Church is opposite
- From platform 4 (fast trains from Central London), go straight ahead; at traffic lights, Trinity Church is diagonally opposite.



It can be found on Google Maps at <http://goo.gl/qZvcF>.

The main hall is accessible by the disabled and has an accessible toilet.

Travel to the meeting

FCC have again confirmed that, should your ticket not include St Albans, free travel is available to/from the meeting - please print off and show page 1 of this newsletter if needed.

Questions for the meeting

If you have any questions or specific topics for FCC or Network Rail, can I please have these by **Thursday 17 May (evening)**. There will be no 'ban' on raising additional topics on the evening, but FCC or Network Rail may need to respond later rather than on the night.

Subscriptions Reminder

Subscriptions for 2012/13 are now due for payment. Thank you to those who have already paid, but quite a number of members have not.

If you have not yet paid, then I would appreciate your cheque for £3.00 (single membership) or £5.00 (joint membership) as soon as possible. I will of course accept payment at the meeting on 31 May.

Thank you

Malcolm Howe

Treasurer

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Alternatively, you can pay using PayPal (note: we do incur charges) at

<http://www.aptu.org.uk/membership.html>

May timetable change

The key change is through running overnight and at weekends from Saturday 19 May (this includes 4 all stations trains per hour south of St Albans). In more detail:

Weekdays

On Monday to Friday nights the 'Core' section between St. Pancras International and London Blackfriars will reopen for overnight services with the timetable based on the May 2008 timetable when the 'Core' section was last open overnight.

Saturdays

On Saturdays the 'Core' section between St. Pancras International and London Blackfriars will reopen all day for services with the timetable reflecting the May 2008 timetable when the 'Core' section was last open throughout the day.

The 'Core' section will close from End of Service Saturday night [actually very early hours of Sunday] until 07:20 Sunday morning for Network Rail engineering access.

There are some changes to early morning services between Luton and St. Albans and London. The 15 minute interval service between St. Albans and London is also restored.

On Saturday evenings there are additional services from St. Albans to London calling at all stations. These services will extend to Sutton via Mitcham Junction providing additional evening services on this route until the 20:48 departure from St. Pancras International.

On the Bedford to Brighton route, the 22:16 and 22:42 departures from Bedford will be extended through to Brighton

Longer trains: Eight carriage trains nearly all day between Bedford and Brighton on Saturdays as well as Sundays

Do note that the main national timetable change is tomorrow, and FCC's changes are deferred to the 19th.

Disruption: Extent of ticket acceptance

APTU has been in correspondence with FCC as regards the extent of ticket acceptance when it is announced that it is place during a period of disruption. FCC have told us:

APTU: So, if I am to summarise it, as soon as your website talks about any ticket acceptance, you'll definitely be OK on all of London Midland, FCC Great Northern, Uno buses and Sullivan Buses - and hopefully Arriva as well.

FCC: Yes, that's correct.

(See next item re Uno, Sullivan and Arriva buses).

As regards the Abbey Flyer, FCC commented: "As you know, the limitations on the service between St Albans Abbey and Watford Junction are the infrequency and the maximum four-car length of the train. Morning peak departures leave St Albans Abbey at 0700, 0742, 0825 and 0922 so our focus is on encouraging passengers to use train services from Hatfield, from where there are seven trains to London between 0700 and 0800 and five between 0800 and 0900."

Disruption: Buses between St Albans & Hatfield / Potters Bar

FCC have said this on bus arrangements:

As soon as UNO are contacted by our Service Delivery Centre, they radio their drivers to accept FCC tickets on routes 620 and 621 between St Albans City and Hatfield. The same procedure applies to Sullivan Buses on their route 330 between these stations. Our tickets are also accepted on Arriva bus routes 300 and 301 and on Arriva-operated Greenline route 724 between St Albans and Hatfield. Unfortunately Arriva do not have radios on board these buses, so FCC staff have to be present when passengers board and hand a voucher confirming the number of FCC passengers travelling to the bus drivers. If our staff are not present, passengers can purchase their own tickets for which we will be happy to refund the cost.

Where extended disruption to our services is anticipated, we will try to obtain buses to operate a rail replacement service between St Albans and Hatfield. There is an inevitable delay while bus operators with spare vehicles call in drivers to operate such services which can be exacerbated if disruption coincides with the times of scheduled school buses.

We do not have an agreement with Metroline for ticket acceptance on their route 84. Unlike the bus routes detailed above it does not stop at St Albans City Station; the nearest stop is near the London Road end of Alma Road. FCC ticket holders may choose to use that service and, on receipt of the bus ticket, we will be happy to refund the fare paid between St Albans and Potters Bar or vice versa.

The Olympics

You will no doubt be aware of the extensive publicity regarding the Olympics. The best web site to obtain more information is www.getaheadofthegames.com. On the Thameslink route,

only St Pancras and London Bridge are highlighted as specific hot spots. It is of note that the number of travellers at St Pancras is expected to increase from Friday 3 August, when events start in the Olympic Stadium, and London Bridge will be very busy, particularly during the equestrian events at Greenwich.

APTU has been in correspondence with FCC on this topic. FCC initially commented “On the Thameslink route the ODA [Olympic Delivery Authority] indicated a need for service strengthening which includes late night services from London and our plan is that many late night trains will run with 8 cars. We receive regular reports from the ODA on Olympic ticket sales and, although the data is somewhat broad ranging, we are attempting to interpret it on a route and train specific basis and overlay it on current known service loadings. We will then be able to form a view about what further action we may need to take over and above our ODA obligations”.

In further correspondence:

APTU	FCC
Have you contemplated 12 coach trains? [in the evening]	Yes, if ODA ticket sales data indicate that necessity
Will you also increase capacity during the evening - in particular around 10pm when the service goes to every 30 minutes?	A view will be taken based on ODA market intelligence
Are you developing plans to be flexible, primarily to reallocate stock after the first few evenings when travel patterns are a bit clearer?	Yes, this could be ad hoc, based on planning timescale discipline
Have a number of other plans available to them to flex the service delivered based on what actually happens during the first few days - so if there is a need to (say) provide more capacity around 10pm, but the early evening peak is less loaded, then the stock reallocations to achieve this are already on a shelf somewhere waiting to be used?	The primary constraint on our ability to be flexible is that the drivers' rosters have to be prepared and issued some weeks in advance. We are in the process of interrogating further ODA ticket sales data and overlaying predicted passenger numbers by time of day against our planned upgraded Olympics services. Ad hoc changes would be entirely dependent on the availability of spare drivers and rolling stock, which is why we are working hard to optimise the pre-planning of our service now.

FCC have repeatedly emphasised that a key requirement is not to jeopardise train maintenance, as they neither want to reduce train lengths of scheduled services, nor risk the completion of route maintenance.

Network Rail

The Thameslink Route is classified as a Zone 2 route - this means a freeze on engineering works (other than routine maintenance) and increased support to undertake any necessary repairs quickly.

Gold Card Holder? – Have you registered this on your Oyster Card?

If, like me, you travel on a Thameslink travel only Gold Card and also have a pre-pay Oyster Card, then do make sure this is registered (you can do this at TfL ticket offices by showing both the season ticket and the Oyster Card).

Doing this gives you reduced price off peak travel on the Underground (currently £1.30, rather than £2.00 for Zone 1) and a reduced daily cap. More details at

www.tfl.gov.uk/tickets/18343.aspx.

Weekly travelcard user?

For any renewal on or after 20 May, you will need a photocard (I've seen posters about this at City Thameslink, but been unable to find an on-line announcement).

Oyster @ Radlett and St Albans

Just to note that FCC asked that the Oyster scheme be extended to St Albans, but that this was rejected by the Department for Transport. I now think that Smart cards will become available north of Elstree either:

1. Because the decision is revisited because of Hertford - Greater Anglia have a franchise commitment to make Oyster available at Hertford East and it could be decided that it also has to be available at Hertford North, and this is then extended across FCC north.
2. As part of the new Franchise - I'm sure that this will be a franchise commitment, but exactly when can only be a guess at present.

In response to the DfT decision, FCC commented:

First Capital Connect has been advised by the Department for Transport (DfT) that their plan to extend both Oyster Travelcard and Pay as You Go (PAYG) to St Albans / Welwyn Garden City / Hertford North has been rejected. The reason given by the DfT is that it wishes to progress ITSO smart card technology and Oystercards are not ITSO-compliant. It is unlikely that this technology would be ready before 2014.

Negotiations between First Capital and the DfT on the proposed extension of Oyster PAYG have been taking place since October 2010, when initial discussions got under way.

A spokesman for First Capital Connect said: "The extension of Oyster would have been a major benefit to our customers but we recognise the additional benefits that nationally accepted ITSO-compliant cards will bring to integrated travel. FCC is fully committed to introducing this technology for the benefit of customers as early as possible."

ITSO is a Government-backed, non-profit organisation which defines and develops the UK-wide technical specification for smart ticketing.

Personally, I think Smart cards will arrive sooner rather than later, not least because they are a good mechanism for introducing some of the pricing options talked about in the McNulty report.

Delay Repay - Compensation options

I thought you might be interested in this article by Passenger Focus:

Passengers want 'delay-repay' style compensation

Passenger Focus recently joined forces with FirstGroup and London TravelWatch to research passengers' attitudes when it comes to compensation when something goes wrong on their journey.

Among the key findings from this qualitative research was a strong preference from passengers for 'delay-repay' style compensation regimes over the traditional Passenger's Charter arrangements. Delay repay was felt to be fairer and more transparent.

The research also found that passengers' understanding of compensation entitlement is limited; that passengers believe more should be done by train companies to highlight entitlements to money back when there are delays; that the claims process needs to be as quick and easy as possible; and that passengers dislike paper vouchers, preferring either a straight rebate or an electronic credit to be used online against future purchases.

The full research report is available at www.passengerfocus.org.uk.

New franchise – Short list announced

The short list for the new Franchise is as follows:

Abellio Thameslink Limited (NV Nederlandse Spoorwegen)	Operators of railways in the Netherlands; recently took over as operators of services out of Liverpool Street ("Greater Anglia")
First Thameslink Limited (FirstGroup plc)	Current incumbents
Govia Thameslink Railway Limited (Go-Ahead Group plc and Keolis SA)	Operate Southern, South Eastern and London Midland
MTR Corporation (Thameslink) Limited (MTR Corporation Limited)	Based in Hong Kong rail system and joint operators of London Overground (in cooperation with Arriva [Deutsche Bahn AG of Germany])
Stagecoach Thameslink Trains Limited (Stagecoach Group plc)	Operate East Midlands Trains and part owner of the West Coast Franchise

Of note is that:

1. First Group were the only company listed for all 3 franchise re-tenders (the others being Great Western, Essex Thameside (or C2C).
2. Arriva and National Express were the major operators that were not shortlisted.

The Department for Transport ("DfT") comment as follows:

These potential providers will receive the Invitation to Tender which is anticipated will be issued in October 2012. It is anticipated that the successful bidder will be announced in May 2013, with the contract commencing in September 2013. The length of the franchise will be a minimum of 7 years, with pricing also required for a potential extension of up to 2 years at the discretion of the Secretary of State.

The next major event is the publication of the "Franchise Consultation Document" by the DfT, which is due this month. APTU will work with the Bedford Commuters Association and Railfuture, with the objective of a combined response, as our collective view is that a single response is more likely to be taken account of.

I'll write with some thoughts on this subject in due course.

More at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/press-releases/dft-press-20120329/>.

Thameslink programme latest

The Easter closure saw the last major item of pre-Olympic infrastructure change: the introduction of the signalling for the bay platforms at Blackfriars, together with bi-directional signalling south of Blackfriars.

As regards Network Rail, the next major event is now estimated to be April 2015 when all Thameslink services will be diverted away from London Bridge for some time for the re-build.

The order date for the new Thameslink rolling stock is now “Spring 2012”. Cynics amongst us (including me!), wonder (a) what is the last possible credible day in spring; and (b) whether even this date will be achieved.

In the meantime, Siemens are pressing on with preparatory work; the railway specialist press has recently talked about the new design of bogie for the stock; these have recently been “unveiled”.

FCC and disruption management

It is clear that FCC continue to struggle with disruption management - consistently on communicating it and intermittently on responding to the incident. For instance, after I followed up on the 13 Feb delays, I received this:

- Our Service Delivery Centre's proposal to run the 12-car train as an all-stations train was flawed. The train driver sensibly queried the instruction which was subsequently rescinded.
- Our Service Delivery Centre could and should have suppressed the automatic announcing system and apologise that they forgot to do so

On communications, I noted: “Announcing was good on the train and at CTK, in particular the driver reassured before the reset at St Albans. However the automated announcements at CTK continued, which just winds everyone up.”

Repeated signal failures between Blackfriars and Elephant & Castle

We've received this (written in March):

There have been a number of signalling failures between St Pancras and Elephant & Castle in the past two months, four of which have been south of Blackfriars. The failures have occurred independently on separate parts of the infrastructure, and all have been investigated revealing a range of causes. All but one of these faults have been track circuit failures, the part of the signalling system that detects the presence of trains. These failures can be worked around, albeit delaying trains by a few minutes each, however the intensity of service means that a queue of trains can build up quickly, compounding the delays, particularly if the incident happens at peak times. The one other incident was a partial failure of the signaller's control equipment at the Victoria Signalling Centre on 13 February, preventing the signaller from setting routes in the Blackfriars area for about 30 minutes. The knock on effects lasted throughout the evening.

Almost all of the failures occurred on equipment recently installed as part of the resignalling of the route, and this has been the focus of our attention. To date no common themes have emerged in the particular nature of the failures, although our investigations are continuing. As a matter of course all components of the signalling system are tested rigorously prior to commissioning,

however the sheer quantity of signalling work being carried out at the current time can increase the risk of issues occurring.

The final stage of the resignalling is commissioned this Easter. Following the signalling failures, the testing regime has been enhanced to help highlight potential failures before they can occur in service. On a wider point, the conclusion of the resignalling will bring to an end the extensive works on the signalling system in this area, thus reducing considerably the potential for the repeated signalling problems.

It will be interesting to see if the failure rate reduces now that the major works are complete (until they start at London Bridge ...)

St Albans update

We have asked FCC:

- If they will install some seating under the canopy on platform 1 at St Albans. Some years ago some seating was removed to make way for a cabin to be installed to sell refreshments etc and has now been taken away.
- if they can arrange for improvements to the condition of the steps leading down to the station from Victoria St. in St Albans.

Finally, when the current cycle parking works in Station Way are complete sometime soon, there will be over 1,000 cycle spaces at the station. Not only will St Albans have more capacity than any other station served by FCC but it will be one of the biggest in the UK.

Class 319s & Heating

FCC replied to a query from the BCA as follows:

Historically, the heating on class 319s has not been as effective as we would like. This is because the heating elements inside carriages had expired over a number of years and needed replacing. Unfortunately no one manufactured the heating elements anymore and so a new supplier needed to be found who could make them to our specification. Last summer we undertook a major overhaul of the heating systems on each of our trains, replacing wiring and heating elements. This work was complete before the cold weather hit us this winter.

Sadly we did have some issues with the heating again this winter. With some very low temperatures, all of the elements were on for sustained periods of time to keep the interior warm. This caused a protection circuit to trip out – meaning that the heating would switch off. In order to get the heating switched on again the train needed to be manually re-set inside a depot because the heating circuits are located underneath the carriages. We are looking at further modifications that can be made to avoid this again in the future.

We have always switched our train heating on in November and off again in early April. This work is carried out in the depot while trains are booked in for other scheduled maintenance – so it can take a period of time to turn all of the heating on or off on every train. It is necessary to turn the heating systems on and off each year because the class 319s were built with a slightly unconventional thermostat system. These trains have 2 thermostats, one inside the carriage which measures the internal temperature and one outside which measures the external temperature. The external thermostat takes precedence over the internal one. This means that on days where it is reasonably cool outside, the train will continue to heat the inside. This began to happen in early March when the weather became warmer and many customers commented on how hot the trains were inside. We therefore decided to turn the heating off slightly earlier in the year than usual to avoid this problem.

Unfortunately, early mornings got very cold again towards the end of March, which meant that customers experienced some cold journeys due to the heating being switched off.

The engineering team are looking at the wiring diagrams for the heating circuits to assess if improvements can be made, as the current situation is clearly unacceptable.

Train operators commit to new regulations on passenger information (from Railfuture's Rail User Express)

All train operators have signed-up to new licence conditions aimed at ensuring passengers receive appropriate, accurate and timely information, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) confirmed earlier this month.

ORR Chief Executive, Richard Price, said: "I am pleased that all train companies have now joined other parts of the rail industry by signing-up to new obligations aimed at ensuring passengers receive appropriate, accurate and timely information. ORR has repeatedly made clear that rail passengers should receive reliable information so that they can plan journeys and make informed decisions, especially when rail services are disrupted. It is striking that currently only one third of passengers think delays are handled well.

"The provision of good passenger information is a fundamental requirement, not an optional 'add-on'. Good performers have nothing to fear, but poor performers will not be allowed to undermine the industry as a whole. We look forward to working with the rail industry as it gets on with the job of meeting passengers' expectations, ensuring that train operators, working with station managers and Network Rail, meet the standards set out in their own code of practice on passenger information." - *Rail.Co*

Passenger Focus also agreed:

"Information during disruption - a battle yet to be won"

Improving passenger information during disruption is a key Passenger Focus priority. Building on our December 2010 report into passengers' experiences, Passenger Focus has recently worked with train company Southern to dig deeper into the issues and understand what practical steps could be taken to improve things.

The findings are consistent with earlier research and show, the importance of accurate and timely information in allowing passengers to make informed decisions; that during delays the attitude and empathy of railway staff towards passengers is key; that passengers want train companies to actively tell them if there are problems, particularly if a temporary timetable is being introduced or there are cancellations; and that, once caught up in a problem, knowing how long you'll be delayed becomes key.

The research also found that some passengers distrust the information they are given during disruption, particularly the reasons given." Autumn 2011

FCC – recent performance

FCC report as follows:

- Period 1 > 1 April to 28 April.
 - FCC's overall PPM for Period 1 was 90.12%, which did not meet our overall target of 92.11%
 - We missed our Thameslink route performance target with a result of 90.89% (target 91.79%)

- On 23 April a track circuit failure at City Thameslink caused major disruption during the morning peak. Steps were then taken to recover the service to normal timetable by the PM peak.
- Delay responsibility for Period 1 across the entire network was as follows: FCC – 24%, Network Rail – 66%, other train operating companies – 10%
- Period 13 > 4 March to 31 March
 - Unfortunately we did not meet our overall PPM target for Period 13, which ran from 4 March to 31 March.
 - FCC's overall PPM for Period 13 was 91.52%, which did not meet our overall target of 92.33%
 - We missed our Thameslink performance target with a result of 90.93% (target 91.11%)
 - A points failure at London Blackfriars on 22 March caused significant disruption to our Thameslink peak time services
 - A loss of power to signalling equipment south of Bedford on the morning of 27 March caused a number of delays to our morning peak time services
 - Delay responsibility for Period 13 across the entire network was as follows: FCC – 26%, Network Rail – 63%, other train operating companies – 11%
 - **Delay responsibility across the entire network for the 2011-2012 railway year is as follows: FCC – 24%, Network Rail – 62%, other train operating companies – 14%**
- Period 12 > 5 February to 3 March
 - FCC's overall PPM for Period 12 was 87.66%, which did not meet our overall target of 91.83%
 - We missed our Thameslink performance target with a result of 86.05% (target 89.97%)
 - Delay responsibility for Period 12 across the entire network was as follows: FCC – 29%, Network Rail – 55%, other train operating companies – 16%
- Period 11 > 8 January to 4 February.
 - FCC's overall PPM for Period 10 was 87.64%, which did not meet our overall target of 90.40%
 - We missed our Thameslink performance target with a result of 87.48% (target 89.69%)
 - A track circuit failure at Farringdon during the morning peak on 9 January caused significant delays
 - A person being hit by a train at St Albans Station on 12 January, which resulted in a 2 hour closure of the station and major disruption to the Thameslink service
 - Delay responsibility for Period 11 across the entire network is as follows: FCC – 27%, Network Rail – 61%, Other TOCs – 12%
- Period 10, which ran from 11 December to 7 January.
 - FCC's overall PPM for Period 10 was 87.69%, which did not meet our overall target of 89.05%
 - This was a 13.87% improvement compared to period 10 last year
 - We beat our Thameslink performance target with a result of 89.04% (target 87.43%)
 - A person being hit by a train at South Croydon during the afternoon of 13 December caused major disruption to the Thameslink service throughout the evening peak
 - Delay responsibility for Period 9 across the entire network is as follows: FCC – 30%, Network Rail – 55%, Other TOCs – 15%
- Period 9, which ran from 13 November to 10 December.
 - FCC's overall PPM for Period 9 was 87.74%, meeting our overall target of 85.63%
 - This was a 4.32% improvement compared to period 9 last year
 - We beat our Thameslink performance target with a result of 88.13% (target 84.18%)

- A points failure at West Hampstead on 22 November caused a number of delays to the Thameslink service. This affected the evening peak service and unfortunately the problem repeated itself the following morning
- Delay responsibility for Period 9 across the entire network is as follows: FCC Delay responsibility for Period 9 across the entire network is as follows: FCC – 23%, Network Rail – 63%, Other TOCs – 14%

Vandalism & Bellingham sidings

As you have no doubt noticed, FCC stock, particularly class 319s are regularly graffitied. This often happens at Bellingham sidings. London TravelWatch recently commented:

London TravelWatch welcomes clean up at Bellingham Station but more can be done to prevent graffiti and litter on railway land and trains

London TravelWatch has welcomed work carried out by Network Rail to clean up Bellingham station and remove litter and rubbish on their land, something which we brought to their attention two years ago and have been pushing for ever since. However, we will continue to push for a much more focused effort to tackle the problem of Connect and Southeastern services.

The photo on the left shows the station after the cleanup work. For 'before and after' photos visit our Flickr channel: www.flickr.com/photos/londontravelwatch.

Damage caused at Bellingham Station has had a major impact on passengers over a wide area of London and the South East as it has meant that trains have been cancelled or have had to run with fewer carriages than normal, and thousands of passengers have experienced delays, disruption and overcrowding as a result. Network Rail plan to cut back the buddleia bushes growing around the bridge at the station which obscure the view of the carriage sidings but more needs to be done to fully secure the site.

We will be urging the Government to place a high priority in its forthcoming High Level Output Specification to reducing the incidence of graffiti and unsightly rubbish and litter on the rail network.

I understand that there may be less stabling of trains at Bellingham from 19 May as part of the reason for locating stock there was the weekend / overnight blockade.

Strategic Railfreight Interchange at Radlett

The latest is that Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has cited the need to consider the implications of the recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and that a decision is due by 13 June.

FCC Safety Award for passenger safety

FCC have informed us:

First Capital Connect has won a national safety award for 'Operational Safety – Passenger Management'. The prestigious honour – a 'Golden Whistle' awarded by the Institute of Rail Operators in cooperation with the Modern Railways magazine – is based on passenger safety figures reported by the Rail Safety Standards Board.

First Capital Connect outperformed all other train operating companies in the country.

Of course, since then there has been:

- <http://www.bedfordshire-news.co.uk/News/The-runaway-train-came-down-the-track-without-crew-30032012.htm>
- http://www.hertsad.co.uk/news/fcc_passengers_left_stranded_on_faulty_train_1_1338921

The Government's latest "Command Paper" on the Railways.

The Government has followed up the McNulty report with a command paper (see <http://goo.gl/BB9br> [PDF document]). As to the view from the industry, I think this extract from Roger Ford of Modern Railways probably sums it up:

"Vague

So where does the rest of the DfT's £1.7 billion a year come from? The Command Paper claims that it is 'clear' that some of the additional Network Rail efficiency is only deliverable through partnership working with train operators.

But no one knows yet how partnerships might work, let alone the savings they might deliver. It is back to 1992 when everyone 'knew' that privatisation would cut costs.

And this is the worrying aspect of the Command Paper - it is full of such unconsidered and untested assertions. For example, with ORR still consulting on the concept of operators sharing in Network Rail's out-performance on efficiency targets, and sharing the financial pain of under-performance, DfT assumes that this Regional Efficiency Benefit Share mechanism is a done deal which will provide the foundation 'behavioural change'."

Odds and Ends

- I thought you might be interested in this from the latest FCC Stakeholder news:

Conquering the Three Peaks for Railway Children

On 21, 22 and 23 June, Neal Lawson will be leading an FCC team in the Railway Children's 'Three Peaks Challenge'. It's a great event in which teams climb the three highest mountains in England, Scotland and Wales – Scafell Pike, Ben Nevis and Snowdon.

Railway Children is a fantastic charity that works to help street children in the UK and around the world, focusing on early intervention to stop the abuse of children living alone and at risk on the streets.

If you are able to sponsor Neal and the team for this worthwhile cause then please send a cheque, made out to Railway Children, to Catherine Smith, Hertford House, 1 Cranwood Street, London, EC1V 9QS.

- FCC have changed cash machine provider at their machines and there is now no charge (see <http://goo.gl/Hxf4Y>).
- You may be interested in this "A working life: The revenue protection officer" in the [Guardian](#), which is about an FCC Revenue Protection Officer (on the GN).
- Discounts are available for those parking environmentally friendly vehicles: a 10% discount for tickets purchased via RingGo, FCC's mobile payment system. The discount is available to all vehicles registered as low-emission and in Band A, B or C with the DVLA. Customers who are unsure of their vehicle's CO2 banding can find out on <http://carfueldata.direct.gov.uk/>.
- London TravelWatch gave a recent presentation on their priorities at a Passenger Focus event, which is available here: <http://www.aptu.org.uk/pdfs/londontravelwatchspring2012.pdf>.

...and finally: 'What's for dinner tonight?'

We've heard from someone who is researching a service for commuters. He comments:

Have your say...A focus on time. There's never enough of it is there?

You rush for the train and then to the office, work all day, rush back home again and still have jobs to do such as cook dinner when you get in. It's never ending.

Don't despair though as help is now be at hand. A new, Bedford based company is looking to help you make the most of your precious evening time by providing an easy, cost efficient and highly desirable answer to that age old question - 'What's for dinner tonight?' The service they offer will save you time, effort and will be loved by the whole family in the comfort of your own home. It couldn't be quicker, easier or healthier.

Sounds interesting? Would you like to know more? Well here's your chance to get the exclusive insight to this great new service...and get some free food too!

The company would like to invite you to take part in some informal research to make sure that the service they offer is just right for you, the busy commuter. As with any new business, getting the product and pricing absolutely right is extremely important and so you would be playing a major part in helping this small business grow and offer you a service that you may later find invaluable.

They will be running a small focus group to discuss their service and you are invited to come along and take part. The venue will be very close to Luton railway station with a range of food and drink provided. It will be fun, interactive and reasonably short. After all, it's all about saving time right?

For more information or to express an interest in attending the focus group please email andrewyiannaki@hotmail.co.uk or text your name and email address to 07730 505806. Following this, a company representative will contact you to answer your questions or discuss the focus group details. Your contact details will not be divulged or passed on to any third parties nor will they be used for further marketing purposes.

I hope to see you on the 31st.

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

13 May 2012