



Dear member

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I wanted to share with you a number of stakeholder updates APTU has received in recent weeks, including those following incidents and problems on the Thameslink route.

I will be writing again soon with further updates etc.

### Home Start Charity Collection

Dear Neil

I am writing to you with a request some help. Joe Healy, one of First Capital Connect’s station managers, is organising a collection of Christmas gifts for the charity Home-Start at St Albans and Harpenden stations. I was hoping you might be willing to send details of the collection to members of the APTU.

In order to raise as much awareness of the collection as possible, volunteers will be handing out gift tags to customers at St Albans and Harpenden stations on 14 December. The tags will have details of the collection on them. Any gifts that people wish to donate will then be collected by volunteers on **17 December**.

We encourage our staff to get involved with charity and it’s very heartening that Joe has taken it on himself to organise this event. I hope you might be able to support it by passing this email and the [attached advertising poster](#) on.

### Fares from 2 January 2013

Please note that the fares change on Wednesday 2 January, rather than the first Sunday in January.

Over the last few days, the local and national press has been covering the upcoming changes to rail fares. In common with other operators, First Capital Connect will be increasing a number of our fares. I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with more detailed information on the fare changes which will affect your local services.

Across our Thameslink and Great Northern routes, fares will be rising in line with the national average of 3.9%, however this is not a uniform change. The [attached spreadsheet](#) shows the change in fares from our stations between Bedford and London. I have also included the changes to fares which are set by TfL. These are highlighted in Yellow.

I hope this may address some of the concerns that you and members of APTU may have. If you have any questions about the figures or would like additional details then please let me know.

FCC’s news release is available here: <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/about-us/media-centre/news/2012/2013-fares-and-car-park-tariffs-announcement/>.

### Christmas & New Year services

Detailed timetables for the period 24 - 31 December are now available. I have not been able to find a combined PDF version, so my recommended option is to create your own at <http://ojp.nationalrail.co.uk/service/pockettimetable/search>.

In summary:

- Monday 24<sup>th</sup> - normal Monday to Friday service, followed by early close.
- Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> / Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> - no service.
- Saturday timetable on Thursday 27, Friday 28 & Monday 31 December, with additional peak hour services.
- City Thameslink opens earlier than the Saturday timetable from start of service, following a request from APTU to FCC (for which APTU thanks FCC).
- Special arrangements for the evening of 31 December including closure of Blackfriars (crowd control for fireworks) and extra late night services.

## Wednesday 12 December – PM

Dear Stakeholder,

As you may be aware Bedford station was closed yesterday evening due to a security incident. I would like to brief you on the impact this event had on our services and the actions we took to limit disruption to our customers' journeys.

At the beginning of evening peak service the police were called to the station due to reports of a disruptive and potentially violent passenger. The man in question claimed to have left a suspicious package on one of our trains, which was swiftly evacuated and taken into the local train sidings to allow the police to investigate it. The station was reopened after the train was moved and the man in question was taken into custody. The sidings were reopened before midnight when the police confirmed the items discussed were not dangerous.

The incident and subsequent station closure had a significant impact on FCC services and passengers who were delayed on their evening commute. Rail replacement services operated from Luton Airport Parkway and St Neots to Bedford, allowing customers to continue their journey, with additional rail replacement services from Flitwick during the initial stages of the disruption. A number of other operators also accepted FCC tickets on their services, allowing our Bedford customers to make their journeys by other routes. Customers were made aware of these changes to their usual service via information screens, Twitter, our website, and platform announcements made by our staff.

The second major impact was that trains which were due to come off the Thameslink line at Bedford for cleaning and maintenance were unable to do so due to the police cordon in the sidings. This resulted in units being temporarily stored elsewhere on the network. It was initially expected that this could lead to disruption to this morning, however our drivers and train presentation staff made a heroic effort to ensure that the vast majority of units were returned to their intended locations after the Bedford sidings were reopened. This meant that we were able to run a full service this morning, with no major delays stemming from the security incident.

Any customer whose journey was delayed for more than 30 minutes as a result of this security incident is eligible to submit a claim under the Delay-Repay scheme. Forms for this can be collected from any staffed station or downloaded from <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/customer-care/delay-repay>.

On "*however our drivers and train presentation staff made a heroic effort*" afterwards, this is something I would endorse.

## Wednesday 12 December – AM

Dear Stakeholder,

This morning, a number of First Capital Connect services on the Thameslink line were subject to cancellations or delays of up to 50 minutes due to problems with overhead line equipment (OHLE) at Bedford. I am writing to you to outline how this problem occurred, why the delays were so severe and how FCC responded to the problem.

During the preparation for our morning services, circuit breakers at Bedford Carriage Sidings were tripped several times, cutting off power to trains as they were about to leave the sidings. Due to the risk of damage to the trains, all units were held in the sidings while the cause of the power failure was identified.

The fault was traced to icicles which had formed on a public footbridge which crosses the carriage sidings. These were pressing on the OHLE from above, resulting in a short circuit which repeatedly triggered the circuit breakers. Power to the sidings was turned off to allow staff to knock the icicles down after which trains were able to safely exit onto the mainline. Network Rail is now investigating the cause of the water dripping from the bridge and will be taking steps to prevent this issue from recurring.

While this incident occurred before peak service began, it prevented units from getting to their starting locations until after 0600. As a result there were some service cancellations and alternations during peak time. To help restore the timetable, passengers from St Albans were provided with bus transport to Hatfield to allow them to continue their journey on the Great Northern route.

By 0815, delays had been reduced to less than 25 minutes. Full timetabled service from Bedford towards London was restored by 1000. A separate fault near Brighton resulted in timetable recovery taking slightly longer than expected and in additional delays of 10 to 15 minutes for a number of services on the line between London and Brighton. Network Rail is working to resolve this problem and it is not expected to have a major impact on services.

First Capital Connect extends its apologies to all those affected by delays today. Passengers who suffered delays of more than 30 minutes will be able to submit claims under the delay-repay scheme. Forms for this are available in stations and online at <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/customer-care/delay-repay>.

## Tuesday 4 December – AM

Dear Stakeholder,

This morning, a First Capital Connect (FCC) train suffered a power failure while in London Blackfriars station, leading to major delays across the Thameslink route. Many of our customers are understandably upset about the impact that this had on their daily journey so I would like to take this opportunity to outline the details of this incident and FCC's response to it.

While making a scheduled stop at London Blackfriars at 0744, the 0636 service from Flitwick to Sutton lost power. The driver and station staff were unable to restore power to the train, and engineers were dispatched to Blackfriars at 0800, fifteen minutes after the Sutton service had been due to depart.

As Blackfriars is a key link in the London core route, arrangements were quickly put in place to allow our customers to continue their journey with other providers. London Underground, East Croydon Tramlink, TfL Bus services and train services run by Southern, Southeastern, South West Trains and East Midlands trains all accepted FCC tickets to allow our customers to complete their journey. Buses were arranged to transfer passengers from St Albans station to Hatfield station, allowing some customers to continue their journey on the unaffected Great Northern line, reducing pressure on interchanges at West Hampstead, Kentish Town and St Pancras.

Our engineering staff were on-site at Blackfriars by 0900 when power to both lines was turned off to allow full access to the stricken unit. The engineers carried out work to prepare the unit to be moved away from the mainline in an unpowered state and a second train moved it to a siding near Blackfriars. The northbound line was reopened at 0920 while the southbound line was reopened at 0950, restoring full service to the station.

This has been an extremely challenging incident to recover from. Due to the high customer demand at this time of the day we didn't terminate services early nor merged them with subsequent services, which we typically use to restore services. We also faced challenges getting rescue locomotives into the central London core to remove the stricken unit.

One major problem that we encounter during nearly all disruptions is that large number of our drivers and trains are displaced from their intended locations on the network. We have additional drivers on

stand-by at Blackfriars and at Brighton to take over services and have altered the rostering of a number of our trains to take account of this; however it does appear that our passengers will continue to face some delays and short-notice cancellations through the evening peak.

First Capital Connect takes service delays extremely seriously and we are very sorry for the disruption caused today. Throughout this disruption, we have been working to make sure our customers have been kept informed. In our stations, we have extra announcements and messages on customer and operational information screens. We also have additional staff and station managers working on platforms at St Pancras, Blackfriars, City Thameslink and Farringdon stations to highlight the delays. We have been providing our customers with updates throughout the day via our website, Twitter account, email and text alerts and will continue to do so as long as the delays persist.

Customers who have experienced a delay of more than 30 minutes in their journey as a result of these problems may make a claim under our Delay Repay scheme. Forms for this are available in our stations and online at <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/customer-care/delay-repay>.

## Finally

The APTU Committee takes this opportunity to wish members and other readers season's greetings and all the best for 2013.

Regards

*Neil*

Neil Middleton

16 December 2012