



Dear Member

This is another ‘bumper’ edition, which now means I have largely caught up with the backlog of news and other items to report, although as you will see below, a reply is awaited from FCC on some items.

Index

FCC MANAGEMENT CHANGES	1
PROBLEMS AT RADLETT FROM WEDNESDAY 13 TH FEBRUARY	2
<i>Practical matters</i>	2
<i>The cause</i>	2
<i>FCC updates</i>	2
STAKEHOLDER FORUM	4
FRANCHISE UPDATE	5
2014-2015/6	6
2015/6 for 7 years	6
<i>First Group comments</i>	6
<i>A general overview</i>	7
ALERTING SERVICE	7
NETWORK RAIL PERFORMANCE GENERALLY	8
PASSENGER SURVEYS	9
THAMESLINK PROGRAMME	9
FCC PROFITABILITY AND SUBSIDY	10
ST ALBANS UPDATE	10
HARPENDEN UPDATE	11
<i>Footbridge</i>	11
<i>Cycle parking</i>	11
LUTON AIRPORT EXPANSION	11
(NOT) BUYING SUPER OFF-PEAK TRAVELCARDS ONLINE	11
DISRUPTION REPORTS	12
<i>18 January</i>	12
<i>Weekend before Christmas</i>	12
ODDS N ENDS	13

FCC management changes

It has been announced that Neal Lawson, the current MD, has taken a new job at Network Rail as “Director, Maintenance and Operations Services”. Neal is still in-post at FCC and will apparently remain in this role for sometime whilst his replacement is found. More details of his new role are available here: <http://railwayeye.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/lawsons-arrived.html>. Neal has written to Stakeholders as follows:

I wanted to take the time to send you a personal message as you may have heard that I have decided to accept a new position at Network Rail.

I will be joining as their new Operational & Maintenance Services Director. One of the key aspects of my new role will be to lead the implementation of European Train Control System (ETCS), including the coordination of the operational, technical and commercial interfaces with the train operators. This is a key component in the Thameslink programme, as it will allow us to run 24 trains per hour through the London core.

I can assure you that it is still very much business as usual at FCC. Indeed our work will continue on our planned investments to provide better stations, continuous engineering



improvements, strengthening of community and stakeholder relationships, and our ever-improving customer information. Your day-to-day contacts and relationships will of course remain unchanged.

The date for my departure has yet to be agreed and I will of course be in touch with you once this has been confirmed and my successor has been appointed. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Neal Lawson

Problems at Radlett from Wednesday 13th February

Practical matters

A couple of practical matters on this:

- On the service buses between Hatfield and St Albans:
 - Uno drivers are instructed by their Control to accept FCC tickets via an electronic message to their ticket machines. At least one driver did not read this message and insisted on cash. If this happened to you and you still have the ticket, FCC should provide a refund (let me know if this is problematic).
 - Arriva drivers cannot currently receive electronic instructions. An FCC staff member counts rail passengers on to the bus and hands the driver a single voucher for all travellers.
- Generally, I found the FCC Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/firstcc) the best way to get an overview of what was going on, often the web site was not very clear as regards the one sentence summary (e.g. “two lines open for electric, two lines open for diesel only).
- This will be a very expensive incident for Network Rail – by sometime on Thursday 14th it had cost 12,800 minutes and there will have been later delay minutes all the way through to Sunday 16th (due to extra engineering works).
- We took up with FCC the issue of the appearance of 4 carriage trains on services on Thursday 14th and Friday 15th and FCC responded to the effect that this was usually due to driver logistics, in particular they wanted to be very sure that drivers were always available at West Hampstead to take trains that had terminated there back south.

The cause

The BBC reported on the 22nd that it was component failure in the Overhead that caused both the Radlett failure and the problems at St Neots on the 19th. Details are here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-21516102> (there is further material below on Network Rail performance generally).

FCC updates

Key extracts from FCC stakeholder briefings include:



- **Friday 09:49**

Following the disruption on the Thameslink route during Wednesday and Thursday, I would like to provide you with an update on today's service.

Network Rail reopened two of the four tracks between St Albans and Elstree & Borehamwood shortly before 0700 this morning. A third track was opened to electric trains approximately an hour later. We don't expect the fourth track to open to electric trains today, however East Midland Trains will be running diesel services on this track. Further work will be required by Network Rail, however we expect this to take place outside of our operating hours.

With three of the four tracks open to our trains, we are able to run to our regular timetable, albeit with delays of up to 15 minutes at present. There will also be some short-form services today due to stock displacement, however we will be doing our best to minimise these.

Once again, on behalf of First Capital Connect, I would like to offer our sincere apologies to all those who have been affected by this disruption.

- **Thursday 15:04**

Further to my previous email, we have received an updated plan from Network Rail for the repair work on the Thameslink route tonight. As a result of this, we have had to make changes to our intended services for this evening.

FCC services between Bedford and West Hampstead will now end at 2100 to allow Network Rail full access to the affected site. This earlier cut-off should mean that the repair work is fully completed for tomorrow morning, however residual disruption is expected on FCC services due to the displacement of stock.

Rail services will continue between West Hampstead and Brighton, and the Wimbledon Loop and Blackfriars. A bus replacement service will operate in both directions from West Hampstead to Bedford, calling at all stations. An express bus will operate from St Pancras to Bedford via St Albans and then all stations.

We are also running buses between Hatfield and St Albans, Hitchin and Luton Airport Parkway, and St Neots and Bedford. All Thameslink tickets will be accepted on Great Northern services to allow customers to use these bus services.

We apologise for the severe disruption to the Thameslink route. We strongly advise customers use to alternative routes from 21.00 and to leave as much time as possible for their journey.

- **Wednesday 12:56**

I am writing to alert you to an on-going incident near Radlett which is affecting First Capital Connect services on the Thameslink route. Due to the severity of this incident, customers are likely to face disruption throughout evening peak service and into tomorrow.

Shortly after 1100, it was reported that overhead electrical wires had collapsed on the track between Radlett and St Albans. This led to loss of power on several First Capital Connect services and damage to the windscreen of an East Midlands Trains unit. Early investigations suggest that the damage was caused by an earlier freight train.

At present, all four tracks between Radlett and St Albans have been closed to allow Network Rail staff to assess the infrastructure damage, however reports suggest that wires above three of the four tracks may have sustained damage. Due to the extent of the damage no trains will run between Elstree & Borehamwood and St Albans until tomorrow.



To allow customers to continue their journey during this disruption, FCC Thameslink tickets are being accepted on Southern, FCC Great Northern, London Midland, East Midland and CrossCountry services. Rail replacement buses have also been arranged and details will be available online and from our station staff. Limited services will be run on the Brighton Mainline, the Wimbledon loop and between Bedford and Luton.

We are currently working to develop our contingency timetable for this incident. We will be issuing further information this later this afternoon, however please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Finally, FCC issued a “plea on behalf of their customers” effectively complaining about Network Rail’s recent performance. This can be read at <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/about-us/media-centre/news/2013/first-capital-connect-plea-behalf-their-customers/>.

Stakeholder Forum

FCC held a Stakeholder Forum on 31 January; the presentation materials they provided are here: http://www.aptu.org.uk/pdfs/fcc_stakeholderpresentation_31012013.pdf . I think these slides are of particular interest:

- 7 How the UK Rail industry is structured
- 9 Performance: FCC ahead of target, Network Rail behind (and now further behind following Radlett and St Neots)
- 14 “My alerts” – see below

We did not have time to talk about many of the questions you passed to us – other Stakeholders wanted a chance to ask questions as well! However, I forwarded them to Larry Heyman and have since met him to go through many of them:

Topic	Response
Siemens Desiro: Optimised for long or short distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neither. The core design features revolve around 24 trains per hour in the core, so wide doors and 2+2 seating. First class will be “dynamic” – that is it can be altered by the train operator electronically. There will not be longitudinal seating as on the latest Tube stock.
Wimbledon loop destination north of the river	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is still undecided. A particular concern was expressed that Wimbledon loop trains are limited to 8 carriages and this would be a restriction on Thameslink North services. FCC observed that many of the inner London stations south of the river (eg on SouthEastern) are also limited to 8 carriages.
Ticket acceptance to London Bridge during the blockade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet confirmed. At present, Thameslink North tickets can be used on the Underground from West Hampstead, Kentish Town and St Pancras when there is no service because of either disruption or engineering works. It is not yet clear if TfL will regard the long-term blockade as standard engineering work and therefore covered under the normal arrangements or as a special situation, in which case they may want payment (from FCC, the Department for Transport or the traveller). <i>APTU will follow this up</i>



Elstree footbridge – timing / a roof	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start March / April, build duration around 1 year.• No roof. Apparently, the Network Rail approach is that replacement footbridges match the current arrangement, hence a roof at Harpenden to match existing, but no roof at Elstree. West Hampstead was subject to special arrangements as this was Thameslink Programme funded.
Purchasing Oyster cards at West Hampstead Thameslink	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is hoped that it will be possible to sell Oyster cards at West Hampstead Thameslink. These will be pre-paid cards only, both because there is little room to put the equipment to allow loading any amount in the office and because FCC believe demand will be relatively low (it is already possible to top up an Oyster card using the machines).
Wifi and or Mobile signal at St Pancras	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No news. <i>APTU has followed this up with Network Rail.</i>
Carnets & railcards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FCC confirmed that they have no plans to allow Railcards to be used with Carnets; the carnet is a product designed to give discounts to regular passengers who cannot get a discount by any other method (season ticket or railcard).• FCC are now giving out suitable pens at stations when buying carnets: be aware that penalty fares and prosecutions are occurring regularly regarding carnet tickets when the date is not very clear and/or there are signs of tampering.
22:18 from St Pancras: 8 cars vs 4 at present	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• APTU has been pressing FCC to increase the number of carriages on this service from 4 carriages to 8 as the service is frequently severely over-crowded. FCC report there is progress on finding a solution, but no final decision as yet (the diagram that this service is part of is a rush hour 4 carriage service, so increasing the diagram to 8 carriages implies another rush hour service reduces to 4 carriages).
Leagrave – Various issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I have forwarded details of the parking and cycling issues to FCC and hope to have an on-site meeting.

Franchise update

The Government has announced the arrangements for the franchise. These are as follows:

1. There will be a 28 week extension in the current franchise from 14 September 2013 to 29 March 2014
2. The Government hopes to come to an agreement for a short term contract of up to 2 years with First Group
3. The new combined Thameslink Southern Great Northern Contract then commences for a period of 7 years.



2014-2015/6

It is not clear exactly how long the interim franchise in '2' above will last. To me, there are a number of key dates:

- The current Southern franchise currently concludes in July 2015.
- The London Bridge blockade commences in December 2014.
- The 'Integrated Kent' (Southeastern Trains to you & I) currently concludes in March 2014.

Vernon Baker, Managing Director of First Group Rail made the point in his presentation that the originally envisaged two step change to the Franchise (FCC, then Southern) generated noticeable risk. I agree with his view. In addition, Boris Johnson is lobbying to be allowed to take over a number of metro style services, including some operated by Southeastern (of which there will be more in the future now that South East London has lost out to Sutton / Wimbledon users). This adds uncertainty, and almost definitely delay, on this Franchise renewal.

I guess there is a clause in the current Southern Franchise agreement similar to the one in the FCC and First Great Western ones which allows the government to opt for a 28 week extension. Therefore I think the most likely outcome is an extension that terminates sometime between July 2015 and February 2016.

As a result of this, there will be need for separate negotiations on resourcing the commitment to deliver an off-peak London Bridge / Brighton service throughout 2014. No doubt the stock recently ordered by Southern will ease this.

Note: This approach is slightly at variance with the Brown report, which had this to say:

As a result of the pause to the programme, it will not be possible for the Department to deliver this franchise by September 2013 as previously planned, but a new contract should be able to start at some point in 2014. The Department should be seeking to optimise the starting point of the new franchise with regard to the wider programme of Thameslink infrastructure works and rolling stock delivery. The Department should take soundings from the short-listed bidders to help inform this position.

2015/6 for 7 years

The Secretary for Transport had this to say on 31 January

“The competition for the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise will also be resumed, with an invitation to tender being issued to the existing short-listed bidders. This will be for a 7-year contract term, again as previously announced. Consistent with Mr Brown’s recommendation, I expect this to be more of a management-style contract. This different approach will require more time to develop and test the proposition with the market, and I will set out the timetable for this competition in the spring.”

First Group comments

In a press release, First Group commented:

The First Capital Connect franchise will also continue beyond the current planned end date of 14 September 2013. The current contract includes an option to extend the duration for 28



weeks, which the DfT states it intends to exercise. We are also in discussions in respect of an agreement for the franchise to continue for a further period of up to two extra years, which will allow First Capital Connect to continue to support the successful Thameslink Programme. This major investment has transformed a key part of London's transport network and benefits for passengers are set to continue, including the redevelopment of London Bridge station and the introduction of new rolling stock.

Neal Lawson also sent out a briefing to Stakeholders. Where it expands on the First Group statement, material is as follows:

Today's announcement is good news for our passengers. Everyone at First Capital Connect has worked tirelessly to improve service levels throughout the lifetime of the franchise so far, and we have an impressive track record for delivering successful projects along both of these routes, working in association with Government and our industry partners.

However, we know overcrowding remains an issue on this network. Today's announcement will allow us to work closely with the DfT and our industry partners in order to deliver much needed new capacity and route improvements as quickly and effectively as possible.

As the largest rail operator in the country FirstGroup has unrivalled experience of operating high quality rail services. We are proud that we will continue to serve your communities on the Thameslink and Great Northern routes.

A general overview

For anyone who does not want to read the full Brown report (86 pages), Passenger Focus has produced an 8 page summary (total document size: 12 pages) -

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/brown-review-of-franchising-passenger-focus-summary-of-key-points>

Alerting service

FCC have launched a new free alerting service which includes both email and text messaging (with Twitter due soon). My initial experience of the service is that it does not send you the blizzard of email messages that JourneyCheck often does during periods of significant disruption, restricting itself instead to a handful of texts/emails. You can register an account for these alerts (or extend the use of your existing account) at

<http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/your-account/alerts/> - additional details of the service are available at <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/travel-alerts/>.

It is intended that this service will replace both the JourneyCheck email messages and the existing Twitter alerting service. I, for one won't miss the alerting blizzards from JourneyCheck, but would like FCC to keep the JourneyCheck websites

(<http://www.journeycheck.com/firstcapitalconnect> and <http://pda.jcheck.com/fcc>) as I find these provide a compact way to check the current service. Although I do not use the latter site a lot, it is useful when the mobile network is slow / unreliable because the pages are so small.

☞ *Does anyone have strong views on the continued use of JourneyCheck websites?*



Network Rail performance generally

Network's rail performance was slated in a number of areas recently by *The Office of Rail Regulation*. Selected extracts are as follows:

- We have concerns about Network Rail's resilience in dealing with recent weather conditions and are raising this urgently. Although it did much to recover weather-related delays, there were other factors affecting performance such as some significant engineering overruns. We want a full account from Network Rail about how it will improve its performance in future.
- Asset management has been a long-term concern and we need reassurance that resources are in place to manage assets competently and efficiently into the future. We are satisfied that the company has now completed all the high priority assessments of the load-carrying capacity of its bridges and has plans for completing the rest. The derailment at Barrow-upon-Soar is another significant incident to add to Network Rail's growing list of embankment and cutting failures. We have challenged it to find the cause of the derailment and learn from it. Although we are treating this initially as a safety issue, the embankment failure raises asset management issues and we are concerned that no precursor indicators were picked up by the maintenance inspection regime.
- Between 9 December 2012 and 5 January 2013, Network Rail and train operators dealt with multiple flooding incidents, landslides and embankment slips. We acknowledge that many rail staff made exceptional efforts, often working long hours in arduous conditions, to get services running for passengers. However, we also need to make sure that Network Rail did everything reasonably practicable to meet its obligations. At the beginning of January we told Network Rail to report back on issues including performance, engineering work overruns, passenger information and the derailment at Barrow-upon-Soar. We are looking at its response along with its updates on the Long Distance and London & South East recovery plans.
- In December, we re-affirmed our expectation that Network Rail will do everything reasonably practicable to deliver 93% PPM. We are therefore disappointed that it now expects that LSE will end 1.1pp below target. This is even lower than thought previously. We are reviewing Network Rail's report for evidence that it has done, and will do, everything reasonably practicable to deliver the best performance it can *This was rated by the ORR as rank "Yellow/Red" – "The issue is subject to special scrutiny, with intensive investigation and enhanced monitoring. We may have discussed potential licence concerns with Network Rail Directors.*
- Track quality - Sussex route: Our inspection and investigation work has led to concerns about Network Rail's track maintenance on the Sussex route. Network Rail had already identified issues and increased its resources to improve track quality. The number of faults in the alignment, level or gauge of track can be a precursor to broken rails and Sussex has the highest number of these faults of Network Rail's ten operating routes. It is developing long-term plans to address this and other factors which are affecting

The report can be read here: http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/upload/pdf/network_rail_monitor_1213q3.pdf; and the introductory web page at <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.11118>.



Passenger Surveys

Two passenger surveys have hit the headlines recently:

- Which, which scored FCC the lowest at 40% (Virgin were the highest at 67%). FCC had this to say

“This is questionable research which quizzed just 461 people online out of the 170,000 we carry every day. People chose to take part so many who did would have had an axe to grind.” “A face-to-face survey by rail watchdog Passenger Focus which is audited by the Office of National Statistics that shows 81% of our passengers are satisfied or very satisfied with our service and 13% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Just 6% expressed dissatisfaction.”

If you are a member of Which, you can read more at <http://www.which.co.uk/home-and-garden/leisure/reviews-ns/best-and-worst-uk-train-companies/>; it also on the BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21494270>) and other websites.

- Passenger Focus, which published its autumn 2012 survey and gave FCC 81% [satisfied or good], 1% lower than Southern and 1% more than Greater Anglia. The top score went to Grand Central at 96%; the top ‘conventional’ TOC scorer was C2C at 93%. Key points for FCC were:

○ Overall score change	+1%
○ Value for money (Thameslink North: 34%)	38% (no change)
○ Punctuality	81% (+4%)
○ Sufficient room	61% (no change)
○ Station	79% (+3%)
○ Delays	33% (no change)
○ Cleanliness of the outside	56% (-4%)

More information is available as follows:

- Passenger Focus introduction: <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news/articles/record-satisfaction-levels-in-latest-national-passenger-survey-nps>
- Passenger Focus: Full survey: <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/national-passenger-survey-autumn-2012-nps-main-report>
- FCC response: <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/about-us/media-centre/news/2013/first-capital-connect-passenger-satisfaction-score-rises-third-year-running/>

Thameslink Programme

The Thameslink Consortium (mainly a mix of local authorities and rail user groups) has provided an update on the Programme. Key extracts include:

- There are no proposals at present to add any Thameslink services into London Overground arrangements



- London Bridge blockade: The Thameslink Programme website <http://www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk/> has all the key dates involved with the blockade on it which you are asked to view. However, the specifications for the alternative timetables has not yet been finalised and the date for making it public is not known at present. However, David realised this is a major point for stakeholders and would ascertain a date for the consortium. There will be no open consultation on the alternative timetables, as discussions about this are only taking place within internal rail industry stakeholders. The DfT is taking it that the train operators will provide the voice of passenger concerns throughout.
- Rolling stock procurement: Commercial close was achieved on the contract before Christmas and credit committee approvals are now being sought with the objective of producing financial closure in the Spring. This has been a drawn out process, but now the project is in the hands of the commercial bond/debt markets and is dependent on general economic and market forces to finalise. [The DfT is] still is aiming to have the train delivery in full by 2018 to meet with the outlined franchise timetable above and the fact that the infrastructure project is running on time. Any issues relating to purchasing of new rolling stock and cascading of rolling stock through other franchise agreements remain solely the responsibility of those franchises under their own business cases.
- Wimbledon Loop: You would have read that after significant lobbying and consultations the Wimbledon loop has been retained in the proposed Thameslink network. Of most importance is Network Rail's position on this change, and it is accepted that it is now comfortable with any performance implications arising out of this decision. There is no decision on the terminus of the Wimbledon loop yet, but full service modelling for this and the whole Thameslink network is currently underway.

FCC profitability and subsidy

The March Modern Railways quotes data on profitability and subsidy of various Franchises provided by the Parliamentary Transport Committee. A selection is set out below

		Operating Profit			Net Subsidy (£m, negative = premium)		
		2009	2010	2011	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
FCC	31 March	5.4	-2.0	2.5	(89.1)	(136.4)	(162.7)
Southern	3 July		3	18.5	48	(102.3)	(16.7)
Southeastern	4 July	16	6.6	21.8	122.8	218.2	86.7
Southwest Trains	30 April	15.3	24.1	47.5	(137.7)	(177.6)	(228.6)

In 2011, the most profitable franchise was South West Trains, the least profitable Chiltern Trains (loss of £57.1m); the biggest subsidy was to Arriva Trains Wales (£136.7m) and South West Trains paid the biggest premium.

St Albans update

Following lobbying by APTU, a waiting shelter is to be provided on platform 1 and further seating is to be provided on platforms 1 & 2, in both cases by the end of March.



- Waiting shelter: South end, near the '8 car' market
- Platform 1 seats: Under cover, just north of the road bridge (2 benches), just south of the road bridge (2 benches) and north end (1 bench)
- Platform 2 seats: north end (2 benches)

Harpenden update

Footbridge

Apologies for the mistake in the last newsletter. I wrote that section on the Sunday, based on a large crane in the car park on Saturday night. FCC have provided me with an update:

Due to the high winds on the weekend just past, Network Rail's contractors were unable to install the last of the stairs island 2/3 London end which is now programmed for this weekend coming. The plan now is to open the new bridge on 18 February. The lifts should still open by the end of March.

I am writing this section of the newsletter on 22 February and the works have yet to be completed – but it does look as if it will open soon.

Cycle parking

It is expected that there will be more cycle parking at Harpenden; one possible location is the north end of the east side car park, where the contractor's compound is located. I am awaiting more details.

Luton airport expansion

This is currently going through the planning process, but the Highways Agency recently issued a halt order in order to have more time to review the application. The APTU position is similar to that for the Radlett Strategic Rail Freight Interchange: We are interested only in the potential impact to our services.

The main issues at present is that the planning documents have a very optimistic view on capacity, quoting from the Network Rail RUS that only 70% of capacity is used over 3 hours and 85% over 1 hour.

At present, the two options available seem to be:

1. To sign the E-Petition that demands that Luton Borough Council are not allowed to make a decision about an asset they own:

<https://submissions.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/44069>

(Not) buying Super Off-Peak Travelcards online

If you have attempted to buy a Super Off-Peak Travelcard online recently, you may have failed as the website did not offer this option from many destinations (Super Off-Peak Returns to London Thameslink were available). FCC have acknowledged this is an error and arranged for it to be corrected; the supplier's first attempt failed, but the second attempt succeeded.



If you think you have been disadvantaged, please let us know and FCC have not provided a refund, let us know.

Disruption reports

18 January

Dear stakeholder,

This afternoon, customers were affected by delays on the Thameslink route after a train developed a fault in central London. I would like to take this opportunity to brief you on this incident and our response to it as you may receive some enquiries about this.

Shortly before 1200, the 1025 Bedford-Brighton service came to halt between City Thameslink and Blackfriars stations due to a problem with its brake systems. The unit was reset, which did not resolve the problem. A second unit was brought forward from City Thameslink to drag the failed unit back to City Thameslink and on to our service depot. Both trains were underway by 1310. Several passengers who had been trapped on-board the failed unit were met with hot tea and coffee at City Thameslink station. Our colleagues will be working to ensure that they are able to complete their journeys.

Due to the large number of trains which pass through central London via Blackfriars, a number of our services have been delayed by this incident. We are now working to recover our timetable, however we expect to have delays until 1600 and potentially into evening peak service. We are advising passengers on Thameslink that they may use their tickets on services run by London Underground, FCC Great Northern, Southern, Southeastern, East Midlands Trains and TfL buses.

At present, we are only experiencing minor delays due to snow, however we will continue to monitor the situation and issue customer updates as appropriate. We do recognise that many of our customers will be heading home early today, so we have removed peak restrictions from all services. Please check <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk> for the most up to date information on weather related disruption.

Any customers who have experienced delays in excess of 30 minutes as a result of this disruption may make a claim under our Delay-Repay scheme. Forms for this are available from our stations or online at <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/customer-care/delay-repay/>.

Weekend before Christmas

- This was when there was a fire in a signalling cabinet at Preston Park (just outside Brighton). I asked "As regards the weekend before Christmas (and, I think the 21st [I was on holiday]), I can fully understand why there was no attempt to run services through to Brighton, and can also understand why there was a frequency reduction south of the river. However, I am not clear why the entire service was thinned out to every 30 minutes. It seems to me that the appropriate response was every 15 minutes Bedford to East Croydon (or possibly, Blackfriars) and every 30 minutes to Haywards Heath. Can you clarify?"

We originally did attempt to run 4tph Bedford - Blackfriars with 2tph south to Haywards Heath but had to slim that still further as the disruption that was being caused to our diagrams bit deeper.

As for the Preston Park fire, the problem is getting Brighton drivers north and if they miss the time to pick up their service we lose a train. By cutting the service to 2tph from Bedford



(and replacing 4-cars with 8s) we were able to provide a more robust service and protect the Wimbledon/Sutton loop to St Albans and Luton.

Odds n Ends

- Thameslink Programme / London Bridge: You may be interested in this article in Rail Engineer, which provides additional detail on the works:
<http://www.therailengineer.com/2013/02/12/thameslink-next-stop-london-bridge/>
- Luton - Dunstable guided busway: This is due to be in service by "Spring 2013"; the latest update is here: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/travelling/public-transport/the-luton-dunstable-busway.aspx>

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton
24 February 2013