



Dear Member

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Annual meeting with FCC

The annual meeting with FCC management will be at 7:30pm on Monday 10 June at the Friend's Meeting House in St Albans. We also expect to have attendance from Network Rail management. In view of the changes at both FCC and Network Rail, names will be confirmed shortly.

To get to the Friend's Meeting House (7 Upper Lattimore Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3UD), from the station, head down Victoria Street[↻] towards the centre of St Albans and turn right at the second set of traffic lights (where there is a Cotswold Outdoor Sports shop) and the Friends Meeting house is on the approximately 4th on the left – see <http://tiny.cc/krhcc>. The hall is accessible by the disabled and has an accessible toilet.

↻ Victoria Street is straight ahead from platform 4; from platform 1, turn right and cross the bridge over the railway.

Questions for the meeting

If you have any questions or specific topics for FCC or Network Rail, can I please have these by Monday 27 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.



Travel to/from the meeting

I will ask FCC to repeat their normal offer of free travel – 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.

Subscriptions Reminder

Subscriptions for 2013/14 are now due for payment. Thank you to those who have already paid by cheque, standing order/direct payment and in advance, but that leaves over 110 members who have not.

If you are one of these 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 10 June.

Thank you

Malcolm Howe

Treasurer

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Franchising update

The Government has announced the restart of the franchising process, including the plans for the new Thameslink Southern Great Northern franchise. The three key facts are:

1. The current FCC franchise is extended until September 2014 (I reckon 13 September)
2. The new franchise will be a “management” contract. This means the Government takes revenue risk.
3. The existing Southern Franchise will merge into the new Franchise from July 2015.

The DfT also clarified that:

The Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern (TSGN) franchise competition has resumed with an Invitation to Tender to be issued to the existing shortlisted bidders in September 2013, with the intention to award by May 2014. As [this] competition has already passed through the pre-qualification stage, it is not possible for new entrants to apply.

This means that the bidders will be:

Abellio Thameslink Limited (NV Nederlandse Spoorwegen)	Operators of railways in the Netherlands and operators of Greater Anglia services out of Liverpool Street
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, operators of the Metro rail system there 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

FCC had this to say on the announcement:

The Department for Transport (DfT) today [announced](#) that First Capital Connect's franchise will be extended by 12 months to September 2014.

After this date a new franchise will be let which, in July 2015, will then incorporate rail services currently operated by Southern. First Capital Connect's parent company FirstGroup was one of the companies shortlisted to bid for this franchise in March 2012.

Commenting on the franchise extension, First Capital Connect Managing Director Neal Lawson said:

"Despite the challenges of operating an ageing fleet of trains, passenger satisfaction has improved during our time in charge of the franchise, some elements by up to 17%, despite carrying 14m more people a year.

"We have brought in extra trains and longer services to deliver 29% more seats at the busiest times of the day on the Thameslink route and 22% extra on the Great Northern.

"We have also shown we can manage complex projects such as the Thameslink Programme which will deliver more much-needed new capacity and route improvements and we will continue working closely on this with the DfT and our industry partners."

Tim O'Toole, FirstGroup Chief Executive said:

"The publication of the timetable setting out the return to rail franchising is an important development for the industry, enabling the private sector to continue to provide effective and efficient passenger rail services with further performance and infrastructure improvements. In particular, the extension of our First Capital Connect franchise provides continuity and consistency for our passengers and enables us to continue to deliver considerable improvements to services.

"As the UK's largest and most experienced rail operator, we remain committed to maintaining a leading position in the market. We look forward to reviewing the details of the upcoming franchise competitions as they are announced, and submitting further high quality bids that deliver for passengers, taxpayers and shareholders."

Commenting on the Franchise re-start generally, Passenger Focus commented as follows:

- A franchise procurement process map is to be published on 25 April 2013
- A franchising competition process guide will be published on 25 June
- The department [ie the DfT] will be making a full response to the Brown review in June
- A Rail Franchise Overview will be published in July 2013 as a successor to the Passenger Rail Industry Overview last published by OPRAF in 1996.

More information is available at:



- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fresh-start-for-franchising>

The Thameslink Consortium asked the Department for Transport what a “management contract” actually means and received this reply:

The key differences between what we have termed a ‘management-style’ contract (MC) and what, in railway parlance, is termed a ‘franchise’ are (a) under an MC the Government retains most or all of the revenue risk, and (b) the operator is contracted to undertake specific additional tasks – in this case all the relevant preparations for the introduction of the enhanced Thameslink service in 2018;

Thameslink Programme

A critical aspect of achieving the 2018 date must be signing the contract for the new trains. On 13 May this written answer was given to Parliament:

- *Chris Williamson (Derby North, Labour):* To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the reasons are for the time taken to agree the signing of the Thameslink contract; and if he will make a statement.
- *Simon Burns (Chelmsford, Conservative):* The Department intends to award the contract for Thameslink Rolling Stock shortly. Transactions of this size necessarily include a significant volume of both project and finance documentation. The Department is working with Siemens and Cross London Trains to finalise these arrangements.

We have asked FCC for an update at our 10 June meeting, however if there has been no announcement before then, I am sure the answer will be “it will be signed shortly ...”.

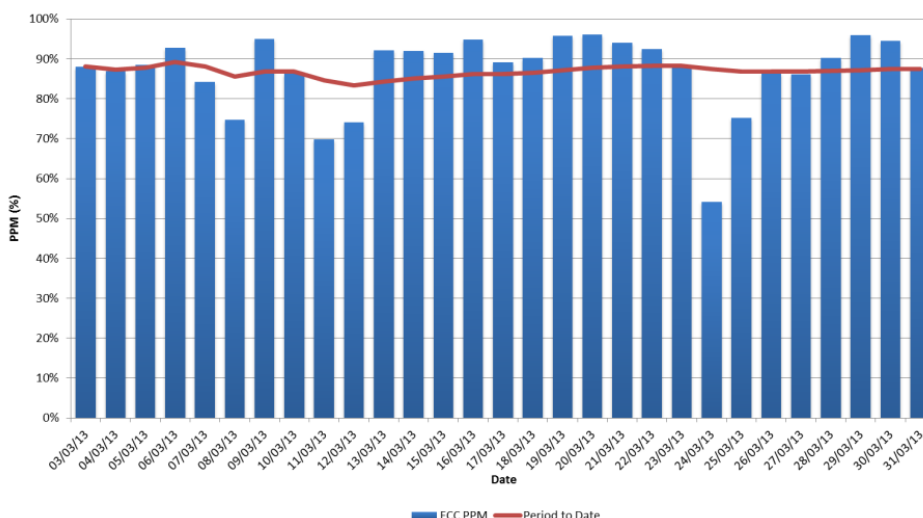
The other main issue of concern to APTU (and the BCA) is the service plan during the London Bridge blockade (from December 2014). During this time no FCC services will call at London Bridge. APTU’s concern arises from promises made regarding continuation of London Bridge to Brighton services – delivering this will mean rolling stock will need to be found from somewhere and our concern is that it could come from the current Thameslink fleet, thus reducing our south of the river service. Also, there is probably insufficient capacity on parts of the Brighton Mainline to support both 4 trains per hour for Thameslink north, the new Brighton to London Bridge service and other existing services.

March performance

FCC commented on this as follows:

Unseasonable winter weather continued into Period 13, although with limited impact on First Capital Connect services. Infrastructure problems remained

FCC Daily PPM Breakdown - Period 13 2012/13

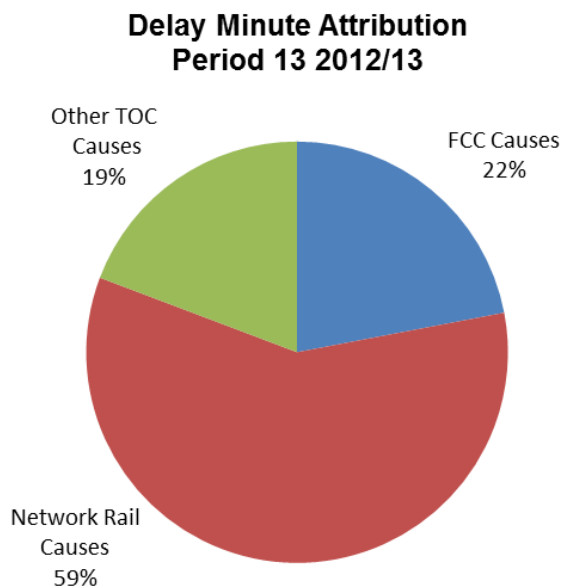




an issue during this period, with the incursion into the Northern City Line by a construction firm working on an unrelated commercial building 13 meters above the tunnels as well as points and signalling failures.

There were two major disruptions on the Thameslink route during Period 13. Services were disrupted for several hours on 11 March after a person was struck by a train near Horley. There was further disruption on 24 March due to a points failure at Herne Hill which took Network Rail some time to repair. Both of these incidents resulted in knock-on delays after drivers and stock were displaced across the route.

Despite achieving our public performance measure (PPM) target of 92.30% on a number of days, we were unable to achieve the target for the period due to the negative impact of the infrastructure failures. As a result, overall PPM for this period was 87.42%.



FCC comment on 2012/13 performance

The past year has seen First Capital Connect achieve the best performance figures of the franchise in August, September and October, however major infrastructure and traction failures between October and April have resulted in below target performance in recent months.

Delay minute attribution for the year shows that First Capital Connect was responsible for 24% of delays, other train operating companies caused 19% of delays while factors relating to Network Rail infrastructure resulted in 63% of delays. We are continuing to address the causes of these incidents both internally and with Network Rail and our industry partners.

During the past year, 88.34% of our services met their public performance target. 69.1% of our services achieved their right time measure. This performance is comparable to other commuter services in the south-east and our right time performance is ahead of the national average for 2012-13. Full industry figures are available from Network Rail: <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/about/performance/>.

Problems on 26 April – Fire evacuation at Three Bridges

FCC sent us an update in the immediate aftermath of this incident:

Today passengers across the Thameslink route have faced delays following a fire alarm at Network Rail's Three Bridges signal box. I would like to provide you with an update on this disruption and details of our response to it.

Shortly after 0500 this morning, fire alarms at the Three Bridges signal box went off. The signal box was evacuated with lines throughout Sussex shut down. Following emergency



services attending the signal box, it was reopened at approximately 0630. The Brighton Mainline was reopened to First Capital Connect services at 0700 and we have been engaged in service recovery since then.

To ensure that as many of our passengers as possible were able to complete their journey while the Brighton Mainline was closed we began turning Bedford to Brighton services at Blackfriars and St Pancras stations in order to maintain a good service to the north of the route. Rail replacement buses operated between affected stations on the Brighton Mainline. There have been a small number of knock-on delays and cancellations affecting services to and from Sutton and Sevenoaks.

Following the reopening of the Brighton Mainline, it took some time for FCC services from Brighton to recommence. This was because only a small number of our trains are stored in the Brighton area, requiring trains from the north of the route to reach Brighton before a near normal service could be resumed. To allow passengers to continue their journey during this time, First Capital Connect tickets were accepted on services run by Southern, Southeastern, South West Trains, London Underground, London Overground and TfL London Buses. Tickets were also accepted on services operated by East Midlands Trains, London Midland and on our Great Northern route, helping to mitigate delays to the north.

At present we are continuing to work on service recovery. We expect to be running a normal service by mid-afternoon, with some residual delays and short-form services due to the extent of the displacement of drivers and stock.

All passengers who were affected by delays today will be entitled to compensation through our Delay-Repay scheme. Forms for this are available from staffed stations or online at: <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/customer-care/delay-repay/>.

Since then, there has been some 'chatter' in the rail forums on the web on how contingency planning will work once these large regional operating centres are in use – for instance, the planned Three Bridges site will cover Thameslink North. We have added this question to the agenda for the meeting on 10 June.

Radlett Strategic Freight Interchange

This rumbles on; St Albans District Council has applied for a judicial review and Hertfordshire County Council have applied for an extension to 30 June as regards the Secretary of State's final decision (and the developer has objected) – more at http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning/rail_freight_interchange.aspx.

We have asked Network Rail for an update at our 10 June meeting on both capacity and engineering works.

Harpenden update

Lifts

The lifts at Harpenden are now in use, associated with this staff based at Harpenden have had ramp training and there are ramps on the station, so wheelchair travellers should be able to board / light when staff are present.

FCC had this to say:



Network Rail's contractors commissioned and opened the elevators on Friday morning, 3 May. The lifts are a key part of the new footbridge, which Network Rail completed in March as part of the Government-funded Access For All programme. The final section of the old footbridge was removed at the weekend.

As part of the overall project, the ticket gate entrance to the southbound platform 1 is being moved and is due to open shortly. This will be better placed for the new footbridge.

Work also continues extending the canopy on platform 1 to provide protection between the new gates and an existing waiting shelter. A new glass-fronted waiting room with an automatic sliding door is also being built on platform 1 to replace one that had to be removed to make way for the new footbridge.

Another replacement waiting room is also planned for the island platform in space created by the removal of the old footbridge.

Customer Service Director Keith Jipps said: "We're thrilled for our customers. The new lifts will be a huge help for people with disabilities as well as passengers with buggies or heavy luggage."

Network Rail's Route enhancement Manager Spencer Gibbens said: "We've been working with the Government and train operators to improve accessibility across the network and the lifts at Harpenden are a fine example of this. "Many of our stations were built hundreds of years ago and we are working hard on them to open the railway up for everyone."

Car Parking

It is planned to install a single deck extension to the East side car park, which will increase parking available by 200 positions. More information at <http://goo.gl/kY8RB> (and also in various other local media).

Mill Hill update

FCC have reported as follows:

On 1 April, work will be starting on a two month refurbishment of Mill Hill Broadway station. I would like to take this opportunity to brief you on the planned work and let you know about the changes you will be seeing at the station.

At present, the station is in poor condition: the ticket office has been closed since 2011 due to a now repaired leak from the motorway above and the booking hall and station subway are gloomy and have damp problems.

The ticket office within the station will be fully refurbished and a have a new Disability Discrimination Act-compliant ticket counter installed. This will include induction loops and an improved intercom system similar to those recently introduced at Cricklewood station. This refurbishment will allow the removal of the portacabin which is currently used as a ticket office.

The booking hall and passenger subway will both be damp proofed and have new, brighter lighting installed. New flooring and wall friezes will be fitted to the booking hall. The whole of the station will be redecorated and new measures will be put in place to deter pigeons.

This work will greatly improve the station environment, making travelling to and from Mill Hill Broadway a much more pleasant experience for passengers. The station will feel lighter, brighter and safer, particularly in the platform subway. Restoring the ticket office to use will mean that customers will be sheltered from inclement weather when buying tickets.



I know that David will maintain the strong stakeholder relationships that we pride ourselves on and focus on improving customer satisfaction, which is at the heart of all our business decisions, by delivering solid performance, a clean train environment and the best possible response and information during times of disruption. He will be in touch with you very soon to discuss his plans for taking FCC from strength to strength.

I would also like to thank Neal for the significant contribution he has made to our business. He leaves First Capital Connect in great shape for the next phase of the franchise, and we wish him all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Vernon
First Group, Managing Director of UK Rail

Barker

David Statham was quoted on the First Group website as saying ““I look forward to leading the team at First Capital Connect as we continue to improve the service we offer our customers and deliver considerable further infrastructure and capacity increases for our passengers, partners and stakeholders. I am determined to focus on improving customer satisfaction, which is at the heart of all our business decisions, by delivering solid performance, a clean train environment and the best possible response and information during times of disruption.””

Herts Advertiser article

The Herts Advertiser has been in an ongoing (useful) dialogue with FCC, and recently published another update, which can be found here: <http://goo.gl/r8kiQ>.

Buying Season tickets

... with thanks to the Bedford Commuters Association.

How far in advance can I renew my current ticket?

- **Weekly tickets** – where the current ticket is surrendered with no break of continuity, a ticket starting on a Sunday or Monday (or Tuesday after a Bank Holiday) may be issued from 1200 noon the previous Friday. If the start date is another day, the ticket may be issued after 1200 noon the previous day.
- **Other Season Tickets** – where the current ticket is surrendered with no break of continuity, a ticket may be issued up to seven days in advance.

How far in advance can I buy a Season Ticket when it does not run on from an existing season?

- **Weekly tickets** starting on a Monday (or a Tuesday after a Bank Holiday) may be purchased from ticket offices from 0600 on the previous Sunday. For any other day of the week, they may be purchased from ticket offices on the first day of validity only. Weekly tickets can only be purchased from self-service machines on the day of travel.
- **Tickets valid for one month or more** – tickets starting on a Saturday, Sunday or Monday (also Tuesday after a Bank Holiday) may be issued from 1200 noon the previous Friday. If the start date is another day, the new train ticket may be purchased from 1200 noon the previous day.



What happens when I buy a ticket online?

If you are buying your ticket online, do so at least seven days in advance and up to 21 days before you travel. The ticket will be issued to you seven days in advance.

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

19 May 2013