

Dear Member



A mini-update on three matters:

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Compensation survey

As mentioned in our 25 January newsletter, our attention has turned to the matter of compensation payable. Our concern is that the DelayRepay approach only works where a fundamentally good service is blighted by the occasional very bad day. For most of us, it does not really work for the frequent, smaller delays we suffer because of late or cancelled trains - with the intensity of the service in place during the day, I find I am relatively rarely delayed by more than 30 minutes - rather it is regular smaller delays that are incurred - I arrive at my destination station, look at my watch/phone and conclude that this has been another time I cannot make a DelayRepay Claim because I have been held up for 20 - 25 minutes.

I am also curious to know if anyone has made, or even approached the trigger for “Enhanced Compensation” - which requires 12 journeys with a Delay of 30 minutes or more within a single railway accounting period.

Accordingly, APTU has put together a survey to determine what traveller’s actual experience is, in order to understand better how often you are delayed by and to relate that to the circumstances in which a claim can be made.

The survey can be completed here: <https://www.surveymoz.com/s/146297CUCCI> - please do this by Monday 23rd February - and ask friends and colleagues to complete as well - it is not just restricted to APTU members.

Note: You may have heard recent stories in the Media about improvements to the DelayRepay scheme - eg <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-31067355> - whilst welcome, this does not change the basis of DelayRepay - what has now happened is that the assumed number of journeys has returned to the number used by FCC; with the slight reduction in days to be travelled, the amount payable increases by around 5%.

Stock Shortages – update

We have received this from GTR:

The flooding damaged at least 25 trains that we know of so far.

As of today (Friday 6th) we were still seven trains short of the number we need to operate the service as a result of the water damage with a further two units out of action because of a person being hit by a train earlier in the day, at Hackbridge. Because of this we have a number of services running with fewer carriages than normal which is leading to crowded trains, especially in the peak - but this is far fewer than before. I've counted only one heading north at the moment in the evening peak.

Details are that the water penetrated gear boxes, axle ends, wheel bearings and in some cases electrical components; one of the trains most seriously affected is one of our new Class 387s.

Engineers have been able to repair some trains relatively quickly but others have taken longer due to the severity and amount of damage caused as well as the availability of spare parts.

We have checked about a quarter of the Thameslink fleet, which was those deemed to have been most at risk from the floodwater, and we are now continuing to carry out checks to the rest of the fleet. Inevitably, the work carried out to date has delayed some of our regular maintenance work which has kept other trains out of service.

Our engineers will continue working as hard as possible to continue the repairs and redress the maintenance backlog as soon as possible.

You asked about us spot hiring more 319s. This could only be done when the cascade allowed it and I have been told that there are none available. Furthermore, we don't expect it will take much longer to repair the units.

Improvement plan

GTR have recently released updated us as follows:

As you know Network Rail, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and Southern are working together to improve performance on one of the most congested railways in the country.

Our passengers have not been getting the service they expect from us and for this we apologise.

More than 3,000 trains a day run on the railway linking London and the Sussex Coast and in recent years, as demand has grown, performance has declined. This also affects Thameslink services north of London.

The rebuilding of London Bridge as part of the Thameslink Programme, which will ultimately bring vitally needed extra capacity to the route, has added an additional strain with fewer routes into and out of the station. More than a million people use London Bridge every week, and keeping them moving whilst rebuilding the station has been a huge challenge.

We have already started to tackle the issues, including making some changes to the timetable to ease the pressure on the infrastructure at London Bridge.

We look forward to a rail summit on Wednesday with north Thameslink MPs, the rail minister Claire Perry, Network Rail and GTR.

And following a similar rail summit held today for south Thameslink and Southern MPs, we have published our joint improvement plan which sets out what we are doing across six key areas – Infrastructure, Trains, Timetable, Drivers, Operations and Customer Experience. The plan is available at <http://www.thameslinkrailway.com/download/8872.5/improving-performance-update-feb-15/>.

It is noticeable that many of the immediate improvements are more Southern Railway centric, rather than of direct benefit to Thameslink passengers. However, it is noticeable that we suffer from:

- Smaller delays north of St Pancras: The work on the Midland Mainline should benefit us in this area, including, I hope, work north of Bedford as this will increase the ability of East Midlands Trains to run on time through our area.
- Delays on the Brighton Mainline south of Gatwick: Work at Haywards Heath and Keymer Junction (this is for the line to Eastbourne). This should be of direct benefit, increasing the ability of trains to arrive from Brighton on time.
- Delays around East Croydon: Work in the London Bridge area, including at Sydenham should benefit us indirectly as it should allow Southern Railway services to run more reliably.

The other area that will be important is train maintenance - dealing with flood damage and catching up on the backlog of normal maintenance caused by a focus on flood damage.

We are currently arranging our annual meeting with GTR and will want to discuss progress at this. We are hopeful this will be before Easter.

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

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