



Dear Friend

I thought it worthwhile to share the briefing we have received from Thameslink that apologises for last week's service issues and provides a briefing on the train failure on Thursday.

I would like to offer my wholehearted apologies for the severe disruption on Thameslink services this week. I appreciate that this has been immensely frustrating to our customers on the back of the extended disruption last week after a power surge damaged signalling systems in the Luton area.

This week there have been further major incidents affecting Thameslink services. On Wednesday evening following a fatality near Elstree and Borehamwood, with services held for around 80 minutes while emergency services attended, and subsequent services delayed or cancelled.

Yesterday [...Thursday..] evening one of our trains came to a stand near Kentish Town at 1842. Our provisional findings are that there was a loss of overhead electric power which caused a 'tripping' in of the circuit breakers in the train involved. With the train unable to receive power, a rescue train was sent from Cricklewood. However, when that train was attached the same problem affected the rescue train. Our priority was the comfort and safety of our passengers, so the trains were decoupled in order for passengers from the original train to be evacuated on to the rescue train. This took place at around 90 minutes after the original incident began. After that, the stalled train was cleared once engineering assistance arrived.

Investigations are on-going with Network Rail, and we will update you further on this next week.

The location and timing exacerbated the seriousness of the incident, with all lines blocked for its duration. The complexity of the situation made it difficult to give clear information to customers about how long the disruption would last. Whilst we have had some positive customer feedback about communication from the drivers involved, we are reviewing how we could have done better in terms of the flow of information to customers during a challenging and uncertain situation.

Ticket acceptance was put in place on alternative routes including London Midland (routes via Watford and Bletchley) and Great Northern (route via Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage). With replacement buses unavailable at short notice passengers were advised to use local buses or taxis to complete their journeys home. We are aware that some communications had not reached some bus drivers regarding ticket acceptance, however claims will be accepted along with Delay Repay claims.

Once again I extend my apologies to all those affected this week and last. My team and I are determined to learn any lessons for our handling of major incidents and a great deal of work is already underway.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Cheshire

Passenger Services Director for Thameslink & Great Northern

As regards "loss of overhead electric power which caused a 'tripping' in of the circuit breakers", I am curious as to why the unit concerned could not (almost) immediately recover from this and will endeavour to find out more.

Week before last – Luton Incident

Further to my update of 10 November, I have had it confirmed that Network Rail have accepted the fault was theirs and that the freight train that was in the area immediately beforehand was not at fault.

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

21 November 2016