



# Travel Topics

Issue 122

Autumn 2015

The watchdog for all Rail Travellers from  
Tonbridge, Paddock Wood and Hildenborough  
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## Christmas train services

Improvement works at London Bridge take a major step forward at the end of the year with the diversion of Charing Cross services to the line across the new bridge already in place. As a result no trains will be able to access London Bridge between Christmas Eve and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January. There will be a revised timetable with all London trains starting or terminating at Victoria and Blackfriars, and tickets will be accepted on Transport for London services.

These major engineering works start at 20:00 on **Christmas Eve, 24 December** and from this time no trains will be available at Charing Cross, Cannon Street, London Bridge and Waterloo East. The last train departure from Charing Cross is 19:45 (to Hastings) and from Cannon Street 19:50 (to Orpington). There are no trains on Christmas Day or (sadly once again) Boxing Day. Services resume on **Sunday 27 December** with London services running to and from Victoria and Blackfriars only.

Between **Monday 28 December and Thursday 31 December** a Saturday service will be run, but there will be **no** Southeastern trains to or from Charing Cross, Cannon Street, London Bridge and Waterloo East. A reduced service will be run with departures from Tonbridge as follows: xx:05 and xx.35 to Blackfriars (slow, stopping at all

stations via Elmstead Woods and Lewisham); xx:11 and xx.41 to Blackfriars (semi-fast, calling at Sevenoaks and Orpington only); xx:17 and xx.47 to Victoria (semi-fast, calling at Sevenoaks, Orpington and Bromley South only).

**On New Year's Eve** there will be no Southeastern trains from Blackfriars from 11pm. After this time London services will only be going to and from Victoria, where special late night/early morning trains will operate. The last train departures are 02:31 to Tonbridge and Paddock Wood and 02:42 to Orpington. Revellers bound for Hildenborough must leave the party early to catch the 02:27.

Between **Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January and Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January** trains continue to operate to and from Victoria and Blackfriars only. Normal service will resume on **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January**. If travelling over the Christmas and New Year period please check before you travel. You can do this by checking SET's live travel information.

Incidentally, late-night revellers may wish to note that from December 13<sup>th</sup> the 2345 train from Charing Cross is retimed to leave at 2356, and both it and the 0015 train will cease to call at Cannon Street and London Bridge, and will instead run direct from Waterloo East. **LS**

## Chairman's report

Many members will have suffered some disruption to their journeys as a result of the revised timetable brought in during the London Bridge works. However, we consider the service provided has in general run smoothly, largely, it has to be said, due to the reduced number of London Bridge stops, and the chaos that was forecast has not so far occurred. We are still dissatisfied with some aspects of the timetable, particularly from Hildenborough, and of the Underground ticket options offered. SET made a good impression by publishing loading figures suggesting which trains

were heavily loaded; we pressed for Cannon Street trains to be of maximum length. David Statham, SET's new managing Director, recently invited local commuters to travel with him and point out the problems they faced. Our representative John Morton took up the offer and passed him the Committee's 'Issues Log' of outstanding local problems which Mr. Statham agreed to take away with him. These include signage at Paddock Wood, queuing at Tonbridge, the siting of automatic ticket machines, and non-functioning toilets on trains. **KP**

## Annual General Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> May

A disappointingly thin audience heard Ben Ward from SET give a brief resume of the changes that had been introduced following the Direct Award in June 2014: 100 extra front line staff, a loop main line service via the Kent coast, and an extra fast train to and from Hastings. Twitter coverage had been expanded and 20 extra information screens had been installed, with all service data now coming from a single source. In addition, performance data was now being presented on a line-by-line basis. Class 375 coaches are to receive a repaint, but with some first class seats being down-graded to increase second class capacity. The company was still looking at aspects of smart ticketing and at the London Bridge timetable due to start in August 2016. Meanwhile punctuality had improved from 86.8% to 89.4%. Angus McConchie of Network Rail gave a brief presentation of his work, which formed part of the long-term Rail Utilisation Strategy.

Recent growth averaging 7% p.a. had serious implications for future passenger loadings. Given the maximum usage of the existing lines the only viable way of increasing capacity was to find a way of reducing headways safely, a term known as the digital railway. As a way of securing a more reliable service in the longer term he suggested that converting to overhead electrification might be the only way ahead. During questions members queried the use of the alarm buttons in the lifts and the misleading platform indication notice at Paddock Wood, and the possibility of relocating the ATM at Hildenborough. Chairman Kathy Pratt paid tribute to Lionel Shields' 12 years' work as secretary, and welcomed John Morton as his replacement in the post. Lionel will continue to serve as treasurer for the group. The meeting also approved the Committee's proposal to abandon the insurance cover hitherto provided for members as it had become uneconomic to finance. **LS**

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## Delay Repay Compensation

For some years now Southeastern passengers have been entitled to claim compensation under the Delay Repay scheme. This means that if you are delayed for 30 minutes or more you are entitled to compensation of 50% of the fare paid for that leg of the journey, or 100% for delays of 60 minutes or more. If you bought a day single or return you are now entitled to receive a straightforward refund of the fare paid, but for season ticket holders things are rather more complicated. This is because it is necessary to divide the price of the season ticket by a nominal overall number of journeys expected to be made over the period for which season ticket is valid.

Why should this be a cause of concern? Well, it turns out that the number of journeys used for this calculation is not consistent between train companies. Southern reckons on an annual season ticket holder making 520 journeys per year, whereas Southeastern presumes 546 journeys. This means that an annual season ticket holder from Tonbridge will receive around 5% less compensation than a passenger from Edenbridge per £1 paid for their ticket.

We believe that the rate of 546 journeys used by the Southeastern is unfair because it is highly unlikely that anyone would make 546 journeys in a year. After all, this would involve travelling to work every single Monday to Friday, including bank holidays, Christmas Day and Boxing Day

(when no trains are running!), as well as making 13 return trips at weekends. Furthermore, the figure of 546 journeys is higher than any other train operator in the UK. National passenger watchdog Transport Focus reports that most operators use a figure of 520 journeys per year and is calling for 464 journeys to be used as the industry standard.

Rail minister Claire Perry has argued that it is fair for compensation to be based on a higher number of journeys than the number actually likely to be made because annual season tickets are already sold at a reduced rate, giving entitlement to 52 weeks' travel for the price of only 40 weekly season tickets. Whatever the merits of this argument, she appeared to be under the impression that Southeastern uses the standard figure of 520 journeys per year, and certainly did not explain why it is allowed to use the inflated figure of 546 journeys. We therefore wrote to our local MP Tom Tugendhat, and he has agreed to ask the Secretary of State what justification there is for Southeastern season ticket holders being treated less favourably in this way. Claire Perry has since replied to acknowledge that the formula used by Southeastern is less generous than that used by other train companies, and to say that her officials are looking to making improvements in this area. The commitment she makes is rather vague, so we will continue to press for action. **JM**

## Fares from Ticket Machines

If you are a London season ticket holder you will know that your ticket allows you to travel to or from Bromley South. However, if you are an occasional traveller and go to a ticket machine at Tonbridge station and select the “Any Permitted Route” from the top of the list of available routes you’ll be asked to pay £35.80 off-peak return. In fact this allows you to travel in the wrong direction to Ashford, take a High Speed (HS1) train to St Pancras and then double-back to Bromley South via Thameslink. We believe that most passengers would prefer to pay £10.70 for the 50-minute journey via Sevenoaks, but you’ll only get that choice if you select the somewhat obscure option ‘Not Valid on HS1’. Of course, staff at the ticket office would never think to offer the High Speed fare, so it is the unwary ticket machine user who is caught out. As regular readers of ‘Travel Topics’ will know, we’ve been campaigning for some time to stop these overpriced fares being charged by

ticket machines. The simplest thing would undoubtedly be to remove the High Speed fares for journeys where the High Speed route would never be a sensible option. However, common sense does not always apply in the railway industry. Instead, Southeastern has agreed in principle to alter the ‘Any Permitted’ fare to ‘Plus High Speed’. This will at least make it clear that the High Speed fare is an add-on product rather than the standard route, and, more importantly, the correct ‘Not Valid on HS1’ route will appear at the top of the list of options shown on the screen. SET says that it must consult with various rail industry bodies before the change can be implemented, but we have managed to secure the personal support of Anthony Smith, the Chief Executive of Transport Focus. This should help to ensure that progress is made soon, and we will certainly hold SET to account if it is not. **JM**

## Advance fares

For occasional travellers who can plan their journeys in advance, cheaper fares can now be purchased online and from local stations. The minimum fare from Tonbridge to London is currently £6 one way, available for all trains after the 1012 departure except for some reason the 1020. You have to specify the train you will be catching. A return can be purchased as two £6 singles, ie £12 in total, but cannot be used on trains

leaving London between 1600 and 1859, so when compared to an Off-peak Return of £13.50, is probably of little value given the disadvantage of being tied to travelling on specific trains. However, the £6 fare could be worth considering for a single journey at a specific time, since the Offpeak Single costs £13.40, so you would save £7.40 by buying an Advance fare. **JM**

## 2016 timetable

From August next year the work at London Bridge transfers to the Cannon Street side, and trains into and out of the station will be unable to stop at London Bridge. In this case disruption will be minimal since this only applies to peak services, and all Charing Cross services will call at London Bridge. Nevertheless we did find that SET’s

original proposals had some holes, in particular a gap in services from Hildenborough to London between 0644 and 0822. Following our objections SET offered to stop the 0520 Ramsgate to Cannon Street giving a stop at 0721. There will also be additional trains from Tonbridge to Cannon Street at 0545 and 0827. **LS**

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## Tonbridge Line Commuters – Your Committee

the following were elected at this year’s AGM:

**Chairman:** Kathy Pratt  
96 Leigh Road, Hildenborough  
TN11 9AG Tel. 01732 838620

**Vice-Chairman:** John Reynolds  
14 Cumberland Court, Tonbridge  
TN10 3AL Tel. 01732 355871

**Hon. Secretary:** John Morton  
39 Rose Street, Tonbridge  
TN9 2BN Tel: 01732 359308

**Hon. Treasurer:** Lionel Shields  
13 Streamside, Tonbridge  
TN10 3PU Tel. 01732 355919

**Membership Secretary:**  
Steve Terry:  
6 Poppy Meadow, Paddock Wood  
TN12 6BN Tel: 01892 833880  
Terry Hines  
89 Hadlow Road, Tonbridge  
TN9 1QD Tel. 01732 351383

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## Boris strikes again

Members may remember that a few years ago Transport for London (TfL) sought approval to take over responsibility for Southeastern's suburban services to and from Sevenoaks. The proponents claim that TfL services are generally more reliable and offer more fare options. While there was some local support for the principle, including from our colleagues in SRTA, we were dubious for a number of reasons. First, TfL have repeatedly shown a desire to standardise services to all major stations, and there was a fear that this would involve the stopping of many long-distance trains at Orpington in order to improve the peak

service there. More importantly for us there was little to demonstrate how in the event of a major disruption two separate operating regimes would manage the service on a single network. Which trains would get priority treatment, and who manage information flows to passengers? At the time KCC supported our view and the proposal was dropped. However, the idea has now been resurrected, albeit with the addition of several major caveats to reassure people like us about the status of our trains. Nevertheless we remain sceptical, and await more details of the proposals.

LS

## Redhill Line news

At long last, from December this year most of the through London trains via Redhill will serve Victoria instead of London Bridge and will also call at Clapham Junction, providing greater access to South-West London and the main lines to Reading, Portsmouth, and many other routes.

Off-peak trains will normally leave Tonbridge at 19 minutes past the hour and return from Victoria at 39 minutes past. There are morning peak departures to Victoria at 0729, 0816 and 0839, together with the 0759 departure which will continue to serve London Bridge. However, the return evening peak schedules leave much to be desired, there being a gap at Victoria between

1632 and the last departure at 1819, though there are additional connections available by changing at Redhill. Those who find this route more convenient may be interested to know that an annual season ticket to London via Redhill costs only £3,136, against a figure of £3,980 for a ticket available on all routes, even though the distance is greater. However, there are of course fewer trains. On balance, Victoria seems preferable to the old destination of London Bridge, which can be reached more quickly by the direct route via Sevenoaks. We will nonetheless be pressing for a more satisfactory evening peak service as soon as possible.

JR

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