**Hogrider 153 (December 2016 – February 2017)**

This newsletter contains evidence-based reports, research, analysis and discussion from the **South Hampshire Rail Users’ Group (SHRUG)**, founded in 1993.

It complements our widely-researched History of South West Trains under Stagecoach [see 'Behind the PR Gloss' on www.shrug.info. **\***Summary on next page of this newsletter].

**In this issue:**

**Franchising dubbed ‘not fit for purpose’ again.**

**Shameless behaviour by Stagecoach and the Virgin -Stagecoach Alliance illustrates why it’s not fit:**

* **South West Trains hits ‘just about managing’ families, advertising savings with new weekend super off-peak fares; the ‘savings’ arise from avoiding the huge increases introduced for travel at more popular times of day when super off-peak fares withdrawn;**
* **Virgin Trains West Coast (49% Stagecoach-owned) counters government’s purported commitment to better-value rail travel, using ‘Gestapo’ tactics against passenger legally avoiding rip-off fare.**

**Plus: news round-up, including the daily articulation of passenger despair on SWT.**

**\*** The history records, through the voices and observations of many, including Ministers and other Members of Parliament, how Stagecoach, with its founders Brian Souter and Ann Gloag owning 149 million of the shares and the former confessing to ethical limitations, quickly undermined performance and expunged quality through stripping assets; abruptly dismissed critics in terms which avoided the truth; had a second franchise reduced from 20 years to three through poor performance; made huge profits at the expense of taxpayers, and delayed investment in capacity for a decade while it attempted to tackle the mess it had created; and then gained a third franchise by offering an unrealistic premium; reduced or removed every remaining vestige of quality; and further boosted profits by wrong-footing and intimidating honest members of the public at every opportunity.

In recent times Stagecoach has profited from a challenge against government over its SWT contract, and a challenge by its partner Virgin over the West Coast franchise, and its founders’ fortune has soared to more than £1 billion. However, it has lost the opportunity of a two-year extension of the third SWT franchise to 2019 through refusing to agree to a few customer service improvements, despite having long failed to operate the committed timetable with much reliability, and recently failed in a deliberate attempt to evade £11 million in tax liability. It has latterly been considering action over future competition on the East Coast franchise where, as on Stagecoach’s SWT, severe restrictions on the availability of cheap tickets have been introduced, illustrating how franchising to ruthless operators won’t work for passengers without competition.

**House of Commons’ Transport Committee finds the franchising system ‘no longer fit for purpose’**

**Was it ever?**

The Committee’s 2006 report found that ‘The system of passenger rail franchising is a complex, fragmented and costly muddle which is unlikely to provide the innovation and investment needed for the passenger railways of the future’.

The preceding report of 2002 found that ‘The fragmentation brought about by privatisation contributed to the chaos and delay that paralysed the industry’.

***[Our Group’s substantial memoranda (Appendix PRF 12 to the 2002 report, and Appendix 1 to the 2006 report) outlined the shameless conduct of Stagecoach’s South West Trains franchise, which has helped sour public perceptions of rail franchising.]***

**New rail franchising report**

In its report, the Transport Committee recommends the Department should commission an independent review of its franchising functions, including the possibility of transferring enforcement powers to the ORR (Office of Rail and Road).

While MPs are encouraged by progress made since 2012, the core policy objectives of franchising are not being met. The current model fails to deliver for passengers, to drive industry efficiencies, promote competition, reduce the taxpayer subsidy or transfer financial risk to the private sector.

The report examines why and concludes that without changes to the current model, it is difficult to see how franchising is sustainable in the long term.

**Comments from Chair of the Committee, Louise Ellman MP**:

"While franchising enabled passenger growth and service improvements when it was first rolled out, passenger satisfaction with the railways is falling. Its core objectives are no longer being met, potential benefits are being lost and the passenger is suffering through higher fares and continued underperformance.

Our report explores why the current model is no longer fit for purpose. But this will not be solved overnight. There is no one-size-fits all approach and the Government should work with other agencies to introduce steady, strategic reform to secure improvement.

The Department should take steps to restructure franchises and the bidding process. Open access operators, already operating successfully, could provide opportunities for new entrants to the franchise market. Longer term franchises should be considered, but only where the existing operator has delivered on performance. Streamlining operational alignment between Network Rail and train operating companies will address a fundamental flaw of the current system. These are improvements that must be made if franchising is to deliver for the passenger over the longer term."

**Time for Stagecoach to be stripped of the South West Trains franchise if the Government really wants a better deal for passengers. The tax-evading company is sneakily conning passengers with huge fare increases.**

**“We are very pleased that the government and others are committed to working with the train companies to explore how the complicated fares set-up created over decades can be simplified so that we can deliver customers an even better deal.” – Rail Minister Paul Maynard, 13.12.2016.**

When the 2007 SWT franchise was awarded, DfT’s press release stated: “It is expected that many regulated season tickets will be discounted for passengers travelling outside the height of peak times”. Great expectation; nil delivery. The franchise started with much dearer fares for off-peak travel and huge increases in station car parking charges, and is ending with these dearer fares being extended to weekends.

SWT Managing Director Christian Roth confirmed in a letter to Anne Milton, the MP for Guildford that: “fares are changing on the 4th September 2016 to introduce a restriction on Super Off Peak tickets at the weekend. Super Off Peak tickets will no longer be valid all day.”

This outbreak of truth clearly breached ethically-limited Stagecoach’s normal practices. The increase didn’t go ahead but was suspended until January 2017, when it could more easily be misrepresented within announcements of annual fare increases.

The public presentation of the increases relied on the argument that the new (time-limited) fares were money-saving. This was extraordinarily devious, however. The savings arose because the higher off-peak fares would in future apply for much of the day.

**[SHRUG’s Co-ordinator exposed the scam in a letter published in the Southern Daily Echo on 20.12.2016. This also appeared on the websites of both the Echo and the Basingstoke Gazette.]**

“**Money-saving tickets a con**

“South West Trains’ latest publicity sounds like excellent news: “Get your weekend mojo back, with our new weekend Super Off-Peak fares. We’ve launched these fares across our network so you’ll save money whatever your journey.”

The principal ‘new’ element of these weekend tickets is that, unlike the current Super Off-Peak tickets, they will not be valid all day. Passengers using trains arriving in London between 09.31 and 11.59, or departing between 16.09 and 18.40 will need to buy the dearer Off-Peak tickets. For non-London journeys, Super Off-Peak tickets will no longer be available on trains departing between 04.30 and 10.59.

So passengers will make significant savings only if they avoid the dearer fares which will apply for much of the day. Many will face huge fare increases compared with pre-January rates. For example, Southampton-Waterloo day return journey up 16%; Portsmouth-Waterloo up 20%.

Weekend engineering works involving slower journeys and bus replacements will make these dearer tickets even worse value for money. However, the increased revenue should help Stagecoach offer a large premium to retain the SWT franchise, so that they can devise more money saving offers.”

**Another reader’s letter, published in the Southern Daily Echo on 25.1.2017**

‘**A fare price for Sunday rail travel?**

I wonder how many people are aware that as from January 2, Sundays are classified the same as working week days and that one has to pay more if one needs to travel by train during peak periods.

I was shocked to discover on a recent Sunday when I needed a day return travel card to Waterloo with the underground, using a senior citizen’s railcard the price had gone up to £30.30, whereas on December 9 it was only £25.15.

I really think this is unnecessary as the trains are not crowded on Sundays. I can understand that during the week the rail company tries to discourage people travelling at peak times because the regular commuters do not want to end up standing on a crowded train but this is not the case on a Sunday.

What can we do about this? Ann Gildersleve, Winchester.’

**Letter to MP [Source: railforums.co.uk]**

Just sent letter to my MP:

Quote:

I am writing to you with regards to SouthWest Trains; as of January 2017, they have implemented 27% fare increases on weekend fares.

Prior to 2008, there were two fare classes on trains to London - off-peak, and anytime. In 2008, a new class of fare was added, 'super off-peak', priced the same as the old off-peak fare, and the price of off-peak was increased by 25%.

The super-off-peak could be used any time on weekends, and after 12 noon on weekdays and returning outside the evening rush hour.

As of January 2017, South West Trains have removed existing super-off-peak tickets from sale on weekends, and have added a new 'weekend super-off-peak ticket'. This is restricted on trains arriving into London between 09:30 and noon, and leaving from London between 4pm and 6:30pm. This applies even on Sundays and on days when the trains are running at half speed due to maintenance work.

The morning restrictions make it more difficult to attend lunchtime restaurant reservations in London, and make a weekend day out a more stressful experience, as you must hurry to catch the 08:59 train, or face 25% higher fares until 11:29. Even more egregiously, passengers are charged extra for slower trains on days with maintenance works - on the 28th of January, for example, the last morning super-off-peak train is at 08:31 as journey times on that weekend are extended by 32 minutes, meaning that train is scheduled into Waterloo at 09:29, and subsequent trains are therefore no longer 'super-off-peak'.

The evening restrictions also create unnecessary confusion, as even if the traveller is travelling outside the morning restricted hours, they may not know what time they want to return, and facing a 2.5 hour blackout period, may end up buying an unneeded 'off-peak' ticket, which costs 27% more.

This is particularly problematic in view of the fact that although the National Rail Conditions of Travel allow a passenger to pay (including on board the train) the difference between the price of a super off-peak and off-peak ticket when travelling outside of the super-off-peak hours, in practice the guards and barriers at Waterloo will not permit a passenger to board a train with such a ticket, and will not advise passengers of the ability to purchase an excess.
The new weekend super-off-peak rules are unique to South West Trains, and the fares applicable from Woking are in any case already the most expensive in the London area:

Woking - London off-peak £17.50 return (£13.80 highly restricted super-off-peak) (24.66 miles) - 71p/mile. Harlow Mill - London (Greater Anglia) £17.10 (£13.40 super off-peak, which is unrestricted at weekends) (24.52 miles) - 70p/mile. Hemel Hempstead - London (London Midland) £13.90 return (24.53 miles) - 57p/mile.
Knebworth - London (Thameslink) £13.50 (£9.10 weekend) return (25.06 miles) - 54p/mile. Hildenborough - London (Southeastern) £14.10 return (26.77 miles) - 53p/mile. East Tilbury - London (c2c) £13.10 (£10.10 weekends) (25.11 miles) - 52p/mile. Horley - London (Southern) £13.40 return (25.63 miles) - 52p/mile.
Furze Platt- London (First Great Western) £11.80 return (25.48 miles) - 46p/mile
Great Missenden - London (Chiltern) £11.50 return (28.74 miles) - 40p/mile.

Thus as you can see, at 71p/mile, even prior to the new weekend restrictions, off-peak fares from Woking were already more expensive than any other station located a similar distance from London.

Furthermore, the only similarly expensive off-peak fare, from Harlow Mill, has a super-off-peak ticket which can be used at any time on weekends. That means, that for unrestricted weekend travel, travel from Woking is 25% more expensive than the next most-expensive station (Hemel Hempstead), and double that of the cheapest (Knebworth).

I believe it is unacceptable that Woking residents thus suffer both the highest weekday off-peak and highest weekend fares in the South East, and would appreciate your assistance in addressing this issue, and in particular effecting a return to an unrestricted weekend super-off-peak, or at the utmost minimum, a super-off-peak ticket that is valid all day Sunday, as well as a suspension of restrictions on weekend days with maintenance works.

The new rules are designed to confuse, and the comparable fares and fare history show that the fair 'off-peak' fare is actually the 'super-off-peak' - the super-off-peak fare was introduced as a device not to encourage travel at quieter times, but to increase the cost of travel even outside of the rush hour. Therefore, given that 'super-off-peak' fares have been increased in line with the old 'off-peak' fare, the 'off-peak' fare should be cut to the price of the 'super-off-peak', and super-off-peak either scrapped, or made cheaper.

**SWT accused of lying at ‘Tweet the Manager’ session, but the deceptions continue**

The issue was also raised by angry passengers at SWT’s ‘Tweet the Manager’ session on 23.12.2016. SWT stuck to the evasive and idiotic line that “We are introducing a slightly revised fare structure at weekends”. Unsurprisingly, this was branded as ‘lying’, and the session was abruptly closed.

A tweet on 17.1.2017 enquired: “Is it true SWT have now put in a peak hour on the weekend?? Charging more to travel to Waterloo on weekends??” Response: “From 02.01.17 Super off peak was introduced at weekends”. It wasn’t introduced but restricted, of course.

The cynical deceptions just continue, for example in the Southern Daily Echo of 2.2.2017, where an advert covering almost half a page offers ‘15% off selected fares with our new Super Off-Peak weekend tickets’. ‘15% off’, for passengers day-tripping from Southampton to Waterloo at a reasonable time, means ‘16% on’.

**Sheer contempt for passengers: The Times shames Virgin-Stagecoach West Coast with report of staff behaving like Gestapo**

From The Times, 4.2.2017:

‘**Virgin Trains staff like Gestapo, says thrifty traveller**

A business man accused one of Britain’s biggest rail companies of acting like the Gestapo after being threatened with arrest for using a fare loophole to save more than £250.

Steve Morrissey, 32, a company director, was challenged by a conductor on a Virgin Trains service and accused of fraud after using a legitimate tactic to cut the price of a journey to London.

He was held for 40 minutes by British Transport Police while CCTV footage was checked, proving he had not cheated the fares system. The row centres on a loophole under which passengers are charged more to travel to London from Preston compared with nearby Lancaster, even though Preston is 25 miles closer to the capital.

Virgin Trains classes passengers from Preston and stations to the south as “commuters” and forces them to buy more expensive tickets to manage demand. Those from Lancaster and stations further north are considered “leisure” travellers and pay less.

The system has been attacked by a local MP who has accused Virgin of ripping off passengers from Preston, but the company stands by its fares.

This week, Mr Morrissey, from Bispham, near Blackpool, booked a train to London for a business meeting but found it was cheaper to travel from Lancaster, with a ticket costing £93. He boarded the 7.38am service on Tuesday but was challenged at Preston, the next stop, by the conductor who accused him of joining the train at the later station and attempting to dodge a higher fare. He was ordered to buy another ticket – a £350 return – or be fined and detained at Euston.

After refusing, he was stopped by staff members and transport police officers in London and held for 40 minutes until the company checked CCTV images that proved he boarded at Lancaster. He missed his meeting.

He said: “It was not a pleasant experience. It looked like I’m a criminal. I’ve never been as embarrassed in my life.” He added: “It feels like some sort of Gestapo of Virgin Trains at Lancaster.”

Virgin Trains sets lower fares on long-distance peak-time trains into London from stations with fewer commuters or business travellers. It insists this is done to manage the flow of passengers from busier stations. The cut-off point is at Preston, so anyone travelling from north of the city pays less if entering London at peak times.

Mark Menzies, Tory MP for Fylde, Lancashire, said: “This is beyond the pale for commuters. It’s about milking rail users. They’re ripping people off. ---”

**Ironically, given the excesses of Stagecoach and Virgin-Stagecoach, the Rail Delivery Group has just announced a trial scheme to simplify fares following criticisms by ORR**

Rail ticket machines cause so much confusion that one-fifth of passengers who use them buy the wrong ticket, according to the rail regulator.

While 7% of people underpay and could be fined, 13% are paying too much.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) wants train companies to refund passengers who accidently buy tickets which are too expensive for their journey. It said the 16 million fares on offer were "baffling" for passengers.

The ORR employed mystery shoppers to buy rail tickets from machines.

* Nearly two-thirds (65%) could not see any information on the machines about the type of tickets which could or could not be bought
* More than half (57%) said the machines did not explain the times when peak and off-peak tickets were valid
* And nearly one-third (32%) said there was no information on the machines about ticket restrictions.

"Despite investment in new technology and the removal of jargon from ticket machines, our new research shows passengers may be paying more for their journey than necessary," said John Larkinson, ORR director of railway markets and economics.

"We are calling on train companies to commit to refund anyone who finds that they could have bought a cheaper ticket for the same journey," he added.

Rail operators C2C and Scotrail already have a price guarantee in place for when passengers overpay.

Radical changes to rail fares that would guarantee customers simpler fares and the best possible deal every time they travel are set to be trialled by train companies.

* **Trials could lead to most radical overhaul of fares system for more than 30 years**
* **Best value through fares to remove need for ‘split ticketing’**
* **Action plan for more user-friendly ticket machines**
* **Easy process to get the right ticket online or at stations**

Trials are due to start in May this year on selected routes of new pricing, simpler routes to give customers clearer choices, and the removal of unnecessary and unwanted fares from the system.

The trials to simplify the complex rail fares system will mean:

* **A route will be overhauled** to reflect what is actually on offer, ending the existing situation where changes to train services in many cases only allow fares to be added to the system rather than older, less relevant routes which customers do not use being removed from the fares system to make it clearer;
* **A best value end-to-end ‘through fare’** will be offered for test journeys where customers change trains, by offering one price combining the cheapest fare for each leg of the journey. Current rules require operators to set and maintain a through price even where there are cheaper deals;
* **Easier journey planning** by showing customers the best price in each direction on selected routes, allowing customers to mix and match the best fare – like airline bookings.

This requires changes to regulated return fares dating back to the 1980s that can’t be sold easily online, giving customers much more clarity and simplicity.

A ten-point plan and design guidelines for ticket machines include getting rid of jargon, informing customers when a machine will start to sell cheaper off-peak tickets and making clear what types of tickets machines do and do not sell. All the improvements to ticket machines will be in place by the end of this year, several by the summer.

Responding to the ORR study a spokesman for RDG said: "Complex, decades-old government rail fare regulations make it more difficult for train companies to offer the right, simple options on ticket machines.

"Simplifying the number and types of fares in the system will let train companies provide customers with clear information and help them to make better informed choices," they added.

**Evasive SWT advertising campaign sidesteps poor value for money**

With re-franchising in progress, SWT is investing in full page advertisements in local newspapers. These cover astrology, riddles, and film quizzes, with just a link to southwesttrains.co.uk/Better Journeys at the bottom of the page. The link takes readers to a rose-tinted account of all SWT is purportedly doing to improve passengers’ journey experiences.

Pity that Transport Focus’ latest survey finds that just 39% of SWT passengers are satisfied with the value for money of their ticket price, and 34% positively dissatisfied. Even severely disrupted Southern is right behind with 38% satisfaction. These data precede SWT’s huge weekend fare increases. First’s Great Western Railway scores 51% satisfaction for value for money. Given that DfT always stresses that franchising is intended to offer value for money, it’s clear that First deserves to win the next SWT franchise, especially as Stagecoach’s greed lost them an extension of the current franchise.

**Meeting with Alliance Rail**

Members of our Group had a very positive meeting with Ian Yeowart of Alliance Rail and Tony Lodge of the Centre for Policy Studies on 6.12.2016. This focused on plans to run an Open Access service with decent rolling stock and affordable fares between Southampton Central and Waterloo. We strongly support these proposals. Possibilities for the Southampton-Hythe line were also discussed.

The past 15 months have been a busy time for us, with substantial responses submitted to Network Rail’s consultation on the Wessex Area, and to DfT’s consultation on the forthcoming South Western franchise, along with meetings with representatives of Arriva and First Group.

Thanks to everyone who gave of their time, and also to Guildford’s very active rail users for sharing information and research with us.

**SWT’s ‘right time railway’ promise for the current franchise is a continuing failure (Missed targets in bold)**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Charter Standard | Performance 4 weeks to 10.12.2016 / 7.1.2017 / 4.2.2017 | Average performance 52 weeks to 10.12.2016 / 7.1.2017 / 4.2.2017 | Season Ticket discount threshold |
| % of main line peak trains within 5 minutes of schedule  | 89.0 | **73.4** / **83.6** / **81.4** | **86.7** / **86.6** / **86.6** | 86.5 |
| % of main line peak trains run | 99.0 | 99.5 / 99.5 / 99.7 | 99.4 / 99.4 / 99.4 | 98.0 |
| % of suburban peak trains within 5 minutes of schedule | 92.0 | **79.2** / **84.7** / **83.7** | **89.9** / **89.8** / **89.7** | 89.5 |
| % of suburban peak trains run | 99.0 | **98.4** / 99.7 / **98.7** | 99.1 / 99.1 / 99.1 | 98.0  |

**Future of South Western suburban services**

Contrary to expectations, no more London suburban services are to be transferred to Transport for London control. TfL claimed that for every pound invested in devolution, there would be £4.30 in benefits, including more reliable services, better customer service, and improved access for disabled people. However, the current Secretary of State had already opposed such a move as long ago as 2013 to keep services “out of the clutches of any future Labour Mayor”.

Letter in the Metro of 4.1.2017: “I live in New Malden. At peak times it takes me 45 to 55 minutes to get to London, instead of the 25 minutes advertised. After 8am there is not a day when trains are on time.”

**‘Electric Spine’ to Southampton delayed and partially axed**

Plans for overhead electrification through the Midlands to Southampton container port is now uncertain. This is evident from the Government’s refusal to confirm a new target date for prior electrification of the Midland main line north of Bedford, and abandonment of plans to electrify the Oxford-Cambridge route (the Electric Spine was planned to include the latter route as far as Bletchley).

The changed plans are in the wake of serious delays to the Great Western electrification scheme. However, it is difficult to avoid the implication that they may be linked to Brexit. Nobody knows how much it may cost to underpin the economy to avoid the consequences of withdrawal as outlined in the Government’s pre-referendum booklet. As no government can afford to collapse the economy, expenditure savings and deferrals are likely to become increasingly common in all spheres of activity.

**Plans to bring track and train under the control of single teams despite failure of the SWT/Network Rail ‘Deep Alliance’**

The Secretary of State wants to integrate track and trains, despite the ‘Deep Alliance’ between Network Rail and South West Trains having failed.

Excerpt from a relevant article on SWT's Passengers Panel website, dated summer 2013 and written in the familiar style of the Panel’s former Chairman, Sir Alan Greengross:

"The danger is the temptation by the different parties involved in running the system to, if not pass, then at least share the blame between all the others. SW Trains, Network Rail and Government can all individually suggest they’d love to help solve an issue but unfortunately it’s impossible without the other two changing how they work, which anyway would not be doable under the current franchise agreement."

**South West Trains: fantasy and reality**

**From SWT’s ‘social responsibility’ statement**:

With over 200 stations on our network, and 16,000 trains in operation every day, South West Trains is right at the heart of the community. We believe that our responsibilities extend to more than providing people with vital transport links and helping to boost local economies in the South West. We are part of the Stagecoach Group, which means that we take our wider responsibilities of growth in economy and sustainability very seriously. We are always looking for ways to improve the delivery of our service to our passengers, whilst being a great partner to work with, and making an increasingly positive impact on society and the environment.

Find more information about our corporate strategy and what we stand for as a business below. Or follow the links to find out more about our policies in any of the following categories.

**Reality check**:

As the Daily Telegraph commented over 11 years ago: “SWT has struck on one of the great philosophical truths of all time: the lower the standards that you set yourself, the easier they are to meet”. For example, SWT’s new website has conveniently hidden details of closed ticket offices and broken ticket machines under an ‘All live travel updates’ link.

**Some station problems during the period covered by this newsletter, in many cases repetitive**:

**SWT ticket offices advertised as closed during opening hours**:

Addlestone, Aldershot, Andover, Ascot, Bagshot, Basingstoke, Bournemouth, Bracknell, Branksome, Brentford, Brockenhurst, Brookwood, Byfleet & New Haw, Camberley, Chertsey, Chiswick, Claygate, Datchet, Dorchester South, Eastleigh, Earley, Egham, Esher, Ewell West, Farnborough, Farncombe, Farnham, Fleet, Fulwell, Godalming, Hampton Wick, Hamworthy, Haslemere, Havant, Hedge End, Hersham, Hinchley Wood, Hook, Honiton, Hounslow, Kingston, Liphook, Lymington Town, Malden Manor, Milford, Mortlake, New Milton, Norbiton, North Sheen, Petersfield, Pokesdown, Portsmouth Harbour, Putney, St Margaret’s, Shepperton, Southampton Airport Parkway, Southampton Central, Staines, Sunningdale, Sway, Tisbury, Totton, Twickenham, Upper Halliford, Virginia Water, Walton-on-Thames, Wandsworth Town, Wareham, West Byfleet, Weybridge, Weymouth, Whitchurch, Whitton, Winchester, Windsor & Eton Riverside, Woking, Wool, Yeovil Junction.

**Ticket machines advertised as failed (closed ticket offices are frequently followed by out-of-use ticket machines, in a spiralling cycle of failure - staff who aren’t available to sell tickets also aren’t available to tend ticket machines)**:

Addlestone, Ascot, Bentley, Botley, Bracknell, Brookwood, Bursledon, Byfleet & New Haw, Camberley, Chertsey, Chessington South, Clapham Junction, Earley, Egham, Esher, Ewell West, Fratton, Godalming, Grateley, Guildford, Hamworthy, Hersham, Hinchley Wood, Honiton, Hook, Horsley, Kempton Park, Kew Bridge, Lymington Pier, Parkstone, Petersfield, Pinhoe, Pokesdown, Portchester, Portsmouth & Southsea, Shawford, Shepperton, Staines, Sunnymeads, Tisbury, Totton, Upwey, Virginia Water, Walton-on-Thames, Wanborough, Wareham, West Byfleet, Woking, Wraysbury, Yeovil Junction.

**Disabled people beware: lifts advertised as out of use at various times, in addition to periods when stations left unstaffed**:

Out-of-use station lifts can make it even more difficult for disabled people to buy tickets and access services. Out-of-use lifts have been advertised for Clapham Junction, Fareham, Farnborough, Fratton, Godalming, Haslemere, Havant, New Malden, Portsmouth & Southsea, Surbiton, Weybridge, Whitton, Wimbledon.

**Twenty years of Stagecoach neglect: Further SWT service delivery failures as recorded on Twitter (spelling and grammar modified, and expletives deleted, where appropriate)**

Worst service ever! Late to work nearly every day and sometimes hours late home!

So after last night's mayhem, this morning Revenue Protection Officers close off the exit from Clapham Junction! Shows where your priorities lie!

Please make sure to announce platform changes as I missed a train on next platform due to no info. Was 10mins early, delayed by 30mins.

Guard kicks people off at Motspur Park only to tell us on the platform that Raynes Park is next stop. Wouldn't re-open doors...???!

Luckily we just made our connection at Clapham Junction. No staff at station though, and no one answered the help point.

WOEFUL info regarding rail replacement from Ash Vale. No staff, no signage to relevant bus stops. 2.3% fare rise in Jan for what?

Running trains fast to Waterloo just means you're putting schedule metrics ahead of customer service.

You have surpassed yourselves with your \*\*\*\*\* service over the last couple of weeks, absolutely priceless and incompetent!

Do you know if the staff at Clapham grease the walkways? Entire upper level walkway is permanently like an ice rink. Weird.

Barely squeezed onto 17.16 Richmond to Waterloo; train rammed, people left on platform, yet you're still enforcing 1st Class! Why?!

I was on the 7:25 train from Ewell West to Waterloo which then decided to be a fast service to Waterloo only. I had to get off...the problem is it's been happening frequently, making me late all the time. Sort it out!!!

Why did you cancel the 7.50 from Norbiton and then just run it past us practically empty? You guys make no sense.

1646 from Clapham to Fleet cancelled with 3min notice. Any particular reason? No information on SWT website or from station staff.

Bus driver might need a few more directions. He just got lost on his way from Richmond to Mortlake. I've got off now, but only because he stopped to check his map.

Driver didn't know the area and argued and swore at his co-driver. Arrived at Effingham 40 mins late.

Am on train from Bath to Waterloo. Paid for 1st class ticket but can't get anywhere near 1st carriage. Don't even have a seat.

A guard tried to not allow me on a train because I asked him which sections were going where, is this how you train your staff??? He flat out ignored me 3 times despite no one else even being on the platform, then said he didn't like my attitude. Unacceptable.

Sat on the 1539 to Reading, waiting and waiting, ended up being other passengers who told us it was cancelled. Rubbish! Refund?

You organise the replacement bus service (took 2 hrs from Exeter to Yeovil) and times given said we'd make a train, not wait an hour.

I think you need to teach your conductors some customer service skills and not to treat every customer as a criminal.

So, to recover that one part of service you then disrupt and overcrowd other parts? I've now missed connecting trains.

Why the hell are your staff not making any announcements at Putney? The train guard had to notify us of changes to the route. Seriously, the displays at Putney are never up to date. The ones on the platform don't match the entrance and we get no updates.

I just got an e’mail notice that my train "would not call" at destination. Sent 10 minutes after we got kicked off.

Wimbledon station closed. No reason given. Staff incredibly rude. Explanation, people in the station were locked in and we could not get out?

Just experienced the worst treatment by one of your train guards. Group of ladies even came up to me and asked if I was OK. Arrived 5 minutes early tobuy my ticket at the machine but was not able to use my railcard. Used the "call for help".

Yet more cancellations and delays on SWT- can't remember the last time a good service ran!

According to statistics, my morning train has been more than 5 mins late 75% of the time in last 4 wks- how can you justify this?

It doesn't matter that there are alternatives. Every single alternative will get me to where I want to be late...like every day.

Only SWT would cancel a train and still have the next one running late (which is 99.999% percent of the time).

**SWT never fails to fail passengers. Please take their rail franchise away now!**

SWT sorry. Turns out not delays. You've just cancelled a train. Staff reply "due to late running of earlier train". Why?

The doors didn't open on the 17:58 Waterloo to Windsor and Eton train. Well done for not noticing!!! Lots of late people home now.

Do you understand/care how difficult last minute platform changes are for those with disabilities?

They don't care about disabled people, hence multiple lift failures every day, long waiting times to book assistance.

Heard your replacement Windsor trains have no toilets. Do you know how many kids this line ferries to Lego Land in summer? Rethink?

Unbelievable! Told train at Vauxhall platform 3 has a fault and to join slow train on platform 4. Then original train leaves half empty.

This doesn’t help the impact this has had on my journey and the extra cost I now need to pay for unplanned chilldcare. Compensation?unbelievable! Told train at Vauxhall P3 has a fault and to join slow train on P4. Then original train leaves half empty. Idiots

Just got off the 18:28 SWT train from Waterloo to Feltham. Left fuming by the rude and obnoxious guard!

SWT are terminating train at Woking instead of Waterloo because it's 'running too late'. Great job, top customer service...

Poor show Vauxhall gate keepers; rudeness never acceptable

Two weekends in a row you've messed up my travel plans.... useless service; left the rail replacement bus service -the overwhelming smell of \*\*\*\* was making my eyes water... on the Tube now.

My new smart card has lost my ticket. Guy at barrier won't help, ticket office can't help. Only suggestion: buy another ticket.

I drove to Southampton Airport Parkway to get tickets for tomorrow. Waste of petrol and time. This was advice given by your help point! Waited around for 15min. Whole place locked up with lights off.

8:16 from Brookwood. Just fancied a lie in did it?

\*\*\*\* service on SWT again, as ever, seems like forever!

Travelling to Bristol from London Waterloo on 12.20, not informed to sit at the front of train, travelled miles in wrong direction.

I literally CANNOT believe what has just happened to me and my other half at Martins Heron... WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOUR DRIVER/GUARD?!

Your train door closed on me as I was getting on and now I have a cut on my arm and a bruised leg.

What's the point in having toilets if they're all always out of order?

He shut the door before the 30 second limit - and the train was empty, he saw us walking along the platform!

How can I make a complaint about a man called ------ who works at Teddington station? Appalling person!

All chucked off at Southampton Central yesterday, no info, support workers made quick exit, 3 platform changes, very late. Apology?

My mum (70) is standing on your service from Woking to Exeter. 3 carriages packed to bursting. Disgraceful!

Told us to "hurry up and get on f\*\*\*\*\*\* train" despite people waiting to get on and off but doors not working!

It's now 29 working days. Still no refund; can't get through to customer services. When will I get my refund please?

Advertising a 6:56 to Waterloo changing at Clapham, on New Year's Day. 7.16 via Guildford in reality, made me very late.

What are the next steps here? I was accused of fare dodging in front of other passengers, then the card check showed the opposite.

How long should a compensation claim take to come through? Why have I been waiting since the end of November then?

Purposely missing stations on delayed routes to meet targets.

Treated like a criminal when admitting an honest mistake. Never been so humiliated.

Where do I claim my money and report staff?

SHAME ON YOU! Saturday mornings to travel is now more expensive. This is BLATANT PROFITEERING!

Your woman at Walton-on-Thames barriers was disgustingly rude to me. Absolutely appalled!

Train Farnham to London in late 2016: one locked toilet and one overflowing with \*\*\*\*. £30+ for the anguished journey. Unacceptable.

I opted for an uber!! Literally can't take any more of your horrendous service. 5 days a week is bad enough.

Delays with no explanation. Asked staff stood by plat. 18 who pretty much ignored me and just said 'We don't know'.

There's a leaky roof on carriage 71560. Stream of water just came down between roof panels above aisle near door D1!

Delayed again! Why every day with no information!? Please be more considerate and just tell us why!

What station staff? They must have been hiding! Do you or don't you get money for providing an acceptable level of services?

Appalling handling of the broken down 18.20 from Waterloo. Misdirected many people and wasted much valuable time. Rubbish service.

Why did the 10.57 from Egham to London depart at 10.55?

I was on the platform at 20:18... how can you allow your scheduled trains to leave so much earlier than planned??

Why have you consistently failed to answer customer complaints within 20 working days for the last 3 years? SWT is bottom of all TOCs.

**Please Lord have mercy and give the SWT franchise to someone even semi-competent.**

Same day in day out, what are you doing about it? It’s criminal how you advertise train times that are a damn right lie.

Should be at work by now but not even pulled into Clapham Junction. You going to explain how and WHEN you'll improve?

There should be a law banning train companies for 'cancelling' trains to skip stations and get to a destination 'on time'.

Man gave up, so cold he put extra clothes on. Hope you can see everyone shivering. Not pleasant at all. All carriages the same.

21:30 from Waterloo and \*\*\*\*\*\* freezing on train. Warmer on \*\*\*\*\*\* platform!!!!

A train that goes fast to Motspur Park from Waterloo without any announcement is just unacceptable.

You tell us the 18.23 is from platform 11. That turns out to be the 18.32. That train still stationary at 18.37. No excuse.

Pathetic. The only printable word to describe SWT. Your entire service. Trying to get to Vauxhall from Kingston. Ended up getting a uber to work this morning. Can't afford one home.

Booted off at Basingstoke on the way to London, now booted off at Gillingham on return to Sherborne in freezing fog. Bravo SWT.

I genuinely hate this company. paying a fortune to use this \*\*\*\*\*\* service from Waterloo to Basingstoke. I'll not buy tickets, no one checks them.

Thanks, but last time I did that I waited 2mths for an e’mail pretty much telling me I was wrong and how amazing SWT actually were.

To add insult to injury the next service is delayed making me even later. It's really not good enough.

Good job with the rail replacement bus that got me to Woking just in time to watch my train LEAVE. Extra hour added to my journey.

Running later than this before and they just run through? Can I ever arrive on time?

What are you doing to make the trains more reliable? Last 10 journeys delayed. Start refunding customers as incentive to improve.

Asked the guard on my SWT train for first aid and apparently there's 'nothing in the first aid box' - no antiseptic or plasters etc.Also asked the guard on my for first aid and apparently there's 'nothing in the first aid box' - no antiseptic or plasters etc

Asked 'manager' at Waterloo why my season ticket would not let me through barrier. She told me I had an attitude.

The 7:32 service Haslemere-London Waterloo just left Haslemere at 7:30, puzzling and frustrating in equal measure.

1. You need to let the passengers board though. I stood there tears rolling down as I was excluded

**1 reply . 0 retweets 0 likes**

Reply

**1**

1. **You need to let the passengers board though. I stood there tears rolling down as I was excluded**

**1 reply . 0 retweets 0 likes**

**Reply**

**1**

You need to let the passengers board though. I stood there, tears rolling down as I was excluded.

Why did the 19.10 advertised Dorking train from Wimbledon stop and not open the doors while Epsom train was allowed to leave? SHAMBLES. People were fuming, your poor colleague on the platform got a lot of stick for it.

Seems a pity that the rail company have no plan/method to allow passengers to access waiting rooms in the evening.

**Newsboard**

* Stagecoach is resisting proposals to build a bridge across the railway at Lymington Town station. The bridge is intended to provide safe access to the new Lymington Shores residential development. Stagecoach contends that the bridge would reduce spaces in the station car park, where high charges apply. [Southern Daily Echo 13.1.2017]
* Stagecoach-run Southampton Airport Parkway has the second most expensive station car park in the country, at £15 a day. Stagecoach-run Guildford has the third highest, at £14.50 a day. [Southern Daily Echo 13.1.2017]
* A strike on London Underground led to crowding at Clapham Junction in the morning peak of 9.1.2017, so SWT ran its trains through non-stop and evacuated the station.
* Hundreds of angry Portsmouth-Southampton commuters were thrown off their train at Fareham at 08.15 on 25.1.2017 because of dispute over a ticket with a single passenger.
* The Porterbrook rolling stock company plans to add diesel engines to 8 ex-Thameslink electric trains. Hybrid stock of this kind could potentially run services such as Hythe to Waterloo or Portsmouth.
* The Charter train to the Fawley line, which derailed in Southampton on 5.11.2016, is now expected to run on 8.4.2017.
* Network Rail has been in dialogue with Hampshire County Council and Fareham Borough Council about commissioning a study into providing a station at Welborne, to the northern side of Fareham, where a 6,000-home development is in prospect. Waterloo-Portsmouth (via Fareham) trains could call with no added journey time. Twenty five years ago, they typically took 112 minutes southbound and 117 minutes northbound, with 13 intermediate stops. Currently, these timings have been inflated to 131 minutes southbound and 129 minutes northbound, with 14 intermediate stops.

Acknowledgements / Contact details

As always, thanks to everyone who has been kind enough to contact us. Without your support and input, this newsletter would not be possible. The newsletter is produced in good faith, based on reports and information from many individuals and sources including information identified from press and website research. Contributions are always welcome. We aim for accuracy at all times, because our good reputation depends on it. We do not use material which could be offensive or which appears unlikely to be correct.

Address for correspondence: Denis Fryer, 19 Fontwell Close, Calmore, Southampton, SO40 2TN. (denis@fryer1491.fsnet.co.uk)