

KENT AND OUTER LONDON MPs INFORMAL MEETING WITH SOUTHEASTERN AND NETWORK RAIL – 14th SEPTEMBER 2011

Preparations for Winter 2011-12

An update for rail users in Maidstone and the Weald

In attendance

Network Rail: Mike Smith, Route enhancement manager
Mike Hogg, Public Affairs Manager

Southeastern: Charles Horton, Chief Executive
Vince Lucas, service delivery director
Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager
Jon Hay-Campbell, Media Relations Manager
Sarah Boundy, Head of Customer Services

MPs: Helen Grant MP, chair of meeting
Gordon Hendersson MP
Gareth Johnson MP
Tracey Crouch MP
Greg Clark MP
Michael Fallon MP
Julian Brazier MP
Mark Reckless MP
Laura Sandys MP
Representative of Charles Hendry MP
Representative of Gregory Barker MP

Others: Dr Tony Roche, Director of First Class Partnerships

Meeting

❖ Introductions

❖ Presentation:

➤ **Charles Horton;** Speaking as an introduction about Recent Kent Winters:

- Winter 2009 – 10 was unusually cold with heavy snowfall closing Gatwick, Heathrow, Birmingham and many other UK airports
- Southeastern services in Kent were affected as were Eurostar and other rail services in the south east
- Winter 2010 – 11 heavy snowfalls, record low temperatures
- Estimated to be the coldest winter in Britain for 31 years
- The UK's earliest widespread winter snowfall since 1993
- 33 cm and 34cm snow measured in Swanley and Tunbridge Wells

➤ **Mike Smith;** Explaining how Network Rail are Preparing for Autumn:

- Ensuring Multi Purpose Vehicles ready and reliable
 - Early testing 'shake-down' and gearboxes replaced
 - Vegetation clearance underway
 - Autumn controller role in control room
 - Twice-weekly conference call to monitor progress
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➤ **Mike Smith;** Explaining how Network Rail are Preparing for Winter:

- Conductor rail heating, completing 2 year programme
- Launched new fitment programme in spring 2010
 - By Winter 2010 – 40 locations
 - By Winter 2011 – over 120 locations
 - Plus 30 additional locations in Sussex
- Remote operation by Kent Integrated Control Centre with local over-ride facility
- Improvements to point heating

Treatment Trains:

Anti-icing and snow clearance trains for winter 2011/12 will be:

- 8 treatment vehicles
 - upgraded ultrasonic conducted rail sensors
 - enhanced capability to deliver heated anti-icing fluid (6 litres per minute)
 - 2 snow and ice treatment trains
 - 20 class 375 Electrostar fleet to be fitted with in-service anti-icing capability
 - Snow and ice treatment trains
 - Able to clear snow from the running rails and conductor to 50mm above rail head
 - Ice scraping and de-icing capability with a heavy duty sleet brush/ ice scraper
 - Application of hot de-icing fluid onto the conductor rail head
 - One train to provide two passes of ice scraping and de-icing
 - Locomotive hauled combined with Dellner couplers provides
 - Capability to rescue stranded passenger trains
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➤ **Mike Smith;** Explaining how Network Rail has learnt from Past Years:

- Joint review of processes underway with Southeastern
- Combined "gold command" including operations, maintenance and Southeastern
- "On ground" staff focussed on vulnerable/high risk locations
- Infrastructure & vehicle improvements ready for "early winter"
- Options to deploy solutions for Frost Ice & Snow
- More preventative options
- Building on front line staff commitment – "we never closed a signal box" due to ice or snow

➤ **Charles Horton; Speaking about Preparation:**

- Strong support from Kent County Council's contingency planning team
 - Key station approach roads included in KCC's gritting and clearance plan
 - KCC providing 'mutual aid' for passengers if stranded and assisting essential staff to get to trains
 - 3 new 4by4 vehicles to assist engineers reach failed trains
 - 18 month long project launched in January 2011 to improve all local information systems and processes
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➤ **Charles Horton; Speaking about Practical Measures:**

- Increased supplies of grit, salt, ice melt chemicals stored at locations across the network for stations, car parks and depots
 - 100 additional grit salt bins
 - Additional equipment to help staff clear snow and ice efficiently such as 220 hand pushed ploughs
 - 16 motorised snow clearance vehicles for larger stations and depots
 - 4,000 foil blankets and glow sticks onboard trains for vulnerable passengers
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➤ **Charles Horton; Speaking about Trains modifications for Autumn and Winter:**

- Drivers briefed for new autumn driving policy
 - Improved sand delivery to trains for better rail adhesion
 - Changes to traction software to 'widen tolerances' during ice and snow
 - Driver given greater capability to reset and restart the train
 - Driver 'Ice mode' reminder introduced
 - De-icer fluid onboard to 'unfreeze' couplers
 - Anti-ice tanks fitted
 - Working with Network Rail and Bombardier: anti-ice tanks fitted to passenger trains
 - 20 mainline Electrostar units fitted with 450 litre tanks to hold and dispense anti-icing fluid
 - Grove Park, Ramsgate and West Marina (Hastings) depots have 9,000 litre storage tanks to store the anti-icing fluid
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➤ **Charles Horton; Speaking about Contingency Timetable:**

- On severe weather days a contingency timetable for key routes as instructed by Network Rail
- Efforts concentrated to keep main artery routes running into and out of London
- These are published on our website already – giving an idea of service levels
- After last year's difficulties, much work has been done by industry partners to make information systems more reliable

➤ **Charles Horton;** Speaking about Improving Communication:

- More reliable industry systems to upload timetable
 - More robust industry processes for timetable uploads to feed journey planners, electronic station screens, etc
 - Longline PA to be installed at stations (meaning announcements can be made at any station from the central control room)
 - New Blackberry Application for employees and 'Workmate' social network site to improve internal communication between colleagues
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➤ **Charles Horton;** Speaking about Customer Information:

- Training and briefing for customer facing staff – increasing confidence and understanding of what passengers need
 - Announcement guidelines trained and briefed to customer facing employees
 - Improved access for employees to information changes to train service (P2 software / Hub, Subhubs briefing process in place)
 - New Twitter data feed, automated email alerts, i-phone App, etc
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➤ **Charles Horton;** Speaking about Expectations for this Winter

- We will be able to provide better information to passengers
 - With Network Rail's support provide a more robust train service
 - Recover more quickly and return to operating a normal timetable Service
 - This quote given by me to Press Association in December 2010 still holds true however
 - *"if there is very heavy snow, we are always going to find it a struggle to provide a good service. Fortunately, bad weather is only around for a very small part of the year. The big question is: what is the right balance for investing in equipment to keep the network free of snow and ice?"*
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➤ **Vince Lucas;** Speaking about Engineering Works

- This Christmas season will see the start of upgrading for signalling equipment over 62 miles of East Kent.
- £120 million spend, 201 new signals and 82 new points
- New level crossing
- New signalling centre
- Thameslink

➤ **Vince Lucas; Speaking about rail plans for London 2012**

- Southeastern has more events on their network than any other overground rail provider
 - Equestrain – Greenwich
 - Shooting – Woolwich (Arsenal)
 - Volleyball – Charring Cross (Horse Guards Parade)
 - Draft timetables published online
 - Need to balance Olympic delivery with other service users
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➤ **Vince Lucas; Speaking about Service Over the Past Year**

- Increasing punctuality – although always more to do
- Above 90% punctuality
- Increasing number of passengers (up 5%)
- Increasing investment in employees, stations and trains
