

# MARLOW - MAIDENHEAD PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

## Newsletter Number 151

### September 2011

MMPA covers transport in Maidenhead - Marlow, High Wycombe and Twyford - Henley-on-Thames.

#### **Chiltern Timetables**

With this newsletter we are distributing copies of the revised Chiltern Mainline timetables to members in the Bourne End area. These come into force from 5<sup>th</sup> September. The timetables show a number of timing improvements following the infrastructure projects carried out under Evergreen 3. These follow from the blockade in the third week in August of the line into Marylebone to carry out line improvements. The changes will result in some additional seating capacity and some reduced train times into London particularly from High Wycombe.

We have just been advised that Chiltern are not increasing any fares from High Wycombe in September and there will be no increase in the car park charges there in January. MMPA will be at the station on the morning of 27th September (06.30-10.00) giving out our leaflets as part of a membership drive as we are responsible for looking after this station on behalf of their Passenger Board.

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#### **HS2 consultation**

MMPA have submitted comments to the HS2 Consultation process. Our focus was on how to maximise benefits for passengers from the area by providing an effective interchange to avoid having to travel into Euston Station. An interchange at Old Oak Common is currently proposed which the Association supports but suggests that an interchange with the North London line should also be provided.

#### **FGW October meeting**

FGW Senior Management have been invited and have accepted to attend our October Committee meeting to review a number of issues and concerns that the Association has with regards to the Branch and the main line. One issue to be raised is the movement of off-peak car park charges from 10 am to 4 pm. We consider this is unfairly penalising use of off peak train travel. If you have any other issues that you believe should be addressed please inform the Committee.

#### **GW electrification**

When the Great Western main line is electrified there is a considerable risk that the Branch will be marginalised as it is not included in the electrification plans. MMPA will continue to campaign for the Branch to be included in the electrification programme but of course will investigate all alternatives to keep it from becoming marginalized as a diesel orphan.

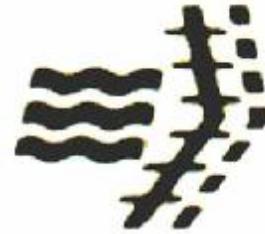
There is a solution available if the UK rail authorities take the opportunity to adopt a type of vehicle used in Europe known as the tram-train. In 2008 the UK Department for Transport (DfT) announced that tram-train vehicles would be operated on a trial basis over the Huddersfield-Penistone-Barnsley-Sheffield route ('the Penistone line'), mostly in the county of South Yorkshire and this year has announced funding to support the scheme from Rotherham to Sheffield.

A tram-train is a light rail vehicle that can operate on both street tramways and conventional heavy rail infrastructure. These would be hybrid vehicles that operate 'under the wires' on electrified lines or run on diesel engines



A Vossloh tram-train

on non-electrified lines. Such a solution would be ideal for the branch as it could allow through trains to operate from the non-electrified branch to Paddington. It is to be hoped, though without any great expectation on my part, that the conservative elements



Newsletter Editor Robert Latham  
Email: [newsletter@mmpa.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@mmpa.org.uk)

within the various UK rail authorities will open their minds to the opportunities presented by the adoption of tram-trains for this and other branch lines. Otherwise rail travel from Marlow and Bourne End will be in decline as those authorities try to cut back on what they see as secondary services. Here too is an opportunity for the reinstatement of the line from Bourne End to High Wycombe.

#### **Branch Brochure**

The Committee is looking at supporting the production of a leaflet or brochure setting out the attractions of the line to encourage more leisure visits particularly from outside the area. We also intend to hold a competition to find suitable name (strap line) for the Branch. The Henley Branch is named '*The Regatta Line*' and there is '*The Tarka Line*' in Devon just to start you thinking on the 'right' lines.

#### **Cookham Cycle racks**

Some new cycle 'racks' (inverted U tubes) have been installed on Cookham station platform. The Committee considers they have been badly installed as they obstruct passenger access along the platform. This is being raised with FGW with a view to correcting this.

#### **Revenue protection staff on the Branch**

Committee members who use Branch trains have noticed increasing reluctance by FGW revenue protection staff to sell and check tickets between Marlow and Maidenhead. Anyone using a Branch train where they are not invited to purchase a ticket or their ticket is not checked is requested to inform the Association of the details of the service affected so we can raise this with FGW. It is essential that the number of travellers is accounted for otherwise the FGW accountants may consider the Branch is not paying its way and take action to reduce the services in some way. **PLEASE TELL US.**

#### **Member survey**

The Committee is developing a membership survey to find out whether we are satisfying members' needs. Access details will be announced once the questionnaire has been finalised.

#### **High Wycombe Station**

High Wycombe Station has been totally remodelled and the car park capacity increased by the building of additional floor. Use has been made of the original Brunel Goods Shed to provide additional facilities.



**Aylesbury/PR refurbishment**

MMPA representatives recently attended the unveiling of the refurbished stations at Aylesbury and Princes Risborough by Chad Collins, Chiltern Railways Area Manager. The upgrading has been well carried out.

#### **Marlow line possible re-timings**

FGW have advised that they propose to adjust the times by one or two minutes of some Branch trains to improve the main line

connectivity. MMPA has suggested some changes that could also be made in the reverse direction onto Branch trains so as minimise missed connections.

#### **Marlow platform shelter**

A platform shelter has now been installed at Marlow Station. Please advise MMPA of any issues arising.



#### **Bus shelter at Bourne End Station**

A new bus shelter has been installed outside Bourne End Station thanks to contributions from the local council.

#### **Fare increases**

The Committee notes with concern the national proposals for substantial fare increases from January. We do not have details about the effect on this area yet but when we receive these we will be raising with the relevant operating companies. We consider the Government's proposals unreasonable particularly in view of the impact of the financial cut backs, the expectation that passengers have to pay for improvements before they have taken place and the increased car park charges at FGW and Chiltern Stations.

We note with concern that the McNulty Report proposes de-staffing lesser stations. The list includes Bourne End, Cookham and Furze Platt. MMPA believes this would be a retrograde step and will campaign against such closure.

#### **Car park charges**

Car park charges at FGW and Chiltern Stations in the area have all been subject to significant increases this year. A particular aspect that gives considerable cause for concern is the change of the off-peak time from 10 am to 4 pm! Hardly encouragement for passengers intending to travel by train. At Beaconsfield recently I found that the car park charge almost matched the return rail fare into Wembley. This appears to us as profiteering and is a matter we propose to raise with the operating companies. One result of the increased charges in Maidenhead is an increase in on-street parking near the station, presumably by commuters seeking to avoid the excessive outlay in the station car parks. This is now causing congestion on these roads.

#### **FGW stations – user feedback**

If you have any comments or questions about First Great Western stations that we can raise with First at our meeting with them in October please contact MMPA through the website or by email ([info@mmpa.org.uk](mailto:info@mmpa.org.uk)).

#### **Chiltern Rail users feedback request**

Please let us know if you have any comments or issues regarding Chiltern Railways operations through the website or email as the paragraph above.

#### **Chiltern Railways Passenger Board**

An MMPA representative attended a recent meeting of the Chiltern Railways Passenger Board in Birmingham.

Chiltern Railways are to simplify all their fares from 5th September. The refurbishment of High Wycombe station has now been completed, with a good bus interchange and much better parking facilities. Part of Evergreen 3 is now completed, (The main line from Marylebone to Birmingham) and the new timetable to reflect this starts on the 5th September. This will give faster journey times throughout the whole of the line.

Money has been set aside for the upgrade and installation of Disabled Toilets at High Wycombe, work should be completed in the spring of 2012.

The new platform (No.1) is now completed at High Wycombe. Work should commence in the next few months to connect Chiltern Railways through to Oxford, it is hoped that services from that station should be up and running by May 2013.

#### **NR Local Government Conference**

An MMPA representative attended a recent meeting of the Network Rail Local Government Conference in Birmingham on 26 July with a theme of 'Investing in the Future'. Representatives from Local Transport Authorities from all over the country attended.

A review of the HS2 route proposal was given by Rupert Walker, Network Rail's new Head of High Speed Rail

Development, including the associated release of capacity on the WCML - Passenger Focus is conducting a market research study on the latter to assess the needs and priorities for current and potential future users. Network Rail speakers also gave updates on the current RUS workstreams (rolling stock and alternative solutions to meeting passenger demand) and also the Company's Level Crossings strategy.

James Conway from the Department for Transport explained the Government's policy to promote more devolution of local and regional train services down to local councils and communities - this will be included in the forthcoming Railways White Paper.

#### **FGW and London's top 10 most crowded trains**

It will come as no surprise to those commuting to London using FGW that their peak time trains are the most overcrowded of companies operating trains into London as seen in these figures published by Rail Magazine.

#### **London's top ten crowded trains**

Place	Train	Load Factor %	Carriages
1	0637 Reading-London	201	3
2	1845 Paddington-Reading	193	3
3	1815 Paddington-Oxford	177	5
4	0630 Bristol-Paddington	171	HST
5	0740 Reading-Paddington	170	5
6	0607 Oxford-Paddington	168	5
7	1657 Paddington-Reading	166	3
8	0709 Oxford-Paddington	164	HST
9=	0728 Bourne End-Paddington	160	5
9=	1718 Paddington-Oxford	160	3

Source: DfT. Notes: Autumn 2010. All trains operated by First Great Western. Load factor equals total standard class passenger load as a percentage of capacity

Data from Rail Magazine

FGW has applied for additional rolling stock to help alleviate these problems but the Government (DfT) moves very slowly in implementing such moves.

We note the FGW punctuality for Period 4 (July) was 89.9% (2010/2011 91.3%). The annual moving average is 89.8%. Chiltern Railways Period 4 figure is 93.9% (up from 93.6% in 2010/2011) and an annual moving average of 94%. These figures include any delays which arise from Network Rail.

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#### **TRAVEL INFORMATION**

BBC Radio	95.4, 104.1 fm and DAB. (also phone 08459 - 311333)
Berkshire:	08457 - 484950 (24 hrs)
National Rail enquiries:	or <a href="http://www.nationalrail.co.uk">www.nationalrail.co.uk</a> or text
First Great Western:	08457 - 000125 (0700 – 2200 daily)
Chiltern Railways:	08456 - 005165 (08.30 – 17.30)
Arriva Bus:	0844 8004411 (0900 - 1700 Mon - Fri)
First Berks Buses:	01753 524144
Carousel Buses:	01494 533436
Traveline:	0871 - 2002233 (0700 - 2200 daily) 10p/min on BT landline
RBWM Transport helpline	01628 796666

Also see our web site [www.mmpa.org.uk](http://www.mmpa.org.uk) for links.

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#### **Contact MMPA**

If you have any issues or comments regarding public transport in the area that you would like to raise please use the Contact Us links on the MMPA website [www.mmpa.org.uk](http://www.mmpa.org.uk).