

MARLOW - MAIDENHEAD PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Number 152

December 2011



Newsletter Editor Robert Latham
Email: newsletter@mmpa.org.uk

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

Timetables

With this newsletter we are distributing copies of the December First Great Western timetables to members. These come into force from 11th December.

The timetables show some additional fast evening services now calling at Maidenhead.

* * *

October meeting with FGW managers

FGW Senior Management attended 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 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.

FGW were made aware that the new cycle 'racks' (inverted U tubes) installed on Cookham station platform have been badly installed as they obstruct passenger access along the platform. FGW agreed to investigate.

* * *

Overcrowding of FGW services

Rail Minister Theresa Villiers has announced that passengers on some of the country's busiest rail routes are set to benefit from extra seats. In the Thames Valley there will be nearly 4,500 additional seats each day into and out of London Paddington. The majority of these services will also provide additional capacity into Reading.

The extra seats are being added thanks to Government funding for an additional 48 carriages on First Great Western services which run through Reading and the Thames Valley and into London Paddington as well as in Bristol and the far south west of England.

The extra carriages being provided by Government support will see 15 Mark III buffet-car carriages (currently stored) converted to standard class to provide longer trains on services into Bristol, Reading and London Paddington.

25 Class 180 carriages will be leased to operate Cotswold services which will release Turbo units to enable shorter distance commuter trains to be lengthened into Paddington.

Six Class 150 carriages will be used on services running between Reading and Basingstoke and thereby allow the stock currently on that route to lengthen suburban trains on the Thames Valley into Paddington.

The total cost of providing these services until the expected end of the First Great Western franchise in April 2013 is £28.9m.

The extra carriages will create a total of 2,266 seats in the morning three hour peak and 2,233 seats in the evening three hour peak into and out of London Paddington.

Reading will see 1,483 extra seats in the morning peak and 1,731 extra seats in the evening peak.

* * *

Great Western Franchise

MMPA are compiling a 'wish list' of items and issues that we consider should be addressed during the refranchising of the Greater Western operation during 2012. If you have any ideas for inclusion please submit them to the Committee as soon as possible by email (info@mmpa.org.uk) or through the MMPA website.

* * *

Branch Naming Competition and Promotional Plan

The competition to find a name for the Branch suitable for promoting travel on it in the 21st century has now closed. Some thirty entries were received and these will be reviewed by the Working Group.

MMPA participates in the Working Group which includes representatives of FGW, Network Rail, Bucks County Council, Marlow Town Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Group works together cooperatively to solve problems, seek improvements and secure the future of the Marlow Branch. One of the Group's priorities is a plan to promote our local railway. The goals of this plan include:

- To increase the number of visitors to the area, encouraging them to come by the railway
- To encourage local residents to use the train to explore, commute and shop in neighboring communities served by the Branch
- To support tourism, community events and economic development in the area served by the Branch
- To provide another means for local businesses and attractions to advertise to locals and visitors
- To build community spirit and pride in the Branch
- To promote integration of the Branch with other modes of transport - bus, cycle and walking - amongst those travelling in the area

A model for this effort is the Twyford-Henley Branch which has branded itself "The Regatta Line." The concept is marketed using leaflets and brochures with descriptions of the communities served by the Branch, information about each station, maps of the Thames Path and other footpaths, and descriptions of local pubs as part of a "Real Ale Trail." The train operator also promotes the line with posters on board trains and

on its website. The "branding" extends to signage at stations and elsewhere in the communities served. Marlow Branch could use the Regatta Line as an example to start from, whilst planning to build upon that foundation in ways to meet the priorities of our own local communities.

This promotional effort will require significant investment, so before getting started the Working Group thought it worth considering the best "brand" for our Branch. A naming competition was organised to seek ideas and suggestions from the public. The contest ran for 7 weeks during the autumn and generated some 30 entries from across the area. The diversity and thoughtfulness of the suggestions was impressive, showing remarkable goodwill for the Branch as well as knowledge of the natural, cultural and local history in each of the communities connected by our railway. Unfortunately, FGW as a key member of the judging panel was not convinced these options contained the best choice in terms of marketability. They have proposed to engage a professional marketing agency at their own expense to see what they can come up with to augment the list of alternatives. As a result, the final decision on a name has been postponed until January at which time the result of the agency's work can be added to the mix. The Working Group, including FGW, will then reconvene to decide what might work best.

Whilst it is no doubt disappointing to those who entered the contest that a winner has not yet been selected, their contribution is nevertheless greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged now. As a thank-you, FGW has agreed to provide a pair of Standard Class tickets for travel on their network to every person who entered the competition. We will report back to everyone on the outcome of final discussions in January and hope to begin work on our promotional brochure immediately after that. MMPA Chair Susan Morrison will be contacting all the contestants directly to arrange delivery of the tickets and to respond to any questions or concerns.

* * *

Revenue protection staff on the Branch

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 continue to 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 membership survey has been carried out. Some thirty people completed the survey and the results are now being analysed.

* * *

CCTV

CCTV is now being installed at Furze Platt, Cookham and Marlow. Some equipment has already been installed at each station and the process will continue over the next couple of months.

* * *

Fare increases

The Committee noted with concern the exceptional national proposals for fare increases from January. Although the Chancellor has announced in the Autumn Statement in Parliament a cap to the increase of 1% above the rate of inflation instead of the previously proposed 3% the bad news is that the increase is still above the rate of inflation.

We note also the postponement of the January fuel escalator until August and the cancellation of the rise planned for August.

By the way can anyone explain why diesel is priced at a premium to petrol in this country even though the tax regime is the same and diesel is supposed to be easier to refine? In France the differential is reversed and unleaded is generally about 20 cents a litre more expensive.

* * *

FGW and Chiltern – user feedback

If you have any comments or questions about First Great Western local stations and operations or Chiltern Railways operations that we can raise with the operators please let us know through the website or email as the paragraph above.

* * *

MMPA Committee

If you are a member interested in volunteering in support of MMPA by serving on the committee, please get in touch. We are especially interested in finding someone interested in serving as General Secretary or Minutes Secretary but have other focus areas as well.

Please contact Chairman Susan Morrison at 01628 531755 or susanmorrison589@btinternet.com to register your interest or for more information.

* * *

TRAVEL INFORMATION

BBC Radio	95.4, 104.1 fm and DAB.
Berkshire:	(also phone 08459 - 311333)
National Rail	08457 - 484950 (24 hrs)
enquiries:	or www.nationalrail.co.uk 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 for links.

* * *

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.

* * *

The MMPA wishes all our readers a peaceful Christmas and stress free travelling in 2012.

