

MARLOW - MAIDENHEAD PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Number 154

May 2012



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 May FGW timetables to members. These come into force from 14th May.

MMPA Chairman's AGM Report

Since our last AGM, several improvements have been completed at Marlow Branch stations. These include:

- A new shelter and platform barrier at Marlow
- New cycle storage at Cookham
- Accessible toilet facilities at Bourne End
- Perspex replaced in the shelter at Cookham
- CCTV installed and operational at Furze Platt, Cookham and Marlow
- Repainting of seats at all stations

The first two items were accomplished with the assistance of contributions from local authorities as the result of the ongoing efforts of our Marlow Branch "Working Group." This group also continues to develop a Branch promotional plan and brochure with First Great Western. The goal is to have materials complete in advance of the Olympics.

Further station improvements are an important component of suggested specifications requested by MMPA as part of a new Great Western franchise. The timetable for the franchise replacement process is as follows:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 31 Mar 2012 | Stakeholder consultation period on specifications for the new franchise ends. MMPA's response is available for review on our website. |
| May 2012 | Short-list of bidders established by Department for Transport (DfT) and Invitations to Tender (ITT) for GW franchise are issued. |
| Aug 2012 | Short list bids for franchise are returned to the DfT. |
| Dec 2012 | New GW franchise operator is selected. |
| April 2013 | New Great Western franchise begins. |

The new franchise is expected to run for 15 years. Several massive infrastructure programmes are underway or planned for the Great Western during that period, adding complexity to the replacement process. These investment projects include:

- Electrification of the Main Line but not including Thames Valley branches (2014-2016),
- Completion of Reading station redevelopment (2015),
- Completion of Crossrail (2018) and
- Transfer of Maidenhead-Paddington local service from the Great Western franchise to Crossrail (2019).

It's hard to imagine passengers will not face serious disruptions during these major projects. We are hoping the new franchise can incorporate some protection, but it's impossible to foresee and plan for all the eventualities amidst the changes.

MMPA's response to the consultation on franchise specifications emphasizes the following priorities:

- Current service levels as the starting point of the ongoing service platform.
- Investment in Branch stations to bring them up to the minimum standards for stations with similar footfall as established by the Better Stations Report 2009.
- Commitment to diligent revenue protection, giving every passenger a chance to buy a working ticket conveniently and better enforcement to ensure everyone is counted.
- Commitment by franchise holder to work with Network Rail to address Branch infrastructure issues, in particular the Bourne End Bridge deterioration and the Victorian-era token system.
- A sensible strategy for parking, allowing Branch rail users to access stations as part of a reasonable fare structure. Car parks

should also be properly maintained and any fees charged should be at a rate that doesn't force travellers to park on neighbourhood streets.

- Willingness to work cooperatively with local stakeholders to improve access to stations via other more sustainable transport modes, including walking, cycles and buses.

- Acknowledgement that staff members at smaller stations serve multiple purposes. This includes ticket selling, revenue protection, customer information, advice and security, helping disabled passengers, keeping the station tidy, clearing snow and spreading grit in bad weather. Toilets are also locked and closed without staff on site. If budget constraints make closing ticket offices inevitable, then compensating or replacement investment in technology must be made to fulfill all those purposes.

- Acknowledgement that some franchise decisions about service and investment are best made with local input and that flexibility to accomplish this will be required for a large franchise of such long duration.

- Robust plans to ensure the Branch is not marginalised or neglected amongst the surrounding large infrastructure investment programmes.

Another route we are investigating to sustain the Branch is a Community Rail Partnership (CRP). For about two years, MMPA has participated in an informal Working Group including representatives of local authorities, the train operator and Network Rail. The group works cooperatively to solve problems, seek improvements, and promote the Branch. We are not a designated CRP but are investigating whether it makes sense to pursue that as part of an alliance of Thames Valley Branches, including Marlow, Henley and Windsor. There is no doubt that some decisions about service, costs and investment are best made with local input and CRPs have proven to be an excellent way to manage that in other parts of the country. We are researching whether such a format can best serve the interests of those relying on the Branch but much more work needs to be done.

During the year MMPA participated in several external conferences, surveys, and public consultations to stay informed about plans that might impact our area and to ensure that community and passenger interests were represented. A listing of these and upcoming topics is included at the end of this report. Amongst all this activity and change, MMPA's challenge remains the same: Stay informed, stay involved and when necessary, be a strong voice for all those who rely on the Marlow-Maidenhead railway branch.

MMPA Committee

The Committee members elected at the AGM are:

- Maurice Oram (President)
- Susan Morrison (Chair/Bourne End Station Rep)
- John Marsh (Treasurer)
- Richard Porter (Webmaster and Membership)
- Robert Latham (Newsletter Editor)
- Mike Cooper (High Wycombe Station Rep)
- Ken Fulker (Cookham Station Rep)
- Mark Jameson (Interim Secretary/Maidenhead & Twyford Station Rep)
- Harriet Wilson (Marlow Society Rep)
- Richard Ward (Network Rail liaison)
- Martin Coker (TBD)

Thanks were also expressed to Jan Swinglehurst who watches over Marlow Station on MMPA's behalf and to Jim Peck who acts as our link with the Cookham Society although they do not participate on the committee.

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.