

MARLOW - MAIDENHEAD PASSENGER ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Number 155
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MMPA covers transport in Maidenhead - Marlow, High Wycombe and Twyford - Henley-on-Thames.

The Great Marlow Line

The Branch is now being promoted as The Great Marlow Line. A leaflet outlining what the line has to offer and points of interest has been produced and distributed to stations on the main line between Paddington and Oxford/ Newbury as well as Branch Stations. These have proved so popular that very few remain so we are seeking a new print run. However if you would like to see the content the leaflet can be downloaded from the MMPA site at http://www.mmpa.org.uk/forms/gml_v2.pdf. If we obtain new supplies a copy will be included with the newsletter.

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MMPA Interview

MMPA Chairman, Susan Morrison, was interviewed recently on Marlow's own radio station, Marlow FM (97.5MHz) and had a question addressed on *Any Questions* on 17th August. Her question to the panel was "We know it costs lots of money to operate, maintain and improve Britain's railways, but who should pay for this, rail users only, or taxpayers and businesses more generally? ". A lively discussion ensued centring mainly on the inefficiency of the current arrangement of separation of track and trains and the employment of hordes of lawyers on both sides of the divide at considerable expense together with the lack of competition that privatisation was supposed to bring. Richard Porter was heard on *Any Answers* on 18th August pointing out that there are no funds available to instigate a complete re-nationalisation of the railway network.

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Assistance needed

MMPA is aware that the approval process for planning applications is not always visible in time for the Association to respond particularly where such applications could impact on the possibility of reinstating a rail based link between Bourne End and High Wycombe. We are seeking people who can monitor planning applications in the area and advise MMPA of any that might impact the alignment of the line between Bourne End and High Wycombe.

Also we are still seeking a General Secretary for the Association. Please contact us at secretary@mmpa.org.uk for more information if you are willing to help out in this way.

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FGW Matters

Performance

We are still receiving reports of poor management of the Branch and elsewhere by First Great Western. In particular in the afternoon of 24th July several trains failed to arrive at Marlow. No information was provided by the Help Point and intending passengers phoned Slough Station but failed to get any sense from staff as to when services would be resumed. It is estimated 100 people were inconvenienced. If you were affected by this failure have you claimed ticket or taxi refunds from FGW?

Meeting with MMPA

For the October meeting of the MMPA Committee we have invited senior managers of FGW for discussions. Please contact us if there are issues you would like us to take up with them.

West Coast Main Line franchise

The award of the West Coast franchise to First Group is causing considerable concern that First have underestimated the commitment and the franchise could fail in the same way that the East Coast franchisees have failed twice. This is to the detriment of everyone, passengers, investors and taxpayers. Such failure could impact local services if First were to be awarded the new Great Western franchise as well. The signing of the new franchise has been suspended pending a court case instigated by Virgin Trains. The whole franchise process seems riddled with problems particularly the apparent lack of transparency of the reasons behind a particular award.

Ticket Pricing

My partner recently tried to purchase a single ticket from Maidenhead to Kemble at the Maidenhead ticket office and was quoted £84! She

rang me from the station and I was able to get one the same train for £37 on the FGW website. It's been recommended that it is always best to check the online price first, print off the result and take it with you to be able to challenge incorrect offerings. If you have any similar instances MMPA would be pleased to receive the details so we can take it up with FGW at the meeting with them in October.

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High Wycombe

The Committee recently took a guided tour of the refurbished High Wycombe Station at the invitation of Chiltern Railways as part of ongoing liaison with railway authorities. We were shown round the new facilities and also the original Brunel station building/ goods shed previously occupied by a tyre company but now empty. It is to be hoped that some enterprising organisation will be inspired by its history to renovate the building and make good use of it possibly for retail outlets relevant to the station.



During the refurbishment the station name board was removed to reveal not one but two earlier name boards on each side. The right hand one dates from the early 20th century. The letters were simply cut out from wood and attached to the backplane. The newer panel was mid 20th century. Chiltern Railways intend to refurbish both and leave them in their present position although they may need to a notice nearby to advise passengers to catch a bus to Maidenhead or Marlow; there may be a rather long wait otherwise!

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Bus Service Cutbacks

The Comprehensive Spending Review by the Government has reduced the budgets available for local councils and as a consequence also for local transport authorities. To meet the budgetary challenges, publicly-supported bus services (i.e. those not operated on a full commercial basis) have been removed, reduced, or the network altered. MMPA would like to hear from anyone affected by the changes or reduction to services in particular what aspect of their travel plans have affected (e.g. commuting, leisure, family meetings, hospital visits, etc.)

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TRAVEL INFORMATION

BBC Radio Berkshire:	95.4, 104.1 FM, DAB, or 08459 - 311333
National Rail enquiries:	08457 - 484950 (24 hrs) 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) 10p/min on BT landline
RBWM helpline	01628 796666

Also see our web site 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.

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