



South Eastern Franchise Consultation

Response from Kent Community Rail Partnership

The Kent Community Rail Partnership is pleased to see reference to itself within the consultation document (paras 6.3 and 6.4), but is surprised that the DfT thinks that there is only one CRP line within the current Southeastern franchise. In fact not only are we involved with the Medway Valley Line, but also Swaleroil, the Sittingbourne to Sheerness branch!

We welcome the comment in 6.3 that there may be scope to develop more CRP initiatives and we would be keen to do so if funding for such initiatives can be secured. In terms of specific lines we believe that the line from Dover Priory to Faversham has CRP potential (and there may well be others). The introduction of HS1 services on the Ashford to Ramsgate line via Canterbury West appears to have led to a reduction in passenger traffic on the line via Canterbury East. Engaging with local communities such as Temple Ewell and Adisham could well lead to more attractive stations, better marketing and a recovery in passenger journeys.

We also believe that the current TOC has been slow to see the benefits of "Station Adoption" programmes in contrast to their sister franchise "Southern". In the latter case this was partly driven by a franchise commitment and we would be pleased to see a similar obligation included in the ITT for South Eastern. While we have already secured some funding to increase our promotion of station adoption projects, this could be much more successful given greater TOC commitment and funding.

It is of course right that Community Rail Partnerships need to be funded from a range of partners including local authorities and other beneficiaries of rail services, but we would like to see a stronger financial obligation on bidders to commit to particular levels of funding.

With regards to the specific question in the consultation document we have below submitted answers to those on which we have a view.

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| Q.1 | What improvements do stakeholders believe could be made to the franchise through partnership working between Network Rail and the new operator? |
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We recognise that significant efforts have been made in recent years to improve and integrate the management of train operations by both Network Rail and the current TOC. These should continue and be strengthened.

By contrast, the relationships between Network Rail as the landlord and the TOC remains far too bureaucratic and cumbersome. We believe that this is a national issue and is now seen as an unnecessary hindrance to the achievement of even quite minor improvements and changes to passenger facilities at stations. It is also a major disincentive for community projects in that volunteers, Parish Councils etc find it hard to understand why it takes so long to get projects approved.

We say that TOC's should be given virtual carte blanche to undertake station improvements (clear of the running lines) while of course keeping the landlord informed and perhaps able to veto where there is good cause.

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| Q.3 | Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail development schemes that might affect the new franchise? |
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We are aware that other consultees have given information about major schemes for new housing in the franchise area. At a more local level to our two CRP lines we would draw your attention to the possible redevelopment of the former "Syngenta" site adjacent to Yalding station which is proposed to comprise more than 350 housing units and some employment opportunities. In an area with poor road access, this development would be strongly dependent on Medway Valley Line services and could perhaps require some improvements to frequencies on the southern half of the line.

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| Q.5 | Which aspects of the specification, in addition to those services operating on the HS1 network, would stakeholders wish to see mandated and which aspects of the specification could be left to the discretion of the operator? |
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We believe that all of the aspects listed in para 7.5 should form part of the service specification. However, the DfT should specify a minimum service and the TOC should be free to add to this service level as and where they believe there is a financial case to do so. Should additional services be required which would operate at a loss there would always be the option for franchise variations to be negotiated.

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| Q.6 | What changes to services would stakeholders propose, why and would these provide economic benefit? |
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A constant demand from actual and potential passengers on the Medway Valley Line has been for later evening services, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays. Maidstone and the Medway towns are key locations in the evening economy yet services wind down before pubs, clubs and cinemas etc have closed. Patrons of facilities further afield (London, Dartford etc) find it even harder to use rail to travel to and from evening events.

Shift workers are also disadvantaged.

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| Q.8 | How might better use be made of the capacity currently available? |
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We welcome the recent introduction of 3 car Class 375 units onto the Medway Valley Line. This has permitted improved revenue collection and overcome peak period overcrowding problems. We would wish to see similar units introduced to Swaleraill services in order for that line to see similar benefits.

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| Q.9 | What steps might bidders be expected to take to meet passenger demand and what might be the most appropriate mechanisms for managing demand? |
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Current stock provision on weekend services from Ashford to London via Maidstone East is inadequate with trains being formed of 4 cars. These services are regularly overcrowded and should again be formed of 8 cars.

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| Q.12 | Do respondents feel that Folkestone Harbour branch line and station should be kept open and maintained or would the funding currently devoted to supporting this line and station be better used for other rail schemes? |
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We do not support the retention of the Folkestone Harbour Branch as a heavy rail facility.

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| Q.13 | How would you like to see performance information published? |
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The MVL and Swaleraill are amongst the first lines to lose their services when snow falls as resources are targeted on the main lines. We would therefore wish to see figures for the number of services cancelled. The MVL in particular also experiences frequent instances of services having intermediate stops cancelled to allow schedules to recover or to minimise disruption. This is not peculiar to the MVL so it

would be relevant for TOCs to give a figure for the number of services that suffer from a short notice reduced stopping pattern. This would not include planned changes due to engineering work.

We believe that "Right Time" should mean within one minute of booked arrival and departure times.

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| Q.14 | How frequent should its publication be? |
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The current 4 weekly publication intervals are appropriate.

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| Q15 | What level of disaggregation of performance do you believe is reasonable? |
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It seems odd that DfT is looking to require the new franchisee to make more data public having just advised the current TOC that it can cut down on what it reports to stakeholders!

The complex South Eastern network makes disaggregation problematic. The current split between Main Line and Metro services remains valid and it would perhaps be useful to show HS1 services separately as well.

As a Community Rail Partnership principally concerned with two largely stand alone services (Medway Valley Line and Swaleroil) it would be useful to see data for those lines and their largely discrete operations should make this fairly easy.

We are aware that there is a demand for other routes to be shown separately; i.e. "Tunbridge Wells/Hastings", "Ashford via Maidstone", "Thanet via Canterbury West" etc and would welcome this if it were possible.

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| Q.16 | What are the priorities that respondents consider should be taken into account with providing passenger experience of using these services? |
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We believe that Passenger Focus adequately identifies the concerns of passengers and we would only add that we receive many adverse comments about the adequacy of revenue inspection on board trains. It is at best patchy!

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| Q.17 | What do stakeholders see as the most important factors in improving security (actual or perceived) and addressing any gap between the two? |
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There is a significant minority of actual or potential passengers who are concerned about their security at specific stations, particularly unmanned ones. This is especially so during hours of darkness. The

means of overcoming these perceptions will vary in each case, but can include improved lighting and access routes; more frequent visits by Police Community Support Officers and Community Wardens where they exist and CCTV.

We would wish to see an extension of the provision of live monitored CCTV to most stations on the network other than the most lightly used.

On board trains there are similar issues – particularly in the evenings and far too many conductors are unwilling to come out of their cabs. This may be understandable in that they are pretty vulnerable to attack from youths or others, but if they don't feel safe it is no wonder passengers don't. The level of BTP cover is such that the force cannot be relied on to respond to incidents and instead the Met or County Constabularies are normally the first to respond to incidents. However, they tend not to visit stations or travel on trains on a more casual basis so are no deterrent.

Rail Enforcement Officers now look more like police or security staff, but tend to be deployed more in peak periods.

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| Q.18 | What is important to stakeholders in the future use and improvements in stations? |
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Station staff!
Better seating and waiting areas.
Improved and more reliable customer information systems.
Better integration with bus services.
Clean toilets.

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| Q.19 | What priorities would respondents give to car parking and cycling facilities at locations where these are fully used? |
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A very high priority. An increasing number of people are using bikes to get to stations and this will only increase provided they are confident that bikes can be left safely.

The introduction of HS1 services has seen an increase in railheading in Kent, but pressure has also been felt at other stations. Increasing the capacity of carparks by installing a second level as has been done at stations north of London (by Chiltern for example) would seem to be an appropriate solution in some cases. However, the roads and town centres around many of the main stations on the South Eastern network are already pretty congested so while from a narrow rail perspective increasing car parking might seem sensible, encouraging more traffic into these towns at peak periods may not be sensible. This could well be the case in Maidstone, Canterbury, Tonbridge Wells and the Medway towns.

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| Q.20 | What sort of ticketing products and services would you expect to see delivered through 'smart' technology on this franchise? |
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On line ticket purchase.
 Advance purchase tickets.
 Smart phone tickets.
 Oyster card acceptance in London area.

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| Q.21 | What local accessibility and mobility issues do stakeholders see and how they might be addressed? |
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With well over 100 main line stations in Kent, plus others in S.E. London and East Sussex it is not surprising that many are not readily accessible to the disabled, mothers with young children etc. There are also far too many where the tracks have been raised over the years and passengers have a step of 20-30 cms on and off the train.

There has been good progress in recent years at specific stations (Staplehurst, Canterbury West and Sittingbourne for example), but there are still too many mid size stations that do not come up to current standards for accessibility. (e.g. Maidstone West, Strood and Faversham.) There are also numerous smaller stations that were designed before electrification and frequent fast services where passengers were intended to access platforms by track level barrow crossings. This is no longer acceptable and platforms can now only be accessed via a footbridge in many cases. (Aylesford, Charing, Halling and Yalding for example). In many cases it would be reasonably easy to provide an alternative access route to platforms currently only accessible via a footbridge and as the larger, busier stations are dealt with attention should turn to these other stations.

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The Kent CRP is hosted by the registered charity, "Action with Communities in Rural Kent" (No.212796), the Rural Community Council for Kent & Medway.

1. What improvements do stakeholders believe could be made on the [South Eastern] franchise through partnership working between Network Rail and the new operator?

Endorse the KCC response.

2. What, if any, changes to South Eastern services need to be made given the likely changes in demand?

Since the introduction of the HS1 service, the residents of Swale have seen the frequency of services from intermediate stations (which comprise 50% of the stations on the mainline) reduced by 50%.

In comparison to the stations between Rainham and Strood these stations have either remained at the same level or increased as in the case of Rochester and Strood. Stations on the North Kent line covered by other local authorities of Canterbury and Thanet have not seen any detrimental changes to the frequency of services and in some cases an increase.

Swale Borough council feel that this is unfair to the residents of Swale and given the housing demands (approx. 10,800 new homes) required in the coming years within the borough, request that a return to 2 TPH service be introduced from all stations in Swale.

3. Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail development schemes that might affect the new franchise?

Endorse the KCC response.

4. What increments or decrements to the specification would stakeholders wish to see and how would these be funded?

A return to the 2TPH service from Teynham and Newington stations to London and Ramsgate/Dover via Faversham.

Additionally we request a review of the timetable for the stations serving the Sheerness branch line to ensure that services arrive and depart within not more than 15 minutes of a connecting service to London or Faversham. In order to allow this the service provision within the Medway towns could be reviewed given the volume of stations and their close proximity to one another could mean that Rochester and Strood have slightly less services stopping at the station.

5. Which aspects of the specification, other than those services operating on the HS1 network, would stakeholders wish to see mandated and which aspects of the specification could be left to the discretion of the operator?

Endorse the KCC response.

6. What changes to services would stakeholders propose, why and would these provide economic benefit?

The reintroduction of a 2TPH service and better connection with service on the Sheerness Branch line would enable the residents of Swale to access better retail services within London, Canterbury and most importantly Sittingbourne and Faversham.

A reduction in the travel time from London to Swale would also likely increase the demand on the system to the benefit of all parties.

7. Do respondents feel that there are other destinations that domestic high speed services could serve that would support regional and national economic growth?

Endorse the KCC response.

8. How might better use be made of the capacity currently available?

In order to ease the pressures on the routes into London Cannon St/ London Bridge and London Victoria it would be potentially beneficial to introduce a service from Swale into London Blackfriars (and return) during the peak periods.

9. What steps might bidders be expected to take to meet passenger demand and what might be the most appropriate mechanisms for managing demand?

Endorse the KCC response

10. What destinations on the current South Eastern network do respondents think should be served by Thameslink core services and what is the rationale for those services?

Endorse the KCC response and additionally that the new franchise operator should continue to support the Community Rail Partnerships to improve the experience of passengers from arriving at stations and the entire duration of their journey.

11. What improvements would respondents like to see made to other South Eastern services, what is the rationale for them and would these provide economic benefit?

Endorse the KCC response

12. Do respondents feel that Folkestone Harbour branch line and station should be kept open and maintained or would the rail industry be better investing the monies in other rail schemes?

Endorse the KCC response

13. How would you like to see performance information published?

Ideally, it should be possible for performance information to be presented for each individual line and station. This information should show train service punctuality and reliability. As a minimum, the performance for HS services should be separated from mainline services.

14. How frequent should its publication be?

Endorse the KCC response

15. What level of disaggregation of performance do you believe is reasonable?

See response to Q13.

16. What are the priorities that respondents consider should be taken into account with providing passenger experience of using these services?

Endorse the KCC response

17. What do stakeholders see as the most important factors in improving security (actual or perceived) and addressing any gap between the two?

Endorse the KCC response but also add the staff provision at stations within Swale has significantly reduced over the last couple of years. An example of this relates to Teynham station where there is a ticket office that used to be operated by staff every day. Since 2010, this has reduced to reportedly during early morning periods when in actuality more often than not no staff have been available.

The number of station staff at Sittingbourne monitoring train arrivals and departures has also reduced. We would want the new operator to address these issues.

18. What is important to stakeholders in the future use and improvements in stations?

Improved staffing levels at stations and when staff are not present or required that technology be available for passengers to purchase tickets. The 'permit to travel' machines have been neglected and often do not work from the rural stations. This has been a concern raised by parish councils in the past.

Parking capacity at stations should be increased with the cost to passengers kept as minimal as possible. The volume of cars parked on side streets causes' resentment to residents and where possible free parking maximised.

19. What priorities would respondents give to car parking and cycling facilities at locations where these are fully used?

See response to Q18 and also endorse the KCC response

20. What sort of ticketing products and services would you expect to see delivered through 'smart' technology on this franchise?

Endorse the KCC response. The provision for smart tickets has been readily available for a number of years in the London area. This should be made available to the entire network and specifically for season ticket holders.

21. What local accessibility and mobility issues do stakeholders see and how they might be addressed?

Endorse the KCC response.

22. What environmental targets would stakeholders like to see within the franchise specification?

Endorse the KCC response.

Lloyd Bowen

Councillor Teynham and Lynsted Ward member
Swale Borough Council

Agenda Item No. 5
(iii)



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Your Ref.

Our Ref. JW

Date: 4 September 2012

Philippa Davies
Democratic Services Officer
Swale Borough Council
Swale House,
East Street,
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Dear Ms Davies

SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD MEETING: 10 SEPTEMBER 2012

I am writing to advise you that Faversham Town Council, at a meeting held on 28 August, discussed the Department for Transport's 2014 South-Eastern Franchise Consultation (<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-29/southeastern-consultation.pdf>). Councillor John Coulter gave a presentation, based on a paper written with Councillors Trevor Payne and Nigel Kay, consisting of the following points:

- a) Restoration, as far as possible, of classic services to Victoria and Cannon Street, both in terms of train numbers and journey times, peak time and off-peak.
- b) The present 40mph average speeds were not acceptable in the 21st Century. The new franchise should specify journey times at least as good as they were ten years ago, which would mean Faversham -Victoria taking 65 minutes.
- c) HS1 was unimpressive for users from Faversham in terms of journey times, taking 1.05hr / 1.10hr, against Ashford's 35 minutes.
- d) A relatively small and cheap addition to the Victoria-Gillingham service that terminated at Gillingham could extend it to Sittingbourne, with a link to Sheerness, Faversham (adding an extra train per hour to Swale stations between Newington and Faversham) and Dover. This would bring back a half-hourly link with Sittingbourne and Faversham for Teynham. An extended Victoria-Gillingham service could also take on some of the



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Date:

stopping burden between the Medway Towns and London, reducing London Victoria journey time for travellers on other services using any Swale station from Selling to Newington.

e) Fares rose at RPI +3% in the existing franchise four years earlier than they did in the rest of the country with no additional improvements in services, so the new franchise should offer significant investment to expand services and reduce journey times or exempt it from RPI +3%.

Further to the presentation, Faversham Town Council raised the following issues:

- Journey times had substantially deteriorated since the introduction of HS1
- Although HS1 as a useful addition to Faversham's transport links, most rail users went to London via Victoria or Cannon Street
- HS1 was significantly more expensive

Faversham Town Council agreed that these points, and those set out in Councillor Coulter's presentation, should be made to the Swale Joint Transportation Board at its next meeting on 10 September, and it was hoped this could form part of a wider Swale response in order to maximise co-ordination and impact.

Yours sincerely



Jackie Westlake OBE
Town Clerk

5 (iv)

1) The KCC paper is focussed on the Maidstone, Ashford, Folkestone line and off-shoots in that corridor. There are some other foci, but the North Kent Line, and our part particularly, is clearly well down the priority list. This is very bad news for the town; political support and, probably therefore, investment is going to be low, unless the case for Faversham is made strongly through other means.

2) While the KCC emphasis on reducing North Kent Line journey times is welcome, the aspiration is so vague it is next to worthless. It would be good to state specific targets, eg, reducing Faversham/London journey times by 10% or by 10 minutes. There is also nil about investing in North Kent Line track and equipment in order to improve times to all London termini, particularly to improve the laughably slow Fav to Dartford section of the misnamed High Speed service.

3) The trains per hour (two per hour for Victoria, three for Cannon Street and two for St Pancras) look OK, but for Cannon Street the true issue is the total number of peak time services. There used to be seven, there are now six and there is no early morning service (but there are early services from Gillingham, which could be easily extended to Faversham?). This may also apply to Victoria.

4) The SBC proposed submission is equally disappointing. This needs more teeth and detail about journey times and needs to address reduced peak times capacity into Victoria and Cannon Street.

5) I suggest FTC submits its own full, punchy submission in addition to SBC and KCC and engages strongly with the process in its own right. It seems nobody else is going to box this corner

6) I also suggest Hugh Robinson is briefed and his aid enlisted.

I'm very happy to help with all this and have copied this to Jackie so she knows my thoughts.

Laurence Young
Manager
Faversham Enterprise Partnership