



CHILTERN RAILWAYS PASSENGER BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011

Ian Rivett – Chairman

Reg Whittome – Vice Chairman

Chairman's Message: This is the ninth Annual Report of the Chiltern Railways Passenger Board and summarises the key issues affecting Chiltern Railways in the past year and the valuable contributions made by the Board in discussions at each of the meetings and in correspondence.

The Board plays an important role in providing the opportunity for Chiltern Railways senior management to present their plans and to be held accountable for any performance issues. The Board also acts as an information source, to enable Chiltern Railways senior managers to understand the issues and concerns that directly affect the passengers who use the services.

The past year has been very challenging for the managers and staff of Chiltern Railways for many reasons. It has been a period where the involvement of the Passenger Board has seen increased opportunity in providing feedback and focus on the various issues, which will be developed further in the year 2011-2012, with timescale benchmarks determining the consultation process to enable the Board to recommend forward solutions at earlier stages.

Background: The Chiltern Railways Passenger Board was established in April 2002. Facilitating the Board is a requirement of the Chiltern Franchise agreement (schedule 13 – clause 11.7) which requires that:

- The Board meets at least once each year and seeks to ensure that Chiltern Railways conducts its business in the best interest of passengers.
- The Board comprises representatives from Passenger User Groups along the Chiltern Railways line of route.
- The Board monitors the operational performance of Chiltern Railways and reviews infrastructure upgrades, passenger's facilities, timetable and fares proposals and passenger satisfaction surveys.
- The Board promotes integrated transport schemes on the Chiltern Railways line of route.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETINGS 2010 - 2011

Four Board meetings were held approximately quarterly, alternating between venues at Banbury Station, Birmingham Moor Street Station and Marylebone Station.

Additional meetings were arranged by Chiltern Railways at the request of the Passenger Board to discuss in detail issues which occurred during the year, relating to the affects of the severe winter, Evergreen 3 infrastructure works, access for all, timetable changes and fares policy.

Detailed meeting minutes are produced, outlining the Board members' views on proposals and progress, ideas for consideration and the responses from the Chiltern Railways management representatives. The following is a summary of the major topics and projects discussed.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETING - 16 JULY 2010

At the Annual General Meeting Ian Rivett and Reg Whittome were both elected unopposed as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively. The Board thanked the retiring Chairman Don Barton for his contributions during his period in the chair.

Service Performance was good with a period PPM of 95.35% compared to the target of 95.36%. The PPM Annual Average stood at 95.25% ahead of the target of 95.17%. During the period a number of failures were recorded associated with high seasonal temperatures.

Projects:

The project to install new double sided dot matrix Customer Information Screens at 25 stations had now been completed some four months ahead of target.

National Passenger Survey

Passenger Focus had been requested and made a presentation to the Board on the principles employed in compiling the National Passenger Surveys of Rail Passengers, which are carried out in the Spring and Autumn of each year. Around 27,000 responses are analysed per wave, with the sample size ranging from 500 to over 2,000 per train operator. The target for Chiltern Railways was 1,000 customers.

Evergreen-3 Project

Chiltern Railways presented an update and the following points were highlighted:

The Transport & Works Act application was submitted for the Bicester to Oxford line on 6th January 2010. The Public Inquiry was due to start on 2nd November 2010 and conclude by the end of 2010. The inspector's report would then be submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport for an expected decision by the Autumn of 2011.

Chiltern Railways were expecting to assume responsibility for operating the Bicester Town to Oxford service in 2011, with a substitute bus service operating whilst the Evergreen-3 upgrade is in progress. A new chord line would be built at Bicester to connect with the main line and most of the level crossings would disappear for safety reasons associated with faster trains. Bicester Town station would be rebuilt and a new station would be built at Water Eaton Parkway to complement the Park & Ride facilities. The line was expected to be re-opened by May 2013.

On the Mainline, new tracks were proposed at Aynho, Northolt Junction and Princes Risborough plus a range of other upgrades and track alignments to enable an increase in train speeds and operating flexibility. It was expected that platforms 3 & 4 at Birmingham Moor Street station would be opened for use with the new timetable in December 2010.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETING - 22 OCTOBER 2010

The Chairman's Annual Report for 2009-2010, written by the Vice-Chairman was formally adopted by the Board, for publication on the Chiltern Railways website.

Service Performance remained good with a period PPMs of 93.65%, 96.365% & 97.34%, recorded. The PPM Moving Annual Average was recorded at 95.18% against the target of 94.9%.

Power failure affected signals in the first period between Neasden Junction & Gerrards Cross and a points failure occurred also at Neasden Junction. There were two incidents of cable theft in the second period, which occurred at Hatton and The Hawthorns.

Projects:

The Board noted that of the obligation to deliver 1444 additional car parking spaces at selected stations by 31st March 2011, 1008 spaces had already been delivered.

The Board also noted that the Projects and Station Maintenance team management undertook a visit to the Tyne and Wear Metro in order to share best practice between the two companies. As a result, further work is being considered as to how Chiltern Railways may incorporate lessons learnt.

High Wycombe Bay Platform-1

This item was initially raised at the Passenger Board Meeting in April 2010. Since then a large amount of correspondence had been generated between the Passenger Board and Chiltern Railways over the plans to make the temporary structure on Platform-1 more permanent.

Since the construction of the "temporary" Platform-1 some five years ago, the original bay Platform-1 had been fenced off thus prohibiting cross-platform interchange to Platform-2 and removing easy access to the subway leading to Platform-3. Passengers also faced the weather elements on the new Platform-1 as, unlike the original Platform-1, there is no shelter available.

The Board suggested that the money allocated to improve the temporary structure of the new Platform-1 would be better spent in devising a solution to move the track in order to restore and extend the original Platform-1 to facilitate longer trains, thereby removing the need for the temporary platform.

Chiltern Railways advised the Board that this fell outside of the remit of Evergreen 3 and posed a number of issues with rules and regulations, particularly with the close proximity of the planned new car park structure to be built alongside the temporary platform.

The Board was disappointed that the opportunity to improve the passenger experience at High Wycombe station has been virtually lost forever and had not been thought through from the outset, with the objective of including the opportunity to improve access to platforms whilst the station was being re-developed.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETING - 28 JANUARY 2011

Service Performance PPMs per period were recorded as 95.69%, 91.49%, 94.40% & 85.00%. The PPM Moving Annual Average was recorded at 94.24% against the target of 94.80%.

The second period (P8) was disappointing with several infrastructure failures being the responsibility of London Underground and Network Rail. Efforts by Network Rail to also deal with leaf fall, was deemed to be less effective than in previous years.

Projects:

The commissioning of the signalling at Moor Street Phase 3 was accomplished over the weekend of 13th & 14th November 2010, which paved the way for opening as planned on 12/12/10.

Chiltern Railways took over the station facilities management at Solihull and Dorridge stations on 14/11/10.

The Evergreen 3 Phase 2 Transport and Works Act Inquiry for the Oxford to Bicester Line commenced on 02/11/10.

The Board noted that cycle storage upgrades at Beaconsfield, Banbury and Bicester North and the installation of subway lighting at Warwick Parkway had all been completed using money from the User Group Fund.

Severe Winter Weather

During the last period (P10), performance was significantly lower than desired for the first three weeks of the period, following severe winter weather before Christmas. Not only did the extremely low temperatures result in technical failures of the trains, but it also required the implementation of a temporary timetable for several days.

Chiltern Railways had examined the problems in depth, culminating in additional plans to be included in the 2011 Joint Performance Improvement Plan. The Engineering Director arranged a detailed presentation on 14/04/11 to the Board, outlining the difficulties and resolutions.

Wrexham & Shropshire Railway

The Board noted that the Wrexham & Shropshire Railway would cease operations on 28/01/11, the day of the Board meeting, held at Banbury. The announcement was sudden and news had only been released two days previously that the service was to close, less than three years after it was launched. On the same day as the closure press release, the service had received the highest ratings in the UK for passenger satisfaction in a study by Passenger Focus, which had found that 96% of users were satisfied with their journeys. Passengers commented that the trains always seemed to be busy and everyone using the line loved it. The Board meeting was literally abandoned at 15:50 so that members could salute the last southbound departure from Banbury station at 16:12.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETING - 13 MAY 2011

Service Performance PPMs per period were recorded as 95.94%, 92.70% & 94.50%. The PPM Moving Annual Average was recorded at 93.89% against the target of 93.90%.

The second period (P3) was affected with three separate Evergreen 3 incidents resulting in a possession over-run on Monday 14th March. There were also two separate train failures causing significant delays and a fatality at Banbury during the period.

Chiltern Mainline

Chiltern Railways announced on 18/02/11 that the launch of the Chiltern Mainline timetable due on 22nd May was to be deferred to 5th September. A thorough review of the Evergreen 3 project highlighted a risk of over-running if the engineering works had proceeded as planned. Rather than risk disruption or late notice timetable changes, a section of work was moved to August to reduce disruption to passengers.

After the Board meeting on 13/05/11 a special Board meeting was arranged and hosted by the Directors of Chiltern Railways, to present an in-depth discussion regarding the engineering work Blockade in August. This required the railway to be suspended for two weeks to enable major junctions at Neasden and Northolt to be reconfigured. In addition, all outstanding work at other locations would be completed either during the blockade or at weekends prior to the blockade.

Franchise Agreement Fine from the Department for Transport

It was reported in the press in early April that Chiltern Railways faced a £500,000 fine from the Government over breaches of its franchise agreement. The penalty concerned the late delivery of two station improvement schemes and two breaches of requirements in relation to timetable changes.

The Board considered that if any fine were to be imposed it would be better spent on additional station facilities or service improvements for the benefit of passengers. The Board made direct representations to Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch, whilst the individual User Groups, as members of the Board, made direct approaches to the Transport Secretary and Members of Parliament to consider the recommendation.

The Department for Transport recognised the support for Chiltern Railways by the constituent User Group members of the Board and reduced the fine to £350,000 accordingly. Sadly, the money was paid directly to the Treasury and not into any facilities improvement schemes.

Projects:

The replacement of the temporary bay platform with permanent 6-car bay platform at High Wycombe was commissioned for use on 04/04/11 and the new Transport Interchange, built in a joint venture with Buckinghamshire County Council, was officially opened on 20/05/11. The new Interchange provided new bus stopping and interchange facilities, taxi management and a new multi-story car park providing 285 additional spaces.

The Board noted that the following projects had been successfully completed:

- Birmingham Moor Street customer information screens upgrade.
- New station roof canopies at Gerrards Cross.
- The Waiting Rooms upgrades at Aylesbury, Leamington Spa and Princes Risborough.
- The DDA Foot Bridge and Lifts upgrade at Wendover.
- The remainder of the additional 1444 car parking spaces at selected stations were made available by 31st March 2011.

The Board also noted that provision of an additional ticket gate at Aylesbury (partially funded by Buckinghamshire County Council) had been completed; a new data feed to display train departures on Customer Information Screens in Aylesbury Bus Station had been provided; interior and exterior heritage style signage had been installed at Birmingham Moor Street and additional cycle stands between platforms 1 & 2 at Marylebone had been provided, with all schemes using money from the User Group Fund.

User Groups Activity

In addition to the contribution made to the Board by members of the individual User Groups, the following summary highlights issues which have been on-going separately.

Submissions had been written to the Public Inquiry supporting Chiltern Railways Transport and Works Act application for a new rail service to Oxford via Bicester Town.

There is concern that once the Oxford to Bicester line is connected to allow trains to run to and from London, the generation in recent years of rail passenger traffic on the branch line will reduce, particularly at Islip. Currently there are 11 trains per day and they all stop at all stations. The new service level requirement at Islip will be 7 trains per day and Chiltern Railways have offered 8 trains per day.

On the Stratford-upon-Avon line it is thought that services to and from Stratford should be marketed more pro-actively, in partnership with local stakeholders such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and that the evening stopping pattern of the train service could be revised to capitalise on the withdrawal of local bus services in the evenings.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind Group have consulted with Chiltern Railways on "Access for All" features of new and refurbished rolling stock and also the presentation of information and the readability of publicity and timetables for partially sighted persons.

And, Finally.....

I would like to thank all the members of the Chiltern Railways Passenger Board for all their invaluable contributions and assistance made during the past year for the benefit of passengers using Chiltern Railways and also thank the Directors and Managers of Chiltern Railways for the time they have afforded to the Board.

Ian Rivett - Chairman