



CHILTERN RAILWAYS PASSENGER BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

Ian Rivett – Chairman

Reg Whittome – Vice Chairman

Chairman's Introduction: This is the tenth 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. Most notably with the Evergreen III engineering work in August 2011 and the introduction of the 'Mainline' service in September 2011.

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. The Passenger Board meetings have also been restructured, following detailed discussions with Chiltern Railways managers, so that fuller consultation on key operational issues can be shared with the Passenger Board at much earlier stages, so that points raised during the consultation process can be included prior to the finalisation of proposals for change. This has been of great benefit to both the Passenger Board members and Chiltern Railways managers, who have made some very detailed and welcomed presentations to the Board, which has encouraged significant feedback. It has also been a year where "Passenger Focus" and "National Passenger Survey" have not been recorded in any of the minutes.

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 of representatives from Passenger User Groups and Local Authorities along the Chiltern Railways line of route.
- The Board monitors the operational performance of Chiltern Railways and reviews infrastructure upgrades, passenger's facilities, timetable changes, fares proposals and passenger satisfaction surveys and supports integrated transport schemes proposals.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETINGS 2011 - 2012

Four Board meetings were held approximately quarterly, at either Birmingham Moor Street or Marylebone Stations, with additional meetings when necessary.

Detailed meeting minutes were produced, outlining the Board members' views on proposals and progress, ideas for consideration and the responses from the Chiltern Railways management representatives, but were not published at the time to avoid any breaches of confidentiality or commercial sensitivity. The following is a summary of the major topics and projects discussed.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETING (AGM) - 29 JULY 2011

At the Annual General Meeting Ian Rivett and Reg Whittome were both re-elected unopposed as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively.

It was noted that Chairman's' Annual Report for 2010-2011 referred to the new DDA footbridge at Wendover, which the Board were informed had not yet been completed. The report was adopted and recorded in the minutes as, "Excellent".

The Chiltern Railways "Review of the Year"

This was presented by Chiltern Railways management and covered many of the points included in the Passenger Board Chairman's Report for 2010-2011. In addition, the following projects were under consideration:

- Reinstating the seating at the table in the waiting room at Gerrards Cross.
- Consideration being given to additional disabled ground floor spaces at High Wycombe, because there are no lifts in the car park.
- Auto-announcing on trains.
- Improvements made at High Wycombe following a Passenger Board report and recommendations.

Evergreen III – August 2011 Blockade

A discussion was held after the formal meeting, following a request by the Chiltern Railways Managing Director for the Passenger Board to offer ideas and recommendations regarding alternative travel arrangements for the blockade, during the suspension of the train services. A report was later submitted to the Chiltern Railways Managers by the Passenger Board Chairman. A disappointing response was received from senior Chiltern Railways management, as the reply failed to acknowledge the effort in responding and showed that any level of feedback would not have been well received, despite the Passenger Board being asked by the Chiltern Railways Managing Director to submit ideas and observations, which had been written to promote safety and best practise and was submitted in good faith.

Chiltern Railways Passenger Board - Forward Programme 2011-2012

Chiltern Railways management presented their views on the structure of the Board meetings, following detailed discussions on the consultation process. It was agreed that the Passenger Board would be involved at earlier stages of projects in line with operational deadlines and strategic dates and that the General Managers will be the main points of contact for Passenger Board members. It was further agreed that there would be sub-committees to discuss performance, timetables, replacement buses etc. whenever necessary.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETING - 28 OCTOBER 2011

Evergreen III – August 2011 Blockade - Post Mortem

The engineering work was actually completed on time, despite most of the blockade period enjoying some quite un-seasonal monsoon rain conditions. The anticipated completion over-ran by around 48 hours, which put the project into 'panic mode', as the signal engineers required to sign-off the safety of the railway had missed their booking and were on other projects when the engineering work was eventually completed. There were times when it was thought that the railway would not re-open on time and the replacement buses were even booked to be on standby, but thanks to some valiant efforts in the early hours of Monday September 5th, the railway re-opened in time for the morning rush hour, as planned.

Passenger Board feedback on the effects of the blockade and alternative travel arrangements were recorded and can be summarised as follows:

- Publicity was considered to be good.
- Regular travellers were well catered for, but occasionally not so.
- Alternative travel from Paddington in week one was recorded as having worked well. (Chair: Even though some passengers missed their late night train connections at West Ruislip, due to inadequate running time for buses and trains were not held to connect).
- Week two buses were quiet, as many passengers preferred not to use them.
- More staff at Marylebone would have been helpful.

Timetable Changes & Mainline Services, from September 5th 2011

The following is quoted and edited from a blog entitled, "The Great Chiltern Railway Debacle", which was also sent as a letter to Chiltern Railways for comments. It colourfully illustrated what happened in the early days of all of these changes.

"Installing brand new infrastructure and signals on a tight deadline and going 'live' with the new equipment in one big bang roll out is something that hindsight would have desperately tried to avoid. The risks of failure proved to be astronomically high, with the new infrastructure taking its' toll on the services whilst 'bedding down'. Passengers were naturally cross when the service delivered was initially not what was expected. Sometimes, the best way to garner plaudits from customers is to surprise them with more than was promised. It is often best to under promise and over deliver. In suit-speak it is called 'Expectation Management', which was not adopted. The service launched and the complaints flooded in.

Trains were rammed full with people standing in the aisles. Service quality had been sacrificed to improve the Birmingham-London service. It was quoted that Chiltern Railways seemed to not know who travelled when and where, a criticism that led Chiltern Railways staff to perform some retrospective passenger counts, which could reasonably have been expected to have been performed beforehand and form the basis of the new timetable and rolling stock distribution. The new signals also had teething troubles and by the third week of the service, getting past the signals at West Ruislip was still some sort of gauntlet challenge commuters faced every time they travelled”.

Passenger Board feedback on the effects of the new timetable, were recorded and can be summarised as follows:

- The new Birmingham services had a positive impact but the removal of the 06:30 from Kidderminster had not been well received.
- The Dorridge half hourly peak was considered to be ‘unstructured’.
- Issues at Lapworth had been investigated and responded to very well.
- The overcrowding at Bicester had been eased with some emergency train lengthenings.
- It was suggested that Haddenham journey times were not of much benefit and were presented too optimistically by Chiltern Railways.
- High Wycombe had five trains in the new timetable in key periods, down from eight trains, but the capacity issues at High Wycombe and some of the other stations could not be addressed until the December 2011 timetable.
- Expected future growth at Saunderton was raised and it was agreed that a feasibility study would be undertaken and the results presented to the Passenger Board.

Chiltern Railways responses were as follows:

- Recognition that at some stations passengers have been disappointed by changes to their regular trains and had experienced crowding on a number of key morning and evening peak services. Whilst everything possible was done to balance the needs of passengers from 40 stations travelling at different times, Chiltern Railways clearly did not get it right at every location at every time and that the distribution of seats was not initially optimised in the new timetable.
- Recognition also that the commuters had been patient and supportive during the Evergreen III project and a promise was given to resolve as many of the concerns as swiftly as possible in order to offer the best solution for all passengers.
- The infrastructure had not bedded in quickly and caused the majority of problems.
- The Chiltern Railways Managing Director had arranged to hold a forum with the contractors to resolve issues and had also arranged to meet angry passengers from the Gerrards Cross area at a series of public meetings and extra ‘Meet the Manager’ sessions to hear views.
- It was stated that the Marketing Department had built expectations far too high in the South and the service had not lived up to the promises.
- The Passenger Board was informed that the December 2012 timetable may be the time to address more specific issues and that passengers at the southern end of the line do have alternative travel facilities and it was not possible to achieve everything for everyone.

December 2011 - Timetable Changes

Chiltern Railways advised the Passenger Board on the number of changes to train lengths being made to reduce overcrowding following the September 2011 timetable changes and the rationale for them. A comprehensive census of loadings was undertaken in week commencing 19th September and together with direct feedback from passengers had been aimed to improve operational performance and remedy, where practicable, instances of passengers routinely standing for over 20 minutes. The changes also affected the Metropolitan Line timetable, to be consistent with the revisions to London Underground services to Amersham and Chesham. The change that had a major impact was the lengthening of the 06:54SX from Bicester North from 6 to 7 cars, which meant that the train could no longer call at Saunderton, where platform lengths were limited to 6 cars in length and the 07:19SX call was removed without replacement.

The Passenger Board was advised that alternative arrangements were being negotiated with Chiltern Railways for the thirty or so passengers who regularly travel at that time from Saunderton. Several alternative submissions of ideas to provide a replacement call on other trains were made, none of which reached agreement.

Summer & Winter 2012 timetable revisions – CRPB strategic aspirations

The Passenger Board was asked to submit strategic aspirations for reshaping services, so that suggestions could be incorporated into planning timetable revisions for May and December 2012.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETING - 27 JANUARY 2012

Service at Sudbury Hill Harrow and Sudbury and Harrow Road

Correspondence had been received by Chiltern Railways from the Sudbury and Harrow Road Users' Group campaigning for an off peak service at Sudbury & Harrow Road, at the expense of Sudbury Hill Harrow station. Chiltern Railways explained that the current provision is in line with the Franchise Agreement and whilst swapping stops from one to the other was feasible, Chiltern Railways was not in a position to increase the overall quantum of stops made.

The Passenger Board voted to retain the pattern of service serving only Sudbury Hill Harrow. The vote, however, did not preclude any individual group campaigning with appropriate statutory bodies to have the Franchise Agreement amended.

High Speed 2

Construction of the new High Speed 2 line was reported to have gained formal government approval. The impact on Chiltern Railways services between South Ruislip and West Ruislip had changed, as this section of infrastructure was planned to be in tunnel to avoid conflict with the current railway. The tunnel will start north of West Ruislip station and run towards Northolt and surface again beyond Northolt Junction. Chiltern Railways want to work with the HS2 project to minimise and where possible eliminate any disruption to Chiltern Railways passengers.

Fares

The Passenger Board members requested summary details of all fares changes, as this was very useful for comparison purposes. Chiltern Railways agreed to distribute the various fares leaflets that had been published to all Passenger Board members, which were distributed to members shortly after the meeting.

Passenger Communications

The Passenger Board stated that information available to passengers in times of disruption needed to improve and gave suitable examples where no announcements had been given at stations and the station staff had no information to pass to passengers. Chiltern Railways explained that an investment to update existing equipment had been approved to address this situation. All front line staff, for example, will be issued with smart phones to help improve the information that they have available. It was agreed that Chiltern Railways would perform a presentation on PIDD (Passenger Information During Disruption) to the Passenger Board at the AGM meeting in June 2012.

Company Briefing

Chiltern Railways stated that it was not yet where the company wanted to be in terms of operational performance, following the infrastructure and timetable changes in September 2011. Alterations that were made to the December 2011 timetable had helped to improve performance and it was noted that further adjustments were planned. The operations team was restructured under the leadership of a new Operations Director and a new control centre at Marylebone was to be operational in February 2012.

More refurbished MkIII rolling stock with powered doors on four sets were planned to be available by August 2012, with the first set expected to be in service in March 2012.

Chiltern Railways announced that an iPhone App for fares had been developed.

Following the announcement by the Department for Transport for construction of the East-West Line, the impact will be to co-ordinate both sets of works at the Oxford end. The introduction of Oxford to Marylebone services was now expected to be introduced in 2014 at the earliest and not in 2013 as was originally planned.

Projects

The planned enhancements of the toilets at High Wycombe toilet on Platforms 2 & 3 will provide both sides of the station with new toilet facilities and disabled access.

The Passenger Board stated that Princes Risborough toilets are not accessible if using a wheelchair and Chiltern Railways noted this comment, which was to be forwarded to the Project Manager. Chiltern Railways later confirmed that the Project Manager was aware of the issue should there be any future works, but the project had been completed and there was no funding identified to undertake further works.

December 2012 Timetable

Chiltern Railways had proposed to restructure the timetable with a "Clock-Face" style regularly repeating pattern. This concept had been presented to the Passenger Board at a special meeting arranged on 2nd December 2011, which had been well attended. At that meeting, the proposal was to structure the three hour morning and evening peak periods into three one-hour sectors, with train calls divisible by three for the total three hour period. In consequence, some of the existing call patterns would increase and others would reduce. All changes were to be submitted to the Department of Transport for agreement.

London TravelWatch expressed that they were pleased with what Chiltern Railways had proposed and were supportive of the process, however they wished to see services to the Inner London stations improved. The general consensus was that the trains needed to be more evenly spaced in order to offer passengers more choice, although it was not a unanimous Passenger Board decision to accept "clock-face" working. The commuter population was reported to be increasing at Haddenham and Thame for northbound travel and there were no direct services to Birmingham in the new timetable. It was also requested that short trains running at weekends be increased in length. Chiltern Railways agreed to forward this suggestion and later confirmed that some weekend West Midland services from Birmingham Moor Street would be lengthened.

Each individual User Group was requested to respond with their aspirations in response to the restructuring of the timetable for December 2012.

PASSENGER BOARD MEETING - 27 APRIL 2012

Correspondence received by selected Passenger Board Members

The Chairman updated all Passenger Board Members regarding a letter that had been received by selected members of the Board from an external individual. Referring to a letter received from the Managing Director of Chiltern Railways, the letter criticised members' attitudes regarding the discussions held and views recorded in the Board Meeting Minutes of 27/01/12, concerning the off peak services to Sudbury Hill and Sudbury & Harrow Road. The Chairman reminded the Passenger Board members that at the Passenger Board meeting in question, it was stated that the collective views of the Passenger Board did not preclude any individual member or User Group from progressing any campaign concerning the service to the Sudbury stations with any Corporate Body they may choose to lobby.

The Passenger Board Chairman made a statement in which it was stated that the Board Members had collectively fulfilled their obligations in expressing their views and preferences and that these were within the Terms of Reference agreed with Chiltern Railways. The Chairman also stated that Passenger Board members were not answerable to external individuals, who may think otherwise and that independent enthusiasts were free to take up their own agendas and campaigns with whichever organisations they deemed appropriate, but that did not include trying to intimidate individual members of the Passenger Board working in partnership with Chiltern Railways.

The Chairman stated that User Groups should decide whether to respond to the letter or not.

Passenger Service Requirement (PSR) changes from December 2012

A Stakeholder letter dated 10th April 2012 had been received in which Chiltern Railways stated that the primary purpose of the changes was to enable the delivery of a clockface, repeating pattern timetable which was believed to represent the best approach to the ongoing provision of services and growth in passenger numbers, with more expected once the route to Oxford opens. The Department for Transport had approved the PSR changes. The main points were:

- In what is the first comprehensive review since privatisation, quantum levels have been adjusted in line with demand, and Chiltern Railways believed they represented appropriate levels of service for the market. Whilst many quantum levels have been reduced slightly, some have been increased reflecting their significance to passengers.
- The quantum required in the morning and evening peak periods are the same.
- Kidderminster to Leamington Spa were all the same or slightly more.
- Bicester North or Bicester Town, Princes Risborough and High Wycombe were slightly more.
- Saunderton, Seer Green, Denham, South Ruislip and Wembley Stadium were the same.
- Haddenham & Thame Parkway, Denham Golf Club, West Ruislip, Northolt Park, Sudbury Hill and Sudbury & Harrow Road were all slightly less.
- Banbury, Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross were all significantly less.

The Passenger Board expressed surprise at some of the changes. Chiltern Railways explained that Department for Transport's final agreement had been amended to a larger quantum at some stations from what was originally proposed. The Passenger Board was advised that Department for Transport had expressed concern at the quantum for Beaconsfield (down from 16 to 12) and that capacity and demand would be closely monitored.

Station footfall statistics were requested by the Passenger Board and Chiltern Railways agreed to provide them and advised members that the information was also available on the ORR website. The Chairman advised members to respond to the consultation process by making views count by identifying any possible big issues rather than trying to recast the timetable.

Aylesbury to Marylebone Services via Harrow

The Chairman stated that adverse comments had been received on delays at Neasden Junction to southbound Aylesbury to Marylebone via Harrow trains which wait for a path, particularly at peak times for up to 10 minutes and drivers apologising to passengers 'uncomfortably' for the delay virtually daily. Chiltern Railways stated that the pathing issues were recognised and that the December 2012 timetable will make some effort to address this issue, but will not resolve the problem entirely.

In addition, some trains were suffering overcrowding due to passengers' preference to use Chiltern Railways, rather than the new London Underground trains with 30% less seating.

Timetable Books

The Passenger Board suggested reverting to a previous design where different colours were used on timetables to differentiate each issue, which was later agreed by Marketing.

Train Services for the Olympics

Chiltern Railways presented the train plan specification that had been agreed for the Olympic Games, with the following enhancements to the service to provide as much capacity as possible without risking the robust operation of the service overall:

- Maintaining the current level of peak services.
- Strengthening of off peak services, mainly between 10:00 and 11:00 similar to amendments made during school holidays.
- Strengthening of evening services between 22:00 and 24:00.
- Operation of five additional late night services from Marylebone, after the usual cessation of services.

PROJECTS COMPLETED (2011-2012) BY 31/03/12

- Evergreen III. Completed 5th September 2011.
- Installation of on train Wi-Fi on Mainline rolling stock. Completed Autumn 2011.
- Marylebone Control Centre. Completed December 2011.
- Front line staff issued with Smart Phones / PDAs. Completed February 2012.
- Solihull car park deck decking. Completed March 2012.
- Marylebone - Gateline improvements to reduce congestion and enable greater use of bar code ticketing. Commissioned on 23/03/12.

Access for All Small Schemes

- Denham - Deep cleaning and installation of ventilation system at the DDA toilets.
- Dorridge - Automated door opening.
- Dorridge - Installation of DDA compliant toilets.
- High Wycombe - Installation of DDA compliant toilets.

User Group Fund Projects

- Banbury - Cycle Shelters.
- High Wycombe - Benches.
- Marylebone - Second Mobility Buggy.
- Sudbury & Harrow Road - Shelter.

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 with the Passenger Board meetings and consultation process.

Ian Rivett - Chairman