

CHILTERN RAILWAYS PASSENGER BOARD 2016-17 ANNUAL REPORT



Oxford



Marylebone

Introduction

This is the 15th Annual Report of the Chiltern Railways Passenger Board (CRPB) and summarises the main issues that have affected Chiltern Railways (CR) during the past year together with the valuable contributions made by Board members at each of the meetings and in correspondence.

The CRPB plays an important role in providing the opportunity for CRs senior management to present their proposals and future plans and to be held accountable for any adverse performance issues. The Board also acts as a useful information source enabling CR senior managers to understand, at first hand, the issues and concerns that directly affect passengers using their services.

Background: The Chiltern Railways Passenger Board was established in April 2002 and facilitating the Board is a requirement of the Chiltern Franchise agreement (schedule 13 – clause 11.7, page 393) which can be summarised as:

- The Board meets at least once each year and seeks to ensure that CR conducts its business in the best interest of passengers.
- The Board comprises representatives from Passenger User Groups and Local Authorities along the CR line of route.
- The Board monitors the operational performance of CR and reviews infrastructure upgrades, passengers' facilities, timetable changes, fares proposals and passenger satisfaction surveys and supports integrated transport scheme proposals.
- Four quarterly Board meetings are normally held every year with the venue alternating between Birmingham Moor Street and London Marylebone stations. Additional meetings covering specific issues are convened as and when required.

Detailed minutes are produced after each formal meeting recording Board members' views on performance data, ideas for consideration and the responses to queries from CR management representatives. These minutes are not published to avoid any possible breaches of confidentiality or commercial sensitivity.

The following pages contain a summary of the major topics and projects discussed at Board meetings during the previous twelve months.

July 2016 Meeting

Election of Chairman

As no nominations had been received, the board decided that, in line with the Constitution, a Chairman would need to be appointed for each individual meeting until the 2017 AGM and members were requested to volunteer for this.

John Elvin agreed to chair the rest of the meeting and members were actively encouraged to come forward and volunteer their services at future meetings.

Review of Performance Issues

Performance during recent periods had been blighted by a succession of incidents outside of CRs direct control. Several instances of flooding, trees on the line, a body on the line, a serious embankment collapse and an attempted suicide all conspired to return in the most recent period, a PPM score of 91.67%. This was 3.58% behind the Performance Strategy Target of 95.25%. Given that the equivalent period in 2015/16 was 95.93%, the MAA had dropped 0.29% to 94.04%, 0.44% below the Performance Strategy Target of 94.48%.

As an indication of how the underlying causes of the weak performance were not unique to Chiltern, the PPM score of 91.67% was still sufficient to make CR the fifth best operator in the country for this measure. National PPM was 86.5%, a whole 5% behind target.

Of the 10 most significant incidents of PPM failures, only one was caused by CR with the rest resulting from infrastructure issues. The most significant incident of the last quarter - and the most disruptive in terms of PPM for over two years – occurred on 6th May when the power supply system to Marylebone signalling centre shut itself down while some routine maintenance works were being undertaken. This resulted in a complete loss of signalling between Marylebone and Aynho Junction. The technicians manually rebooted the system, but as this process is quite involved, it took some 60 minutes to restore the signalling system to full working order during which time trains were unable to operate.

As a result, NR undertook a learning review, which was attended by CR staff and several recommendations were made, aimed at making the hardware more robust. In addition, similar maintenance works will now be undertaken outside of operational hours

Extended Chiltern journey times on Aylesbury to London Services via Amersham

Some members expressed significant concerns about recently extended journey times on Up services between Aylesbury and Marylebone via the Met line. Following input from Train Planning, it was explained that LU's Met Line services had been speeded up requiring CRs trains to fit in with the revised timetable between Amersham and Harrow. It was agreed to follow this up with Train Planning where a Board member had an alternative proposal to try and remedy these extended journey times.

High Wycombe Bay Platform

The Board expressed concern at the train stopping positions on Platform 1 (Bay Platform) at High Wycombe resulting in a long walk for passengers. After much discussion, it was unanimously agreed by the Board that CR should work constructively with NR in an attempt to resolve this situation.

Future Passenger Board Meeting Times

After a review of existing meeting dates, times and venues, the Board agreed to leave the current patterns unchanged for the time being.

October 2016 Meeting

Appointment of Chairman for this Meeting

Frank Shaw's offer to chair the meeting was warmly welcomed with thanks by members.

Review of Performance Issues

It was reported that Period 8 had seen a slight improvement on recent performance, but the average PPM of 92.35% for the period was 2.13% below the PPM target and 2.56% lower than the equivalent period last year. The MAA has dropped by 0.19% to 93.64%. Nationally, CR were 6th for PPM.

Period 9 was the fifth consecutive period to deliver a PPM below 93% with the recorded 90.94% being 4.55% adrift of target and 4.82% worse than the equivalent period last year. The MAA dropped by 0.36% to 93.28% and now lies 1.22% off the target trajectory. For PPM Chiltern were ninth in the industry, and for the MAA fifth.

The main cause of the below-target results had again been NR's performance, with the most disruptive incidents (measured by PPM) being attributable to them. In response, a performance summit with NR was held on 5th September where NR pledged to spend an additional £1m on performance improvement initiatives along the Chiltern routes.

This additional money would be invested via a 35 point action plan that would be tracked on a monthly basis. NR's pledges include the provision of additional incident response staff, more signals and telecoms engineers, a more rigorous approach to track quality and guarantees over the reliability of certain pieces of key infrastructure.

It was confirmed that incidents of delays caused by trespassing are increasing with the Midlands area being a blackspot.

New Banbury Depot

Construction work had continued at the new Banbury Depot site where the reception and departure roads were open and could each accommodate a locomotive hauled rake or a seven car DMU. In addition, two four car DMUs would be able to be stabled in the depot from 12 December. Phase 1a construction was forecast for completion in April 2017 that would allow a total of 38 units to be stabled there.

Award for Oxford Parkway Station

It was noted that at September's National Rail Awards, the new Oxford Parkway station had been voted 'medium size station of the year'.

Staff changes

It was confirmed that former 'Head of Stations' Chad Collins had moved to Arriva Trains Wales on a 12-month secondment. Alan Riley had taken on this role in addition to his existing responsibility for on-train services. There had also been some changes to station area managers at a local level.

David Heathfield had taken on the role of 'Stakeholder Manager' while elsewhere Andrew Munden (Operations Director) would be leaving in January 2017. It was also confirmed that former Business Development Director, Graham Cross, had moved across to Arriva London (the London Overground concession).

Oxford Line Construction Update

Track work had been completed and signalling installation had begun around one week ahead of programme and is making good progress. It was expected this section of infrastructure will be complete in time for the planned signal commissioning in November.

It was confirmed the project was on schedule to officially open on Monday 12 December although public trains would actually start running on the previous day. Fares via the new route would be uploaded to the fares database four weeks prior to opening.

Members were handed a copy of the December joint line timetable (T/T) that contained some minor alterations but no major amendments. Those minor changes were summarised on a separate schedule.

It was reported that Islip users were unhappy with some of the retimed trains but CR emphasised that, in the new T/T, reliability would be the key driver and of paramount importance would always be the minimum journey time between Oxford and Marylebone.

However, CR said they were looking at the feasibility of running a later train to Oxford following requests from the local user group.

Review of Disruption Incident in August

It was confirmed this incident on 16th August had been caused by points in both directions failing at Aynho Junction resulting in them being clipped in the Oxford direction.

Some services from MYB were diverted to Bicester Village/Oxford Parkway where passengers for stations north of Bicester were encouraged to take the 500 bus to Oxford station where northbound Cross Country trains were being held for diverted passengers.

Overall the incident was not as serious as originally had been thought and, the board were informed that, as part of their contingency planning, CRs aim is to always try and get passengers to their destinations by train rather than by using buses.

Ticket Vending Machine Strategy

Many of the Ticket Vending Machines (TVM) along the CR routes are beginning to show their age so both CR and Arriva are looking at the next generation of TVMs and had approached suppliers to find out the latest technology that was available.

CR confirmed that, in common with other TOCs, the purchase of new 7-day weekly season tickets from ticket machines could only be transacted on the first day of validity to comply with current Rail Settlement Plan rules.

However, this restriction is likely to be reviewed by the rail industry as a whole but these restrictions do not apply when renewing existing 7-day tickets from station ticket offices.

Concerning the subject of passengers travelling without a valid ticket, CR stated they had evidence that only a tiny proportion of ticketless travel was occurring across their network.

January 2017 Meeting

Appointment of Chairman for this Meeting

Chris Bates offered to chair the meeting, which was welcomed with thanks

Review of Performance Issues

In November/December, for the first time since April, CR bettered their Performance Strategy target for PPM with a final result of 92.55%, 0.03% ahead of forecast and were the only franchised operator to achieve this distinction.

The improvement in performance was primarily due to good infrastructure reliability with NR having delivered against their delay minute and PPM targets for the first time in eight periods. A further Performance Summit was held with NR in December when NR and CR developed a new range of pledges to improve performance and reliability.

However it was noted that fleet performance had dropped below target driven by a number of one-off incidents but underlying performance remained on an upward trajectory. A new Head of Fleet Performance has been appointed and their immediate priorities would be to review the Engineering performance meetings and review and adapt performance processes.

In December /January, for the second successive period, CR had exceeded the Performance Strategy target for PPM with a result of 93.53%, 0.61% better than planned that led to the MAA rising to 93.38% with CR being ranked fifth in the country for PPM.

The Board heard this result was very satisfying as CR had been able to exceed the Performance Strategy target given that the period was the first to include data from the recently opened line through to Oxford.

The delay to the delivery of the Oxford Area resignalling scheme meant that NR had been unable to provide conflict free access to the bay platforms at Oxford station. In the build up to the launch, CR had worked closely with NR and other operators to mitigate performance risks associated with sharing the infrastructure into Oxford and the interactions at Oxford had generally worked extremely well.

Rail Compensation Super Complaint

The Board was briefed on the background to the recent ORR report and Chiltern now has a dedicated paper claim form for delay claims with a link from the web site home page. The Board was informed that, as industry changes took place, it is likely that compensation schemes would change and CR are working with suppliers to introduce an automated process for dealing with aspects of claims. The member representing London TravelWatch, Tim Bellenger, confirmed that appeal volumes from CR customers were low when compared with other TOCs.

Furthermore, CR acknowledged that there are conflicts between the Franchise Agreement and the current thinking of both the ORR and DfT. These conflicts are being worked through with many of the industry changes being coordinated by the Rail Delivery Group. CR said their preference would be for customers to be able to log-in to an online account to lodge their claims for compensation.

Launch of Direct Services through to Oxford

On 12th December the new service between Oxford and Marylebone was officially launched marking the conclusion of one of the biggest ever projects embarked upon by CR and the start of a new era for the business. It was reported that patronage for the new service had been very good and the new infrastructure had generally been performing well.

This work marked the culmination of the £320m project to create the first new rail link between London and a major British city for over 100 years. All CR services to and from Oxford Parkway had been extended through to Oxford, operating at half hourly intervals with most trains terminating in the new, extended bay platforms.

Passengers at Oxford Parkway have had the opportunity to continue their journey on two wheels using just their smartphone as new hire bikes were installed at the station. CR had worked with local bike hire shop, Bainton Bikes, to use their innovative new bike hire system that allows customers to book and unlock a bike using an app. Four of the brand new city bikes are installed in the racks outside the station waiting for customers to use them to explore Oxford.

Timetable Review following the full Oxford Opening

Members were briefed on the perception that there was a higher than normal level of crowding and short formations due to fleet maintenance requirements. CR advised the company was pleased with customer volumes from the Oxford line but noted a slight surprise at the significant numbers commuting on services between Bicester and Oxford.

Printed Timetable

The Board were advised that CR were not planning to produce a printed version of the full timetable from May 2017. This generated significant discussion and caused considerable unease among some Board members. CR agreed to re-visit the decision and, subsequent to the meeting, confirmed that a limited paper print run of the May 2017 timetable would be produced, available by request only.

On-Board Catering

CR confirmed that consultations were taking place with staff to cease providing on-board catering on main line services from the end of the current timetable in May 2017. The ensuing discussions were fairly limited due to the confidential nature of the negotiations with staff that were taking place.

Proposed Warwick Step Free Access

In reply to a question concerning step free access being put in at Warwick station it was subsequently confirmed that NR were planning the installation possibly around 2019.

Leamington Station wins Heritage Award

It was reported that CR had won “Highly Commended” in the Railway Heritage Trust Conservation Award for best restored structure in recognition of the Leamington Spa Waiting Room Project. This project (funded by NSIP, Clause 10, and Railway Heritage Funding) saw CR change an old store room into a comfortable waiting room which retained features in line with the original 1930s Art Deco image.

Future Board Meeting Times

The Board agreed that the start time for the AGM in July would need to be considered and discussed by members at the next meeting as some Board members cannot get to London by 10:30am.

April 2017 Meeting

Appointment of Chairman for this Meeting

Frank Shaw offered to chair the meeting, which was welcomed with thanks by members.

Review of Performance Issues

PPM for the period to 4 February closed at 94.18%, meaning that for the first time since in April 2016, CR had achieved the Franchise Agreement PPM target of 93.75%. By doing so, CR had also exceeded the Performance Strategy target by 0.6%, making this the third period in a row to beat this measure.

The MMA ended at 93.37%, 0.01% down on the previous period and this was as a result of performance in the equivalent period in 2016 being marginally better than that recorded in 2017. In terms of an industry comparison, for both period PPM and the MAA CR were the fifth best operator in the country.

A very welcome development had been the improvement in NR's performance and, building on this momentum, CR had increased their focus on 'TOC-on-Self' delays, particularly those relating to the Control function. To this end, CR established a project to reduce 'TOC-on-Self' delays with a specific resource identified to aid delivery.

PPM for the period to 4 March saw the run of above target performance come to an end on the 23rd February, with the effects of Storm Doris significantly impacting performance with the average PPM of 92.72% missing the target by 1.59%. The equivalent result for 2016 was 3.40% higher at 96.12%, leading to the MAA falling by 0.26% to 93.11%. Overall, CR was placed 8th for its PPM in the period when compared with the results of other TOCs.

Business Zone Catering Proposals

Following on from discussions at the previous meeting, Board members were briefed that, from the May timetable, there would be no refreshments provided in the Business Zones off peak and all catering trolleys on the 168 trains would be withdrawn at all times. However, at peak times, Business Zone customers would be offered cold drinks and snacks together with an entertainment package and superior Wi-Fi.

Innovation Funding for Intelligent Gate lines

At the recent TOC'16 competition, funded by the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB), there was success for CR as a part of Arriva in securing innovation funding to the value of £2 million for three innovations. One of these innovative applications is around intelligent gate lines (ticket barrier machines).

In collaboration with London Underground, CR will be installing sensors at stations to influence gate line decision making. This would allow gates to automatically change their entry/exit formation when crowds are detected approaching the barriers.

The board was informed that there is an industry wide plan to end the use of the familiar orange paper tickets by December 2018 with Oyster card style ticketing being used instead.

Free Wi-Fi Roll Out Across the Fleet

Back in 2011, CR had been one of the first TOCs to provide free Wi-Fi on their 'Main Line' services. Since that time, the company has continued to improve its Wi-Fi provision. Free Wi-Fi has now been introduced across CRs commuter routes including services between London Marylebone and Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross.

An additional 1,400 services per week now have free Wi-Fi, resulting in the entire CR fleet offering this service to passengers. The Department for Transport has provided support which has enabled CR to achieve this.

This is in addition to the integrated station and train Wi-Fi proposition which was launched last year that enabled customers to get online while they waited for their train and be seamlessly connected as they joined their train.

Oxford Parkway Success at the Rail Business Awards

More good news was received in February when Oxford Parkway scooped the Station Excellence Award at the 20th Rail Business Awards. It was a huge achievement for Oxford Parkway to win such an award and was down to the way the station had been designed with customers at the heart of its thinking.

The win is also testament to a fantastic team of staff who are on the concourse rather than behind a ticket office window to ensure customers get the best experience as they pass through.

National Rail Passenger Survey

The Autumn 2016 NRPS results were recently published and were very encouraging with CR maintaining an Overall Customer Satisfaction score of 91%, which was the joint top score for a franchised operator.

The 85% recorded for the Attitude and Helpfulness of Station Staff was also a highest ever score for CR. Other franchise leading results were achieved in: Satisfaction with stations, satisfaction with trains, car parking facilities and the ease of getting on and off CR trains.

Printed Timetable Booklets

CR confirmed that a limited number of timetable booklets would be printed for the forthcoming May timetable although the majority of TOCs had already ceased providing them citing cost and environmental issues as the main reasons.

In addition, the board heard that the majority of customers now seem to prefer consulting train timetables on line or via an 'App' on their smartphone.

Conclusion

Members of the Passenger Board would like to express their thanks to the Directors, Managers and Staff of Chiltern Railways for their time afforded to the Board during meetings, consultation processes and correspondence throughout the year.

2016-17 Annual Report

Approved by the Board

21 July 2017