

CHILTERN RAILWAYS PASSENGER BOARD: 2017-18 ANNUAL REPORT



Introduction

This is the 16th Annual Report of the Chiltern Railways Passenger Board (CRPB) and summarises the main issues that have been reviewed and considered at Board meetings during the past year together with contributions made by Board members at each of the meetings and in correspondence.

The CRPB plays an important role in providing the opportunity for Chiltern Railways' (CR) 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 first established in April 2002 and facilitating the Board is a requirement of the Chiltern Franchise agreement (schedule 13 – clause 11.7).

The Board comprises representatives of Passenger User Groups and Local Authorities from along the routes served by CR's train services. The Board monitors the regular operational performance of CR and reviews infrastructure upgrades, passengers' facilities, timetable changes, fares' proposals and passenger satisfaction surveys.

Currently, 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 can be convened as and when required.

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

The following pages contain a summary of the major topics and issues covered at each Board meeting during the previous twelve months. References to Chiltern Railways are abbreviated to CR and similarly Network Rail is NR.

JULY 2017 MEETING

This meeting was held at Marylebone with seventeen people present including six from CR.

Election of Chairman for 2017-18

Although unable to attend this meeting due a longstanding commitment elsewhere, John Elvin was elected unopposed as Chairman for the year to July 2018. Richard Thompson then agreed to chair this meeting in John's absence.

Dave Penney, Managing Director

The Board received a short presentation from Dave Penney, who gave a brief overview of the current state of the business focussing on the major milestone of running direct services through to Oxford. He also compared how the business was developing both pre and post Oxford.

In a question and answer session with Dave Penney, many queries and suggestions were put forward by members with highlights of his responses being:

- Extending services from Oxford to Cowley was presently just an aspiration.
- Recent issues with fleet availability had been exacerbated by a number of factors including class 165 units being away for PRM modifications, two 168/0 units suffering from smashed windscreens that resulted in a long lead time for replacements being obtained and weather-related problems due to the recent heatwave.
- Going forward he said they were investing in People, Tools, Systems, Communications and encouraging feedback.
- Agreed that platform lengths at inner London stations did constrain flexibility but a proposed action plan was with NR on this issue.
- Confirmed that the withdrawal of catering from Main Line services had not resulted in any major adverse feedback.

Review of Performance Issues

CR reported that performance over the last three periods had been challenging with the majority of major delay incidents being attributed to NR infrastructure failure issues.

Meanwhile the ORR had recently published its Passenger Rail Service Complaints Report covering 2016-17 and the Board was pleased that CR had enjoyed the biggest (66%) fall in complaints over the period and had reduced complaints about punctuality or service reliability from 65% to 19% and was responding to 100% of complaints within 20 days.

Cross Industry Partnership Award

The Board was pleased to hear that the Bicester to Oxford Collaboration group had been named winner of the Cross Industry Partnership Award at the 2017 Rail Industry Partnership Awards. This award was made for delivering CR's new Oxford to London rail link including the first phase of the East-West Rail programme. The Collaboration group had included CR, NR and a number of contractors all working together.

Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs)

CR confirmed that 73 new TVMs had been ordered for stations along their route and installation should commence later in the year, pending resolution of one issue around car parking. CR also confirmed these new machines would eventually be able to sell monthly season tickets and Groupsave tickets but only after a Phase 1 deployment.

Bicycles On Board Trains

Members reported an issue of bicycles left in carriage vestibules partially blocking access for disembarking passengers. The Board thought there was little they could do about this problem, but members were requested to report instances of this nature to determine how widespread the problem was. It was also noted that bicycles are not allowed on specified peak hour services.

Future Passenger Board Meeting Times

The Board reviewed the programme of existing meeting dates, times and venues, and after discussion, agreed to revert to meetings starting in the early afternoon so that certain members did not have to take a full day off from their workplace.

OCTOBER 2017 MEETING

This meeting was held in Birmingham with fourteen people participating including five from CR and one member via a video link from London.

Met Line Train Running Information

In response to a member's request prior to the meeting, CR provided the board with a detailed briefing on the manner in which live train running information is collated, distributed and presented across all customer facing channels including stations, websites and mobile apps. This went into great detail and resulted in members acquiring a detailed understanding of how the various reporting systems function.

Review of Performance Issues

The Board had been informed that Fleet failures had been responsible for a significant number of delay incidents over recent months. Members were concerned that CR's Fleet reliability had been impacting on passengers and the Board requested that CR arrange for a more detailed explanation of fleet reliability issues to be presented to them at the next meeting.

Review of Recent Train Cancellations and Short Train Formations

Also in response to another member's request, CR provided a detailed overview of the background and causes relating to a number of recent train cancellations. Reasons included diverting resources to manage crowds at Wembley events, a temporary shortage of available drivers over the summer and breakdowns as a result of train faults.

Managing Growth in Passenger Numbers

CR confirmed to the Board that, at present, future growth in passenger numbers was being planned for by strategic timetable developments and not through fleet expansion. CR thought the full opening of the new Banbury depot would bring additional operating flexibility to the existing fleet.

Banbury Depot

The new depot became available for servicing 42 vehicles each night from May 2017. Facilities include two five car roads for fuelling and toilet emptying and a five-car road for underframe cleaning in addition to stabling roads.

The picture below shows the site while still under construction but with space remaining for the eventual construction of a four road shed with a wheel lathe and jacking facilities.



High Wycombe Bay Platform Starter Signal

This unresolved, ongoing issue relates to High Wycombe bay platform 1 where, following the installation of a new footbridge, most trains have had to berth some way along the platform away from the entrance/exit. This results in an extended, long walk for those changing trains from the main London bound platform 3.

The reason for this is due to a sighting issue with the bay platform starting signal that cannot be seen by the drivers of certain departing trains if they are berthed close to the stop block and platform entrance. Board members had suggested, at an earlier meeting, either moving the signal or installing a 'repeater' to resolve the problem but were informed that any changes to the signalling system would be costly and funding was not currently available to progress either option.

However, CR confirmed that options were being explored for funding allocations in future years but they stressed that nothing had yet been confirmed.

The Board were informed that two evening London bound trains have had station stops at Beaconsfield added specifically to help passengers wishing to transfer on to local services avoiding having to change at Wycombe.

National Rail Awards

The Board was pleased to be informed that CR had been 'Highly Commended' as Passenger Operator of the Year at the recent National Rail Awards with Bicester Village winning an award as 'Small Station of the Year'. The judges were particularly impressed with the provision of the foreign language signage and said that Bicester Village had set a new, incredibly high standard for small stations.

JANUARY 2018 MEETING

This meeting was held at Marylebone with sixteen people participating including six from CR.

Review of Fleet Reliability

Following up an action point from the previous meeting, a presentation was made on behalf of CR's Fleet Engineering section. This confirmed that fleet reliability had become challenging at times during 2017 with a number of different issues that had resulted in train failures. These included: increasing age of the fleet, Banbury depot coming online, partial closure of Wembley Depot, 168/0 DMUs windscreen supply issues, increasing age of the fleet and maintaining the old ATP safety system in working order.

As a result, a new senior management team had been put in place with an emphasis on Planning Led Maintenance Schedules that was leading to a more proactive production line. A reliability strategy, Project 66, was in place to reduce train failures to a maximum of 66 incidents per period compared with around 100 previously. This strategy was founded on the principles of:

- People: Performance culture, empowered, knowledgeable, trained, competent & accountable
- Product: Robust, sustainable, governed, supplier management, system management & material management
- System/Part: supported, maintained, available, reliable, defect governance, quality management & production management

The Board was shown a Defect Escape Chart which tracks the prevalence of minor and major defects and the linkages between them and it was explained how this can help management target the root cause of disruptive maintenance issues.

In answer to a question, it was explained that one of the biggest problems for fleet maintenance was that trains were running for longer periods (assets being sweated) and the need, in a more intensive fleet schedule, to make time to fix maintenance issues whilst minimising passenger impact. Currently, the most reliable trains in the fleet were the class 168 DMUs

Review of Recent Performance Issues

The Board was informed that, in the most recent Company reporting period under review, CR's PPM MA performance was still below the franchise obligation. In period 12 this was due to a combination of NR Infrastructure failures, disruptive passengers, and some fleet issues.

These NR incidents had received a slow response due to NR teams attending another incident which had exacerbated the impact of the NR infrastructure failures on PPM. The specific issues that arose were on infrastructure items that would normally have only been replaced on failure and there had been no opportunity for proactive maintenance that would have avoided the equipment failure from occurring.

Ticket Vending Machine Renewal Project

The Board was informed that CR has 73 TVMs across their network comprised of two types, cash and non-cash.

Over £2m of investment was being committed to these new TVMs and was part of an Arriva Group project. This should result in a more consistent look and feel for passengers.

The technology platform is more flexible than the existing TVMs and future developments such as season tickets, video links for customer assistance etc, should all eventually be possible.

It was confirmed that all TVMs would be replaced during the first half of 2018. There would be a scaling up process in the project with, initially, just single units being installed followed by observation and testing. Based upon lessons learned, the installation process would be refined and, over time, the new TVMs would be installed at a faster rate.

Members were requested to try out the new TVMs and feedback comments and suggestions in order to assist in getting the offering right for all passengers.



Two TVMs installed inside the main entrance at Bicester Village station

Anti Social Behaviour Incident at High Wycombe Station

A Board member had raised the issue of an anti-social behaviour incident at High Wycombe station where some female travellers had felt threatened by a group of males.

CR confirmed there had been an ongoing issue with these men that the BTP had been aware of but, since the incident, these individuals had been apprehended and processed through the criminal justice system. The key message that CR stressed to the Board was that this harassment incident was not reported to a member of staff at the time and incidents like this must always be reported promptly so they can be followed up and dealt with.

CR thanked the Board for bringing this matter to their attention in the absence of it being reported at the time.

APRIL 2018 MEETING

This meeting was held in Birmingham with twelve people participating including four from CR and one member via an audio link from London.

Review of Recent Performance Issues

Recent Performance Briefings had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the highlights were summarised by CR:

The Board was informed that service disruption delays resulting from Network Rail infrastructure and operational issues still dominated the reasons for delay incidents during the most recent three reporting periods. The Board was pleased to note that fleet failures had been noticeably reduced and had been only responsible for a minority of major delay issues during these periods.

Fleet Performance

At a previous meeting, the Board had requested that CR present a report on fleet performance issues and members were informed that, under the Head of Performance, Peter Finch, CR is focussing on catching fleet defects earlier. To this end, the new Head of Fleet Engineering had created separate reporting positions responsible for maintaining each type of rolling stock:

- Class 172s are now being maintained in house instead of being outsourced to Willesden depot.
- Class 168s have had health checks with door control units being replaced.
- Class 168/3s have non-standard engine control units and these are being replaced.
- Class 165s direct control switches and alternators are being replaced.
- Loco hauled: some electric train supply (ETS) issues have been encountered and, if ETS should fail, the train cannot be used in passenger service.
- Health checks are also being carried out on the loco hauled carriage fleet and DVTs.

Rail Business Awards

The Board was pleased to be informed that CR had won 'Train Operator of the Year' at the recent Rail Business Awards in London. It was also noted that CR were 'highly commended' for their combined 'station to train' Wi-Fi service.

Environment and Sustainability

A member had raised these issues to try and help minimise the use of disposable plastic water bottles and to facilitate suitable items of litter being recycled wherever possible:

Recycling

CR confirmed that rubbish, like single use coffee cups & plastic bottles, would be separated and sent for recycling if they had just been left on carriage tables etc. but that any items placed in litter bins would be consigned straight to landfill and not sorted. CR also said they were considering trialling customer sorting of litter on the 168/3 fleet with bins being labelled for the segregation of different types of rubbish that would hopefully lead to more items being recycled.

Plastic Waste

CR said they would consider trialling the provision of a water fountain at Marylebone to reduce the use of plastic water bottles although, at other stations, it would be up to the retail tenants to provide such a facility. The Board suggested CR should produce a 'statement of intent' for the provision of water taps and it was agreed that CR would report back to the Board on this issue at the next meeting.

Car Park Charges

A member had queried why the monthly car park prices at Banbury had been increased by 15.1% while the weekly rate had gone up by just 5%.

In response, CR reported that, although weekly car park charges had increased twice in recent years, there had been no equivalent increase in monthly ticket prices. These recent pricing changes had been made to introduce consistency across the car park estate and with the differences between monthly, weekly and daily rates.

Following further discussions on car parks, it was suggested that Chiltern's Commercial team should make a presentation to the Board at a future meeting. The Board agreed this would be beneficial to all and would tentatively be scheduled for the October meeting.

High Wycombe Bay Platform Starting Signal

The Board received an update on this outstanding issue and was informed it had been receiving attention at recent company management meetings and CR are continuing to pressurise interested parties with a view to the issue being resolved. However, until a suitable source of funding can be identified to carry out the necessary signalling work, the present situation of most trains stopping short of the stop blocks was likely to continue in the short term.

May 2018 Timetable Preview

CR briefly summarised some small changes to a number of services effective from the May 2018 timetable change that would improve performance while creating additional capacity where needed including the addition of 1200 extra seats during the evening peak. Copies of the new timetable booklet were handed out to members.

Chiltern Website & App Update

The Board noted the new Chiltern 'App' had received poor scores following its recent launch. CR said changes were planned and Board members were urged to report any problems as soon as possible and not wait until the next meeting.

Nominations for Chairman at next AGM

The Chairman reminded members of the timing of the process for electing a new chairman at the July AGM. Members were strongly urged to consider putting their names forward to ensure there was a permanent chairman for the next year in order to ensure continuity between meetings. Nomination forms were handed out to those present.

CR said that ideally, they would like the Board to become more representative of their passengers and were aiming to incorporate new channels of 'informed customer feedback' in the future.

Update on New Ticket Vending Machines

The Board was informed that the new TVMs were proving to be quite reliable, but were not as flexible in some areas as they could be. However, a software update was planned for later in the year to rectify these and other issues that had been reported.

Reduction in some Services during Wembley Events

Several members had expressed concern with the lack of publicity covering the reduction in some weekend Aylesbury Met line services during major sporting events at Wembley. CR apologised and said that additional posters had since been placed in more prominent positions on Met line stations including on platform two at Harrow on the Hill.

The Board was informed that the reason for reducing some Met Line service to an hourly frequency was to re-allocate resources in order to provide additional services to Wembley Stadium to cater for the large crowds attending sporting events. It was reported that major sporting events at Wembley had increased by 50% compared to normal and was likely to continue at this level while the stadium was being used for regular Premier League football matches.

Chairman's Comments:

Having been Chairman for three out of the last four years, I shall be standing down at the AGM and would like to express my thanks to all Board members for their respect and support during this period. I am sure they will continue to support the next chairman in the same manner.

Finally, on behalf of the CRPB, I should like to express the Board's thanks to the Directors, Managers and Staff of Chiltern Railways for giving their time to the Board during meetings, consultation processes and correspondence throughout the past year.

John Elvin FCA

Chairman
Chiltern Railways Passenger Board 2017-18