

## **Isleworth Station Group**

### **Notes from a meeting on the Stakeholder Consultation for the South Western Rail Franchise at Spring Grove House – 27 January 2016**

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This event was an opportunity to discuss our local train stations, their services and share thoughts on how people may respond to the Department for Transport's Rail Executive's consultation, prior to their publishing a new operating contract for tender in April 2016.

Osterley & Spring Grove Ward Councillor Tony Louki had arranged the meeting attended by 22 residents, the venue kindly made available by West Thames College.

#### **Recent work of the Isleworth Station Group**

Tony Louki began by describing issues explored since first bringing station users together at the London Road Improvement Group meeting on 30 September 2015. The Isleworth Station group had so far met three times and, highlighting to Hounslow Council and South West Trains, have listed a number of issues to be resolved. These include:

- Improving access to Isleworth Station – Hounslow Council have commissioned and are about to publish options for lifts and new pedestrian routes to both platforms
- Refurbishment of the bridges over London Road and St Johns Road – Hounslow Council is about to undertake a feasibility study in order to offer owners Network Rail options to resolve
- Car park and boundary fence improvements to reduce anti social behaviour – South West Trains have undertaken to work with Network Rail and police to achieve this
- A full structural survey of the station to offer improvements for services to passengers and opportunities for commercial and community – SWT has offered to facilitate and a bid for funding has been made to Hounslow Council should this be required.

#### **Services from Isleworth and Syon Lane Stations on the Hounslow Loop Line**

Michael Peacock, from Thornbury Avenue and a committee member of the Windsor Line Passengers Association kindly and at short notice, gave details of how the service developed and currently works and what to consider when responding to the DfT consultation that ends on 9 February 2016.

- The franchise is currently held until 2017 by Stagecoach South West Trains but it is understood that another operator, the German state railways owned Arriva, is interested in adding this to its other half a dozen or so contracts.
- There is the new added variable of the announcement last week that Transport for London has the ambition, with the support of the DfT, to take responsibility of London's suburban routes to the boundary of Zone 6 as part of the London Overground network, more below.

- Our stations are part of the Windsor Lines service running in to the high (number) platforms in to Waterloo via the low platforms at Clapham Junction.
- The service, from Victorian times until the mid 1990s was only ever two trains per hour before the current weekday four trains per hour. This was introduced following the WLPAs showing that it was completely possible to achieve this.
- Since December 2015 and following years of campaigning, Sunday services offer two half hourly trains but only after 13.08 at Isleworth and 13.10 at Syon Lane Stations towards Waterloo and 14.11 and 14.13 in the opposite direction to Kingston via Twickenham.

### **What to include in new franchise – “it depends on what you want”**

Michael and many present offered a range of ideas, proposals and options which respondents may wish to consider in their submissions to the stakeholder consultation.

#### **1 Frequency**

- The appropriateness of current half hourly service on the loop via Hounslow, Twickenham and Richmond and half hourly to Weybridge
- An all day, fifteen minute interval service on Sundays
- Earlier morning starts to loop operation via Twickenham so that passengers, particularly scholars can make destinations towards Kingston via Twickenham
- Later last train departures from Waterloo, currently 23.52 and in the opposite direction, currently 23.19 from Isleworth and 23.21 from Syon Lane.

#### **2 Destinations**

- Whether there is a wish for additional direct destinations than the current Waterloo via Clapham Junction and Weybridge services
- Introduction of “stop skipping” services where some trains serving the loop are timetabled to miss particular stations during peak or other times.

#### **3 Stations quality**

- Clarity in the franchise document to detail and timetable an operator’s capital commitment for improvement of stations particularly on the Hounslow Loop Line but also elsewhere on the network
- A contractual duty to communicate and consult with service users, community organisations and local authorities on station improvement plans
- Investment to improve and maintain stations along the loop to make them accessible for all users
- Reducing gaps between trains and platforms either completely or by placing *Harrington Humps* at points on the platform to allow level access to carriages
- Station staffing at all times to allow passenger assistance, information, reduce anti social behaviour, maintain the operation of lifts and station toilets and reporting of station defects including ticket machine breakdowns and Oyster Card reader failures
- Requiring operators to ensure a safe environment within the whole of the franchised station curtilage and in conjunction with local authorities all approaches to stations

- Improvements to passenger protection from adverse weather by reopening internal staircases, the waiting room, installing quality canopies on platforms and over the stairs at Isleworth and better elemental protection at Syon Lane
- Offering options for easier payment for car parking
- Maintaining and promoting free car park use on Sundays linked to that day's train services
- Enabling commercial opportunities within stations such as refreshments and newsstands
- Clear advice on who to contact regarding stations issues, including the posting the name and how to contact details of Station Managers and the operator's central customer services operation, at each station.

#### **4 Train journeys quality**

- Minimum eight car train lengths at all times for all services
- Maximising and on board informing of varied doors opening at all stations
- Preferences for carriage layouts including seat configurations options include 2+2, 3+3, lateral rows with seatbacks to windows facing in, with arm rests, height of seat backs, fixed or pull down tables.
- Placing of grab handles near train doors, hanging straps, vertical poles
- Working toilets on all services at all times requiring that emptying and cleaning facilities placed at destination stations and not solely at depots.

#### **5 Service information**

- Maintaining the availability of information as well as emergency facility from the information points located on station platforms
- Honest and clear information on when service delays become cancellations
- Placing train indicators by Oyster Card scanners in addition to those on platforms to allow for alternative travel should there be service delays
- Improving live service information particularly during delays
- Better publicity of all services from stations including street level timetables
- Promoting the availability of station car parks
- Bridges and external signs at stations promoting destinations and service frequencies
- Support for and better integration with other means of access to stations including local buses, cycling and safe pedestrian routes.

#### **6 Ticketing**

- Maximising add on facilities at ticket machines including options to buy fares to and from fare zone boundaries.
- Reduce the opportunities for fare evasion at unstaffed stations.
- Encourage season ticket and Freedom Pass holders to scan in and out at stations to better measure stations use.

### **The Transport for London factor**

During Michael's presentation references were made to the announcement on 21 January 2016, within this SWRF consultation period, of a separate consultation from the Department for Transport and Mayor for London: [A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East.](#)

This proposes the incorporation of all London suburban rail services, including those in the spotlight here, to Zone 6, as far as Feltham in Hounslow's case, to the London Overground system. Not a new idea, one worked on long ago by the former Chair of the GLC's Transport Committee, local boy Dave Wetzel until Thatcher saw them off in the 1980s.

This proposal, also out for consultation and ending 18 March 2016, sets out a number of principles and ambitions to integrate services as franchises come up for renewal. Quoting from the joint DfT and TfL consultation document, its aims are:

- 1. More frequent services, better interchanges and increased capacity – to support growth, carry more people and help address crowding*
- 2. Greater reliability for all passengers – putting excellent performance at the heart of train operator contracts*
- 3. High standards of customer service – including more integrated information, fares and ticketing, as well as weekend and night services and a more accessible network*

*This proposal includes the transfer of responsibility from the DfT to TfL for inner suburban rail services that operate mostly or wholly within Greater London, as current franchises fall due for renewal. The DfT will continue to be responsible for outer suburban services. The partnership will ensure that all the region's passengers benefit from a joined-up approach.*

From a Hounslow perspective, this is probably a good idea. Whilst South West Trains comes out top against other rail franchisees, TfL is better at looking after its passengers and stations. Despite Johnson's campaign promise not to shut ticket offices (which is now happening), all TfL stations are staffed, clean, safer and better integrated with the rest of its network.

**7** Run by TfL, the down side for us, however, would be:

- No more cheap day returns
- No off peak fares
- Inability to use network discount cards
- Driver only operated trains meaning no guards
- Potential to reduce seating to allow for more standing passengers.

Residents are encouraged to respond to both consultations, the more urgent being the South Western Rail Franchise by 9 February 2016.

Councillor Tony Louki would welcome being copied in to your response.

All are encouraged to join the Windsor Line Passengers Association at £4.00 per year, go to [www.wlpa.co.uk](http://www.wlpa.co.uk) to find out more.

The meeting ended on time at 9.00 pm.

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