



Sent via email – 6 September 2023

Martin Darby
Stakeholder Manager
Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR)
Mobile: 07815 016800
martin.darby@gtrailway.com

Re: Start of engagement on potential changes to Southern Rail's West Coastway

Dear Mr Darby

With respect to the West Coastway Timetable Proposed changes Summer 2023 please find enclosed a number of points for your consideration from Billingshurst Parish Council on behalf of the Billingshurst community:

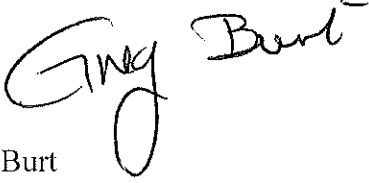
1. On the face of it there do not seem to be significant changes proposed to either to direct destinations available from Billingshurst or timings/frequency of service.
2. This would seem to be a missed opportunity to revisit the needs of a community which has doubled in size since the last major timetable changes in 2007, detailed in the attached letter from the Arun Valley Rail Users Association
3. Services from Billingshurst have had an appalling record on punctuality in recent years with many trains cancelled altogether due to operational difficulties including signal failures, staff shortages, industrial action and occasional poor weather.
4. The main 2007 change affecting Billingshurst was that the splitting/joining of trains destined for Bognor Regis and Portsmouth/Southampton would take place in Horsham rather than Barnham as previously. The rationale for the change was that Southern Rail want to speed up the journey time from Chichester in a bid to attract more passengers onto the line as many passengers from the Chichester area were using the alternative faster South Western services from Havant.
5. Splitting/joining at Horsham has:

- a) added 5-10 minutes to most journeys from Billingshurst to/from London
 - b) added considerably (30-60 minutes or longer) to those journeys when things go wrong, which has happened many, many times in recent years because the “fast” portion of the train is prioritised and the “slow” Bognor Regis portion is delayed or often cancelled altogether
 - c) taken away the option of a direct train to Portsmouth or Southampton
 - d) created twice as much traffic up and down the Horsham-Barnham section of the line as there was previously because there are now both “fast” non-stopping and “slow” stopping services causing serious congestion at stopping points including the busy level crossing in Billingshurst
 - e) doubled the risk of accidents and fatalities of which there have sadly been a number in recent years.
6. For the above reasons, Billingshurst strongly favours reintroduction of splitting/joining in Barnham instead of Horsham, given that any passengers from Chichester and beyond who may have benefitted from the 2007 arrangement already have a faster alternative available to them via South Western Railway.
7. Billingshurst also favours reintroduction of the twice daily peak hour Billingshurst-London Bridge and back services which were withdrawn during COVID. The many commuters to the City of London now face a much longer journey either by having to change trains en route or by taking London Transport from Victoria.
8. Destination choices from Billingshurst would be enhanced by running Horsham-Dorking line services South as far as Barnham as happened in the more distant past and similarly by extending Thameslink to Barnham. This would also enhance reliability providing alternative options when the main service is delayed or cancelled.
9. The 22.35 hrs service from Victoria is far too early for a last service to a population the size of Billingshurst making a London night out such as to the theatre unworkable. We propose a later service departing Victoria no earlier than 2330.
10. The hourly Sunday services from Billingshurst are inadequate and we would propose these should be increased to every 30 minutes as on weekdays.

Thank you for inviting us to this consultation exercise and we look forward to your favourable consideration of the above comments and proposals.

We have responded separately to the consultation on the proposed closure of ticket offices.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Burt". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Greg" and the last name "Burt" clearly legible.

Greg Burt

Clerk to the Council

On behalf of Billingshurst Parish Council

Enc.

Timetable changes!

In December there will be radical changes in the timetable for the Arun Valley line for all but a few peak hour services.

The **news is good** for passengers travelling to and from Chichester and Barnham who can expect faster services, especially off peak although there will be only two trains each hour instead of three as the service via Worthing is being withdrawn. For Bognor Regis and Littlehampton passengers there is also good news as they will have two through trains to Victoria every hour in the off-peak instead of one.

Passengers travelling and from Ford, Arundel, Amberley, Pulborough, Billingshurst, and Christ's Hospital will have **longer journeys in both directions** (except for key "high" peak hour services).

From Horsham travelling northwards there will be no effect on current journey times.

Why is this happening?

Southern want to speed up the journey time from Chichester in a bid to attract more passengers onto the line. Currently many passengers from the Chichester area use SWT services from Havant. As Southern have been required to replace services between Brighton and Basingstoke/Reading currently being operated by SWT, one of our off-peak trains will run through to Southampton with the other terminating at Portsmouth.

What will the effect be?

Trains in both directions will split or join at Horsham rather than Barnham. One peak hour in each direction will split/join at Three Bridges.

Key peak services will be unaffected, please see the timetable included with this communication. However there are some services popular with commuters will be affected.

Travelling north, a stopping train will leave Bognor at the current time but, without the current 6 minute wait at Barnham, it will run up to 6 minutes or so **earlier** than at present and wait at Horsham to be joined by a fast train from Chichester that stops only at Barnham.

Southwards, trains will split at Horsham with the front portion speeding off to Chichester after a 4 minute wait, stopping only at Barnham.

The rear portion will wait up for up to a further 4 minutes for a signal to proceed so **arrival times** at stations south of Horsham to Ford will be **up to 8 minutes later** than now. Arrival times at Bognor will be unchanged

The net effect, for anyone travelling off-peak, and for some commuter services, from Ford, Arundel, Amberley, Pulborough, Billingshurst, and Christ's Hospital is a **longer journey in both directions**.

An extract of the timetable is at the end of this newsletter.

We discussed these changes with Southern on several occasions and, whilst they acknowledge that many Arun Valley passengers will have a less convenient journey, they maintain that the new timetable will benefit the majority of passengers. Time will

tell. Southern have agreed to monitor the effect of the changes but the timetable is now set until December 2008.

What can you do?

If the revised timetable affects your journey for better or for worse, please email/write to Southern and copy your correspondence to us. We will be compiling evidence of the effects and need **your** view. The contact details for Southern are:

Email - comments@southernrail.com

By post – Southern Customer Services, PO Box 277, Tonbridge, TN29 2ZP

Longer term improvements.

Southern will take over the franchise for the Gatwick Express in June 2008. This may give more flexibility if the Gatwick Express no longer uses a dedicated line.

Southern are dangling the carrot of a ½ hourly peak time service from Victoria with effect from December 2008.

Meet the managers.

Southern will be holding a “meet the manager” session at Horsham, Pulborough, Billingshurst and Chichester during November. Please take a few moments to speak to the Southern managers and make your views count!