



ABFLY newsletter

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ABFLY MEMBERS' MEETING

Wednesday 5th November 2014 @ 19:30
(doors open 19:00)

ST STEPHENS PARISH CENTRE
BRICKET WOOD

1930 – 2030: London Midland update
Patrick Verwer (Managing Director)

2030 – 2100: CRP update
Janet Tyndale (CRP Officer)

2100 – 2130: Any other business

New members are welcome to join on the door.
Membership is £3 per household per year. For further
information please contact:

John Webster (chairman), 75 Windmill Avenue, St
Albans, Herts, AL4 9SJ. Phone: 01727 752613
E-mail: chairman@abfly.org.uk



The new vandal-resistant shelter at Garston (above) and one of the laser-cut steel panels (below)



INNOVATIVE SOLUTION TO COMBAT GARSTON VANDALISM

Vandalism at Garston station is a well-known problem. A new waiting shelter, provided by London Midland and Hertfordshire County Council, provided a welcome refuge for passengers, but this did not last long. Within 24 hours of being put up, the glass panels had been smashed and needed to be removed. These were replaced and after the vandalism of the replacement panels, London Midland would not replace them again. The shelter stood without any glass panels for over two years whilst a solution was sought. Working with Groundwork Hertfordshire, the Community Rail Partnership (CRP) developed a brief to provide an attractive shelter that was as vandal proof as possible, without completely encasing it in steel which would have made it a dark and oppressive box.

This was a challenging project but thanks to the hard work of Groundwork Hertfordshire and the CRP, an innovative, though technically difficult, solution was found. Artwork designs were cut out of stainless steel panels and used to replace the glass panels. The CRP had previously undertaken an art project with a local school and the resulting art posters had been displayed at the station. The theme for this artwork was around the use of sustainable transport, so it was decided to carry over this topic for the shelter. The original children's art designs from the station posters were redrawn on computer and adapted to allow for the design to be turned into a stencil via a CAD file. This was a challenging and precision piece of work produced by Jayne Pullen, from Groundwork Hertfordshire. The first attempt was unsuccessful as it resulted in a design with jagged edges. Jayne had to painstakingly redraw it. The second attempt resulted in smooth lines with a clear and distinctive representation of the children's artworks. The finished panels are sandwiched between two layers of a very robust polycarbonate and the front panels of the shelter have clear polycarbonate for visibility. Well done to all involved for achieving such a fantastic result.

With thanks to Janet Tyndale, Abbey Line CRP Officer, for this article.

'HERTS CROSSRAIL' FEASIBILITY STUDY

In early August, Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin announced that the government had commissioned a feasibility study to examine the possibility of extending Crossrail into Hertfordshire.

The proposals would see a brand new link between the Great Western and West London Lines in the Old Oak Common area. The West London Line joins to the West Coast Main Line (WCML) at Willesden, making through services to destinations such as Watford Junction, Hemel Hempstead and Tring a possibility.

The benefits would be improved transport links and the shortening of journey times to the City and West End by up to fifteen minutes. In addition it could open up a new Zone 1-avoiding rail route to Heathrow, which will be served directly by Crossrail.

The move is designed in part to relieve the pressure on existing Watford-Euston trains, and to reduce congestion at Euston in advance of its future expanded role as the London terminus of HS2. Crossrail is due to open in 2018. HS2 is due to open in 2026.

The link could have positive implications for the Abbey Line. Watford Junction is fast becoming a key transport hub for Hertfordshire and North London. The Crossrail proposals, together with the Croxley Link (now under construction and due to open in 2017), strengthen the case for completely redeveloping the station. As a feeder service, it could also generate significant new business for the Abbey Line, thus strengthening the case for a higher frequency service.

The re-signalling works at Watford Junction include a new fully-integrated connection between the WCML and the branch, which would allow for regular through-running in future if required. In view of this, ABFLY have written to the Transport Secretary asking him to consider extending the scope of the feasibility study to include services to St Albans Abbey. We await a response.

NEW FACES

In line with our ambition to strengthen the ABFLY team, bring in new skills and make it more representative of daily users, we are pleased to welcome two new faces; Kevin Ambrose and Robin White.

Kevin trained as a town planner and has spent much of his career in local government roles. A member of the Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics, he brings with him a wealth of expert knowledge and experience in local campaigning, having been a lynchpin of the '20 is plenty' campaign to reduce road speed limits in Watford.

Robin is a long-standing user of the Abbey Line and resident of Bricket Wood, and re-joins the committee after an absence of many years.

We are still looking for volunteers to fulfil the specific posts of Secretary, Publicity Officer and Website / Social Media Manager. Please contact John Webster (chairman) if you are interested in any of these roles.

In addition, if you have any relevant skills in business case development, campaigning etc then please get in touch.

Phone: 01727 752613
E-mail: chairman@abfly.org.uk

Facebook
www.facebook.com/abflyrail



Twitter: [@abflyusers](https://twitter.com/abflyusers)

TRAIN CLEANING TRIAL

Following representations from both ABFLY and the CRP about poor standards of cleanliness on the branch's Class 321 trains, London Midland (LM) have started trialling a new regime, whereby overnight cleaning of the interiors is sub-contracted to London Overground staff. As well as that, LM's station cleaning contractor now picks up litter twice a day on the train.

Unfortunately an overhaul of the interior is not funded within the remaining term of LM's franchise. However, we understand that a 'Direct Award' contract is currently being negotiated between the Department for Transport (DfT) and LM, which will extend the franchise from March 2016 until June 2017 when the franchise is to be completely re-let. ABFLY have therefore written to the DfT urging them to make an interior overhaul a contractual commitment of the Direct Award.

We are grateful to LM for having listened and acted on our concerns, but we need to let them have our feedback in order for this to continue. If you have noticed the difference, please e-mail your feedback to crp@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

BUSTITUTION

During the closures, Bus Replacement services have been operating. These are far from perfect at the best of times, and our Ops Manager Roz Devlin has been closely monitoring the situation, however we are always in need of better information / feedback from other users.

If you have issues for example with poor signage, buses not turning up, picking up or setting down in the wrong place, lack of timetables or incorrect / conflicting information at stations (all of which we have witnessed!), or any other problems, then please contact us: info@abfly.org.uk.

TICKETLESS TRAVEL COSTING BRANCH £200K PER YEAR

One of the key problems on the Abbey Line is ticketless travel. There are several reasons for this; including a lack of station ticket machines (although in recent years they have been installed at St Albans Abbey and Watford North), difficulty for the guard to inspect and issue tickets, when he needs to return to his cab at every station to operate the doors, and the intermittent presence of dedicated RPIs (London Midland tend to concentrate them, naturally, on peak time services).

Nobody, to our knowledge, has ever tried to quantify the level of ticketless travel, or its impact in terms of lost revenue. This is important because it has had, or would have had, an impact on feasibility studies concerning improvements which ABFLY has long-since campaigned for, principally a higher-frequency service and restoration of later evening trains.

Almost every year since the inauguration of the CRP in 2005, annual passenger counts have been conducted. These have been undertaken by The Railway Consultancy. Their 2006 report stated that, "Silverlink expressed some concern over the effectiveness of revenue protection on the line. These concerns seem justified given that, although nearly three quarters of passengers indicate that their ticket had been checked, 26% of travellers had not had their tickets inspected."

So what is the true rate of ticketless travel on the branch? And what is the impact on the economics of the line? Here is our attempt to analyse it. If you don't like technical, look away now!

Method

Taking station usage data from the website of the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), which is derived from LENNON / ORCATS data (the rail industry's ticketing and revenue-apportionment system), we have compared it with data from the Passenger Counts. The difference between the two, in essence, represents an estimation of the amount of ticketless travel.

The first problem, however, is that count data for passengers getting on and off at individual stations was only available from the Passenger Count report of 2006-07. After that, the surveys concentrated more on total number of boarders / alighters per day and what the purpose of their journey was. So a direct comparison between Passenger Count and ORR data was only possible for 2006-07. Any other year requires extrapolation.

The next thing to note is that the ORR data talks about 'Entries' and 'Exits'. It is assumed that all 'Entries' to a station have boarded a train and all 'Exits' have just got off one. Hence 'Entries' are comparable to the Passenger Survey's 'Boarders' and 'Exits' are comparable to 'Alighters'. The study cannot include Watford Junction, since Entries and Exits could be to/from all manner of destinations other than the Abbey Line. In reality, not a lot of revenue is probably lost through Watford Junction, compared to the rest of the Abbey Line, because of the ticket barriers.

To extrapolate from the Passenger Count figures of three days in May 2006 (one weekday, one Saturday and one Sunday), up to annual figures, there are assumed to be 105 weekend days, 252 working days and 8 bank holidays per year. The numbers are multiplied accordingly. Bank holidays are treated as Sundays for the purpose of this study.

To extrapolate from 2006 station Passenger Count figures (which were measured) to 2012/13 station Passenger Count figures (which were not measured), the 2006-07 Passenger Count data was scaled up in the ratio of the 2012/13 to 2006 ORR station figures.

Finally, once a figure for the number of ticketless journeys has been arrived at, it needs to be converted into £££s. To do this, we created a 'fares matrix' showing peak and off-peak fares between every combination of stations on the line (see Table 3, overleaf). Then we took an average of the peak and off-peak fares from each station and used these to calculate the lost income per station per year.

Conclusions

Our analysis concluded that the level of ticketless travel was 18% in 2006-07, and 17% in 2012-13. This is broadly in line with Silverlink's "26%" statement from 2006 – at least it's the right 'order of magnitude'.

Putting this in terms of revenue loss, we calculate an annual loss over the whole branch of over £200k per year. If this figure is realistic, it is very interesting – because that sort of money would easily pay the salary of several extra RPIs! Or some modifications to the trains to provide door opening panels at every door position, thus making their job easier. Or perhaps go some way to cover the operational cost of a second train on the branch! Either way it can be seen as a not insignificant cost to the taxpayer, and it is totally within London Midland's remit to do something about it.

The detailed figures are presented in Tables 1 – 3, overleaf.

Readers are invited to comment on the analysis. Please feel free to feed back to info@abfly.org.uk.

Table 1: ticketless travel analysis, 2006

Year	Month	Station	ORR annual		CRP Passenger Survey May 2006								Difference		Average fare		Estimated lost income			
			2006-07 figures		Weekdays		Saturday		Sunday		Annual (extrapolated)		Negative number = ORR underprediction		Peak	Off-peak				
			Entries	Exits	Board	Alight	Board	Alight	Board	Alight	Board	Alight	Board	Alight						
2006	May	Watford North	40571	41922	103	121	55	57	20	21	33991	38850	6580	3072	£ 4.82	£ 3.32	£ 26,758.67			
2006	May	Garston	42341	43697	134	127	90	67	32	45	46834	44124	-4493	-427	£ 4.78	£ 3.28	-£ 18,121.77			
2006	May	Bricket Wood	23873	25382	83	77	72	71	37	38	32657	31153	-8784	-5771	£ 4.48	£ 3.20	-£ 33,745.20			
2006	May	How Wood	18725	19807	63	53	56	56	21	20	24129	21496	-5404	-1689	£ 4.30	£ 2.97	-£ 19,634.53			
2006	May	Park Street	13729	14950	65	76	57	46	18	15	24399	25677	-10670	-10727	£ 4.60	£ 3.22	-£ 41,701.92			
2006	May	St Albans Abbey	105834	101812	336	299	295	322	133	157	130676	126899	-24842	-25087	£ 5.78	£ 3.90	-£ 120,276.68			
Annual journeys by ORR prediction					492643	(not including Watford Junction)													-£	206,721
Annual journeys by CRP passenger survey prediction					580885	(not including Watford Junction)														
Percentage under-prediction by ORR figures					18%															

Table 2: ticketless travel analysis, 2012/13

Year	Month	Station	ORR annual		CRP Passenger Survey - 2012/13 estimation by scaling								Difference		Average fare		Estimated lost income			
			2012-13 figures		Weekdays		Saturday		Sunday		Annual (extrapolated)		Negative number = ORR underprediction		Peak	Off-peak				
			Entries	Exits	Board	Alight	Board	Alight	Board	Alight	Board	Alight	Board	Alight						
2012-13		Watford North	53155	53155	135	153	72	72	26	27	44534	49260	8621	3895	£ 4.82	£ 3.32	£ 35,058.46			
2012-13		Garston	47791	47791	151	139	102	73	36	49	52862	48258	-5071	-467	£ 4.78	£ 3.28	-£ 20,454.34			
2012-13		Bricket Wood	23149	23149	80	70	70	65	36	35	31667	28412	-8518	-5263	£ 4.48	£ 3.20	-£ 32,721.80			
2012-13		How Wood	19039	19039	64	51	57	54	21	19	24534	20663	-5495	-1624	£ 4.30	£ 2.97	-£ 19,963.79			
2012-13		Park Street	17809	17809	84	91	74	55	23	18	31650	30587	-13841	-12778	£ 4.60	£ 3.22	-£ 54,094.94			
2012-13		St Albans Abbey	97465	97465	309	286	272	308	122	150	120343	121481	-22878	-24016	£ 5.78	£ 3.90	-£ 110,765.60			
Annual journeys by ORR prediction					516816	(not including Watford Junction)													-£	202,942
Annual journeys by CRP passenger survey prediction					604250	(not including Watford Junction)														
Percentage under-prediction by ORR figures					17%															

Table 3: fares matrix (data taken from London Midland website, correct as of 26th June 2014)

Peak fares - standard return								Off-peak fares - standard return							
	Watford Junction	Watford North	Garston	Bricket Wood	How Wood	Park Street	St. Albans Abbey		Watford Junction	Watford North	Garston	Bricket Wood	How Wood	Park Street	St. Albans Abbey
Watford Junction		£ 3.50	£ 4.40	£ 5.10	£ 5.80	£ 6.40	£ 7.20	Watford Junction		£ 2.50	£ 3.00	£ 3.80	£ 4.00	£ 4.20	£ 4.80
Watford North	£ 3.50		£ 3.60	£ 4.80	£ 5.10	£ 5.10	£ 6.80	Watford North	£ 2.50		£ 2.50	£ 3.20	£ 3.50	£ 3.80	£ 4.40
Garston	£ 4.40	£ 3.60		£ 4.40	£ 4.80	£ 5.10	£ 6.40	Garston	£ 3.00	£ 2.50		£ 3.00	£ 3.20	£ 3.80	£ 4.20
Bricket Wood	£ 5.10	£ 4.80	£ 4.40		£ 3.10	£ 4.40	£ 5.10	Bricket Wood	£ 3.80	£ 3.20	£ 3.00		£ 2.40	£ 3.00	£ 3.80
How Wood	£ 5.80	£ 5.10	£ 4.80	£ 3.10		£ 2.20	£ 4.80	How Wood	£ 4.00	£ 3.50	£ 3.20	£ 2.40		£ 1.50	£ 3.20
Park Street	£ 6.40	£ 5.10	£ 5.10	£ 4.40	£ 2.20		£ 4.40	Park Street	£ 4.20	£ 3.80	£ 3.80	£ 3.00	£ 1.50		£ 3.00
St Albans Abbey	£ 7.20	£ 6.80	£ 6.40	£ 5.10	£ 4.80	£ 4.40		St Albans Abbey	£ 4.80	£ 4.40	£ 4.20	£ 3.80	£ 3.20	£ 3.00	
Average fare	£ 5.40	£ 4.82	£ 4.78	£ 4.48	£ 4.30	£ 4.60	£ 5.78		£ 3.72	£ 3.32	£ 3.28	£ 3.20	£ 2.97	£ 3.22	£ 3.90

Postscript

By coincidence, a press statement from the RMT Union in July regarding LM job cuts read as follows: "RMT has exposed the false economy of job cuts with LM's own figures suggesting one in five people in the region were travelling without a ticket, with many more expected to dodge their fares if ticket inspectors were wiped out. One inspector on the Cannock line collected more than £200,000 in one year in fines – money that would pay for the post many times over and money that would be lost if London Midland's plan are implemented."

CLOSURES UPDATE

According to the latest information from London Midland's website, the Abbey Line will be closed on the following dates:

- All Saturdays in September and October: Buses replace trains from 1930
- All Saturdays in November: Buses replace trains from 2115
- All Sundays in September and October: Buses replace trains until 1300
- All Sundays in November: Buses replace trains until 1000
- Sunday 29th November – Monday 29th December: buses replace trains all day

Though the extended blockade planned for December was made known to us in June (though only by Network Rail making a presentation at the AGM of the Community Rail Partnership), the further disruption of every weekend between now and Christmas remains yet unexplained. Needless to say we have taken this up with the local MPs for Watford and St Albans and we are seeking some urgent justifications from London Midland & Network Rail.