



TRAVELWATCH SOUTHWEST NEWSLOG 141 – MONDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2010

Network Rail faces fine

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has announced that Network Rail has breached two licence conditions as a result of the ‘flawed’ introduction of a new train planning system – the ORR will decide in October whether to impose a fine on Network Rail for breaching condition one (the requirement to effectively and efficiently produce timetables) and condition two (to provide access to appropriate, accurate and timely information to passengers). The ORR decision was as a result of complaints from train operating companies and passenger organisations, including TravelWatch SouthWest, that customers were been given inaccurate and misleading information and were unable to purchase advance tickets or make reservations – First Great Western was particularly badly affected with the details of many trains been omitted from journey planners and other services with incorrect station calling patterns. Network Rail encountered problems by purchasing a commercial train and timetabling planning system (used by Danish railways) and then trying to modify it to ensure that information could be transferred between the company and the train operators as previously – at the same time Network Rail was relocating all the company’s train planning teams to Milton Keynes.

Club 55

The four FirstGroup rail operators in England (First Capital Connect, First Great Western, First Hull Trains and First TransPennine Express) have launched an off-peak train travel offer for customers aged fifty-five or over, in conjunction with Arriva Trains Wales (ATW). England, Southern Scotland and Wales have been divided into six zones, with the price of tickets been determined by the number of zones travelled and whether any part of the journey involves use of ATW services. It is possible to purchase an off-peak standard class return from Penzance to Edinburgh for forty-five pounds and from Swindon to Penzance for just fifteen pounds – first class tickets are available and holders of Disabled Persons and Senior railcards receive an additional twenty per cent discount. Outward travel has to be completed by Tuesday 30 November and travel is only permitted on FirstGroup and ATW services.

Consultation on Okehampton trains

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has launched a public consultation into the application by Devon and Cornwall Railways for an European passenger and freight train licence to enable it to operate services between Exeter and Okehampton – the company has already been granted the necessary safety certificate. Devon and Cornwall Railways intend to operate six trains daily between Exeter (terminus to be negotiated with Network Rail) and Okehampton in each direction, subject to the granting of the necessary licences and obtaining the required track access rights from Network Rail.

Ashchurch station

The Ashchurch, Tewkesbury and District Rail Promotion Group has launched a campaign to alter the name of 'Ashchurch for Tewkesbury' railway station to 'Tewkesbury Parkway'.

People (1)

Dr Mike Mitchell, a former managing director of First Great Western, is to relinquish his post as Director, National Networks at the Department for Transport (DfT) when his contract expires at the end of this year – the current responsibilities of Dr Mitchell include the DfT rail division.

People (2)

Andrew Cleaves, the present chief executive of Tube Lines, has been appointed as the managing director, UK Coach of the National Express group – he succeeds Paul Bunting, who will leave the company at the end of this month.

And finally,

To celebrate its first birthday greyhound dogs will be able to travel for free on any Greyhound service on any date in the UK. Meanwhile greyhound owners, accompanied by their dog, can also travel for free until the end of September!