



Rugby Rail Users Group

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 2 DECEMBER 2006



KEEPING MEMBERS IN TOUCH

Over the next two or three years there will be major changes to the shape of Rugby station and to the train services. To keep Members and Rugby rail users informed RRUG will be producing a periodic Newsletter. Issues will be sent out to Members by e-mail or post with copies made available on Rugby station.

All the latest news and details about RRUG can also be found on the website at:
<http://www.rugbyrailusersgroup.org.uk>.

2009 Timetable Update

Currently it is proposed to delete direct Virgin services to the northwest and Scotland from Rugby's 2009 timetable. Information now obtained by RRUG from the Office of Rail Regulation under the Freedom of Information legislation indicates that over 100,000 journeys a year could be affected.

In order to connect with rail services to the north in 2009 the Department for Transport (DfT) has previously put forward two rail alternatives for Rugby users, namely: to change at Birmingham New Street; or, catch the hourly semi-fast 'Desiro' service between London Euston and Crewe and change. Both alternatives are unattractive due to longer journey times, with the added prospect of changing to short and often crowded trains at New Street. However, it now appears from a West Midlands Franchise document recently published by the DfT, that one of these alternatives has already fallen by the wayside, at least for passengers from Rugby, with the 'semi-fast' Desiro service now proposed to run via Stoke-on-Trent (instead of the main line) with four more stops, extending the journey time to an estimated 1h 40mins.

Given the absence of direct fast services to the northwest and Scotland from the current 2009 agenda, this is very bad news for an expanding Rugby as rail journeys north will be so unattractive that road or air travel may prove to be the only feasible options, with the consequential loss of revenue to the rail companies and more emissions to speed up global warming which seems to fly in the face of current Government thinking on the environment. In addition, with the message about 'Desiro' already indicating that Rugby is slipping down DfT's agenda, serious shortcomings remain about the overall quality of the services likely to be stopping at the new, improved Rugby station facilities from 2009.

RRUG, with the support of MP Jeremy Wright, continues its campaign to secure the best services possible for Rugby in 2009. However, with the timetable being fixed over the next few months, time is running out to make a difference. Please make your feelings known by writing to your MP, DfT, Virgin Trains, Warwickshire County Council and Rugby Borough Council.



Members' Meeting 4 November 2006

Jeremy Wright, Rugby and Kenilworth MP and RRUG Member, and guests from Network Rail and contractor Galliford Try were the speakers in the Seminar Room at the Town Hall.

Jeremy Wright gave his views about the station and proposed services. With regard to the station he was looking forward to seeing the improvements to the general look and the positive changes in accessibility, especially for the disabled. In the longer term he was also looking for improvements to the currently non-existent links to the Town itself, although these would largely be dependent on the development of the Cattle Market site. These improvements were vital to encourage people in to Rugby by train, rather than by car, considering the new developments being planned and the steps being taken to improve the tourist potential of the town.

In terms of 2009 train services, he felt there were no real worries over future provision for Birmingham and London and that degrees of reassurance had been received about services to Milton Keynes and Watford. However, he said that the potential loss of direct Virgin services to the northwest and Scotland was not acceptable especially with the Government (through the Stern Report) expressing concern about how travel harms the environment, particularly short distance air travel. He went on to say that the train is the obvious alternative, not just for convenience, but also for consistency with environmental policy and that journey opportunity should not be removed. Jeremy advised that this is a key argument to put to Government (DfT) in terms of securing the best possible services for Rugby, but, as the Commercial operator, the pressure primarily needs to be applied on Virgin. Jeremy concluded by saying that the door on the timetable was not yet shut as discussions with Network Rail and DfT were ongoing.

Representatives from Network Rail and Galliford Try (the contractors carrying out the station works) reported that the station improvements were a small part of the overall £190m being spent at Rugby over the next couple of years. It was recognised that the early work at the front of the station was causing difficulties with the one-way system (Galliford had taken note of RRUG's letter expressing concerns about the signing for the one-way system). However, it was explained the work was necessary to enable pipes and services to be moved, roadways to be strengthened and retaining walls built. It was hoped the road, including the taxi rank and parking bays, would be in its final form in the next two weeks (following the meeting). Work will then commence on building the new light and airy station frontage and new Platform 1, planned for opening by Easter 2007. The new platforms, although being built to accommodate 12 car trains, will only have a short platform canopy. The overall project is to be completed by 9 December 2008.

In terms of keeping the public monitoring progress as the works, posters, leaflets etc. will be fixed to the hoarding due to go up around the station front. 'Drop in' open days will also be arranged at the station. Information will also be provided to RRUG from time to time for the website. Members had a number of questions about ticket barriers, refreshment kiosks, parking and cycle provision which Network Rail could not answer as these were issues for Virgin as the station franchisee.

(Latest - next major closure Easter 2007 when a coach/bus replacement service operates from Good Friday to the following Tuesday. The works will include the commissioning of the new Platform 1. More details expected in due course)

Note: the above report was prepared by RRUG from notes taken at the meeting and is intended to reflect the main points and comments made by the contributors. Minutes of the meeting are being prepared and will be placed on the RRUG website as soon as possible.



Do you currently travel to the North?

RRUG is looking for your help in the campaign to ensure that services to the north are retained in the 2009 timetable. So if you currently travel to destinations north of Rugby we want to hear from you now. Please contact the Secretary via e-mail on: secretary@rugbyrailusersgroup.org

Warwickshire Quality Rail Partnership

At the invitation of Warwickshire County Council, Mike Goode, RRUG Treasurer and Membership Secretary, attended the signing of the County Quality Rail Partnership on 4 December. This partnership between the County Council and train operating companies is believed to be the first of its kind in the UK. The purpose of setting up the partnership is to deliver station improvements more effectively such as improved access routes for passengers, providing up-to-date train information, providing secure cycle parking facilities, and improving personal safety.

As well as rubbing shoulders with director level representatives from Network Rail, Central Trains, Chiltern Railways, Virgin Trains (Cross Country), Virgin Trains (West Coast), the Rail division of the DfT, and the Government Office for the West Midlands, Mike was due to tour Leamington Spa and Warwick railway stations before going to Shire Hall for tea and buns, the speeches, signing ceremony and photographs. A full report will be included in the next Newsletter.

More Members Needed!!!

RRUG was formed in April 2005 and currently has over 70 members. Over the last 18 months a great deal has been achieved.

RRUG has built up strong links with all the main players in the rail industry, including the DfT, Network Rail, Central Trains and Virgin Trains, and the local authorities, Warwickshire County Council and Rugby Borough Council. RRUG has also developed a good working relationship with Virgin staff at Rugby station.

RRUG has been directly involved in securing changes to the December 2005 timetable, and helped to convince Central and Virgin to introduce two new services that will benefit Rugby from 10 December 2006, the 0543 additional first train to Birmingham New Street and the 21.40 (from Euston) now stopping additionally at Rugby.

Over the next few months RRUG will be trying to ensure that Rugby rail users are not inconvenienced unduly by the station improvement works. For the longer term RRUG is campaigning for the provision of adequate parking facilities and better access for pedestrians and cyclists in and around the station and improvements to the 2009 timetable.

The more members we have the more we can claim to be the real voice of Rugby rail users. Membership forms are available on the website.

It costs £5 to join. Members benefit from: a strong Committee working on your behalf; free entry to members' meetings held three times a year on a topical subject with guest speakers; a dedicated website with free access to a Members only area; and a newsletter delivered directly to members.



Dates for the Diary:

Members' Meeting to be held at Rugby Town Hall, Seminar Room on **Wednesday 7 March 2007**, 7:30pm to 9:00pm. Guest speakers (to be announced) and AGM.

Entry is free to Members. Non-members can join at the door for £5.

Committee 2006/2007

Officers:

Chairperson - Stephanie Clifford

Vice-chairperson - Hilary Bayliss

Treasurer and Membership Secretary - Mike Goode

Secretary - Alan Turner

Committee:

Elizabeth Parvin (media)

Claire Wells (minutes secretary)

David Cheney

David Carpenter (website administration)

Jeremy Thorne (co-opted)

The Committee meets at Rugby Town Hall normally on the first Wednesday of the month.

Thanks to Rugby Borough Council for allowing RRUG to use the Town Hall facilities.

Thanks to Malcolm Smart for designing and hosting the website.

The minutes of all meetings are contained in the Members area on the website. Copies available by contacting the Secretary.

**WISHING ALL RUGBY RAIL USERS A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR**