



NEWSLETTER NUMBER 3 JULY 2007

KEEPING MEMBERS IN TOUCH

GOVIA WIN WEST MIDLANDS FRANCHISE

On Thursday 21 June the Department for Transport (DfT) announced that Govia, a joint venture between the Go-Ahead Group and Keolis, had won the West Midlands franchise. Govia takes over the services currently run by Silverlink and Central Trains on 11 November 2007. The franchise can run until 19 September 2015 and will operate under the name of "London Midland".

A copy of Govia's press release is on the RRUG website.

THURSDAY 12TH JULY, RUGBY TOWN HALL, 7.30PM. IT'S YOUR STATION - LET VIRGIN HEAR YOUR VIEWS

Rugby station's new Platform 1 was commissioned on 29 May for users travelling to Birmingham. Although not the finished article - with access currently less than ideal - the opening does represent a major milestone in the ongoing re-development of the station facilities. But, what do you think?

On Thursday 12 July you have the opportunity to hear about progress and have your say when Virgin Trains' Steve Leyland, External Affairs Manager West Coast, is the guest speaker at RRUG's second Members' meeting of the year. Steve, a regular attendee at these meetings, will be happy to answer your questions about the station re-development and current service issues. Steve will be accompanied by Rugby station manager Teresa Woodward.

RRUG is also pleased to welcome Dan Caldecote from Warwickshire County Council (WCC). Over the last few weeks officials at both WCC and Rugby Borough Council (RBC) have provided help and guidance as RRUG lobbies for support in the ongoing campaign to get Rugby rail users the best service levels possible into the 2009 timetable. Dan will bring us up-to-date with progress from the Local Authority perspective.

Hoping for a good turn out, RRUG Chairperson Stephanie Clifford said, "Over the next few months Rugby rail users will see a lot of changes at the station. This meeting provides the perfect opportunity to speak direct to the Company responsible for running the station. This could be our last chance to make a difference".

The meeting starts at 7.30pm prompt in the Seminar Room at Rugby Town Hall. Entry is free to Members. Non-members can join at the door for £5.



2009 TIMETABLE – THE CAMPAIGN GOES ON

RRUG is continuing to pro-actively raise awareness about the implications of the proposed 2009 timetable for Rugby rail users. The overall aim is to ensure the best possible service, but there will have to be an element of realism in the Group's aims. In line with the travel patterns of the members, RRUG's main efforts are focused on the Rugby-Birmingham and Rugby-London services where the main passenger flows take place. Overall, there are winners and losers.

Winners:

The Group welcomes the proposed increase in trains from one to three per hour on the Rugby to Birmingham New Street route, the half-hourly evening peak service from London to Rugby and the retention of a regular hourly off-peak non-stop service to London. The Group also welcomes the introduction of the hourly semi-fast service between Rugby and Crewe as it will provide for the first time regular journey opportunities to Nuneaton, Tamworth and Lichfield, thereby facilitating connections to the East Midlands and South Yorkshire. This service will also restore an hourly service to Milton Keynes and Watford (for Heathrow/Gatwick), but could be a bigger winner if it were to go direct to Milton Keynes via Weedon instead of via Northampton. A direct, fast link to employment and leisure in Milton Keynes and Watford is important to Rugby passengers.

Losers:

The Group is concerned about the reduction in the number of morning peak train services from Rugby to London. In the proposed 2009 timetable, there are only three fast trains leaving Rugby between 0700 and 0800, compared to four now and five back in 2004. These peak services are already often full upon arrival at Rugby, and as the town is a nominated growth area for Warwickshire, an increase rather than a decrease in capacity would be expected.

More losers:

RRUG deplores the proposed loss of all through services to the north which also affects potential connecting passengers from Northampton and elsewhere. There is a widely held view that the fast service to Preston, Lancaster and the north should continue to run hourly as now. Even if this is not possible, then provision for both business and leisure journeys from Rugby should be made. The service should have a mix of fast and semi-fast services on the London-Glasgow route, which would cater for intermediate journeys as well as end to end. Making journeys by using the alternatives of changing at Crewe (via the semi-fast service) or Birmingham New Street will not be acceptable to many passengers because of the inconvenience and long journey times.

Influencing the Outcome:

Experience of meeting officials from DfT suggests that the final 2009 timetable will not meet everyone's aspirations. However the campaign must go on with RRUG taking up every opportunity to highlight the relevant issues through the media and by enlisting the help and support of others.

On 27 June a Motion put before RBC received unanimous support from elected members. Officials are now empowered to write to DfT, Government Office for the West Midlands, Network Rail and the train operators expressing the Council's view about expected service levels in 2009. RRUG has also written to Passenger Focus, the national rail passenger watchdog, contributing to their West Coast Route Utilisation Study. Rugby MP and RRUG member Jeremy Wright continues to push our case in the corridors of power. Whatever the eventual outcome, it is certain that the campaign will go on well beyond 2009. More details are on the RRUG website.



EUROSTAR

On Wednesday 20 June Eurostar came to the Benn Hall, Rugby to brief key stakeholders on how the town and the surrounding area will benefit when international rail services launch from the new St. Pancras International station in central London on 14 November 2007, and from Ebbsfleet International, a new station close to Bluewater shopping centre in Kent, a few days later. Eurostar issued a press release to accompany the event which is on the RRUG website.

To book tickets for Eurostar, or to find out more information, go to www.eurostar.com , call 08705 186 186 or contact your travel agent.

Committee 2007/2008

Following the AGM in March 2007, there have been one or two changes to the Committee, the most recent following the resignation of Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Mike Goode. Mike took office back in February 2005 when the Group formed and has made a valuable contribution since. On behalf of the membership the Committee wishes to express its thanks for all the hard work Mike has put in during his tenure. Mike remains a member of RRUG.

The make-up of the current Committee is:

Officers: Chairperson - Stephanie Clifford; Vice-chairperson and Membership Secretary - Hilary Bayliss; Treasurer - Richard Ford; and, Secretary - Alan Turner.

Committee: Claire Wells (Media relations); David Cheney; David Carpenter (Website administration); Jeremy Thorne.

Currently there are two vacancies on the Committee. If you want to put your name forward, please e-mail secretary@rugbyrailusersgroup.org.

The Committee meets at Rugby Town Hall normally on the first Wednesday of every month between 7.15 and 8.30pm.

Thanks to RBC for allowing RRUG to use the Town Hall facilities.

Website for All the Latest News

You can keep in touch with all the latest news about issues affecting Rugby rail users by going to the website on: www.rugbyrailusersgroup.org.uk. A dedicated area for members gives more detailed information about Group and its activities, including minutes of meetings and correspondence issued and received. Every effort is made to keep the website as up-to-date as possible. Periodic maintenance may result in the website becoming temporarily unavailable so please try again later. For persistent problems please notify the Secretary by e-mail (see above).

Thanks to RRUG member Malcolm Smart for designing and hosting the website.



More Members Needed!!!

RRUG 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, WCC and RBC. 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 have benefit Rugby since December 2006. These are the 05.43 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 RRUG website. It costs £5 to join.

Dates for the Diary:

Thursday 8 November 2007 - Seminar Room, Rugby Town Hall, 7:30pm – 9:00pm, Members' Meeting - West Midlands Franchise.

With the new West Midlands franchise awarded and due to start on 11 November, a representative of Govia will be coming along to tell us more about the Company, details of their successful bid and what it all means for Rugby rail users.

Thursday 13 March 2008 - Seminar Room, 1930 to 2100, Members' Meeting with Annual General Meeting – speaker to be announced.