

Alton Line News SUMMER 2013

Newsletter of the Alton Line Users' Association www.altonlineusers.com

39 years serving users of Alton, Bentley, Farnham, Aldershot and Ash Vale stations
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Membership applications to the Treasurer

Annual membership: £4 (or £3 by Standing Order) due 1 March (to be sent to the Treasurer)

“Access for all” – lifts for Aldershot and Alton stations.



“Two Trains per Hour Alton-Guildford

This option improves the rail service between Guildford and Alton to attract more users away from the heavily congested A3 and A31 corridors, and to provide better access to employment in Guildford. Currently the only service between Alton and Guildford requires an interchange at Aldershot. This scheme involves the introduction of a direct service between Alton and Guildford operating twice every hour. It may require the reintroduction of at least a portion of the double track between Farnham and Alton, and the possible development of existing station car parks along Alton line to encourage mode shift, eg Bentley. There is no funding currently allocated to this option. Cost estimates have not yet been made. Surrey County Council and partners should consider providing funding support for this option, as a scheme which has good local benefits.

This is a medium term scheme, which could be included in the next South Western franchise, currently due for renewal in 2017. Surrey County Council and partners should confirm the business case for this option and lobby the DfT to include it in the next South Western franchise specification.”

It also proposes a new station at Park Barn.

“Park Barn Station

This option provides an additional station at Park Barn in Guildford which would improve rail access to employment centres particularly the Royal Surrey County Hospital and Surrey Research Park.

The option involves a new train station on the Guildford-Reading line in the Park Barn area, as shown in Figure 25. Existing Guildford-Ascot and Reading-Redhill services would make additional calls at the station, although London-bound passengers would have to change at Guildford. It could also be served by the proposed 2 tph Alton-Guildford service option. Costs are estimated in the region of £5m for this option. Surrey County Council and partners should consider

Surrey Rail Strategy Draft Report, March 2013

In March Surrey County Council issued a draft report on the future of Surrey's rail services. ALUA hope to make representations before consultation ends on 28 June. This is available at Surrey County Hall, council offices and libraries, and at <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/environment-housing-and-planning/development-in-surrey/surrey-future/the-surrey-rail-strategy>. We welcome copies of any comments you may be making directly. The main proposal for the Alton line is:-

providing funding support for this option, as a scheme which has good local benefits.

This is a medium term scheme, which could be included in the next South Western franchise, currently due for renewal in 2017. It would need support from Network Rail to deliver the infrastructure, which would have to be added to the schemes currently planned for CP5. Surrey County Council and partners should confirm the business case for this option and lobby the DfT to include it in the next South Western franchise specification. They will also need to work closely with Network Rail to schedule delivery in CP5."

In the longer term a flyover at Woking also scored highly in the report and would speed up Alton off-peak services.

Annual General Meeting

The date of our next AGM will be published on our website and in local papers.

Feedback from members

We welcome comments from members as to whether the current pattern of stops on Alton line services meets their needs. Should all trains stop at Clapham or would members prefer Wimbledon, or are they happy with the current pattern? How many members use West Byfleet?

ALUA/SWT meeting

The following points, not mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter were discussed at the recent meeting with SWT and NR.

Emergency planning

New plans for handling adverse events are being developed - hopefully this will lead to more dependable get you to work/get you home arrangements when things go wrong and better information.

Ten car railway

Work has started on the conversion of the Gatwick Express units to outer suburban 5-car units for the Reading and Windsor lines. When this is complete, 28 more of the blue 4-car units will be available for the main, Alton and

Portsmouth lines to reduce overcrowding. Stopping patterns on some peak trains are also being examined to see whether this can have an impact on the numbers of passengers. The selective door opening on other trains will be improved so that all doors adjacent to a platform can be opened.

Farnham level crossing

In August the level crossing will close for renewal. During this period vehicles will be unable to use it but provisions will be made for wheelchairs and pushchairs etc. which may have to be escorted across it. The footbridges will remain open.

Around the stations

Alton



Work on the lifts at Alton station 21 April 2013

Work is progressing on the lifts. We have had staff changes in the ticket office and have said goodbye to Ryan who has moved to the Isle of Wight, but David Brown seems very happy at Alton and Alton seems to be very happy with David as our station clerk. SWT has also brought back Andy who has a long history of working at Alton and he has been wonderful especially on those very busy early mornings. If SWT lets us keep them both, we would be back to a full and very capable crew.

The new car park now has new direction signs and we hope that more people will be able to find and use it. We still wait the 20 minute waiting outside the station.

Bentley

Platform 1 is being extended to take longer trains. Work on this is underway and as a result

part of the Alton end of the platform is inaccessible. Entry to the level crossing, the footbridge and Platform 2 are unaffected. The work should be completed by the end of April. Work on extending the passing loop will take longer to finish.



The ticket office is still being manned from 06.30 to 10.30 but no permanent station clerk has been appointed, although one has been promised for some time. No one has come forward from ALUA to represent Bentley on its Committee. We urgently need someone who travels by train reasonably often from Bentley.

The footbridge underpinnings are rusty and badly need attention. They were left untouched when the station was repainted during the summer. This is a Network Rail responsibility and they have been alerted to this.

Recent delays have again highlighted the need for double track between Farnham and Alton. This would aid punctuality. Bentley would also like to have the same half-hourly service which Farnham and Alton enjoy.

It has been shown that coaches can turn round safely at Weybank (opposite the station). There is therefore no need for Bentley passengers to walk over a mile to the main road whenever coaches are needed during periods of disruption. We have raised this repeatedly with SWT.

Farnham

In 2010/11 Farnham was the 12th busiest Surrey station with 1,561,910 entries and exits.

The new semi-automatic doors in the booking hall are far from ideal, as the slightest movement by those queuing to buy tickets causes them to open and shut continuously. This annoys passengers but is even more irritating to the ticket office staff who have to put up with it all day. We hope SWT will adjust the sensors on the doors so that they do not open unnecessarily.

The extra cycle racks which have been installed on both sides of the station are well used with usually between 80 and 100 bicycles left at the station on weekdays. There is at least one abandoned bicycle which has been abandoned on the down platform rack and we have asked SWT to remove it. Motorbikes are again being parked in the immediate vicinity of the car park entrance and in some of the covered bike racks. This is an inconvenience to others and we have asked SWT to remove any that are causing obstructions. The bike racks are for bicycles NOT motorbikes, as they take up two spaces.

We have received more complaints about the poor road markings in the station forecourt and understand from SWT that this will be dealt with. It is hoped that a no entry sign and 20 minute stay markings will make it safer and easier for all.

We are still concerned about the safety of pedestrians walking down the station approach road and our still waiting for the promised site meeting. We continue to press for this serious safety issue to be resolved.

We have asked the station manager to remind staff to open the down waiting room, particularly during cold weather.

Aldershot

The works for the "access for all" lifts and new bridge have started with the same company doing both Alton and Aldershot with the deadline of completion of early July. We shall see.

The Aldershot Travel Study was published by Hampshire County Council and it raises many questions without providing solutions to the issues. As for the rail station and its grotty outlook and down at heel appearance there is nothing so far of any substantial nature.

The subway looks particularly grotty but so does most of the station itself. Staffing has improved with new people and the ticket office seems mainly to be open at the appropriate hours but there are surprises on occasion.

Seemingly less people are now travelling from Aldershot with more moving over to Farnborough with its quicker and better train service as well as outlook. Major developments locally over the next few years will possibly alter this situation.

Ash Vale

Fortunately we haven't had any re-occurrence of the vandalism of a couple of years ago. The ticket machine is often out of order in the late evenings and Sundays (when there are no staff to help) and it would be useful to have a second machine on the station to provide a back up. During engineering work it is not always clear where passengers have to wait for replacement buses and, on Sundays, there are no staff to assist.

ALUA Committee

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ALTON AND CAMBERLEY LINE ENGINEERING WORKS in connection with Farnham resignalling project

Work is well advanced on the modernisation and renewal of signalling in the Farnham area between Ash Vale and Alton. The works, costing c £20m, will renew life expired signalling equipment, which along with other enhancements, will bring improved performance and reliability to the route. As the work nears completion contractors need an increased amount of access to the track for equipment installation and testing. This work will unfortunately require line closures on a number of weekends up to the end of the summer. These are listed below for your information. SWT regret the inconvenience these closures will bring but they are essential for the project to be completed with the minimum of inconvenience and time.

| Date | Engineering Works |
|--|---|
| Sun 19 May | Bus replacement between Farnborough and Alton, Ascot and Guildford |
| Sat 8 and Sun 9 June | Bus replacement between Aldershot and Alton |
| Sun 16 June | Bus replacement between Farnborough and Alton, Ascot and Guildford |
| Sat 6 and Sun 7 July | Bus replacement between Ascot and Aldershot (Sat all day and Sun from 1220), Ascot and Guildford (until 1220 Sun) |
| Sun 7 July | Brookwood and Alton (until 1220) then Aldershot (until 1620) |
| Sun 14 July | Bus replacement between Farnham and Alton |
| Sun 21 July | Bus replacement between Farnham and Alton |
| Sun 28 July | Bus replacement between Farnham and Alton |
| Sun 4 August | Bus replacement between Farnborough and Alton, Ascot and Guildford |
| Sun 11 August | Bus replacement between Farnborough and Alton (until 1310), Farnham and Alton (from 1310), Ascot and Aldershot (until 1310) |
| Sun 18 August | Brookwood and Ash Vale (until 1555). Trains diverted via Guildford |
| Sat 24 - Mon 26 August – commissioning weekend | Bus replacement between Farnborough and Alton, Ascot and Guildford all weekend. |