

# THE BLACKHEATH SOCIETY



Founded in 1937 to protect and foster the amenities of Blackheath  
Registered Charity No.259843  
[www.blackheath.org](http://www.blackheath.org)

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 4DR

19 May 2017

Dear Sir

## **South Eastern Rail Franchise consultation**

### **1 Publicising the consultation**

We are disappointed that this consultation seems to have received no publicity whatever at stations on the South East rail network (there is certainly none at the stations in our area of SE London and inner Kent). We and other organisations along the rail corridor have been raising awareness among the travelling public and have found very little knowledge or awareness of this consultation or of the proposals it contains.

### **2 Cancelling the public and stakeholder events because of the General Election**

We understand the reason for cancelling the public and stakeholder events when the General Election was called but for whatever reason this impairs the consultation process and this deficiency needs to be rectified. The most straightforward remedy is surely to replace the lost days after the election and to reschedule the cancelled events.

### **3 Overcrowding – need for 12 car trains**

This is a serious problem for Blackheath joining travellers as the morning peak services are generally full on arrival at Blackheath especially those arriving from the Bexleyheath line. Please require the new franchise operator to run 12 car trains during the peak periods on Bexleyheath line to Charing Cross services. Kidbrooke Village will generate far more rail commuters using Kidbrooke Station than did the previous Ferrier Estate and this will add to the problem as Kidbrooke Village is built out and occupied.

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#### 4 **Threat to Charing Cross, Waterloo and Victoria direct rail services**

The suggestion on page 23 of the Consultation Document that all services on the Bexleyheath line and Woolwich via Lewisham route terminate at Cannon Street only has caused a great deal of alarm in Blackheath and many other areas served by these lines. As you will be aware the Parliamentary petition opposing this suggestion attracted nearly 29,000 signatures during its approximately 4 weeks of availability before closure on 3 May. At the instigation of our members we have been raising public awareness of this issue at many of the stations affected and we have not received a single positive response to this suggestion. We have been urging travellers to contact the consultation email directly to tell you their views on this suggestion and we hope the Department has been receiving (and is continuing to receive) a steady stream of emails voicing people's opposition to this suggestion.

We note your case that this proposal could improve reliability and permit the introduction of a more evenly spaced timetable. Given all the investment to create nine through platforms at London Bridge and to simplify the track layout on the London Bridge approaches – which is already improving service reliability – the further reliability gains are likely to be modest and certainly do not outweigh the penalties of forced interchange at London Bridge (for Charing Cross) or at Lewisham (for Victoria).

We estimate the cost to all those required to change at London Bridge to be around 9 minutes of walking and waiting time, equivalent to an additional 18 minutes of in-vehicle journey time twice a day<sup>1</sup>. This is a considerable increase in inconvenience compared with the present situation. (We assume a similar requirement to change at Lewisham for Victoria.)

People want the current service pattern – in place now for 30 years – and have built their lives around the flexibility of direct access to different central London stations that it offers. Trading this for the possibility of a more evenly spaced timetable (all to one destination) is, from our extensive consultation with other SE London organisations and feedback from local people, demonstrably not what people along this corridor want.

If the need to balance capacity implies a similar operational simplification being adopted for the Sidcup, Orpington and Hayes lines to terminate at Charing Cross only, this would add still further forced interchange movement at London Bridge – many more people experiencing an additional 18 minutes equivalent twice a day

We doubt that London Bridge was designed for such high levels of interchanging passengers and foresee considerable congestion on the escalators, stairs and lifts as half train loads of every service are decanting and rushing to other platforms to interchange Cannon Street to Charing Cross services and vice versa.

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<sup>1</sup> Department's estimate WebTAG Unit 3.5.6 Section 2.3.10

This proposal will be particularly hard on travellers with mobility issues and the elderly who are much more likely to use Charing Cross and who will find it very difficult to cope with a change at London Bridge. For those travelling to King's College Hospital at Denmark Hill the change at Lewisham will be equally problematic. For these travellers it is not just the inconvenience of additional journey time and a change of train but actual distress at the prospect and reality of such a change which is not included in the Department's standard appraisal methodology.

We consider the modest reliability benefits and even-interval potential of this proposal are vastly outweighed by the substantial inconvenience for probably a majority of travellers being forced to change trains on every journey to and from Charing Cross, Waterloo and stations to Victoria.

Yours faithfully

Dame Helen Reeves  
Chair

David Walker  
Vice Chair