

Dear David and Mark,

I am contacting you regarding the disruption on the Hastings-London Bridge/Cannon Street route, myself and Huw have been affected by this. I've highlighted the disruption that occurred yesterday and this morning.

Monday 28th November

Morning Commute

All trains departing Hastings to London before **07.00am** were cancelled due to overrunning engineering works. I was made aware that the works had overrun due to a piece of machinery breaking, however this machinery had broken on Saturday evening, it is then rather baffling as to why it took 24 hours to highlight that it would affect services on the Monday morning. I believe that stronger communication plans need to be in place, both internally so that both Network Rail and Southeastern are on the same page and externally so that commuters really understand what has happened.

Issues that also affected the service:

- Rolling stock for morning services were isolated at the Marina Depot and Hastings Parkside Depot
- There was no back-up plan in relation to the two coastal depots being isolated, services were then run from Battle, with carriages transferred down the line from Tonbridge.
- Replacement buses did not run in conjunction with services, i.e. the first service to London Charing Cross departed West St. Leonard's at **05.24am**, however on arrival, I was informed that the first replacement bus had departed at **05.14am**, this was not a scheduled train departure time and left another 30 minute wait.

A Southeastern issue – I spoke to the train guard at Battle who mentioned that himself and fellow colleagues were late in arriving at Battle from Hastings, as they were required by the company to use the 'cheapest taxi provider', which meant a taxi had come from Eastbourne to pick them up.

Evening Commute

Yesterday evening I boarded the **16.42pm** service to Hastings, and due to power supply failure and signal faults on the line between Hastings and Tonbridge, and Orpington and London Bridge, the train departed late at approximately **16.55pm**. It was only formed of 8 cars, which resulted in severe overcrowding as far as Tunbridge Wells. On arrival at Tonbridge, we were informed that the train would run on 50% of its full capacity due to the continuing power supply failure between Hastings and Tonbridge. It finally arrived at West St Leonard's at approximately **18.50pm – 19.00pm**.

The commute totalled over 5 hours of travel for which I will receive a measly compensation of approximately £15.00.

Tuesday 29th November

This morning due to the continual power supply failure, the 06.10am and 06.33am services from West St Leonard's were both cancelled, so I used alternative means and went via Ashford to London, the journey still took over 2 hours.

Summary

Mike Gibson at Southeastern highlighted that regulated fares (season tickets and “anytime” returns and singles) are of course set by Government, not the train operator and that Southeastern currently assume that fares will increase by 1.9% from January next year. Having worked in Parliament for nearly 9 months, I see both sides, that all parties involved in rail improvements face struggles, but ultimately it is the commuter who will lose out time and time again.

I am fortunate in that I have the choice of using Southern or Southeastern, the former I have avoided like the plague due to the continuous industrial action. However, the service on the Hastings line is equally as poor. Commuters want clear communication and not a tweet to say ‘keep an eye on the website for the latest information’ as I received yesterday evening. Social media is a tool that should be used to disseminate concise information of a situation that has occurred and should be informed fully by operational centres that overlook the network, not just on what appears on the website.

I’m 22 and have commuted for the majority of the 4 and ½ years of my working life, which I of course accept is my choice to do so. I am now considering taking steps back on the career ladder in whatever my next role will be because of the connectivity and reliability of the services are so poor.

I would recommend quicker communications/bulletins to the wider public, as well as stakeholders, the first stakeholder apology was received after 10.00am this morning, 19 hours after the issues first occurred on the route yesterday afternoon.

I look forward to hearing from you both with explanations as to why this occurred and what lessons have been learnt following the disruption.

Kind Regards,

Greg

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