

30 January 2022

Dear Member of Parliament,

We are sorry to all our customers who have had disrupted or uncomfortable journeys in recent weeks and for the constituency concerns this is creating for you.

In December, our services were affected by snow and ice, a spate of infrastructure failures and the most intense period of industrial action.

We relaunched our new timetable on 9 January and have now operated it for a continuous period of three weeks. With further infrastructure failures and some mobilisation challenges with the new timetable this relaunch wasn't the start we had planned for, nor what our customers deserve. Network Rail and Southeastern together take responsibility and have issued a joint public apology to our customers.

What are the ingredients of a high performing railway?

You will appreciate that to operate a high performing railway anywhere in the world, four elements are needed:

- **Reliable infrastructure** (this is, for example, why over the Christmas period Network Rail completed the £10m renewal of the strategic junction in Lewisham, which controls the movement of more than a third of Southeastern trains travelling in and out of London every day).
- **A simple and robust timetable** which reduces congestion and the spread of delay across the network.
- **Modern, high performing rolling stock** – noting that we are discussing requirements with suppliers to replace our 30-year-old Metro Networker fleet and will have more City Beam (Class 707) trains arriving this year.
- **Sufficient, well trained and engaged people**

These elements must work alongside each other to achieve the required outcomes for customers. There is widespread misunderstanding that a timetable can operate normally despite infrastructure failures, train faults, passenger alarms or trespass incidents. I am sure you appreciate that this is not, of course, the case.

We do appreciate that many customers and stakeholders have given their feedback on our new timetable. As you know, we made changes with the intention to:

- Provide value for money for the taxpayer as a good and efficient operator. The timetable saves £10 million per annum noting our status as a 'not for dividend' company.
- Provide space on trains where and when needed most, with room for growth in the peak and off-peak. Hence, we reduced Metro services in the peak as hybrid working meant fewer people were travelling. We removed first class from Mainline services to cost effectively better match space with demand.

- Improve punctuality and reduce cancellations primarily by reducing congestion at busy junctions, reducing the ripple effect of delays through Lewisham and enhancing the opportunity for faster service recovery when disruption occurs.

Recent Performance

The disruption our customers have recently experienced is in part caused by too many protracted infrastructure failures. These include signalling and power supply failures at Charing Cross, Cannon Street, London Bridge, Victoria and Ladywell, as well as a displaced conductor rail at Sole Street which caused damage to twelve of our trains. A number of temporary speed restrictions are also compromising on time performance, but this is on an improving trend.

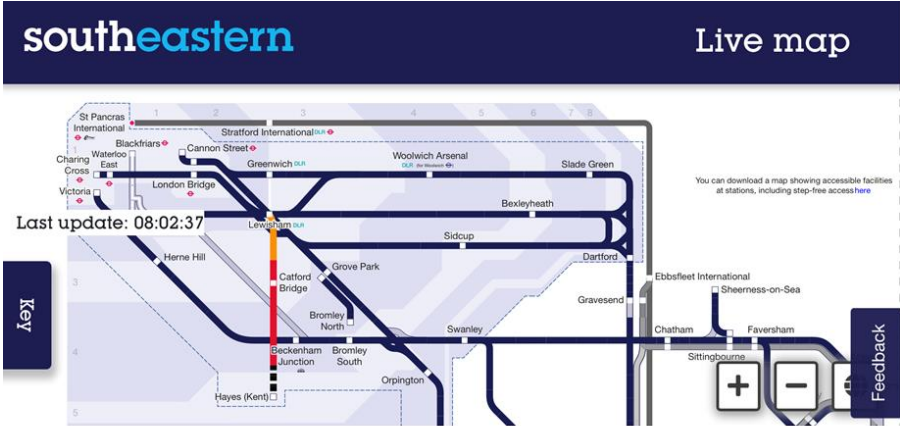
In truth, and in common with much of the country, our punctuality has declined since the start of industrial action last summer as reduced industry workforce capacity and diluted management oversight have combined. The recent cluster of asset failures have resulted in a period of poor performance for our customers. We need to restore infrastructure reliability as a matter of priority.

It is also fair to say that we have faced some mobilisation challenges with the timetable too as all railway colleagues (such as drivers, engineers, signallers, controllers and resource managers) learn to execute a totally different operating plan and practical issues are revealed. These issues have, of course, been made worse because of the multiple infrastructure failures. Together Network Rail and Southeastern are working round the clock to find and fix these issues.

We have now operated our new timetable for three uninterrupted weeks. Early experience has highlighted some strengths of the timetable, how customers are now using our services, and areas where we need to improve.

What has gone well?

- Southeastern continues to be a low cancellation railway with full resource availability.
- New or reinstated services have been well received by customers and well used including:
 - ✓ Maidstone East to Charing Cross
 - ✓ Beckenham Junction to Blackfriars
 - ✓ Crayford to Blackfriars
- Punctuality at weekends and in the off peak is showing better on time performance than previously.
- The off-peak period also allows the railway to 'recover' more quickly after the morning peak
- Delays between lines are more contained than previously (see Hayes Line example below).

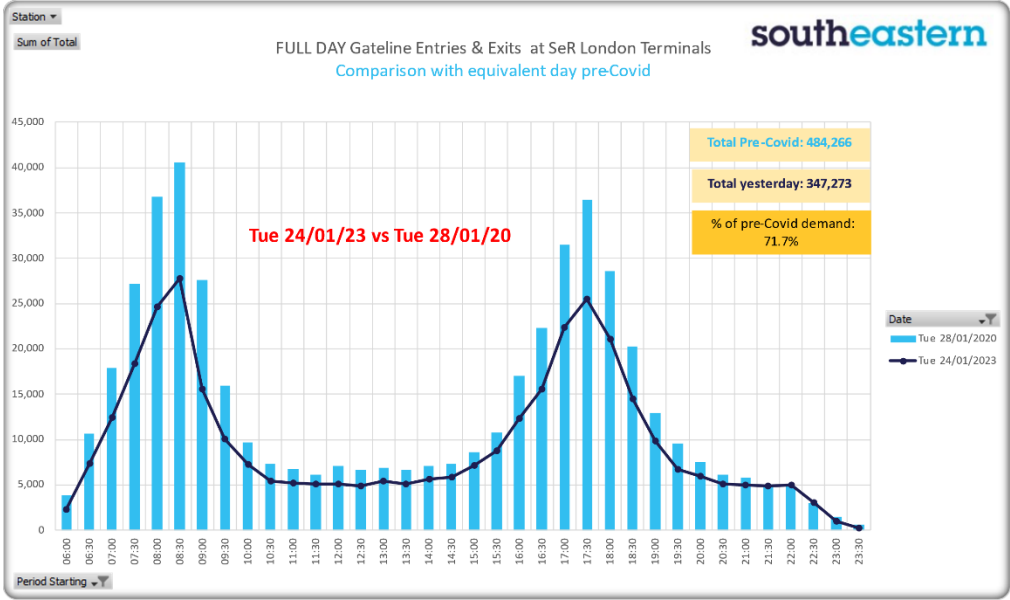


What needs to be improved?

Our immediate attention is focusing on the capacity and performance in the peaks when we are impacting too many customers. Our early investigations, including analysis by lines of route, indicate:

Overcrowding on some trains

After a flatlining of demand from July to December, we are now seeing record post-Covid travelling in the evening peak, which is more more concentrated between 17.00-18.30 suggesting that some additional trains are required. We recognise this change in customer travel habits is different to our expectations.



- Severe disruption (such as the recent trespass incident which delayed 200 trains) is causing crowded platforms at some stations including London Bridge. We are undertaking a formal review of crowd control measures at this station jointly with Network Rail noting that this is a Managed Station.

To reduce overcrowding, we will operate some targeted additional services and lengthen some trains where demand is higher than expected on Mainline and Highspeed services. Specifically, we will:

- Operate two additional trains in the PM peak from Cannon St to Orpington from this evening (30th January). Both services are formed of 10 carriages and are in journey planners now. The 17:36 from Cannon Street to Orpington will reduce crowding from London Bridge and on the 17:40 Charing Cross to Sevenoaks service. The 18:05 from Cannon Street to Orpington to reduce crowding from London Bridge and on the 18:10 Charing Cross to Sevenoaks service.

London Cannon Street	1736	1805
London Bridge	1740	1810
Hither Green	1750	1820
Grove Park	1754	1824
Elmstead Woods	1758	1827
Chislehurst	1801	1829
Petts Wood	1804	1833
Orpington	1809	1840

- From 13 February, the 08:54 service from Tonbridge to Cannon St will start later and divert to Charing Cross. By running later, the service will be available for off peak tickets. This will reduce crowding on the 07:40 Ramsgate to Charing Cross service.
- Some other services will be given additional carriages from 13th February:
 - 06:24 Ore to Cannon Street
 - 07:15 Margate to St Pancras
 - 18:29 Charing Cross to Ramsgate

Please note that we continue to monitor demand daily.

Punctuality

We have identified that some Mainline services are being delayed by:

- Delays arising from the dividing and attaching of trains.
- Delays on the Hastings Line which, in turn, trigger a 'delay chain' to services from Sevenoaks and on the Ashford, Ramsgate and Dartford lines, particularly around London Bridge.

To improve punctuality from 13 February, we will:

- Divide and attach five fewer trains at Ashford and one at Tunbridge Wells.
- Retime and re-platform some trains to avoid knock on delays.
- Start two AM peak trains from Hastings a few minutes earlier – the 05.47 Hastings to Charing Cross will start at 05.43 and the 06.24 Ore to Cannon Street will start at 06.21 - allowing more time for station stops, so they arrive at Tunbridge Wells on time. The times of trains from Tunbridge Wells will not alter and will still arrive in London at the same time as now. This will remove improve the punctuality of the following trains from Tunbridge as well services on the multiple lines that come through Sevenoaks.

Infrastructure

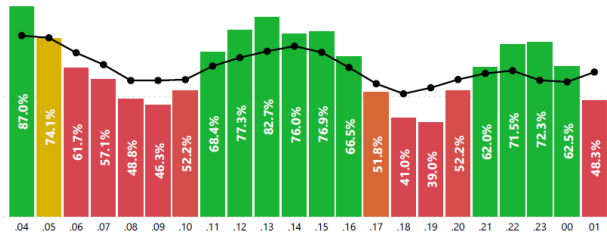
Whilst the £10m renewal of Lewisham Junction was a very well executed project during the festive period, we have found that other infrastructure asset failures have had the single biggest impact on performance along with speed restrictions on multiple lines contributing to slower journey times. A number of temporary speed restrictions are also compromising on

time performance, but this is on an improving trend. We are also rapidly expanding the use of thermal imaging technology on our Metro and Mainline network where passenger trains will routinely identify emerging infrastructure faults so we can fix them before they cause delays and cancellations to customers.

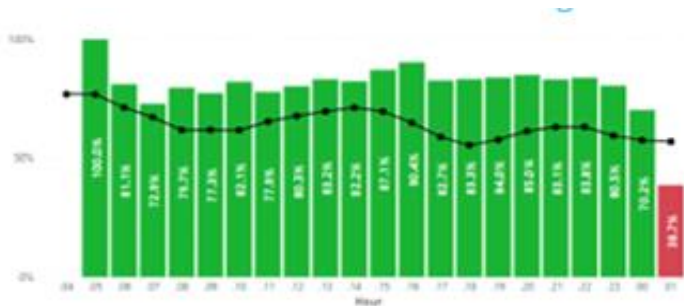
So, how are we performing?

The typical chart below from 24 January shows:

- initial issues with the start-up of service are largely fixed but peak punctuality needs to be improved (see red).
- off peak is performing better than with the previous timetable (the dark line on the chart) and has a strong ability to recover from disruption. This the benefit of the off peak simplification at Lewisham Junction.



- Highspeed punctuality has improved significantly since the new year, regularly hitting, or exceeding our route targets. This is the benefit of starting and finishing the service at Ramsgate.
- Improved performance on Highspeed is supported by:
 - Increased turnround times at Margate.
 - Removal of tight turnarounds at Dover.
 - Better sequencing of trains between Ebbsfleet and Rochester.
- Revised running times to accurately match the capability of the trains.
- Weekend performance is also much improved (see below).



Summary

Our railway has shown welcome signs of customer demand recovery in the last few days particularly in the evening peak between 17.00 and 18.30. Targeted additional capacity will be added in two phases from 30 January and 13 February.

Southeastern continue to be a low cancellation railway.

Network Rail and Southeastern have established a Joint Task Force to work at pace to understand and resolve the performance issues affecting metro and mainline peak services. It will take many small fixes, rather than a few large ones, to deliver the punctuality our customers deserve. We will transition the Task Force in time to a business-as-usual activity which refocuses our people on performance after the prolonged distraction of industrial action.

These conclusions should be treated as preliminary given the limited time for evaluation, but we wanted to share them with you now. We will write again after a further period of assessment.

We appreciate feedback from yourself and from our customers on their experiences of traveling with us and how they are now using our railway. We want to make sure that customers can make the journeys they want to and remain committed to providing a low cancellation, high punctuality railway with space for everyone and value for money for taxpayers.

Yours sincerely,



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Southeastern



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