

PS03 ITEM 29

Stakeholder Meeting of East Sussex Community
Rail Partnership - Marshlink
on 18th October, 2006
at Rye Town Hall

6 DEC 2006

Report by Cllr Granville Bantick

Under the Chairmanship of Nigel Whitburn the following speakers gave an update in their sphere of responsibility:

1. **Jan Chaudhry (Commercial and Retail Director for Southern)**. He said that their had been an obvious improvement in the last two years in having the new trains on the Marshlink line, with further improvement in having a direct route from Ashford to Brighton. He was aware of the overcrowding between Hastings and Brighton, especially during school travelling times. The solution of doubling the units to four from two could only be considered under the new franchise which did not come into effect until 2009, as there was little funding available within the current franchise. Rolling stock availability continued to be a problem.

Other improvements included increased staff training through a Customer Service Orientation Programme. A recent national survey had showed that there had been a significant increase in customer satisfaction, but the most significant survey carried out for Southern showed that customers' perception in every category was above the national average. The national survey is carried out every six months and covered 50,000 people.

The Thameslink Programme has been passed by Government but it will have an adverse knock-on effect on services to the south coast as there will fewer platforms at London Bridge station for these services. Eventually two extra platforms will be built.

With regard to the reduction of Eurostar services from Ashford to the continent, JH said that there was not much movement despite the opposition coming from MPs, MEPs, local councils and Marshlink themselves. Negotiations continue. however.

2. **Philip Ayers (Senior Development Officer)**. He praised Marshlink for scooping second place to London City Airport for one of the top awards at a recent Awards Ceremony held in London. Marshlink was awarded second place in the "Transport Integration" category, second place in the "Involving Young People" category and third place for the "Marketing Community Rail" category.

Funding for Marshlink was being sought from other funding pots including Europe. A bid has been put in for a sum of £100,000. It is expected that this will be achieved and that will mean Nina Headde's post could be secured as our Marshlink Line Development Officer.

3. **Sharon Hedges (Passenger Link Manager for Passenger Focus)**. Sharon represented rail users' interests. She said shewas able to influence quite large decisions on the net work. Complaints of any kind should be funnelled through her office. She can be

contacted on **0870 336 6000** or her mobile **07918 626 126**. Sharon's e-mail address is ***sharon.hedges@passengerfocus.org.uk***.

She agreed the fare structures were confusing and complicated. She would continue to seek a "transparent" fare.

Passenger Focus covers all of Britain but Sharon was employed just for Southern. It has a statutory obligation to look into a passenger's concerns. Sharon was exploring options into the introduction of later services on Marshlink which has been a source of much complaint.

4. **Nina Headde (Development Officer, Marshlink Line)** Nina gave her annual report of her work during the year. She had been involved in many tasks but significantly involving herself with local organisations and ensuring wide publicity is given at the stations by advertising their events. She is currently involved with the Wild Life Project. She has also worked with the schools giving advice on safety, organised walks between stations with children and adults. It is apparent Nina is a valued member of Marshlink and gives much of her time and energy to her job..
Nina said there was a conference being organised for February or March, the venue to be fixed - could be Bexhill or Hastings.