

Kent County Council draft consultation on the New Southeastern Franchise



Following the presentation made to KMEP Members on 14 September 2015, Kent County Council, with support for Medway Council, has prepared this consultation document in order **to seek the opinion of KMEP members** throughout the county on the New Southeastern franchise. These views will inform the official responses which Kent County Council and Medway Council will prepare for submission to the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2016.

There will be significant **background growth in rail travel** on which Network Rail would be expected to advise as a key component in their concurrent **Kent Route Study**. This will determine the outputs required, and the funding submission to support them, during Network Rail's Control Period 6 (CP6) (2019–2024).

Significant **growth in housing and employment** is expected by 2031, both within Kent and Medway and in neighbouring counties. The councils are particularly concerned about how demand for rail travel in and through the county will grow, and how such growth can be accommodated on a network already approaching capacity. Improved connectivity to destinations, and reduction in journey times within and beyond the county, are also important to both councils.

There is a clear need to plan for the **development of the rail network** to meet the expected demand from significant planned housing and commercial growth, as set out in the county's **Growth and Infrastructure Framework**. The councils would welcome any measures that could be introduced through the course of the franchise to assist in meeting this expected demand, and would welcome the opportunity to work with the new operator on these and other schemes to improve the passenger experience.

Summary of key issues:

- Key passenger priorities to be addressed: capacity, service-wide punctuality / reliability, quality of rolling stock
- Key service enhancements: sufficient capacity to London & neighbouring areas, including enhanced service frequency on High Speed services to Ebbsfleet, Ashford, Canterbury, Folkestone and Dover, with passive provision for extension to Hastings and Bexhill in East Sussex; enhanced services on Mainline routes serving Faversham, Sittingbourne, Maidstone East line, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks; improved capacity on all services during evenings & weekends; ensure Metro services meet needs of Thames Gateway (Kent) area if these transfer to TfL
- Commitment from Government to invest in enhanced HS fleet with up to 26 new 6-car sets if required level of HS service is to be delivered during course of new franchise
- Commitment to participate in a new Kent Quality Rail Partnership (QRP)
- Commitment to working with existing Community Rail Partnerships (CRP)
- Improve communication including during times of disruption
- Measures to improve on board experience on congested trains
- Provision of additional seating
- Proposed station improvements, including to station buildings/platforms and forecourts
- Inclusion of proposed new station of Thanet Parkway in new franchise service specification
- Security recommendations
- Key on-board facilities
- Key aspects of service provision to be monitored
- Provision of station travel plans to facilitate sustainable access to stations
- Other issues including access & mobility, ticketing, parking, partnership working, staffing, supporting employment, franchise length/targets/name
- Provision of Smartcard ticketing and contactless payment

Q1. Please select 3 of the Transport Focus recommendations set out below which you believe require particular attention in order to improve your end to end journey? If relevant please identify the rail line to which your answer relates.

- Delivering value for money
- Providing a punctual and reliable service
- Provision of sufficient capacity, both in terms of train frequency and the availability of seating on board the train
- Effective management of disruption, especially through information to passengers
- The availability of accurate information about trains and platforms
- The comfort and adequacy of accommodation on the train, especially on longer journeys
- The availability of train and station staff
- The ease of buying the most appropriate ticket for the journey at a ticket office, online, or via a ticket machine
- The ease of access to services for passengers with reduced mobility
- Free wi-fi available on trains

Q2. Are there any examples of outstanding customer service experiences, related or unrelated to passenger rail services, to which you believe the New Southeastern franchise should aspire? If so, please provide supporting details or evidence in your answer.

Q3. Are there any changes to the current passenger rail service (i.e. number of trains per hour/day), which you feel should be considered?

If so, please explain your rationale. For example, please identify specific local factors which might influence the future level of passenger demand which you consider should be reflected in the specification.

Q4. Results indicate that rail is not the preferred mode of transport when travelling from Kent to Gatwick Airport. What improvements do you believe should be made to the rail service in order to make this your first choice of travel?

Q5. What are your preferences for service enhancements in the new franchise?

Q6. Do you have any proposals to improve Community Rail Partnerships so as to deliver more of the beneficial outcomes for passengers achieved so far? Please provide any evidence in support of your proposals.

Q7. How can the franchise operator help you better during a) planned disruption, such as engineering works and forecasted bad weather, and b) unplanned on-the-day disruption? Please provide separate answers for both cases.

Q8. To improve the railway's capability to match growth in demand with appropriate levels of capacity, an increase of carriages per train, or in the number of services per hour, would help. When travelling on a service where capacity is stretched, what opportunities do you see which would improve your on board experience?

Q9. What are your views on removing first class seating in order to provide more overall seating and reduce standing?

Q10. Are there any specific stations or services that you feel could improve on reliability or punctuality?

Where possible, please explain your reasoning when responding to this question.

Q11. What sort of improvements would you like to see prioritised at the station(s) you use? Please

provide details and reasoning for these as well as the name(s) of the station(s).

Q12. Do you have any proposals to improve security and safety at stations or on trains that you would like to consider? Please provide any supporting evidence and details of any specific stations which you feel merit consideration for future improvement under these schemes.

Q13. Are there areas of improvement in customer information and engagement you would like to see before, during and after your journey?

Q14. On a scale of 1 to 9, how would you rate the following on board passenger facilities (1= not important; 9= very important):

- Luggage holds
- Cycle storage
- Audio passenger information
- Provision of different classes of service
- Catering
- Tables
- Staff presence
- Baby changing facilities
- Plug sockets

Where possible, please explain your reasoning when responding to this question. Please also identify any other on board passenger facilities not listed above that you deem very important.

Q15. What areas of customer service within your end-to-end journey would you expect to see monitored and reported on in the new franchise, in order to improve the service quality for passengers?

Q16. Based on your experience or knowledge of rail passenger services, do you have any observations that may assist us in our commitment to have due regard to the environment, equality, social value and the family in the development of the specification of passenger services for the New Southeastern franchise?

Q17. In summary, what three aspects of your current rail journey would you like to see improved to enhance your overall travel experience?

Q18. Please indicate if there are any additional areas that you think it is important for us to consider and that have not already been addressed in this consultation.