

Friends of the Derwent Valley Line

Consultation for New East Midlands Franchise

The Friends of the Derwent Valley Line welcome the opportunity to make an input to the specification of the next East Midlands franchise. We recognize and acknowledge the work that has been done and the improvements made by the current franchise holder, and these should form the starting point for the next franchise.

1. Improvements to Train Service

The current timetable should form the basis of the new minimum service specification, with an hourly service to all stations throughout the day. However, with the passenger growth seen during the current franchise there is a need for increased provision in certain areas:

1. There is heavy commuter traffic on the line, and the latest RUS study predicts that the service will be full by 2023. Provision should be made to enable a ½ hourly service to be run during the morning and evening peak periods (and at other times where justified). This will require infrastructure work, as has been done most successfully in other areas (e.g. Truro to Falmouth)
2. We would like to see the evening service (Nottingham – Derby – Matlock) improved, with a later last train from Nottingham to Matlock (and return).
3. The Sunday train service does not start until late morning, and is only two-hourly throughout the day. With more people having jobs on Sundays, the service should start earlier than at present, and with the increasing number of tourist and leisure passengers on Sundays, the service should run hourly (mirroring the weekday service).
4. There should be better spacing of trains in the morning peak, with the first train from Matlock starting earlier than at present (06.20).

2. Additional Rolling Stock

There is currently a shortage of rolling stock within the franchise. Some trains are currently formed with a single vehicle, with the result that severe overcrowding occurs, and on occasions passengers are unable even to board the train, so get left behind. On the Derwent Valley Line all trains should be formed with at least 2 cars, and this should be increased to 3 or 4 cars on services known to be busy.

3. Services from Belper to Chesterfield and Sheffield

There is currently one train in the morning from Belper to Chesterfield and Sheffield, with a single return train in the evening. We firmly believe that there is a good case for increasing the number of Chesterfield and Sheffield trains calling at Belper, to turn this into a usable service, which should also operate on Saturdays. A consultation document was produced by The Friends in 2013, setting out the case for increased services. This was supported from within the community, and a copy of this document was sent to the Secretary of State.

4. Ticketing Arrangements

1. There should be improvements to ticketing arrangements, particularly for people who travel regularly but not every day. Every station on the Derwent Valley Line now has a ticket vending machine, but we want to see more information provided at these stations on how to use the machine, and clear advice on what to do if it cannot be used for any reason.
2. The train company should display advice to customers regarding the time needed to purchase a ticket, with advice on what to do if they cannot purchase at ticket within this time for any reason. It is not sufficient to state that “customers should allow sufficient time to purchase a ticket”. This is particularly important at unstaffed stations where often “amateurs” are trying to get to grips with complexities of the ticket machines. Consideration should be given to selling carnets of tickets at local shops.
3. Much work has been done to reduce the number of passengers travelling without tickets, but this can still be a problem especially at times of heavy demand. We are concerned that, apart from the loss of revenue, this leads to the numbers of passengers on the line being understated.

5. Accessibility

Work should continue to make all stations accessible to persons with reduced mobility. (This is particularly at problem at Duffield station).

Where station car parks are not controlled by the franchise holder, we want to see proper provision made for dropping off and picking up passengers, ensuring that the area is properly lit (and treated during the winter). (This is particularly a problem at Belper station).

6. Bicycles

With the Government’s emphasis on the importance of cycling, there needs to be greater provision for cycles on trains, above the two cycles that are currently allowed. There should also be secure covered cycle storage provision at the unstaffed stations on the line (e.g. cycle lockers).

7. World Heritage Site – view from the train

The line carries important tourist traffic through a World Heritage Site corridor, and the view from the train is an important marketing point. However, line-side trees and shrubs have been allowed to proliferate to make this view almost non-existent in many places, especially in summer. The new franchisee should work with Network Rail to remove much of the growth to allow passengers a better view of this important area.

8. Community Rail Partnership

The Friends have noted with approval the support that has been provided, and the improvements that have been delivered through the Community Rail Partnership, and we strongly urge that this should be continued and strengthened in the next franchise.

Friends of the Derwent Valley Line, October 2016