



Press release: Immediate

Rail group slams “new” rolling stock

Commuters on rail lines between Hastings and Brighton have condemned Southern’s plans to introduce 30-year-old “Class 313” suburban rolling stock replacing the new coaches launched only five years ago.

Two- and four-coach units designed specifically for local services along the East Coastway route, as well as new three-coach units, are to be relocated to south London. The 30-year-old units replacing them have no toilets or air-conditioning and have previously seen much wear and tear on the busy North London Line.

In addition, half the direct services between Brighton and Hastings are to be discontinued and replaced with services terminating at Eastbourne. Southern advise passengers to change at Hampden Park if they need to travel beyond Eastbourne in either direction. The East Sussex Rail Alliance is concerned that Hampden Park has limited disabled access and few passenger facilities.

Andrew Leach of ESRA said, “In spite of our objections made to Southern and the Department for Transport in their consultation on the timetable, it appears that it was already a done deal. Passengers between Brighton, Eastbourne and Seaford are going to have to endure uncomfortable journeys made even longer by the reduced top speed of the refurbished stock.

“We are also very disappointed that it looks as if disabled passengers will have to cross the level-crossing at Hampden Park to change trains and continue their journey, instead of being able to change at platform level at Eastbourne.

“Southern don’t guarantee connections at Hampden Park, and it is the busiest level crossing in Europe. Passengers who will have most difficulty in travelling from one side of Eastbourne to the other risk being stranded — even the waiting room closes at 7pm.

“We call on the DfT to invest in infrastructure to ensure a better service for all, on the East Coastway and in south London, rather than ensure that East Sussex is again at the bottom of the pile by tinkering with rolling-stock allocations.”

Bexhill Rail Action Group, East Coastway Commuters Group based in Eastbourne, and the St Leonards & Hastings Rail Improvement Programme campaign for better services along the coast and into London. They are founder members of the new East Sussex Rail Alliance, an umbrella group linking organisations and pressure groups throughout the county. See www.eastsussexrail.org.uk

ENDS : *Notes for Editors overleaf*



Notes for Editors

East Sussex Rail Alliance is an umbrella group formed to campaign for better rail services throughout the county. Founder members Bexhill Rail Action Group, East Coastway Commuter Group and St Leonards & Hastings Rail Improvement Programme concentrate efforts on coastal services between Brighton and Ore and into London.

Southern are replacing the two-car Class 172 units (built 2003–4) and three-car Class 377/3 units (built 2001–2) with three-car Class 313 units built in 1976–7. The Class 313 units are not fitted with toilets or air-conditioning, and have a top speed of 75mph against the 100mph top speed of the more recent trains.

Timetables are changed in May and December, with minor adjustments at other times of year.