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28 January 2010

Caroline Pidgeon
Transport Committee
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Dear Ms. Pidgeon

Rail services into London during recent adverse weather

Thank you for your letter of 15 January regarding the above and I can advise the following in respect of our services into London on:

- 6 January FGW ran 85% of its services
- 7 January FGW ran 97% of its services
- 8 January FGW ran 88% of its services

Of this reduction, 0.5% was as a result of Network Rail declaring that they were going to reduce the amount of infrastructure available. This revised plan was advertised on both the FGW website and the National Rail website from the day before and customers who subscribe to the FGW text alerts were also advised by that method. In addition, media were advised and the message was broadcast on local radio and TV stations.

The remainder of the cancellations were as a result of problems caused by the snow on the days concerned. The reason for the particularly low figure for 6th January is that the snow was heavier than forecast in certain areas on the FGW network. On that day we worked hard with Network Rail to resolve the resultant issues such as points blocked with snow, colleagues being unable to get to work (local bus transport having given up in many towns), trains succumbing to ice in moving parts etc.

In the 24 hours leading up to the snow arriving FGW and Network Rail discussed the issues that affected us in February at some length. The review from that event was used to plan the revised service and we are pleased that our overall

level of delivery was better this time round than it was last year despite there being much more snow over a much wider proportion of our network.

An industry review of how this snow event was handled has already been held with the aim of ensuring that if this type of scenario is encountered again we improve even further.

We must emphasise, however, that the two biggest issues we encountered were the ability of people to get to work in and around the Reading area (with several road closures and no bus operation) coupled with the affect on the infrastructure in the 24 hours following six inches of snow falling in a very short space of time on 6th January.

We have received over 600 letters of praise to date with more continuing to come in. The crews and station staff have been truly fantastic with volunteers coming in to move snow at all hours of day and night. I could not have asked for a better response and I think it really demonstrates the pride in the service at all levels of the organisation.

I do hope the above information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Mark Hopwood

Mark Hopwood
Managing Director

First Capital Connect

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Caroline Pidgeon
Transport Committee
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4th February 2010

Dear Caroline,

Rail services into London during recent adverse weather

Thank you for your letter of 15th January 2010 regarding the affects of the severe weather in early January on the train service into London.

The snow affected the Thameslink route particularly badly from the 6th January to the 10th January and then once more on the 13th January. There were 2 major impacts of the severe weather:

Fleet availability:

- First Capital Connect had a programme to replace the elements of our class 319 fleet most susceptible to extreme winter weather. In February 2009 the principle failure for the fleet was connected to the traction motors which drive the trains. A programme of replacement of these motors had to be postponed in order to provide the increase in service required for the first stage of the Thameslink project due to new trains not being delivered in time. Had the new trains been delivered in time and the programme of traction motor replacement been completed then the impact of the severe weather would have been much reduced. 36 traction motors were affected, 70% of which were the type being replaced. The programme to replace the damaged motors is due for completion by mid February.

- Doors freezing during cold weather is relatively common amongst the older types of multiple unit and processes are in place to deal with this. However, during the initial period of severe weather commencing on the 6th January the combination of extreme cold and significant snow led to a major reduction in fleet availability due to door damage. This damage was largely rectified by the 10th January

Infrastructure availability:

- The infrastructure to run services was severely limited on a number of days particularly in the immediate aftermath of the snowfalls on the 5/6th January and the 13th January. In addition on the 11th and 14th January there were significant infrastructure failures in the core of the Thameslink route which were unrelated to the severe weather. These both led to through services being curtailed.

All alternative services were displayed on our website and also communicated through text alerts and Twitter. Media outlets were kept informed of the changes to the service as they occurred and numerous interviews were conducted to give up to date positions to our customers. During this period emergency timetables were in use. These comprised of a regular pattern of services calling at all stations on the route to ensure all locations received a regular service and the need to change trains was removed. In addition, where it was possible within the constraints of the infrastructure and fleet availability, further services were provided in peak periods.

The major piece of learning from the February 2009 snowfall was the need to replace the traction motors and, as described earlier, a programme to achieve this was underway. Had it not been postponed due to the late delivery of the new rolling stock for the first stage of the Thameslink timetable the impact on the fleet would have been reduced significantly.

A full review of the impact of the severe weather and the impact on our service is underway. The lessons will be incorporated into the business to improve the level of service should such extreme conditions occur again.

Kind regards,

Neal Lawson
Managing Director

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Ms C Pidgeon
Transport Committee
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3 February 2010

Dear Ms Pidgeon

Thank you for your letters dated 13th and 15th January. We welcome the opportunity to provide information to the London Assembly Transport Committee on the services operated by London Midland during the dates specified. In general terms this is a good opportunity to let you know the effects the weather had on our service delivery and the steps that we took to provide as good a possible service in the very challenging weather environment.

How many and what proportion of services into and out of London were changed because of the weather each day between Monday 4 January and Thursday 14 January?

You will see from the chart below that London Midland operated a very good proportion of our train services during this period; this is testament to the work of our own employees, Network Rail colleagues and the resilience of our new fleet of modern trains. I am pleased to confirm that for all of these days we made no changes to the Long Term Plan schedule – i.e. the Timetable that formed the Plan of the Day was the same as that published December 2009 Great Britain timetable.

The table below shows the percentage of planned London arrivals and departures between 4th-14th January 10.

Day	**Planned services to & from Euston**	**Percentage of services operated**
Monday 4th	Full Service	95.1%
Tuesday 5th	Full Service	97.8%
Wednesday 6th	Full Service	73.2%
Thursday 7th	Full Service	76.9%
Friday 8th	Full Service	82.5%
Saturday 9th	Full Service	97.3%
Sunday 10th	Full Service	97.1%
Monday 11th	Full Service	99.1%
Tuesday 12th	Full Service	97.3%
Wednesday 13th	Full Service	61.6%
Thursday 14th	Full Service	97.3%

To give more detail regarding the reliability of the plan, the table below summarises the position for each route into London. You will see that during the period we did have to cancel services as a result of the severe weather; however every effort was made to maintain the full service. The first two lines in each group are trains arriving within 5 minutes of the published time and more than 5 minutes respectively; the third line is trains cancelled or not completing the whole journey.

		04-Jan-10	05-Jan-10	06-Jan-10	07-Jan-10	08-Jan-10	09-Jan-10	10-Jan-10	11-Jan-10	12-Jan-10	13-Jan-10	14-Jan-10
Euston - Northampton	0-4	75	81	16	47	68	88	55	87	84	43	61
	5+	20	17	61	34	28	18	11	8	12	34	36
	CAPE	2	0	20	16	1	2	0	2	0	20	0
	Total	97	98	97	97	97	108	66	97	96	97	97
Crewe - Euston	0-4	22	23	4	9	18	13	11	22	27	9	19
	5+	6	6	14	8	11	13	1	7	0	8	7
	CAPE	1	0	11	13	0	2	0	0	2	12	3
	Total	29	29	29	30	29	28	12	29	29	29	29
Birmingham - Euston	0-4	25	22	2	8	2	0	7	29	26	14	26
	5+	12	12	20	23	5	0	2	8	9	18	9
	CAPE	0	3	15	6	29	0	0	0	2	5	2
	Total	37	37	37	37	36	0	9	37	37	37	37
Euston - Tring	0-4	45	54	10	28	29	37	9	55	53	5	49
	5+	8	5	37	16	23	8	5	6	6	7	11
	CAPE	8	2	14	17	9	1	3	0	2	49	1
	Total	61	61	61	61	61	46	17	61	61	61	61

The days of greatest disruption because of snow were on the 6th and 7th January, where we experienced major issues affecting the infrastructure rather than the trains. We had a particular problem with points either being frozen or compacted with snow across the south of the West Coast Main Line. This led to severe disruption and heavily delayed services – particularly long distance services operated by Virgin Trains. The agreed contingency plan during severe disruption requires us and others to restrict the number of services we operate to accommodate all operators through the areas of restricted capacity and facilitate early recovery of the full service. This is the reason the level of cancellations was high on these two days. We made every effort to keep these cancellations outside of the Peak.

You will also note that there was an increased level of cancellation on the Birmingham – Euston and Euston – Tring routes on 8th January and across all our London services on 13th January. The former was in reaction to a major incident in the West Midlands involving a multiple signalling failure at Birmingham New Street and the latter was in reaction to the overhead wires being brought down in the Wembley Central area. Neither of these major incidents was caused by the severe weather.

In summary, London Midland did not see a reason to pre-plan any reduction in the level of train service at any time during the period and endeavoured to ensure that every train completed its journey, even if that meant that on occasion the train was extremely late. The aim throughout this period was to get people to and from work and we believe that we were largely successful in achieving this.

We have received a number of customer praise letters supporting this approach.

As has been explained, the high level of cancellations seen on the route during the period on some days was largely due to infrastructure issues with the major impacts not actually being related to the inclement weather.

Where services were changed because of adverse weather, what particular circumstances led to the changes, in particular any reliance on track and signalling services beyond your control?

As we operated the planned train service, the only delays and cancellations that occurred during this period were one off infrastructure events and train failures that were either related to the severe weather conditions, or as explained above.

What steps were taken to keep passengers informed and how effectively did telephone and web-based information services operate?

We recognise that this is a very important area where improvements can always be made and we doubled our efforts in this area to ensure that whenever possible our passengers were kept informed. We used a variety of media at our disposal, such as

- Station information screens and announcements on trains and stations. Mostly we used the real time information from Network Rail to update passengers;
- We re-enforced our LondonMidland.com website (especially bandwidth), to provide a summary of service being operated and to reassure customers that we were attempting to run a full service, but to expect delays
- Providing media sources, TV, radio and press with real time information, so that they could serve local news updates and travel bulletins, this was important as the main messages coming from the news channels was largely a ‘don’t travel’ line, and as we were operating, we did not attract attention. This is an area we need to work on collectively as an industry, as many passengers were influenced by these news messages and did not travel;
- Our Customer Relations team were very proactive and dealt with around 220% of its normal level of calls during the worst periods, with a comparatively low increase in the number of calls not answered in the usual 30 seconds. Extra staff were provided to deal with the additional volume of calls.

What contingency arrangements were put in place to minimise the need to change services because of the adverse weather?

We believe that our ability to run without amending the timetable was in part due to effective contingency arrangements that were put in place to mitigate the known risks when it was known how low the temperatures and how heavy the snowfall were likely to be. These included additional resource at points of need, such as our operational control and at train crew locations. Additional resource was deployed by our engineering and stations teams to ensure defrosting was done as necessary. We also made a series of modifications to certain trains such as Class 350's, and from a traincrew perspective we provided standby taxis to enable staff trapped at home by snow to get into work.

We also instigated a system of regular conference calls which ensured that the senior management were fully aware of emerging risks and took action to formulate plans to mitigate risk. In short, we dealt with the whole period as an Incident and mobilised a chain of command approach.

What lessons were learned from the snow in February 2009 and what changes were implemented as a result? What further lessons have been learned from the recent disruption to rail services to avoid a similar situation arising again?

A full review of the adverse weather experienced in February 2009 was undertaken afterwards, and this led to a number of changes in our management processes and modifications to our Fleet to better protect against snow ingress. Better deployment of our staff to ensure that doors and couplers did not become frozen was also part of this plan.

We believe that the lessons learned from February 2009 stood us in good stead and resulted in us operating the best service that was possible in the circumstances.

We are, working with Network Rail to jointly review the lessons we can learn from January 2010 and the outputs from this will be used to further reinforce our winter preparedness plan.

I hope this information answers your questions and gives you sufficient information to understand the operation of London Midland services during the recent exceptional winter weather. Please contact me if you would like further clarification or information.

Yours sincerely

Mike Hodson
Managing Director