

Season ticket lottery

The Campaign for Better Transport published a press release in November which showed the effect of the Department for Transport's decision to impose retail price index plus 1% fare increases on a sample of 16 typical commuter journeys since 2003.

The CBT results were interesting – showing rises of between 28% and 49% over the six year period – but not entirely unexpected.

Following a suggestion by colleagues on Railfuture's Passenger Committee, Peter Cousins has

reworked CBT's figures to show the price-per-mile of the 16 annual season tickets they featured.

The results, shown below, are astonishing.

One can only wonder why the railway industry discriminates against the citizens of Bath Spa, Sevenoaks and St Albans so much as to charge them £107, £113 and £134 per mile for their annual season tickets.

One might also speculate why their local MPs have allowed the industry to get away with this "daylight robbery" for so long.

Changes in annual season ticket prices

Route	Distance (miles)	Price 2003	Price 2009	2003 per mile	2009 per mile	Rise %	Rise pa
St Albans to London	20.00	2,080	2,680	104.00	134.00	28.8	4.31
Sevenoaks to London	22.00	1,660	2,480	75.45	112.73	49.4	6.92
Woking to London	24.25	2,048	2,496	84.45	102.93	21.9	3.36
Chelmsford to London	29.75	2,400	3,140	80.67	105.55	30.8	4.58
Guildford to London	30.25	2,232	2,760	73.79	91.24	23.7	3.61
Tonbridge to London	34.00	2,240	3,000	65.88	88.24	33.9	4.99
Southend to London	35.75	2,412	3,000	67.47	83.92	24.4	3.71
Reading to London	36.00	2,664	3,495	74.00	97.08	31.2	4.63
Brighton to London	51.00	2,720	3,572	53.33	70.04	31.3	4.64
Colchester to London	51.75	2,920	3,960	56.43	76.52	35.6	5.21
Average per mile for London commuters				73.55	96.22	30.8	4.58
Average per mile for regional commuters				49.79	65.91	32.4	4.79

Note: Mileages have been taken from the National Rail Timetables. All fares from National Fares Manual 85 (September 2003) and Autumn 2009. Annualised rises were calculated assuming six years of compound increases.

Tank up with oil money

A complicated web of relationships revolves around a number of right-wing think-tanks across the world that dispute the threats of climate change.

ExxonMobil which owns Esso is a key player behind the scenes, having donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in the past few years to climate change sceptics.

The Atlas Foundation, created by the late Sir Anthony Fisher, founder of the Institute of Economic Affairs, received more than £64,000 in 2008 from ExxonMobil.

Atlas has supported more than 30 other foreign think-tanks that support climate change sceptics, and co-sponsored a meeting of the

world's leading climate sceptics in New York in March 2009, according to the *Independent on Sunday*.

Called *Global Warming: Was It Ever Really a Crisis?*, it was organised by the Heartland Institute – a group that described the event as "the world's largest-ever gathering of global warming sceptics".

The organisation is another right-wing think-tank to have benefited from funding given by ExxonMobil in recent years.

A large British contingent was present at the event, with speakers including Dr Benny Peiser, from Lord Lawson's climate sceptic think-tank, the Global Warming Policy Foundation.

Severnside

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■ ■ Battle goes on

The campaign to redouble Kemble-Swindon continues. Many local people have confused the Cotswold line (on which work to restore double track between Charlbury and Evesham is now scheduled for completion in 2011) with the Stroud Valley and have wrongly assumed that the Government has already approved the Kemble scheme.

■ ■ More capacity needed

The branch input to the Great Western route utilisation strategy consultation emphasised the need for more capacity in Bristol's rail network. The proposals to reopen the Portishead branch to passengers and provide four running lines between Temple Meads and Parson Street were welcomed but we underlined the need to quadruple Dr Day's Junction to Filton Abbey Wood as crucial to the expansion of local rail services across the city.

We were not impressed by what the RUS said about connectivity between south-west England and the West Midlands which it saw only in terms of capacity on CrossCountry services. We drew attention to the deficiency of train services between the South West and Worcestershire which often involves changing at both Worcester stations or travel via Birmingham, making journey times uncompetitive with motoring.

■ ■ Appeal to London Midland

In our view the RUS did not appreciate the dispersal of population away from large cities. Rail travel in the Gloucester-Worcester corridor was not helped by London Midland's withdrawal of its service of five trains each way from 13 December, after only a year of operation.

In a letter to London Midland we suggested the need for lower fares, better pathing and better platform utilisation at Worcester Shrub Hill, criticisms which apply equally to the remaining First Great Western service of nine trains in each direction between the same cities.

We believe the market is there for an improved service, particularly if connections at Worcester were better. London Midland continues to run a 23.00 Birmingham New Street-Worcester-Gloucester train on Fridays only. London Midland replied to our appeal, saying that should a future opportunity arise to introduce a service with a reasonable prospect of covering its costs, LM would be happy to investigate.

■ ■ Electrification bonus

In our response to Wiltshire Council's core strategy consultation, we welcomed a statement under the heading of Trowbridge (the county town) that opportunities existed to expand the capacity of the rail network.

We stressed that Great Western electrification would not only benefit the main lines serving Chippenham and Swindon but also other FGW routes across the county which could expect a cascade of Turbo diesel trains from the London area.

We called for more frequent services on the Cardiff-Portsmouth and Swindon-Melksham-Salisbury routes. The latter could serve a reopened Wootton Bassett station.

Our submission rejected the strategy's comments about reopening of Corsham station as unduly pessimistic in the light of other reopenings exceeding forecasts of usage.

However, we supported the principle of safeguarding transport corridors as a way to promote sustainable transport and have asked for the Calne, Devizes and Savernake-Marlborough branch trackbeds to be protected for possible reinstatement in the long term.

