

Kent's golden hour

Southeastern Trains is working hard to get its new Javelin service ready for the 2012. Southeastern's Charles Horton, the IRO's vice-president, talks to Russ Conyningham

Watch any 're-location-location-location' type television programme and it's clear that Kent and parts of south-east London are now the smart choice for property investment. Estate agents will always 'talk up' an area's potential, but for once it would

be hard to accuse them of exaggerating.

Kent County Council is going all out to boost jobs and encourage companies to invest in the county. Its most deprived areas are being regenerated and it is promoting the county's potential as a premier tourist



The Hitachi-built Javelin.

destination worldwide. And, just as in Victorian times, when Kent and the capital spearheaded entrepreneurial investment, transport is at the heart of the regeneration. Southeastern, part of the Go Ahead Group, is set to play a key role.

It was chosen by the Department for Transport (DfT) to operate the Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) and took over from state-run South Eastern Trains in April.

The six year franchise – extended to eight if certain performance criteria are met – will herald high-speed domestic train services on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) from December 2009, slashing journey times from London St Pancras to Folkestone via Ashford through use of 29 six-car Class 395 Hitachi trains costing £8.9m each and capable of hitting 140mph.

With dual capability, these trains will also serve several stations on Southeastern's 480-mile 'classic' network, including Ramsgate, Canterbury West, Folkestone, Dover Priory and the Medway Towns, providing reduced journey times once they join the CTRL.

Southeastern is committed to improving services, pledging to lift its position in the customer satisfaction league table of London operators, enhance punctuality, increase security on trains and stations and other service improvements.

The integration of the fast domestic services with the existing 'classic' services is referred to as Service Level Commitment 2 (SLC2) and is

managed by Southeastern as a programme involving a large number of rail industry partners.

Southeastern's managing director, Charles Horton, is also vice-president of the IRO. He stresses that high speed services are just a small part of the whole SLC2 Programme.

He says: 'Getting the trains in place to carry passengers on 14 December 2009 is actually the easy part.'

'The programme embraces a huge amount of work, with new depots being built and new stations being fitted out, let alone drivers being trained, trains being tested and a robust timetable being prepared.'

'But the chief achievement must be creation of a service that our existing and potential passengers will want to use, both at launch and in the future.'

David Miller is in charge of the SLC2 programme for Southeastern. Trained as a chartered engineer, Miller has been involved in a host of major projects around the world, including design and construction of Sydney's New Southern Railway in Australia and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation's Airport Railway in Hong Kong.

He has also been a director for Railtrack and Halcrow, and has an inherent understanding of the complexities involved in delivering something like SLC2.

He explains what attracted him to the Southeastern brief. 'This is not the most technically difficult project I've worked on, but what makes it challenging is the number of industry partners and

stakeholders who play a part in it.

'Everyone has a role to play in making it a success, and sometimes when you're bogged down over a small technical detail it's useful to remember this. Southeastern's motto is to "think like a passenger" and this helps to ground us and focus minds on the whole reason why we're doing this.'

And it's clear Miller knows that delivery on day one won't be the true benchmark for a job well done.

'For this to be a success, we must encourage people to use the services, not just as a novelty on 14 December, 2009, but again on the next day and the next. And we must stimulate and sustain a significant growth in demand.'

Regeneration creates a market for the high speed services, but Southeastern needs to ensure it can exploit it.

Sales and publicity campaigns must be geared to the right audiences, and Southeastern is currently undertaking a major 'demand generation' market research study to pinpoint those parts of the population – and industry – most likely to be attracted to the new trains.

The programme doesn't just mean faster commuter journeys from the heart of Kent but opens up a whole new vista for rail travel in general.

With new stations at Stratford and Ebbsfleet within just seven minutes and 18 minutes respectively from London St Pancras and King's Cross, people in the south east will have a head start on many UK journeys that would once have meant a difficult transit across London.

This has not been lost on developers, with new homes and offices on the edge of the capital now a very attractive proposition.

Further investment is expected on the back of the 2012 Olympic Games, and Southeastern has already forged a positive working relationship with the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA).

DIARY OF EVENTS

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Thursday 7 December:

IROSE and YP are hosting a Christmas party for all IRO members on the evening in central London from 18:00.

Please email Chris Loder at: loderc@arrivatrains.co.uk if you would like to come along, or check the website for further updates.

SCOTTISH AND IRISH AREA

Tuesday 28 November:

The next meeting of the Scottish section of the IRO will be held in the network Rail boardroom, Buchanan house, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow.

The speakers will be Derek Skingle, who will speak about his experiences as operations safety manager on the Taiwan High Speed Rail Project, and Steve Bradbury-Konight, who will speak about various Asia Pacific rail operations. Both speakers work for Atkins. All IRO members can attend.

Thursday 25 January:

Andy Barr will come to Glasgow to speak to the Scottish section of the IRO. Barr is the network co-ordination manager for London Underground and will speak about how they dealt with the events of 7 July 2005.

He will describe the day and how the operation of the tube was returned to normal. Barr will also share the lessons London Underground learned from its experiences. This will be an excellent opportunity for railway operators to learn from. The meeting will be in the

Network Rail board room, Buchanan House, Glasgow and will start at 17.30.

For more information on the IRO in Scotland, contact [Jim Gillies@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:Jim.Gillies@networkrail.co.uk) or at Network Rail, Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HG.

MIDLANDS AREA

Monday 27 November:

Visit to Midland Metro's maintenance depot and operational centre in Wednesbury. Attendees to meet at Birmingham Snow Hill station where we will take the tram to the depot.

We will be departing no later than 18:00 and the organisers suggest attendees gather just inside the front entrance to the station between 17:50 and 18:00.

To contact the Midlands Area please contact Julia Stanyard on 0121 345 5030 or email: Julia.stanyard@networkrail.co.uk

NORTH EAST AREA

North East Area meetings normally take place at 17:30 for 18:00, at York. For further news on the IRO in the north east, email: northeast@railwayoperators.org

NORTH WEST AREA

To contact the North West Area on any matter, please contact Clive Evans on 01270 629009 or email: northwest@railwayoperators.org

SOUTH EAST AREA

To contact the South East area on any subject, email: southeast@railwayoperators.org

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The IRO Young Professionals have had another exciting few months with recent highlights being a visit to Slade Green depot and the talk from Iain Coucher.

Thursday 7 December: One for the diary is the IRO Christmas Reception, hosted by IROSE and YP and sponsored by ViZiRAIL on in Central London from 18:00 for all members and colleagues.

If you'd like to come along, please email Chris Loder: chairman@iroyoungprofessionals.org.uk

Our next meeting will be in January, with the speaker and date yet to be confirmed. As of 2007 start times for meetings will be changed from 16:30 to 17:00.

Our next visit will be in February, TBA.

Thursday 11 January:

Following the success of the first few informal networking occasions, informal networking will now be held at the fixed venue of the Euston Flyer between Kings Cross and Euston.

Please feel free to join us from 17:30 onwards.

We would welcome any feedback, comments or enquiries.

Please feel free to get in touch with us at: info@iroyoungprofessionals.org.uk or check our website at: www.iroyoungprofessionals.org.uk

Throughout the games, Southeastern's Class 395s will run the Javelin shuttle services between St Pancras and Stratford, site of the 500-acre Olympic Park with its stadium, aquatics centre, hockey and cycle parks and four multi-sport arenas.

But even before 2012, Stratford promises yet more opportunities thanks to its links with the Docklands Light Railway, providing swift connections to other key parts of the capital, such as Canary Wharf, the City Airport and Bank.

So with the scene set for rapid regional expansion, and the Olympics a jewel in London's crown, Southeastern knows that not only must it be swiftly out of the starting blocks, but must then stay ahead of the field and go the distance.