

Transport Committee – 27 March 2015**Transcript of Agenda Item 5 - London Bridge Station Redevelopment**

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Let's move into our main item today, which is on London Bridge station redevelopment and the works that are going on there. We are delighted to have five distinguished guests before us this afternoon. I am very grateful for you giving up your Friday afternoon to talk to the Transport Committee and to answer our questions. We have three people from Network Rail: Steve Knight [Sussex Area Director], Simon Blanchflower [Major Programme Director – Thameslink] and Phil Hufton [Managing Director of Network Operations], who has recently moved to Network Rail from London Underground (LU); so you are all very welcome indeed. From Govia Thameslink Railway, which covers Southern and Southeastern¹, Charles Horton, who has been before the Committee before – we have met many times – who is the Chief Executive and Alex Foulds, who is the Commercial Director [of Southern Railway]. You are very welcome this afternoon. We have quite a range of questions, as you might imagine, on this topic. We have been asking passengers for comments on this and of course they have been flooding in. When we talk about trains it is very easy to talk about the railway and the kit, but the reality is that it is about people's lives and the impact it is having, to put this into context. We all feel very passionate about this because many of us here are living this every day when we come into work.

Some of the comments we have had from people: "I have been late from work and late picking up my kids too often", "I can't be the only one who's very tired and depressed by this situation", "My commute is ruining my life", "These daily delays are causing me to be late for work and I miss my son's bedtime every evening". Somebody who is new in a job said, "Your incompetence is making me look incompetent". Lots of people have had some very good suggestions and things, but we have had other people saying, "I'm a disabled person and I find it extremely dangerous to have so many people pushing and shoving to get in the station and get on the train".

Obviously, some of the issues we are going to cover today are general issues that have been raised, but the works and everything else are putting so much additional stress on passengers, who are already busy and doing their jobs. The community is part of it and that is what we need to be looking at how we can address today.

I wanted to kick off the questioning to try to understand what is causing the problems at London Bridge. If I look at the performance of the trains and Southern trains, for February, 82% of the trains that ran were late, and 8% were cancelled, diverted or more than 30 minutes late. Only 10% in February ran on time. If you look at that, it was out of a very much reduced service. That is just there. It is similar with Southeastern: 42% have been late and so on. There are some serious issues about reliability going on.

Perhaps Network Rail wants to kick off and then perhaps we will come to Charles [Horton] and the train company. What is going wrong at London Bridge?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Firstly, I would really like to apologise on behalf of both Network Rail and myself personally. I am a fare-paying customer like the people who go through London Bridge and it is just not good enough. We cannot afford to put our passengers and our customers under this level of service. It is not acceptable.

¹ Following the meeting Govia Thameslink Railway stated that Southeastern is a separate company; Charles Horton is also Managing Director of Southern Railway, which will be incorporated into Govia Thameslink Railway from 26 July 2015.

I am going to work tirelessly - and I cannot do it on my own; it is about the organisation - and I am committed to make sure that this place is going to be significantly different and I am going to do that in a number of ways, actually.

I have appointed a senior director who is going to take full accountability for the station itself. Having said that, I am accountable for everything that happens within the operational side of the railway and I accept that. Therefore, I have an individual director who is taking the lead.

We are putting a number of changes into London Bridge in particular because we definitely have to do different things to change the way that station operates. I will talk about that later, but I do want to stress the point that we had four lines coming into London Bridge and now we have three. Recognising that there is going to be a reduction in capacity to meet the volume, it is a challenge that we have to put right.

Again, I just want to endorse my message to everybody that I am so sorry and sincere about the way that this has happened.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): OK, but what has actually been going wrong? We have heard that the new signalling equipment that was installed over Christmas is not perhaps up to the job. We have heard that there might be problems with trains fusing the signals and it might be something to do with the train interface. We are hearing all sorts of different rumours out there as to what it is that is going wrong. Can you tell me? Have you diagnosed exactly what it is that is causing the problems?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Shall I come in on that?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, Simon.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Simon Blanchflower. I am the Programme Director for the Thameslink programme.

We carried out major works over Christmas and New Year, which you are aware of, during the 16-day blockade that we had. We installed a significant amount of new equipment during that blockade and also commissioned equipment that we had previously installed in the staged works leading up to Christmas. We have had two areas where the asset reliability has not been good enough and we openly acknowledge that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): The new equipment has not been good enough?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): There have been two situations. One is to do with some of the sets of points that were installed near New Cross Gate, where we had a series of infrastructure failures in the first four weeks after we reopened the railway in January. We very quickly got on top of that, identified the root cause and remedied the issue with those sets of points just north of New Cross Gate and so they are now functioning well. Indeed, over the last month, we have had only one incident with those points and that was not a service-affecting incident.

The other issue that we have had is with some track circuit equipment. That was part of the signalling equipment that we installed at Christmas. There was one particular equipment room where we had a number of those failures. We have done a lot of diagnostic work in terms of understanding what is causing those failures and have tracked that down to a particular earthing fault that was in that equipment room. We have remedied that. Since we remedied that particular earthing fault, we have now seen, again, a very good level of

reliability from that equipment. Indeed, in the last ten days, since we finally rectified that, there have not been any further incidents in terms of the equipment that we installed at Christmas.

Therefore, we openly acknowledge that there were two areas where the installation had not performed in the way that we wanted it to and that certainly had caused a number of the reliability issues that we have seen in terms of asset performance in the approaches to London Bridge.

The other area that Phil [Hufton] touched upon is in terms of the works that we are doing in order to create the worksites for the next stage of works that we are undertaking as part of the Thameslink programme. We have had to take certain areas of infrastructure out of use while we do those works. That has restricted the amount of infrastructure, as Phil referred to, in terms of the number of tracks that are available on the approaches to London Bridge.

We did a lot of work with the train operating companies (TOCs) in trying to understand the capacity that then remained in the layout and tailored a timetable to suit that. In the morning peak, that has proved - after the initial reliability issues - to be accurate in the sense that we are running 22 trains an hour into London Bridge in the morning peak. In the evening peak, we have recognised that there are constraints that had not been fully identified in some of the modelling we did initially and we have had to slightly reduce the capacity in the evening peak to reflect that.

In summary, those are the issues that we have been facing in terms of the influence of the Thameslink programme. As Phil has already illustrated, there have been challenges that the unreliability of the infrastructure has caused in terms of passenger crush to crowding, if you like, at London Bridge Station, which the station management, as Phil has referred to, is now trying to address.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Let us just try to unpick some of that. It has taken you three months, effectively, to resolve the problems on the new equipment you have put in. Is it the case that effectively you are putting in new equipment that you have not tested elsewhere, a bit like the nightmare we had on the Jubilee line when that was upgraded? They were live-testing new equipment and it was not working and kept failing. Is that effectively what you have been doing at London Bridge?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): No, it is not. In terms of the initial issue with the points, which we resolved within four weeks, it was to do with some installation issues, which again were quickly resolved.

In terms of the track circuit issues that I referred to, which have taken slightly longer to resolve, those track circuits have been performing very reliably in other parts of the network and we have had no issue at all with them. They are a tested product. We have been using them over the last nine months at London Bridge and previous installations have had no issues with them at all. It was just this particular equipment room in terms of the electrical earthing that proved slightly different in that room due to the nature of the power supply. I am probably getting a little bit technical here, but that caused those particular problems to the power supply units. It took us time to identify that, working with the suppliers and with the maintainers. We have now achieved that and we have now resolved that particular issue.

As Phil [Hufton] said, we fully understand the impact that that has had on customers. It is not acceptable and we have learned the lessons from that in terms of feeding those into the next stages of works that we will be carrying out.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): There have been some issues with installing the new equipment, but the new equipment has been tested elsewhere and so it is not completely brand new to the network.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): No, absolutely not.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That is helpful to know, but you have had problems with installing it. Is there an issue with your contractors and how they are installing this new equipment?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): In terms of the track circuits, no, it was nothing that the installers could have envisaged. There was a particular configuration of events there that had caused this. Was it foreseeable? No, I do not believe it was and I do not believe any blame can be laid at the door of the contractors.

In terms of the points installation work, we are looking at an element of retraining there and coaching from the lead expert on this, but again I do not believe that there should be blame laid at the door of the supplier in that instance.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): It is quite interesting because some of this equipment actually was installed on LU and so it was proven and tested equipment. What we did find in those days was that we had different power surges that caused a problem and this was quite significant in terms of some of the failures in this particular equipment room. It was proven kit.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, good, but the trains supposedly fusing some signals was to do with this earthing and how it was wired, if you like, to be simple?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): There was a thought at one stage that a particular train type - Class 442, which has particular electrical characteristics - might be interfering with it. That has never been proven. There are modifications taking place, I believe, on that particular type of rolling stock anyway in terms of the converters on that, but it has never been fully proven that that was a contributor to it. It was potentially an issue, one that we had to rule out.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): OK, both the points down at New Cross Gate and the track circuit equipment, basically, account for the bulk of your delays. Does that account for all these signal failures outside Bermondsey where we all sit there and crawl along and wait for the next green light? Is that covered by that or is that something else that has been going on?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): In terms of the asset failures, those two examples I have given cover probably about 85% of the service-affecting failures that we have had. There have been a couple of other minor issues. There were a couple of blown fuses and things like that, but nothing of significance. These two events that have described cover, as I say, probably 85% of the failures. When people refer to 'signalling failures' and so on, it has been this issue to do with the track circuits and the power supplies to them that has caused the vast majority of those issues.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You are on top of that now?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Yes, absolutely.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Presumably you are installing this elsewhere at London Bridge, are you?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You will not have the same problems again?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): I am confident around that, yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Very good. Val, you want to comment?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Can I just interject there? You said, Simon, that the asset failures around New Cross Gate took four weeks to fix. We have had 12 weeks of this misery now. How soon did you get on the case for getting the repairs done?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): In terms of the points, we were there within three days in terms of getting the right --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Three days? You cannot get an emergency team in overnight if you need to?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): We did. We did a short-term fix and we then had the right professionals there within three days to do the longer-term fix. In terms of the immediate fix, we had people there immediately to deal with that. In terms of the longer-term fix, we had people there within three days mobilised with the right equipment to put in place the right long-term reliability fix on those points.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): We previously had a private briefing and Dave Ward [Route Managing Director (London and South East), Network Rail] was there. We were led to believe that the reason there had been so many substantial failures was that the modelling had been wrong in terms of how many trains could come in and out. They had it wrong because they overestimated the capacity of the trains to turn around and for people to run the system as it was. At that point, nobody said, "We have severe asset-failure problems".

I have had statements from your public affairs people telling me and telling us all in a public notice that it was a passenger on the line at Streatham Common one night when we had the big Tuesday melt-down. There has been a complete absence of any information about possible asset failures or other issues going on in the system until queried and challenged.

Why has Network Rail not been absolutely upfront with us about what has been going on and why? If you knew that this was happening, why were we not told when we kept asking? We have been asking persistently, "What is going on and why?" It has been presented to us as some kind of mysterious cloud that nobody can see through, but clearly you are telling us now that we can have confidence in you because you knew what the problem was and you had it fixed as soon as you could. This has all been done in distressing amounts of secrecy.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Can I just answer part of that? Obviously, on that particular evening, on 3 March --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I do not just want to talk about the evening, Phil. I want to talk about the fact that there has been 12 weeks of misery.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): It is longer than that now.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I understand that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): It has been 12 weeks of misery and this is the first time we have had any kind of account of the problems with the assets. There has been secrecy around the asset failures.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Rumour and counter-rumour.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I do not think that was intentional.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Accountability is something we are interested in.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Absolutely, and I do not think that was ever intentional. All I was going to say was that I cannot answer why people have not told you and I will find out why people have not explained all of the issues that have been going on. Simon [Blanchflower] has obviously made it absolutely clear what the failures have been.

What I was going to say is that on that particular evening, there were a number of issues that compounded the problem even more. Yes, there was an attempted suicide that caused a problem at Victoria. There was a train failure that caused an additional problem at Canada Water. Things became compounded. Again, this is not meant as an excuse, but people just became lost on the way in terms of all of these issues that have come together as a culmination. However, I can assure you from --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Phil, the point I am making in terms of your corporate communications as an organisation, when elected people ask you what is going on and are sent statements that say, "There was somebody on the track. It was not our fault" --

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): OK. I can only apologise for that, but we are going to fix that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): -- and then we have to probe and probe to find out what the problem is --

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Yes, we are going to fix that, I can assure you. We are going to fix the comms as well.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): It is a culture of secrecy within Network Rail.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I am not familiar with that level of secrecy, I can assure you.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I know you are not, Phil, but I am telling you there is a culture of secrecy at Network Rail.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I can assure you that there is a significant change taking place in the organisation. There is an absolute commitment from Mark Carne [Chief Executive, Network Rail] and the rest of the executive team. We are going to do things significantly differently in Network Rail. I can assure you that we are going to be open and transparent.

We are building on our comms team and I am now working on a daily basis with the comms team because I know there are lots of other events that have taken place. Potentially, there are risks that we are going to be faced with in the next few weeks and months and Easter is a challenge. I am working now with the comms people to make sure we have absolute transparency because --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): -- I am not prepared to hide anything whatsoever. That is not my nature. That is not the way I operate. I am not prepared to have people behaving in that way.

I do not think people have maliciously done that. What I think has happened is that people have not got their facts together well. We have to make sure that we are on top of our game and that is where we are going to get to.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you. There are communication issues with passengers and we are going to come on to that, but the idea that you knew there was this problem and not to put up, "We have fixed this problem. We identified it". Then at least passengers think something is happening instead of every day, "Is my train going to run? What is going on? Are they actually doing anything?"

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): We are elected Members.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): What I wanted to ask --

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Can I just clarify one point, Caroline, because it might be useful? In terms of the performance we have had since Christmas, a contribution to that has been the asset failures and the asset reliability issues. It has also been, if you like, the bedding-in of the timetable and I am sure Steve [Knight] is happy to talk about the bedding-in of the timetable, which has also been a contributory factor. It is not as simple as just the asset failures being resolved. It has also been the work that we have been doing jointly between the operators to bed that timetable in.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are going to come on to the timetable in a minute. Simon, something you said earlier was that you were now able to run 22 trains an hour at peak hours in the morning, but you were not able to in the evening rush-hour. How many are you capable of running in the evening rush-hour?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Steve is better equipped to talk about that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Steve, how many are we able to run?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): We are running 20 trains per hour in the evening.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): There are 20 in the evening and 22 in the morning peak?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): I could explain the difference, if that helps, in terms of why we can --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I will leave it there at the moment but remember you were going to do timetabling and maybe we will pick that up. I just wanted to clarify that figure.

Charles, could I come to you, just to ask? Obviously, you have all these infrastructure problems and failures and so on. What about - in terms of you operating the train services - things like dwell-time problems and other stuff? We are going to get into detail on drivers later, but what have you been doing? Clearly, you are running the trains --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Or not running the trains.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): -- or not running them.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Sure. Just to underscore what Phil [Hufton] said, on behalf of Southern and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) as well, we understand our passengers have had a very rough time over the past few weeks. Alex [Foulds] and I were both at a 'Meet the Manager' yesterday morning at London Bridge and so we heard it first-hand. We have been there a number of times over the past few weeks. I happen, actually, to travel through London Bridge on many occasions as well and I have also been caught up in the disruption. I totally empathise with passengers and their experience and I do understand the strength of feeling about this. I totally understand why passengers are frustrated and annoyed. I just wanted to put that on the record.

In terms of a timetable, as you have heard, we would aspire to run probably 24 trains an hour if we could. We have been advised - we have been working very closely with Network Rail - and we always understood that after Christmas, with the infrastructure that we had, the maximum that it would be possible to run - given the need to rebuild London Bridge Station, which we should not lose sight of in this process - would be 22 trains an hour. As you have heard, experience has revealed that 22 trains an hour in the evening peak is not possible and, therefore, we have had to reduce the service on Southern to 20 trains an hour in the evening peak.

That has left us making some choices about which services we cut out. We have made several iterations, changes or tweaks to the services we have cut out. We have done it on the basis of doing our best to try to understand what alternatives passengers have if we remove services. Secondly, it was on the basis of knock-on crowding that we create because we do understand that by taking trains out of the timetable there is a knock-on effect on crowding. Thirdly, it was on the basis of the effect on the performance of other services as well.

In making those decisions, we recognise that there are no good-news choices there. Nobody is going to be jumping for joy out of us making those sorts of decisions. What we seek to do is to do the best we can to make the least worst decisions in those circumstances.

However, I would just finally add before you probably come back to me on that that, in seeking to make those changes, what we have tried to do is to make the best judgements we can based on all the information we have. We have taken feedback from passengers, we have seen how things have performed and we have made further tweaks. We will continue to do that and we have further changes that we are looking at making for May to build on that understanding that grows as we implement the timetable changes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): There will be further changes in May that passengers --

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Yes, which we are working on at the moment.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Is that further cuts to services?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): No. There will be no overall reduction in the quantum of services using London Bridge. What we are seeking to do is to – again, using those three decision criteria that I have explained – try to do even better than we are doing at the moment in terms of --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Will you look to try to more evenly space some of the services?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Indeed.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You will have no doubt seen my tweet last night. My cancelled train meant there was half an hour with no train.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Sure.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That is unacceptable at rush-hour. You will be looking to address those?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): We will certainly do our best, within the parameters and the challenges we have, to do the best we can for passengers. We understand that this is a very difficult situation for passengers.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Can I just ask Network Rail before we move on to another area? Perhaps, Phil, I will address this to you. Have you looked to calculate the economic cost of this disruption to London and to businesses? When there is a strike on the Underground, we know the figures always come out. The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry always estimates the Tube strikes and I think the last lot, it said, cost the London economy £50 million per day. What is this actually costing London's economy?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I cannot answer the question. We are all working on that, absolutely. I have some people looking at it now because I work quite often on a return-on-investment type of approach. If you think about the impact that these types of things make, then it is about investing to eliminate these types of failures. Therefore, we are working on that, but I could not give you the figures today.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): When could we expect that kind of figure to come out from you?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): If I could get back to you, I would appreciate it if we could do it that way.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I have had businesses contacting me saying, "This is costing my business. My staff cannot get in on time and so on. It is having a huge impact".

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Absolutely. I have had quite a bit of experience, unfortunately, with these types of situations and it is just not fair.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): No. OK. We will move on to the next section on accountability and partnership.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Feel free to interrupt me. When we had Peter Hendy [Commissioner of Transport for London] in for his annual discussion with us, one of the things he said to us was that he felt there was a lack of a single controlling mind, ie the interface between the operational trains and the infrastructure management. There was some dysfunctionality there and there was not a controlling mind.

A number of us went to see the Secretary of State [for Transport, Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP] and he said he was going to do something about that and he had his eye on that failure, although of course it was two-and-a-half months in by then.

What I want to know is who now is responsible for ensuring that there is a controlling mind in this situation? Let us explore that role.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Ultimately, it is my accountability. Network Rail is accountable for the London Bridge Station. There is absolutely no question whatsoever.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Very clear.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): We have had interfaces, obviously, with the TOCs and we do work closely together. Having said that, there are a number of areas that certainly need a greater level of focus and that is the focus I am actually putting in today. Even the amount of technology in the station is not as apparent as it should be.

For example, as you know, in the LU stations, we have been working hard to get Wi-Fi into the stations. That is definitely something we are developing. Within the next couple of weeks, Wi-Fi will be more available both for us and for customers.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Do you know, Phil? That is great and we are really pleased, but Wi-Fi is not rocket science. You can get Wi-Fi put up in a coffee shop in three days and we are still three months in. Tell us about this massive interface between the infrastructure, some of which has been going wrong, and the operators. How are you making sure that we are getting away from our petty organisational interests, be they private or be they public, and we are actually getting into looking after the interests of the passengers getting somewhere safely and in a timely fashion? Is that what you are doing, Phil?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I would not say it is a massive challenge or a massive comms issue. It is quite simple and basic, to be honest with you. Yes, it is what we are doing. We have had a number of sessions together. As you know, I joined Network Rail. I took over in February, actually, but I have met Charles [Horton] more times than I care to think about.

I am certainly visiting London Bridge personally. I try to go every day. I go in the peak. Even the positioning of visible staff was not appropriate. I would like to think, if you went there today, you would see that there is a change. However, as I have said, it is a Network Rail station and managing the interfaces between the TOCs and us is absolutely fundamental.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): The buck is stopping with you, Phil. There are two things that worry me about this. We were really pleased when we heard there might be a controlling mind there at last. Two things worry me about it.

I see a reference to you as a sort of 'Gold Commander'. I think that was the phrase that Patrick McLoughlin [Secretary of State for Transport] used. A 'Gold Commander' in our experience is somebody who gets on top of it after it has happened, ie it is an emergency management situation. What we are seeking here is prevention and day-to-day smooth management, not a hero who is going to come in when it has all fallen over again.

Can you reassure us that you are actually going to be doing effective prevention work in a joined-up way and are stemming the problems as quickly as they arise?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I certainly would not describe myself as a hero, but thank you for that. It is not about one person. Absolutely, it is not. My world is definitely about prediction and prevention. That is where we have to evolve to. Today we are not there and we are more around response and recovery. It was the same world in LU when I was in the same place. It is about how we are going to migrate from this response and recovery to prediction and prevention. It will not happen overnight. That is one thing, unfortunately, I can assure you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): How long?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): How quickly can you get the organisation into shape so that it does do prevention and recovery faster?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): There are three parts to the plan. There are the immediate things that we are doing, which are the basic things and the simple things that we should have been doing. Secondly, there --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Give us a few examples. We want to get inside this machine now because we do not trust any of these organisations to do it sight unseen. We want to take the back off this machine and know exactly what you are doing. What are you going to be doing?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Maybe you will trust us when we have actually delivered something. The basic things that we are doing are, one, making sure that staff are equipped with radios that work off the same channel and allow the communications to happen more effectively. We are putting more customer information screens visible outside the station and inside the station. More staff are actually on board.

I have engaged an independent organisation now to assess passenger movements on the station. It is the same organisation we use in the Greater London Authority (GLA) for things like firework displays. That organisation is on board now and is assessing all the movements within London Bridge. I am actually going to develop that further into all London stations. This organisation is a professional organisation that will help us to ensure we have this right.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Just tell me, Phil. You are doing an awful lot of work there and clearly, for some of this, it is a bit of a surprise that it is not already in place, to be frank. You are having to put some basics in there. Do you have a national role as well as doing this or are you now 100% on London Bridge?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I have a national role, but it is important that people recognise how Network Rail operates because there is this perception that I "rule the world". I do not and I never want to, either.

The way Network Rail is structured is that we have a number of functions that have responsibilities and then there are two main parts of Network Rail. One is network operations, which is the part that I am responsible for and which looks after the operational side, ie things like signalling, and also the maintenance side. That is all of the assets. We maintain all of the assets. The other side of it, then, is the infrastructure side, which is the part that Simon [Blanchflower] comes from under a different responsibility.

When I look at the role, yes, geographically, it is much greater. However, if I look at my role in LU prior to coming here, it was far more difficult, challenging and sophisticated than the role I have today, absolutely. Why? I ran the train services; I ran the stations. I had 270 stations and now I have about 20. I ran the whole train service, the train drivers, the unions and everything. Therefore, this role, in my view, is quite a lot simpler than the one I had previously.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Are you reassuring us that if there is a major crisis elsewhere, either in London - and we had problems at Blackfriars and whether it was Thames Water water or Network Rail water and all of that nonsense over Christmas - or elsewhere in the country, you would not have to take your eyes off the ball at London Bridge? I find that quite worrying. I know there is a long-term role there for the whole country to be sorted out, but we are having a crisis now and we want to see this properly managed for once. You are offering us some glimmers of hope, Phil, that things might possibly get better now --

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): They will.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): -- and we are worried that we might lose you somewhere else.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): No. One of the reasons I decided to join Network Rail is because I actually believe - and this is not meant to be arrogant - that I can help to make a difference. It is about leading and inspiring people. I have 25,000 people in my part of the organisation. I have to make absolutely clear that this is never about one person and it certainly is not about me alone.

What I am doing is, because of my relationship within Transport for London (TfL), Mike Brown [Managing Director of LU and London Rail, TfL] and I are looking at developing a pan-London approach to dealing with incidents in particular. Certainly incident management, which is the world that unfortunately we are in today, and developing it into predicting and preventing is going to be far more joined up with TfL. Obviously, I understand the organisation and I know it can be far more effective. We are getting a number of key people in key places to ensure that I am not above the organisation.

Let me just tell you my view of 'Gold command'. It is strategic. It is not operational. It is a strategic role. Whatever description people might have for Bronze, Silver and Gold, Gold for me is always about the strategic approach, not delving into all the details of the operation. If you look at it with a military type of approach, that is exactly where 'Gold command' comes from.

I cannot be everywhere all the time, but I have to make sure there is a structure in place with capable people who can really make a difference. There are some fantastic people in Network Rail and it is the same in TfL and in LU, but it is about making sure that you create people who are far more joined up. That is the thing that we have to do better with.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I have to say that this Committee had an increasingly good relationship with Network Rail before this crisis and our confidence has crashed right to rock-bottom. It was

not that things do not go wrong in the system. It was just that when things go wrong in the system and they are not attended to in any way that seems professional, then that is when confidence crashes.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I do get that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): A last question, Phil, if I may. I know the Secretary of State has now been involved and the Mayor told us this week that he had been involved. What commitments have they asked you for and what commitments have you given to them? Are there any further commitments that you want to give to us?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): It is really quite interesting, actually. I know the Secretary of State has been involved and I welcome any input from anybody.

We have a plan. The plan was being developed because of London Bridge specifically, but it is for the whole of the network. If people want to contribute to that plan, then I can assure you I am more than open to that. My discussions with people within the Secretary of State's organisation have been very open and transparent and for me it has been more about, "What are you doing", rather than, "This is what you need to do". I would like to believe that we know how to run this railway. Some might say not very well at the moment, but that will improve. There is a plan in place that we are developing. The checks and balances are in place.

I know the Mayor has also made comments. In my days in LU it was a similar situation. We used to be on the front page of the *Evening Standard*. LU is in a significantly better place than it has ever been and I would like to think I played a part in that and that is my intention - absolutely - with both Network Rail and also the TOCs.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): What commitments have you made to them?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I have made commitments that we are going to develop a better system within Network Rail both for London and for the whole of the UK. My commitments are quite basic --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): In terms of what is going on at London Bridge now, what is the timetable for things getting better and what are the milestones?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I do not think you will see massive improvements in terms of the train performance until we get the fourth line back. Obviously, I will ask Charles [Horton] for his views on this, but this development at London Bridge is going to be in place initially until 2016 before you see some significant improvements and then 2018 before we are expecting --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Phil, we understand. We had Network Rail in twice before Christmas. We understand that we were going to suffer reduced services in a planned and controlled way. We understood that. What we do not understand is why the reduced services we were promised are not there now and even fewer services are there. Performance spiralled continuously down into hell for weeks and weeks and nobody seemed to be telling us why or how it was going to get better. What we want to know now is how, over the next few weeks, we are going to see services become predictable and reliable.

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): We have seen two things in the problems at London Bridge. One is the infrastructure issues that we have talked about a lot and one is the timetable-related issues.

Many of the aspects around the timetable have been improved over recent weeks through the changes that Charles [Horton] alluded to earlier. Particularly within the morning peak, it is very consistent and over 90% of trains arrive within five minutes of their published times. In the evening peak, we have also seen a continuing trajectory of improvement. Last Thursday and last Friday were the best two days for Southern Public Performance Measure (PPM) for several years.

Therefore, we have seen some tangible improvements in the performance in recent weeks and we are quite easily able to show that improvements have been made. We recognise there is still a lot more to do, but we have made some tangible improvements. The actions that we have taken we will continue to take and we will continue to make improvements.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): When can passengers expect the current timetable to run effectively like clockwork so that they can turn up and know the trains will be there on time and will get them to their destinations on time?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): There are two aspects of that. One: for example, last Thursday and Friday were very successful days. We have published a plan with Southern jointly about Southern's improvement, which is available on the internet and --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): The passengers are not going to look at that sort of thing or most passengers are not. When? I just want a date for when you think this timetable will have bedded in and when 99% of the time you will turn up to the station and the train will arrive on time and then get you to London Bridge on time? That is what passengers want.

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): I accept that and the historical performance in this part of the world has been comparable to where it currently is and we need to make that better. There are further timetable changes in May, which should help to improve that even further.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We have to put up with this until May? Is that what you are saying?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I think what Steve is saying is that really there are three things that are starting slowly to improve the situation.

The first is that driver and signaller familiarity is improving as they get more familiar with this new infrastructure. There has a huge change been made in the approaches to London Bridge and it, understandably, took people a little bit of time to actually get on top of that. That issue is now largely addressed.

Secondly, as Simon [Blanchflower] and as Phil [Hufton] has said, the asset reliability of the points and of the track circuits is improving and we have seen a steady improvement in those areas.

Thirdly, we are through the timetable tweaking process seeing a gradual steady improvement in the reliability of trains in and out of London Bridge. We will make further changes in May, which will - we expect - further improve things again.

I do not think anybody can come here today and say, "We will promise you that there will never be a problem at London Bridge again". I would love to be able to do it. It would make my life very easy today. We will not be able to do that. However, what I can promise you is that through the things that I have said and the work that is being done jointly between us and Network Rail, I do expect things to steadily improve. Part of the

discussion that we have been having with Network Rail on an ongoing basis since the problems at Christmas has been about how we work together to make this better.

To something that was said a little earlier on, which I do want to come back on, I do not share the Commissioner's analysis about there being a lack of clarity at London Bridge or a lack of understanding about who is in charge. I have always understood that London Bridge Station is a Network Rail-managed station. My staff who work at London Bridge Station are there to look after customers, but when push comes to shove, when something needs to be done and when a decision in an emergency situation needs to be made, my staff work to the instructions of Network Rail's people. That has always been the case and that has never and will not change. We work on that basis.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, but it is about senior oversight and ownership is what Peter [Hendy, Commissioner of Transport for London] was getting at, rather than that day-to-day operation.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): In terms of senior oversight and understanding, as soon as we knew we had problems, the day after we started to have problems at London Bridge, we were on the phone to each other talking about what we could do about it, how we could work together to make things better. There is no lack of relationship or lack of understanding or focus between us and Network Rail. We always work very closely together.

In fact, if I could just say, in performance terms, Steve [Knight] has already mentioned the performance improvement plan that we have jointly signed up to with Network Rail. We have an alliance agreement with Network Rail to work together to deliver that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You are going to come in, yes, Steve?

Steve O'Connell AM: I am going to come in on timetabling later, but I am just going to pick up on Steve's [Knight] point about how Thursday and Friday were good days, as if it is cause for celebration that we have actually had two days when the trains were running on time --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I know. It is one of those --

Steve O'Connell AM: -- and we should all whoop and hurrah because you have had two days when my residents in Croydon and Sutton had a good --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Holy cow, Batman! There is a train moving!

Steve O'Connell AM: They have had three months of it day after day after day. They have no confidence that when they turn up at the station there are going to be trains there. They look at East Croydon: delayed, delayed, delayed, delayed. We have to celebrate the two days you had the trains on time? I will come back to timetabling later, but I had to challenge that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, absolutely. We will come back to timetabling. Then we are going to move into communicating with passengers.

Richard Tracey AM: The first thing, Phil, I want to ask you: I read a quote from you in the last 24 hours where you said that London Bridge is "uncomfortable" but is not "unsafe". Is that an accurate quote? Did you say that?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): No, I did not, but one thing I will endorse is that London Bridge is not unsafe. It is not unsafe. It is a safe station. It is well managed. We work very closely with the British Transport Police. We have a significant amount of people there. That station is safe.

Richard Tracey AM: That is very good. I am pleased to hear that, although, to be honest, there have been the criticisms of the operation of the barriers and whether you leave the barriers open or whether you have them closed when people are leapfrogging them or crawling underneath. That in itself, of course, is unsafe. The track may not be unsafe but surely the operation of the station is unsafe, is it not --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): The station environment, yes.

Richard Tracey AM: -- and the environment?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Absolutely and that station is safe. In terms of the ticket barriers, the ticket barriers will remain open in those types of situation.

Richard Tracey AM: You said it is "uncomfortable". You do mean that, do you? It is uncomfortable? Would you accept that?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): They were not quite my words. They might have been written in that way, but they were not quite my words. I can assure you that all customers who use that station are safe and there is no evidence whatsoever that it is unsafe. There have never been any injuries there. Nobody has been hurt.

Richard Tracey AM: It just struck me as the most extraordinary illustration of bad public relations and bad customer relations that you were actually admitting that it was uncomfortable to an extreme, which we all know. There is no question, it is

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): It is not a word I would use, actually.

Richard Tracey AM: I see.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Before you move on, I want to bring Murad [Qureshi AM] in, but you say that there have not been any accidents or whatever there. Quite frankly, that is but for the grace of God. With the number of overcrowded situations, particularly on platforms like 15, it is unbearable. Some of the quotes we had were about pregnant women being pushed in the crush and other people being left in tears because it was so overcrowded and they could not get onto a train.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): People were saying they are afraid.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): People were saying they are afraid, as we have heard as well. It sounds quite dismissive saying that it is safe or whatever. People do not necessarily feel that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): What if there is a terrorist alert?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Just to offer a parallel, LU moves more people a day than the whole of the UK network moves.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, that is right.

Murad Qureshi AM: We know that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, we know LU is competent and we are very pleased that it is.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We have not always been, but we are more pleased at the moment.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): No, but I am talking about the number of people.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): We do not feel quite the same way about the rail industry, though, and it is in the dock.

Richard Tracey AM: It is not a LU station that we are talking about, is it?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): No, exactly. Let us bring Murad in here.

Murad Qureshi AM: Indeed. Thank you, Chair. I am grateful for small mercies that I have not had to suffer like south Londoners have through London Bridge over the last few months. When I go through London Bridge, I just go through the Tube.

Can I just bring back what Val [Shawcross CBE AM, Deputy Chair] has pointed out and highlighted very well about the operational infrastructure and the controlling mind? Can you just remind us which Main Line terminus in London you do not actually control? You do not know? OK. I will tell you. It is Marylebone Station. Interestingly enough, there, the franchisee, Chiltern Railways, runs the franchise and the station and I think that explains why they have been successful in running not just a general station but a superefficient station. Are there any lessons to be learned from that?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Certainly there are significantly fewer numbers of people actually using Marylebone Station.

Murad Qureshi AM: I take that but, nonetheless, for example, it will deal with the peak of tens of thousands of football supporters tonight going to Wembley. If there are any problems at the barriers, they will be up straightaway and they will let them straight through, knowing football fans and computers do not necessarily mix but they will manage it. That is the kind of thing we need.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): OK. I was actually just going to go on to say that Marylebone obviously is not under the scope of change that London Bridge significantly is, of course.

Murad Qureshi AM: It has had platforms, additions and what-have-you.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Just to get to your point, we are always prepared to learn lessons from anywhere, absolutely. If there are better ways of doing things, then I can assure you that best practice fits into my portfolio.

Murad Qureshi AM: For example, there is a station manager there you could go to. He or she is dealing with both sides of the operation, not just the station, and the trains coming in.

I will just come to Charles. Are there things you would like to see improve in Network Rail? You are not being too critical about the things that Network Rail has been doing so far. Surely you, as a franchisee, going to London Bridge, can see things could be done better if you had it in your hands.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I am sure passengers, when they look at what we do, would be absolutely dismayed if we sat there and started falling out with Network Rail about making this better. I would completely understand that. What passengers want us to do is to roll our sleeves up, work with Network Rail and get on with making it better and that is what we have been doing. That is our approach and that is what we have been doing since Christmas.

From spending quite a lot of time myself at London Bridge and from talking to a lot of customers, that is the message they give me consistently. I would just pay a tribute to passengers. They are very good humoured and very patient in the circumstances they have found themselves in. They have also been very good at giving their views and advice and opinions based on their experience as well. I see it as my job and the job of my team to work together with Network Rail to make this better for passengers and get it done as quickly as we possibly can do. That does not mean that on occasions we do not have a difficult conversation and that we do not say things to each other that challenge each other. That is the right way of doing things but, in terms of actually getting this to work better, we see it as a common cause.

Murad Qureshi AM: Can you just at least tell us some of the suggestions you have made in that partnership approach that you wanted to adopt?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): In terms of the timetable, that is a very good example of how we work together. Network Rail has shared its analysis on, for example, movements in and out of a station. We have shared our analysis of the number of passengers using the trains and our assessment of what would happen if we make certain changes to the timetable. By working together, using Network Rail's capability on timetable modelling and our understanding of passenger numbers, we think we have come up with an increasingly better position with the timetable, excepting the fact - going back to what I said earlier - that we accept there is no great news on timetable when you are running fewer trains than you want to be. There is a way by working together with Network Rail of making it the best you possibly can do and that is our focus.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (Chair): Thank you for that and we will move on to communicating with passengers.

Richard Tracey AM: There was one other thing I wanted to ask, though, which I am not clear about. The Secretary of State, I gather, said he was going to put a Department for Transport (DfT) director into Network Rail. It was last week he said this. I wonder if that is the role you are playing, Phil, as the 'Gold Commander' or is this someone who has not yet been appointed.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I cannot really respond to the comment about putting a director of whatever into Network Rail. My role is much wider than just dealing with London Bridge or even London. My role is that I am accountable for all of the Network Rail operations and maintenance activities across the whole of the UK.

Richard Tracey AM: I see.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): That is what I joined the business to do.

Richard Tracey AM: It is interesting that the Secretary of State said this apparently in one of the crisis meetings that have been held, but clearly it has not happened.

Communication with the passengers, if we can move on to that, because it is obviously a very critical area that there are so many passengers that have been writing emails to us and commenting all over the place about what they see as a gulf in communications about what is going on. We, of course, were all involved in the planning of the Olympics and the communication there and it did indeed involve London Bridge with TfL and Network Rail. Everybody said it worked fine, really extremely well. What has gone wrong here, then, with communication? Where is it you have missed out?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Certainly, if I can just allude to the Olympics point, I was heavily involved personally in terms of what we did during the Olympics or maybe not to the Olympics and I guess we probably planned as soon as the Olympics was announced it was coming to London. That was when the planning process started. Certainly in terms of managing the interfaces between TfL and obviously the aspects of TfL and the interfaces then with Network Rail and the TOCs was something we worked on for a very long period of time. We tested, tested, tested and made sure we had it right. Not only did we make sure we did get it right, there were some occasions - and I know personally because I was involved - where maybe things did not go quite as well as we had planned but the level of contingency that we built in to support and underpin the operations and the communications was absolutely significant.

On the role of Network Rail and particularly with London Bridge, there are a number of things that have happened that maybe did not meet our expectations and that is the thing we do have to work much, much harder with. Creating that Olympic environment, that common goal, and if you think about it, everybody was focused on the Olympics being a success because we were cited as a reason why it would not be and of course it was a massive success. There have been so many people who were focused on the Olympics in those days who have not taken the same approach in terms of London Bridge. They are the lessons we can learn by being far more joined up.

Richard Tracey AM: Surely you and we have known pretty much since the Olympics finished that this was all going to happen at London Bridge. I have been travelling through London Bridge for the last six or seven years and certainly in the last two the news has been there and there have been posters up and all that kind of thing warning us as passengers that we were going to confront it. I do not understand why, therefore, the strategic planning was not going on. There is the same sort of strategic planning you just talked about over the Olympics.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): I would just say that unfortunately I obviously was not involved in those particular times; I have recently joined the organisation. The one thing I can say quite clearly is that it is going to get significantly better.

Richard Tracey AM: That is good.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): In the whole issue of strategic planning of communications and the messaging, there is a Travel Demand Management (TDM) board, which is chaired by Vernon Everitt [Managing Director, Customer Experience, Marketing and Communications] from TfL, in which the representatives are all TOCs. It also has passenger representatives coming along on a regular basis and also

Network Rail involved in that as well. Some of the messaging you see has very much been driven by that TDM board where TfL, the TOCs and Network Rail are working together as a team to try to deal with this.

The Olympics is a thing that we learned from and continue to learn from but it had a different characteristic from a major upgrade like London Bridge. Some of the differences: during the Olympics, there was not a constraint on infrastructure through London Bridge. We are dealing with a constraint on infrastructure because we are having to rebuild the station and therefore, that is the first significant difference.

Secondly, during the Olympic period, in that bright, sunny period, we had good asset reliability and of course it has been freely acknowledged here today that during the London Bridge period after Christmas we have not had that same level of reliability in terms of asset performance.

Thirdly, we had fewer passenger numbers travelling. You will be aware of the TDM work to actually discourage people or to encourage people to take their holidays at different times to make sure we were able to maximise --

Richard Tracey AM: But surely --

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): -- if I can just finish, all of those things. The final thing to say is that the Olympic Games was a sprint; this is a marathon. It is a marathon that is going to take place over three years. To rebuild London Bridge and do everything we need to do, does take different thinking and different skills and, as you have heard from Phil [Hufton], based on the experience after Christmas and based on the problems we have had, we have learned those lessons. We have adjusted what we are doing and, as a result of doing that, we will make it better. However, as I said, it is a different experience and a different situation to the Olympic Games.

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, but in terms of communicating with passengers, one of the things we went over endlessly over the Olympics was people being advised to take alternative routes. There has been a certain amount of that with people who take the Overground and then use Canada Water and different bus services and things, but it does not seem to have happened to the same extent here. The other thing is the announcements to passengers who are stuck on trains, let alone stuck in the station, but they are stuck on a train and one of the complaints we keep hearing is that drivers do not appear to have the information to be able to give them. There is a silence and there is nothing more frustrating than, as you must know as a passenger yourself sometimes, not being told what is happening. Why has that not been happening?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I acknowledge that if drivers do not make announcements or where we have a conductor on board who does not make announcements, then that is frustrating to customers and I fully understand that.

Richard Tracey AM: Are they being told the information themselves that they can pass on? It seems that is the problem.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Sure. Clearly in some circumstances when something has just happened, the information may not get to them very quickly but, in most cases, the drivers do get the information and are able to pass it on to customers. What we say to our drivers is, "Even if you do not have the information, make an announcement and say, 'I am seeking information. I am sorry about this'", and that is the practice we want our drivers to follow.

If I could just come back to the question on information, during the Olympics and now, we did not tell people what to do. What we did is encouraged people to know what their choices were and that is the same for this situation now. We are about trying to get the information out there and, therefore, people can make choices for themselves. You are clearly not hearing that clearly enough and we need to look again at our success in getting that message out there.

It is also worth reflecting that what we cannot do with the works we are doing at London Bridge is find a ready alternative for everyone because, as you all know, Victoria Station, for example, on the Underground has to close most days in the morning peak because it is so busy. If we encouraged everyone to go via Victoria, we would create another problem. What we have to have is good reliable infrastructure at London Bridge and, therefore, we can carry the number of people who want to go into London Bridge reliably and consistently and that is what we are focused on doing.

Richard Tracey AM: What about the information to staff in the station? One of the complaints also we hear is that staff are either offhand or they refer the passengers somewhere else and there is nobody else actually to give them the information. That is totally incompetent, frankly, to our way of thinking.

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): If I could, Richard, we have made some improvements. We have recognised that and maybe you could suggest that we should have done it sooner but, basically, for example, from this week, we have put extra people on the station particularly in the evening when people would need to make a choice about their journey. These people have been given iPads; they have also been given a person within the control centre who runs the railway to actually phone and ask a question and, therefore, if they cannot provide the information from their iPad, they are able to ring somebody within the control centre and establish what the options are for that individual. We have put that in place from this week. Also, the people on the station have been given new tabards that are a sort of raspberry colour, which say, "We are here to help". We are encouraging people to ask for more information and we have put some extra measures in place to enable them to either have the information in their hands on the station or be able to call somebody and get that information.

Richard Tracey AM: I am going to have quote back to you exactly what Val was saying. This week you have done this and for 12 weeks this business has been going on and surely the planning of this kind of action should have been taking place last year or the year before.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes. Could I just add to that? I have noticed people in raspberry vests saying, "Team London Bridge. We are here to help". I asked them last night. I went up to one and I thought, "I am going to test this out ahead of today", and I said, "Can you tell me why my train has been cancelled?" "No, I do not know that." "It says you are here to help. Can you advise me?" "No, I cannot. You need to speak to someone from the TOC over there behind the barrier." They were of no use whatsoever. I just think that if they are there, they have to have the information and be proactively catching passengers' eyes and being proactive. At the moment, they stand around in little groups and they do not have the information in any case. Steve [Knight], do you want to respond to that?

Richard Tracey AM: You see, even in here, we have a dissatisfied passenger.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Absolutely.

Richard Tracey AM: It is just that kind of thing that clearly you are not dealing with or not until this week.

Victoria Borwick AM: You have to communicate with them.

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): It is probably fair to recognise that simply giving people a different tabard will not make the difference on its own. What we are investing in is extra training and training to make a transition from our people providing security and safety at the station to providing customer information across all people who work on that station. We are trying to move to the place whereby somebody does not direct you towards the TOC's staff to provide information but that people from Network Rail are also to provide that information. We have not fixed that instantly simply by, as I said, giving people a different coloured tabard and potential access to information, but we are investing in training for those people to make that journey, basically.

Richard Tracey AM: Can we be assured then that you are going to have extra staff on the station to deal with these things? Are you are going to give them special or specific training to deal with these sorts of questions? Indeed, as far as the operator is concerned, you are going to make absolutely sure that your drivers do have accurate information which they can give to frustrated passengers that are stuck somewhere sitting outside London Bridge. Can we have those assurances from you?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): You can. What we have talked about is two plans: one around the reliability of our infrastructure, which is out in the public domain, and one, which is the plan which Phil [Hufton] referred to earlier, which is around London Bridge Station and the customer environment that we create there. Both of those in terms of improving the customer environment and improving the reliability of the infrastructure and the timetable are both public domain documents.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You talked about three-and-a-half months and you have put people on the platform with tabards on. They are not fully trained up. How long is it going to take to train them and give them the equipment so that they can give that real-time information which is passengers want? You just want to make an informed choice. As Charles [Horton] says, passengers have been incredibly patient considering the additional stress this is putting them under.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Progressively, that will improve. Things like the Wi-Fi that Phil [Hufton] referred to earlier is being strengthened on the station for the next few weeks. We are putting the same training course together with the TOC people.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): How long will that take?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): You can see those changes be fully implemented over the next three months.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): It is three-and-a-half months already. It is going to take another three months before the staff are fully trained and have the equipment to be able to give the information to passengers?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): You will see changes taking place every single week, absolutely no question.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): It just feels there is no urgency around this.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): If I could add, from the first week after Christmas we have additional staff resources at London Bridge. We have also had a rota of senior managers and directors at London Bridge to actually be there to support the staff, but also to be there to talk to

customers as well. Alex [Foulds] has been there a lot himself. I have been there on several occasions as well. We have been boosting it with additional TOC staff because we know that customers want somebody to talk to and sometimes just want somebody to express their frustration about it. We understand that and that is why we have boosted our staff.

It is not a case of people sitting out there on their hands for three and a half months and then waiting for something to happen. What we have been doing when working with Network Rail is gradually improving and refining the staffing presence there and adding more as we go along to further improve things. That is what we have been trying to do.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): What about the real-time information? The number of times you hear people who get in touch who say that they have been at work, they have checked online and it says, "The trains are all running", and they walk the five or ten minutes to the station. By the time they have got there the trains are not operating and the boards say the wrong thing. When are you going to get that accurate real-time information?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): The information that is provided nationally is now progressively in a repository that we call Darwin, which is one version of the truth. It is a computer system that allows us to be able to make sure that we have consistent train running information in that place. On occasions - and I admit this has happened to me - you can check that trains are running normally and you can get to the station and find that they are not running normally because something has happened. A good example of that is one of the days we were speaking about recently when we had a problem at London Bridge and it ended up not being what we thought it was and services were able to resume, but obviously there were delays. That can happen at any point that information becomes out of date because something happens.

In terms of the reliable provision of information at London Bridge, working with Network Rail, we have been doing things to improve the reliability and consistency of provisioning information. Network Rail have added some staffing in through British Control Centre to help with this process to make sure the link between the control centre and the control point on the station has improved. That should progressively improve things still further. Steve, you might want to say a bit more about this.

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): Yes, I agree. We have added extra people into those places. To add to that, we will continue the investment we will be making in Darwin to improve the information flow to the station.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): TfL provides open source information to app developers. If I am in my kitchen I can get my phone out and I have a choice of several apps that will tell me exactly where every bus is, how it is running and accurately how long it is going to take to get to my local bus stop. You can do the same on the Tube. Why do you not actually help some app developers use your real-time running information and provide it direct to the customer? When we are in our offices and we want to get home, we can open our phones, get on an app and see, "Oh dear, all the trains are stopped at ...", rather than going through this incredibly old-fashioned process you have. You have all these elves who are producing this information and then it is out of date and it goes up to National where it gets a bit more out of date and then somebody enters it into a thing and it gets a bit more out of date. Why do we not have real-time "this is where the trains are" apps? Why do you not have some open-source information?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): We have. There are lots of choices of apps out there. We have one, which is the Southern Thameslink On Track app, which we think is a fantastic

app and we would encourage anyone to use it. There is a National Rail journey planner app, all of which, however, are driven off one source of information and data. The reason that one source of data is really important is because for passengers there is nothing more confusing and frustrating than one app saying one thing and the information on the screen saying something else. We understand that and it is --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): That is bonkers, Charles, because what you are saying is that it is better to give people stale, out-of-date information just because it is uniform, rather than actually allowing people to source information that is actually going to be local and reliable and up to date. What is the point?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): No. I promise the information is not stale and out of date. It is bang up to date and the most accurate information that is available. There are many open-source developers who have train information and make use of that information.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Can any developer use your real-time information now?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): Yes.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): There is actually a section on the Network Rail website that describes some of the developers and how they are using that data.

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): It is open source. App developers have the same access to the information that the rail industry, Southern or any other train operator would to produce their own application.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): When you were asked about real-time information, why did you not refer to your preferred apps that you reckon are most reliable?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Provision of information is something that people access by many means. Obviously driver announcements is one thing, conductor announcements, screens on stations, screens on platforms, apps and web. There are many, many ways in which this data is accessed by people. Obviously what we want to do is give people the maximum amount of choice. We do not want to tell people how to get it. We want to make sure it is consistent, accurate and right at all times and people can access it in the way in which they prefer to access it and that is what we work to achieve.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Let us move on to the timetabling.

Steve O'Connell AM: We have touched upon timetabling already. The context really is that the timetables have been revised, changed and altered, not just recently but going back in the autumn of last year. Five services were withdrawn entirely last year. Going into this year, 19 services were withdrawn entirely and, particularly in my neck of the woods, West Croydon has been affected. Straight away we are looking at a structure where the service is withdrawn and reduced. Then you load on that only 10% running time. That is the context that we are in, which is a catastrophic failing. I have to say that certainly you have lost the confidence of my residents who are coming up from south London. You have lost the confidence of them and how you regain that I really do not know. If I sounded bad-tempered, that is why.

Going back, Steve, to the timetabling, we talked about reductions. Are there going to be any further reductions to the services, Southern particularly?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): There are no planned further reductions to the services from London Bridge. As Charles [Horton] alluded to earlier, there are 22 trains running per hour in the morning and 20 trains running per hour in the evening.

Steve O'Connell AM: You aspired to 24 at the beginning, did you not, in your so-called modelling and your so-called planning?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): If I can just clarify, the modelling was based on an assumption of 22 trains per hour in the evening peak and 22 trains per hour in the morning peak. That was the baseline modelling, not 24.

Steve O'Connell AM: You have not managed that because you reduced the 22 to the 20. Why is that again?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): Yes. The simple reason is basically, when a train comes into London Bridge, the signal that the train takes to go into the station changes for the driver to go into the station and the driver moves his train. When the trains come out of London Bridge, the signal changes to an aspect where the driver would technically be able to go. The doors close to make sure the train is safe and then the train departs. The issue that we have at London Bridge is that we are absolutely at the maximum capacity that we can run for the reasons people have alluded to earlier. People want their trains to run to London. We have tried to run as many trains into London as we reliably can at the maximum theoretical capacity of that network. The reality is it takes longer for a train to leave London Bridge Station than it does for it to arrive. We are on such a fine margin that that is the reason why we had to reduce the capacity in the evening peak.

Steve O'Connell AM: Clearly the words 'London Bridge' are something that has dominated this. When you have catastrophic failures in East Croydon or Purley or West Croydon, what are the reasons for that? Is it the knock-on effect of how you are not running London Bridge very well and it knocks down to East Croydon, West Croydon, Tattenham Corner and all those sorts of places?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): London Bridge is probably the most congested part of the network in the entire country. 80% of the delay that happens in London Bridge does not happen at London Bridge, it happens somewhere else and the congestion that occurs in that part of the world is the reason why delays occur more significantly in that part of the world. It has to work at its most optimum level. The asset has to perform at the highest level of reliability. The timetable has to be finely tuned for us to run a reliable railway. We are trying to run, as we said at the start, the most trains that we possibly can on three tracks not four, while the Thameslink programme is --

Steve O'Connell AM: Why do we pick on West Croydon and Tattenham Corner? I have to ask this. What is wrong with West Croydon?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): The reason we picked on West Croydon was a variety of different factors.

Steve O'Connell AM: You did pick on West Croydon!

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): We did not "pick on" West Croydon particularly. That is probably not the most appropriate choice of words I used. There were two main reasons why West Croydon trains were removed. We believed there were viable alternative for people to potentially go to Canada Water and use London Overground trains. That was an agreement that was made with other stakeholders,

basically, about the capacity and the capability for people to make that journey. The second reason was that from a logistics perspective they were able to be removed from the timetable without impacting as many services as some other trains.

Steve O'Connell AM: If you are running fewer trains in and out of London Bridge, even before this chaos, to get the train out of Purley after 7.30am, everyone stands. Are you making the trains longer? Those fewer trains you are adding in, are you adding to the capacity in the trains? Are we? Yes?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): We are trying to make as many trains as long as we can. Some of the work you will see we are doing now for the May timetable does do that. Where we can, yes, we are trying to make the trains longer.

Steve O'Connell AM: What about peak against off-peak? We will test that. I personally will. When you look at peak and off-peak, I am not an engineer and I do not understand these things clearly, but we are hitting peak/off-peak during the day. Is there no balancing act? Can we not do some work on off-peak and set it off against peak and alleviate this or is that not in the planning?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): When you have four tracks, which are what you will end up with, you tend to use two into London and two out of London. What you have when you have three tracks is trains sometimes going on the same line in one direction and then sometimes going in the other direction. If you use two tracks into London, you are running twice as many and you could run out on the one line and so you have to basically switch. You transition from two tracks going in to two tracks coming out. That transition is quite complicated from an operating perspective. The main reason that we have this challenge is because we have three tracks, not four, whilst the work takes place. In effect, on all of those lines, we can run trains in either direction.

Steve O'Connell AM: Going back to the modelling, which I am obsessed with, would you not all agree that your modelling was defective and catastrophic and lessons can be learned? You have it right?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): There is nothing wrong with the modelling. The modelling is --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You are cancelling the trains.

Steve O'Connell AM: Sorry, did I mishear that? There is nothing wrong with the modelling?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): There is nothing wrong with the modelling. The modelling is an industry-recognised piece of software.

Steve O'Connell AM: Good.

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): The modelling is fine. The problem is that you get variables in terms of demand.

Steve O'Connell AM: The modelling was fine, but basically the failure was to carry out the modelling?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): No, we did carry out the modelling.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): “Modelling works with no passengers” is what they are saying, Steve. You put passengers in and it does not work.

Steve O’Connell AM: Yes. On a computer the model looks like it is all going to work and everything is going to flow perfectly.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): The modelling, as Phil [Hufton] says, is industry standard software that was used. The outcomes from modelling are obviously based on the parameters and the assumptions that you input into the model. Clearly, as Steve has illustrated, some of the assumptions that were put into the model to gain the output were not entirely accurate.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Ah!

Steve O’Connell AM: Hmm.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): No, let us be clear on this. Modelling is modelling. It is not a form or reality in the sense of what you put in is you put a number of assumptions into the model based on how the trains will operate. That runs through the model and that generates the output. When you are operating, as Charles [Horton] has said, right on the edge of the capacity, even two or three seconds in terms of some of the assumptions you have put into the model can cause a variation in the number of trains that you are able to run in a particular hour. Effectively, some of Steve’s [Knight] people have been out there with stopwatches timing the trains in actuality about their arrival and departure at London. When you feed that back into the model, you will find that there are slight variances in terms of the assumptions that were put into the model originally and what is happening there in reality. That, in effect, is what causes the variation in the number of trains that you are physically able to run.

Steve O’Connell AM: It is the glitches in the computer.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): No, it is not glitches in the computer.

Steve O’Connell AM: It is not the lumps of metal that are playing up at New Cross? Blame it on the lumps of metal.

My last question is on timetabling. As I have said earlier, you have lost the confidence of my residents, which is just so depressing. Can I tell my residents that they can turn up at East Croydon or Sutton Station on a Monday morning and they are not going down an hour earlier as they have to at the moment just so that they can get to work on time? You said, Charles, that you did sample London Bridge. I have residents who have to go every morning and every night and their families are saying, “Are you going to get home at X time tonight?” “No idea, because who knows what time the trains are going to take me out of London Bridge.”

Can you give my residents any reassurance that they will be able to turn up at those stations and their train will be there waiting for them on time? Can we give them that reassurance or is this all progressive? Progressively, for me, means ‘who knows when’. Can you, Charles, give that reassurance to your paying customers?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I have already explained that we have seen a progressive improvement in the punctuality and reliability of services from London Bridge. We are making further changes in May, which we believe will improve the situation still further. Network Rail has got on top of the problems that they had early on in the installation of this equipment. Taking together those

measures, a better timetable, improving our set reliability, better familiarity and staff, signals and drivers working over that infrastructure and improvements to the operation of the station come together to add up to a better result for passengers. What I cannot promise you is that nothing will go wrong in the next 12, 18 or 24 months. That is unrealistic. What I can promise you is that things are showing signs of getting better and we are totally focussed on making sure that improvement continues.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): One positive thing I did hear in all of that was the lengthening of trains where you can, which is one of the big issues we have had raised with us and so that is very good.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are going to move on to the issue around train staff and drivers. Victoria, you are going to pick that up.

Victoria Borwick AM: Some fairly quick questions. When we originally met and talked about the work that was going to happen, we were assured that you were training and recruiting additional staff. Could you just give us a bit of a rundown here? Obviously, that is not what we are hearing from customers experiencing it. We are hearing that trains are cancelled due to either driver or crew unavailability or there are not enough. I just cannot understand, in addition to everything else, why you have not put in some resilience here.

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): Yes. We have been recruiting additional drivers. At the moment we have 74 drivers in training. We have 20 more drivers now than we had at the start of this period. Our drivers are passing out and becoming qualified drivers at the rate of about two a week and so we are getting more drivers. We had a specific thing to manage before Christmas, which was that in the run-up to this blockage we had to train all of our drivers so that they could be familiar with the new layout at London Bridge. That was taking a significant number of drivers out of the system every day. We are through that now. We are getting more drivers. You can see from our own statistics that progressively that is becoming less of a problem for us.

Victoria Borwick AM: What would you normally do to increase the availability of personnel as quickly as you can? Do you swap people from train to train or does that not work because of the particular signalling? Do you hire drivers from other companies? Just give us a bit of how this happens.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): There are two things going on. There is the longer-term aspect, which I just really spoke about, and we now have a series of training programmes ongoing. We are getting people into those training courses and making sure they are all full and training our drivers progressively over a period of time. It does take quite a long time to take somebody from off the street, if you like, to become a driver. We are going through that process and, as I say, we are passing out about two a week.

Victoria Borwick AM: It is not quicker to take someone who has been trained already and then just train them on this particular box or whatever the term is?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): There is a range of things. Some people will have a degree of training when they come to us; others will not. Some take longer than others, but that is the longer-term way in which we are dealing with things. In terms of the short term, you have to make sure you have all of your drivers available every day to run the service. One of the things that does happen from time to time is that because we run a very complicated service and a lot of trains are coming in and out of London, we do get ourselves into the situation from time to time when a driver is trying to get to his train and

finds himself in the wrong place because of a delay and the knock-on effect of that. We do have some spare capacity to cope with that.

Victoria Borwick AM: Do you think it is sufficient?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): There are times when we have to alter our train service because of that problem I have just described.

Victoria Borwick AM: We have talked about various problems with signalling versus equipment and all the other things, but this is something you do have some control over and you work, presumably from your modelling, knowing how many drivers you need. We found it rather disappointing we have not almost over-skilled or overprovided to alleviate this. Simon [Blanchflower] explained why some things did not work, but this is surely in your gift a bit more.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Looking across both Thameslink Railway and Southern, we are undertaking the biggest driver training programme that the UK rail industry has seen. We have 188 drivers in training at the moment across the two companies. As Alex [Foulds] has said, they are passing out at the rate of about two a week on Southern. On Thameslink Railway, 36 drivers will complete their training this year. There are huge numbers of people being brought in.

As Alex [Foulds] said, this is an area that is challenging because it takes more than a year to train a driver because they need to, firstly, know about the train. Secondly, they need to know about the operation of a railway and, thirdly, they need to know about the specific routes that they drive over. Those three skills are things that we need to make sure that obviously they both understand and are demonstrably competent because they have the safety of hundreds of passengers on their train in their hands.

Victoria Borwick AM: Is it possible to take somebody who is, for example, normally driving into Victoria but have been trained with you for a year and then giving them an up --

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): That already happens. Lots of our drivers are trained on a large proportion of our network and lots of them do interchange routes in the way you have just described.

Victoria Borwick AM: It is just concerning that our anecdotal evidence has been that trains have been cancelled because of driver or crew unavailability and so we wanted to know whether that is something else that seems to need a bit of an uplift.

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): Sure. You have heard from what I have said that we are absolutely committed to boosting the number of drivers. If we could get them through training safely and effectively more quickly, we would do it. We are looking at that as part of our work at the moment because we have a plan to try to improve the rate of driver training. At the moment, using the programmes that we have, we are investing very, very heavily in more drivers.

Victoria Borwick AM: On the basis of two a week, when will you have sufficient?

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): We have sufficient now. We do have enough drivers providing that the service operates reasonably well to deliver the full service. What we will be getting progressively is more drivers and that will make the whole arrangement more robust.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): It also provides the capacity for the training that is necessary to introduce new rolling stock, particularly on the Thameslink franchise, because we are going to be introducing over the course of the next couple of years, as I am sure you are aware, the new trains as part of that. This investment in driver training is very much about supporting that as well and so it is looking ahead to the future and not only to today as well.

Victoria Borwick AM: The final quick question was about GTR and Southern deploying ticket inspectors or not using them. What role do you have for them during the current period of disruptions?

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): We have 100 revenue protection officers, as we call them, who move around our system doing customer service activity and checking tickets. During times of disruption their focus very much switches towards the customer service side of their activity and so they spend more time at stations and on trains helping people and less time actively pursuing ticketless travel. There is always a balance in there and clearly we still have a challenge with people travelling on the system without tickets. There will be occasions, even in disruption, when it is appropriate to issue someone with a penalty fare, for example, but the balance very much changes. We can see from our figures that the balance very much changes during periods of disruption.

Victoria Borwick AM: Fine. I had also read there was an issue about people not wanting to take up voluntary overtime. With sufficient drivers will that be less necessary?

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): We do run a system that has some voluntary overtime built into it. We do have a number of our drivers and conductors who want to work some overtime. That is common across the whole industry and it is not particularly an issue for us. It is just something we manage and so it is not something that is an issue for us, really.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Have you had to cancel trains due to drivers not doing overtime shifts?

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): We have, yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): To say you have sufficient now and you can run things, there have been problems. For a whole week there were trains at 7.00am that were not running because you did not have drivers.

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): There have been some problems with rest-day work. We did notice in February there was a decline in the number of people who wanted to work overtime. That is something that we looked at and we talked to our trade union representative about. We did agree as part of that discussion that we would change the allowances that we pay people for overtime work, which we did. That situation is something that we are keeping a very close eye on. Sitting here today, it is not something that is a big issue for us.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Are all your new drivers are going to be familiar with the new routes and so on?

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): They will be, yes, depending on what depot they work from. Different depots serve different routes and they will be trained up in accordance with the depot from which they work. Yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): OK, good, because that had been an issue. The other simple question I wanted to ask is just on drivers. Given that you took out so many routes - we saw 19 withdrawn completely in December time or just in the New Year and from 1 September 2014 five routes were withdrawn - I do not understand why you have such a shortage of drivers because you cancelled a load of routes. To the layperson out there, it makes sense that therefore you have a capacity to put in. However, to be so short, it is not just a couple; it just does not make sense.

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): That is one of the things that will help us in the future. As I say, we have more drivers coming on. We feel we have enough drivers to manage the job now.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Do you understand what I am saying? You have taken out a load of routes and so surely those drivers could be redeployed to other bits and you should have a sufficient number of drivers before you have had to do further recruitment.

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): Yes. That will help the situation and make the situation more robust. Some of those routes you have a driver for part of his shift and so he may or may not be able to do some other activity. Certainly that will help the situation, absolutely, yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Surely it should help to date, I am saying in September you took out trains and in the New Year you took out a load of trains. Surely --

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): The situation is getting better. If you look at the situation we face now, we have more drivers coming on. We are not cancelling many trains now through lack of drivers.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): There was one last night that was cancelled as I sat waiting for mine and it announced, "Due to driver --

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): I am well aware of that. There was, but nevertheless what I have just said is true in terms of the statistics we see.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I am not sure you are fully understanding my point. I know you keep saying it is getting better but the issue that --

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): No, I do understand your point.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Do you understand what I am saying, Charles?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): What I am understanding, Caroline, is that what you are saying is, if we take a train out of a timetable --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Quite a lot out.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): -- can we not reuse that driver somewhere else?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, that is exactly what I am trying to say.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Typically, in a situation where we cancel a train, particularly on a shorter distance journey, what we are doing is cancelling part of that driver's work. Part of what we want to do in May is make the drivers' diagrams and the way in which we roster the driver more efficient so that we can better use the spare capacity that has been created.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You have not to date really used that as much?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): We have used it as much as we would want to and aspire to in May.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Good. I have that. I want to move on to the role of TfL in all of this and Murad.

Murad Qureshi AM: We have seen an increase of almost 20% on weekday usage of the Jubilee line, the East London line and the Overground services respectively. Is there anything more that TfL can do to help reduce the impact on passengers going through London Bridge or not, Phil?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Yes, as I said earlier, I have had quite a number of discussions with Mike Brown [Managing Director of LU and London Rail, TfL], in particular from an LU perspective, because Mike is responsible for rail and Underground, obviously not just the Underground.

We have people now embedded in the LU Control Centre and so, if ever there are issues that are associated with our network, then there is an immediate dialogue with the LU Control Centre so that we can give early warnings and early messages out to customers in terms of an alternative route that people can actually use.

[adjournment for fire alarm test]

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Let us start the meeting again. Phil?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): In short, there is always more that we can do, absolutely. We are pushing at an open door and so we do want to become more integrated. That is the thing that we are going to develop. As I said, I want to take a pan-London approach to how we actually manage the transport system, joining up with TfL. At every one of our stations in London - guess what - there is an Underground station and so why would we not?

Murad Qureshi AM: OK. You mentioned the Tube and the London Overground service, but not the buses. That clearly has a role to play. Maybe it would be useful to hear from Charles [Horton] about what you are doing with the bus services at TfL. Is it getting results?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Leon Daniels [Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL] and I have had some brief discussions as well. Obviously one thing with TfL is that it has a better opportunity for an integrated system, but the answer is, yes, of course we want to work with TfL and will do.

Murad Qureshi AM: It is just that - and some of my colleagues will come in at this point - it has been suggested that the additional bus services have not been used as much as what was expected. It may be because people are not being told sufficiently about the service so as to be able to take that as an alternative to the rail service not being delivered.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): If I can just reply, I mentioned earlier on the TDM board, where we discuss how we can work together to explain what is going on and also to help customers know their choices. Buses are absolutely in the purview of that group. If we are missing a trick in the way we should do things, I am very happy to pick up on that see if we can follow up on that feedback and get it addressed through the TDM board.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Murad, part of this is also to do with the run through that is on the Southeastern side of the station at the moment. With the Southeastern services to Charing Cross not stopping at London Bridge, then a lot of the arrangements you are referring to were put in place specifically for those Southeastern ticketholders who were not able to use London Bridge at this current time. Some of the bus services you refer to are particularly related to that and, also, the ticket acceptance arrangements that have been quite widely publicised for season ticketholders and others who are using the Southeastern services and the arrangements that need to be made for them during this period when their services are not stopping at London Bridge. There has been some good communication there both directly with customers and also through publicity campaigns and through communications. There is ongoing work with TfL to make sure that we are getting feedback from them in terms of what they are seeing in terms of the changes in travel patterns and how we can jointly communicate to make best use of the overall network of services we have in London.

Murad Qureshi AM: Thank you, Simon. Val [Shawcross CBE AM, Deputy Chair] has covered earlier the concerns on the communication issues. There is another issue: the additional cost to TfL. Have financial arrangements been sorted out on that front given that this is going to happen over the next few years?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Yes.

Murad Qureshi AM: Could you outline them, Simon?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Yes.

Murad Qureshi AM: Additional staff is clearly something that --

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): There are contractual arrangements in place between TfL and Network Rail, which have been helpfully facilitated through the DfT as well. There are clear arrangements in place that determine how the tickets work and additional staffing that TfL needs for places like Canada Waters for the interchange there. That is all covered off by the commercial arrangements between TfL and Network Rail and the requisite compensations arrangements are in place. I can assure you that is all in place.

Murad Qureshi AM: A conversation will come up later on, I dare say, for example, on the Jubilee line. It is quite obvious if you go after 5.00pm, then there is an extra 20% of people. Therefore, anything that can be done to limit that impact subsequently because it has impacts further down? It is noticeable there is a lot more moving between London Bridge and Waterloo.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): There is. I try to get on the Tube at Southwark sometimes and it is particularly crowded at Southwark with people making that interchange between Waterloo and London Bridge. We are keeping the situation under review and that is part of the remit of the TDM board that Charles referred to earlier in terms of making sure that we can, if you like, fine-tune the messages that are going out to customers through --

Murad Qureshi AM: Are there arrangements between the TOCs going through Waterloo? They have clearly taken on more people, presumably.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Yes. There are arrangements for South West Trains as well. South West Trains have been part of the discussions that Southeastern, GTR and Southern have all been part of. There is a strategic communications group that is dealing with all those issues and whether there is that right level of dialogue between those operators and with the ticketing arrangements that have been put in place. Therefore, yes, I can assure you that that is all working well.

Murad Qureshi AM: We can conclude that TfL is playing its full role in limiting this impact to both the passengers and other passengers on the Tube, the Overground and the buses?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Yes. There has been good dialogue on a regular basis with timeframe. Steve [Knight] and I were having a conference call this morning with representatives of TfL and LOROL and we have had weekly conference calls that Steve and I have been part of to reflect on how the operations have been going. Then there are formal structured meetings that take place outside of that as well. Yes, I am confident that is in place.

Murad Qureshi AM: Our constituency Assembly Members will probably know more about what passengers actually feel about that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We have covered that well. Thank you, Murad. Can we move on to the issue of compensation to fare-paying passengers? There are a lot of concerns about that. Tom.

Tom Copley AM: Thank you, Chair. This is to Charles, really, about the issue of compensation. There is a huge number of people who are affected by this. My understanding is that they will only be compensated if the delay has been more than 30 minutes. Are you planning to reduce that threshold?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Customers on Southern and on Thameslink are entitled to Delay Repay compensation if their train is delayed by more than 30 minutes. Certainly on Southern, in terms of the numbers of people claiming Delay Repay every four weeks, we are seeing about 19,000 claims every four weeks. There are a lot of people well aware of the scheme and taking their opportunity to claim that compensation.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): That is where they get one of these vouchers, is it? The rail travel voucher?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Sure. There are rail travel vouchers that you can exchange for cash at any Southern ticket office as well and so it is an opportunity or you can put it towards another ticket. That is what you get. It is a 30-minute threshold. That is a consistent threshold for National Rail operators who run Delay Repay schemes. That is something we are not planning to change. What we have done --

Tom Copley AM: You could be delayed for 28 minutes. You have two journeys a day in and out. You could be delayed 28 or 29 minutes on both of them and you would not receive any compensation?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): That is the way in which the scheme works. What we have done in recognition and based on representation from passengers and stakeholders is to

look to see if we could make some changes that would recognise significant ongoing disruption. In the Thameslink Railway franchise we have something called 'enhanced compensation' where, if you are delayed on 12 occasions by more than 30 minutes in any four-week period, you are entitled to what we called enhanced season ticket compensation, which allows you free travel on our network in addition to this. With voluntary --

Tom Copley AM: TravelWatch, as you probably know, has described this as virtually 'worthless'. I think that was their word. I find it difficult to disagree with that assessment.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): As I said, that is their view. I do not think it is worthless. It is something which for some people would recognise significant ongoing disruption.

Tom Copley AM: When was this so-called 'enhanced' brought in?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): We brought enhanced compensation in on Southern in the middle of January, from memory.

Tom Copley AM: How many people have --

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I do not have those figures, but we can find them for you.

Tom Copley AM: I am surprised you do not have those figures with you. Could you please write to us with figures?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Yes.

Tom Copley AM: Even putting that to one side, 30 minutes, given the scale of the disruption, the number of journeys, as Caroline said, were 80%.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): 80% on Southern were delayed.

Tom Copley AM: 82% on Southern were delayed. As I say, it is a long time at both ends of the day. If you have children, you need to get home to see your children. Caroline [Pidgeon MBE AM, Chair] or Val [Shawcross CBE AM, Deputy Chair] said they had seen people crying on the platform because they were so distressed. I know it might say in the fine print of your policy that it is 30 minutes, but there is an issue of decency here. A lot of people are suffering. If a lot of people are going to suffer, and as we have heard it sounds like it is going to take a good while before even this reduced service is operating where it should be, given that, surely the decent thing to do is to offer some further compensation to passengers.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): As I have said, 19,000 people every four-week period on Southern find in Delay Repay something that they can claim and can get recompensed when their journey is delayed.

Tom Copley AM: On TfL it is 15 minutes and you do not have to claim it. It is automatic.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): On TfL and on the Underground, if you are delayed by more than 15 minutes you can claim, but there are a number of exclusions. On National Rail there are no exclusions.

Tom Copley AM: Why do you not move towards something nearing the TfL policy?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Delay Repay is a National scheme. Because of the unique form of contract that we have with the GTR, the money that we pay out through Delay Repay is netted off passenger revenue and passenger revenue passes to the DfT, and so it is the DfT's money on GTR that we are giving back to passengers.

Tom Copley AM: Yes, but this is the failure of you and the failure of Network Rail and passengers deserve that compensation.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I have explained that it is not entirely our decision, for reasons you understand.

Tom Copley AM: Are there any ways you can make it easier for people to claim the compensation?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): We widely advertise the availability of Delay Repay. When there is disruption, we hand leaflets out. We advertise it widely on our website. We tweet out about Delay Repay. In other words, what we seek to do is to make passengers aware of their rights to claim compensation. This is not something we try to hide away. It is something that we try to make people aware of because, from our point of view, if we can give people some recompense after they have been delayed or disrupted, it may go some small way to making them feel a little bit better about the situation. We know from talking to passengers what they want is a service which is not delayed and is not disrupted. Some level of compensation and some recognition of that is something that a number of people do appreciate. The evidence we have is that people do know about it and do claim it.

Tom Copley AM: We have research here from the Office of Rail Regulation that shows that apparently only one-tenth of passengers who are eligible for compensation make a claim. You have said there were 19,000 in the four-week period. What proportion is that of the people eligible to claim?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Off the top of my head, I do not know because this is a self --

Tom Copley AM: It would be good if we could get that in writing.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): No. This is a self-selected scheme. People have to make their own decision about whether they were on a particular train and were delayed by more than 30 minutes. Clearly, I do not know who was on every individual train. I have an idea of how busy a particular train was, but I cannot tell you how many people have been delayed.

Tom Copley AM: An estimate would be good. I am going to move on to Network Rail but I do think this compensation scheme is inadequate and, given the very exceptional circumstances, you should be looking at something that goes a lot further.

If I could move to Network Rail and just ask how much have you paid the train operators in compensation as a result of the problems at London Bridge?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): We paid for compensation to the train operators. I believe the value is £3.2 million.

Tom Copley AM: £3.2 million so far. Obviously that is a figure that will presumably be rising. Just going back to Charles, can I ask how much have you paid out in total to passengers?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I am going to say that the compensation scheme that we have with passengers is not related directly to the scheme or the payment to us of monies from Network Rail. They are two different things.

Tom Copley AM: No, I understand that.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): It is not right to say it.

Tom Copley AM: We would like the figures on that.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): If I can explain to you, as I have explained before, the money we receive on GTR from Network Rail is treated as passenger revenue. All passenger revenue on GTR passes directly to the DfT. OK? We do not receive any of that money on GTR. On Southern at the moment - and Southern becomes part of GTR in the summer - Southern is in revenue support and 80% of that money Southern receives, again, passes to the DfT. That gross figure you have heard from Network Rail, in the case of GTR, all of it passes to the DfT. In the case of Southern, 80% of it passes to the DfT. Then, in terms of the money we received from Network Rail, it is also used to pay our additional costs for disruption as well. You cannot simply say that the two things are --

Tom Copley AM: How much have you paid to passengers yourself, that being taken into account?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): I do not know the timescale of the figure that was quoted there.

Tom Copley AM: Since the work at London Bridge began, since Christmas.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Since Christmas, we have paid in the order of £500,000.

Tom Copley AM: Thank you.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): If I can also add, it has also had an effect on our revenue as well.

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): That is a good point. The process that has been described there, one of the things it does is it tends to be a proxy for lost revenue that we suffer from. There are a lot of levels to that argument. As Charles [Horton] has already said, it is not possible to compare those two figures. I know you have said you are not going to compare the two figures and I welcome you saying that. That would be absolutely the wrong thing to do. Nevertheless, you have those two figures and so I would be very cautious about comparing those two because they are not like-for-like.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Not a problem. I am just trying to clarify it. I just have a couple of question on this before I move on to the last area. Basically, Charles, you are saying it is up to the DfT if they want to say, "We want a more generous compensation scheme", because all the money goes to that. Is that correct?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): My understanding is - and I am quoting from what the Minister has said in Parliament very recently - that she was asked a couple of times by a couple of Members of Parliament about specific compensation packages for passengers at London Bridge and she said, and I quote, "I intend to continue to work on a compensation scheme specifically for those affected by the works at London Bridge". That, I believe, is something that has been said by the Minister.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): It is the DfT and it is up them. They could make a change if they wanted, rather than it being with you, because the revenue goes there.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Indeed.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): What I want to understand is the real issue is that for passengers who use the metro services - and I am not talking about people outside London - it is a ten-minute journey normally or 15 or 20 minutes. The half-hour at the moment is doubling, if not more, their journey. That is why it does not work. Did there not used to be a compensation scheme where, if your trains were a certain percentage, if you had a monthly, season ticket or an annual one, you just automatically had a refund? Is that the sort of scheme perhaps we should be looking at for passengers around London Bridge?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): There is a slight irony to all of this, is there not?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Sure.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I remember being the Managing Director of Southeastern and being challenged and pushed to get rid of that old scheme because people did not like it.

What I have said in correspondence to do with passenger focus and verbally to London TravelWatch is that I am very happy to engage in a debate and a discussion with passenger groups, other train-operating colleagues, others in the industry and other stakeholders to talk about what form of passenger compensation people would prefer. You are absolutely right that that was the scheme that we used to have.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I am sure there was, yes.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): In fact, all the first generation franchises had what they called a charter punctuality-based scheme, but it was unpopular. It was also felt to be unfair because it was supposed to address the needs of season ticketholders but did not adequately address the needs of single and return ticketholders.

Steve O'Connell AM: I wrote to you last week with that very suggestion. As Tom [Copley AM] has pointed out, the compensation system at the moment works for business not as usual. Here you have a situation where, as we have heard for the last two hours, there has been a catastrophic loss in confidence and a catastrophic loss in customer service. Would it not make it simpler for yourselves if you looked at a discount on renewals of season tickets and another structure for those that were not season tickets? If you are saying, however, "It is not down to us. It is the DfT. It is a book entry", and if you are not able to deliver that yourselves, would you support that?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): I have said also that not only would it be something that we would need to discuss with the DfT to enact such a change, but also I have some reservations about whether people would then say, "Actually, I like the old Delay Repay scheme because I

prefer the idea of immediate compensation”, which was one of the criticisms of the old scheme. The old scheme seemed to be unfair because it did not offer immediate compensation. What it involved was looking over average performance over a 12-month period.

Steve O’Connell AM: Yes, Charles, I will intercede. The fact of the matter is you quoted a number and you do not have exact numbers. That will be a small proportion of those affected. There are probably people around this horseshoe who have been discomforted and have not applied, because people have to proactively go into the system and do so. They are worn down by it. They are just worn down and they are not going to do that. You need something, in this unprecedented mess that you have found yourselves in, to compensate, as a whole, the travelling public in a simple manner. I suggest a discount on a renewable season ticket, and/or another structure for those who do not have season tickets, is something that you should consider and support.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That is right, Steve, because 82%, from my rough calculation of the Southern, if you look at February, would have been delayed for up to half an hour but would not qualify for this money back. Only 8% would have qualified. That is the issue.

Val [Shawcross AM] wanted to come in, but I just wanted to bring in that on the back of your lovely voucher it actually says it is not exchangeable for cash.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): There are two different vouchers.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): OK, I have the wrong one here, the wrong kind of voucher.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): We will happily exchange your voucher.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Lovely. Val, you want to just pick something up here?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): A quick technical question. During the worst periods one of the things that was happening to people - and it happened to me - is you would be on a train, you would think, “Great, I am on my way to London Bridge”, and then it would be terminated early and you would be pitched out at, say, South Bermondsey and then you would have to wait on a crowded platform for another train to come in. It would come in crowded and you cannot get on it and you have to wait for another train to come in. How does the compensation scheme treat that?

The other issue is station skipping. When it is predictable, it is less of a problem, but there have been plenty of occasions when you get on a train, say, at West Norwood or at Crystal Palace and they say, “We are going to run this train now fast to London Bridge”. The people who did not want to do that and wanted to get off before London Bridge had to get off and wait for another train. That journey was then delayed by however long.

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): If your journey is delayed by longer than half an hour, for those reasons you are describing, as well as the train you are on being longer than half an hour, then you do qualify for Delay Repay.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): You qualify?

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): You do qualify, yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Do you think people know that?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): It is a good question. There are quite a lot of people who do know that. We do emphasise that it is your journey that is delayed by half an hour. You make a good point and it is something I am happy to look at and see if we can just press that point about how it is your journey that needs to be delayed. It is not about your train; it is about your journey.

Alex Foulds (Commercial Director, Southern Railway): We certainly do get people who apply for Delay Repay on that basis, but you do have a good point.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): I doubt if the complexities of the compensation scheme are properly understood. In fact, from what you are saying, is it simpler than people think it is.

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): Yes. Also, once you have registered, it is very simple to make a claim. We really do encourage people to do that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): OK, that is very helpful.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): The final area of questions, you will be glad to hear. Looking forward, Easter is fast approaching. Network Rail, you have a massive programme again over the Easter period, partly because you have lower passenger numbers at that time. Probably to you, Phil, how are you approaching your Easter programme of engineering works in light of all these problems at London Bridge and also the Christmas disruption around King's Cross and Paddington?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): We have around about 3,000 work sites over Easter. Quite clearly you do hear about the ones that go badly wrong. Christmas was a terrible period. What we have done is we have reviewed all of what we call the 'red sites', the critical sites, locations that are coming into London, for example, Slough and Reading. What we have done is we have reviewed all of the programmes in detail with independent non-executive directors for both jointly the TOCs and us to demonstrate what we are doing in terms of the programme itself, the detailed panning that we are actually going through, the contingencies that we are building into the plans and the joined-up communication that is funnelled into one of my key areas, my Network Operation Centre in Milton Keynes, so that it is a single repository of information. Then finally, we have a number of volunteers that are prepared to support if things do go wrong. There are three real work streams that I have looked at. The first one is deliver the work. We have to deliver the work. We cannot keep calling work off because that is just costing lots of money and delivering absolutely nothing. It is about the robustness of the plans and the checks and balances and the measures along the way.

There are some key areas where there are bigger risks than others. We have tested them. What then are the fall-back periods? Once we have gone through that and, as I have said, determined the contingency, we have made the decision whether we should go, whether we should cancel some of the work or whether we should not do it at all. We have gone through that over the last two months since I have been involved, where we have reviewed every one of these critical projects. That, in essence, is what we have done. As I said, the detailed plan, the customer comes, everything that goes with that that we failed badly over Christmas. We have now revisited that.

We have had some independent inputs into that from former railway professionals. I was in the TfL world during the Christmas period and what was very pleasing for me is that it is the people themselves who have delivered these plans. It is not about other people influencing them but, yes, there have been lots of checks

and balances. There will be senior people around. I will be around every single day of the Easter period. I am going to base myself in London. There are a lot of people who are really committed to make this happen. I have to say personally I am far more confident than I would have been if we had not gone through this process.

We have joined up with TfL. We have had some reviews with the GLA and with the Mayor's Office. Mike Brown [Managing Director of LU and London Rail, TfL] and Nick Brown [Chief Operating Officer, LU, TfL], who replaced me, jointly had a discussion in terms of what each of us could do to support each other because TfL have work as well. I am confident that we are in a much, much better place. Can things go wrong? Sadly, yes, they can because, as I have said, there are 3,000 work sites and a lot of mobilisation, but I have a higher degree of confidence that we will deliver on some of these things. If they do become a risk, then there are fall-back positions that we can take.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): At London Bridge, Southeastern are not running. Is that right?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I do not know if it will be you or Simon or Steve, but will you be on site at London Bridge to make sure it does open again on time?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): My Project Director is on all over the Easter weekend. Yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You have senior people there onsite?

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Yes, absolutely. We have what is called a 'war room' that operates throughout the possession period and then continues for 24 hours after that. We have control people there managing the information, managing the site and senior people on throughout that period overseeing the works. In terms of the Thameslink works at Easter, yes, we have a four-day blockage on the Southeastern side and that has been jointly reviewed with Southeastern and with the non-executive directors that Phil [Hufton] mentioned earlier and so there has been a thorough review.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Charles, do you have confidence in that work that you are going to get it returned on time and are you going to be or is one of your colleagues going to be at London Bridge?

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): My colleague, David Statham [Managing Director] and his direct team at Southeastern are working very closely with Network Rail on this and there has been exceptionally good joint planning for Easter.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You have confidence that this --

Charles Horton (Chief Executive, Govia Thameslink Railway): There is a good high level of confidence that this will deliver.

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): There are daily telephone conferences which involve, again, TfL colleagues throughout that Easter weekend for the London Bridge works. Yes, there is that regular communication with all key stakeholders through the weekend.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Do you have contingency plans if there is suddenly something you uncover and there is slippage? Do you have contingency plans so that you will bring it back into operation on time?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): Yes, we have contingency plans in terms of that and, if there is any catastrophic failure, which is extremely unlikely, then there are operational contingency plans that we have worked through without colleagues within Network Operations.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You have confidence?

Steve Knight (Sussex Area Director, Network Rail): Yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): OK, that is good to hear. Finally, there are huge plans for Waterloo Station coming up. What are you learning from London Bridge to make sure passengers going through Waterloo are not going to experience this same very stressful period?

Phil Hufton (Managing Director of Network Operations, Network Rail): Obviously we do have lots of lessons to learn and we are learning them. Incidentally, we have actually carried out a few drills and it has exposed a few things and a few weaknesses that we have had in the system. Certainly passing on the learning for Waterloo is something that we are really concentrating on. Today do I have all the information around Waterloo? No, I have not. It has been quite a short learning period for me and Network Rail, but absolutely we will be focused on what we need to do with Waterloo.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): OK, thank you for that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Sorry, Caroline, just thinking forward to summer - when we first had indications that there might be things going wrong, if you think back, was when there were long delays for trains getting into London Bridge in the summer heat. We certainly had a least one incident and a couple more where trains that were not air-conditioned were held outside in the extreme heat with passengers in cattle-truck conditions. When they arrived at London Bridge, people were fainting and experiencing heatstroke. We received a lot of complaints. In fact, I complained to the Office of Rail Regulation at the time. That was the first time we saw Dave Ward [Route Managing Director (London and South East), Network Rail] since the Olympics and we spoke to him.

Are you prepared this time to deal with the health risks to passengers if we again have a hot summer and you are going to be having delays on the way in? I was a bit shocked at the time to discover that Network Rail's definition of a temperature incident was whether or not it affected infrastructure rather than whether or not it affected human beings. I hope you now have that one in your mental to-do list as well.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Basically, we do plan for each season. Spring is the one that needs the least amount of planning, but we plan for the autumn, we plan for the winter and we plan for the summer. Last year, after the incident you referred to, we did put in place something called a 'hot train process', basically, which is trying to deal exactly with the issue that you describe. There are a number of levels within that process that basically mean we aspire not to trap any train in hot weather outside of a station, basically.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Particularly the trains that do not have air-conditioning. That was the problem.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): The process will be refined and refreshed for this summer, but the principles of the process are that we know which trains are trapped or could potentially be trapped, we know which trains have air-conditioning and which ones do not and we do not seek to leave trapped trains, particularly those without air-conditioning, outside of any station. We have adapted our processes for that and we will be refreshing that again for this summer.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much indeed for your answers today. I unfortunately have just had a text, which sums up many people's experiences, from my husband saying that he is picking up our baby late because the train has been cancelled. That message has been heard loud and clear both personally and from those passengers who were in touch with us.

Phil [Hufton], there is an awful lot on your shoulders. You are promising an awful lot and it is whether Network Rail behind you has the ability and capacity to be able to support you in that. I do not know about other Members but I certainly feel that you are very genuinely wanting to tackle this. I just hope you have the systems and things in place to support you and to help train operators run the service that they clearly want to. We wish you luck with that and we look forward to seeing an improved service. I am sure we will probably have you back in the next year.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): We would like regular reports on performance. We would like the same performance information that TfL gets at the moment and we want to know exactly what the causes of incidents are.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): Every single day we publish the right time arrivals and departures from London Bridge in the peak period and the incidents that have affected them and we share that with DfT, TfL and other people.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): You do not share it with us.

Simon Blanchflower (Major Programme Director - Thameslink, Network Rail): We are very happy to share it with you as well.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): The only way we get it is when it is nicely leaked to us.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Perhaps there is some sort of digest you can send us, whether it is daily or weekly. That would be very helpful, if that is possible.

Thank you very much for your time.