

Waterloo International plans hit setback

1

PLANS to use the former international platforms at London Waterloo for domestic train services have hit a setback, the Government has admitted. In a Parliamentary answer, transport minister Simon Burns said only one platform can be used in the foreseeable future.

It had been hoped to reopen all the old international platforms at Waterloo for South West Trains, but the scheme has dragged its feet since the last Eurostars departed in 2007.

In answer to a question from Labour's shadow transport secretary Maria Eagle, Mr Burns said the Government was "committed to bringing the former International platforms at Waterloo station into domestic use, commencing with platform 20 being brought back into use by 2014 to assist South West Trains in delivering additional capacity into this busy station".

Work on the roof has been underway for some time to prepare for this, but the problem with the international platforms is that the subsurface layout was designed for one-way flows. These are essential for international arrivals and departures with their associated customs and immigration control points, but not suitable for day-to-day domestic commuter traffic.

Mr Burns continued: "With regard to the other four former international platforms, previous plans to bring these back into use have now been subject to detailed evaluation which has shown them to be too short-term in respect of the efficient overall expansion of Waterloo station. A more comprehensive and longer term plan is required."

Last year's High Level Output Specification included provision for major works at Waterloo, and this was followed up by a £300 million budget for the station in Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan for Control Period 5, which covers 2014-2019.

Mr Burns added: "The SBP proposes a £300 million investment to increase capacity into London Waterloo in CP5 as part of a longer term enhancement programme that will deliver significant capacity improvements into CP6 and beyond. During CP5, improvements will focus on suburban routes into London with platform extensions to accommodate longer 10 car trains and the integration of the former Waterloo International Terminal and its platforms to increase capacity within the station. The independent Office of Rail Regulation will review the SBP during the spring and publish its draft findings for public consultation in June."

[Return to top](#)



The subsurface layout was designed for one-way flows, and had not changed when this picture was taken in October 2012

Reader Comments:

Views expressed in submitted comments are that of the author, and not necessarily shared by Railnews.

Mark, Reading

.... And of course the site would work very well as a new office block redevelopment opportunity
Platforms too narrow? They're wider than most of the others already
This "setback" is just an excuse for another agenda maybe?
Common sense cries out for the platforms to be put back to use immediately

Keith Ashington, Milton Keynes

In the interim, use the station for the Sleeper service.

- 1) All passengers flow to the station in the evening and away in the morning
- 2) No rush to get the Sleeper out of platforms - they could arrive early, allowing passengers to deposit luggage then go and look around London before departure (also applies and after arrival)
- 3) Platform long enough for Caledonian sleeper, even if they replace the life-expired Mark II seated coaches with MK III.
- 4) Extra platform capacity at Paddington and Euston for commuter services
- 5) Trains would depart via Clapham and the West London Line to either the GWML or the WCML (extra journey time immaterial, more time to sleep)
- 6) theoretically, the coaches could be services in Waterloo, allowing them to stay there all day (like a proper hotel train)

Alex, Konstanz

I feel utilisation of these platforms should be implemented in conjunction with the proposed Airtrack scheme, which would be a cost-effective way of linking South London to Heathrow (Terminal 5).

The main problem with Airtrack was that the extra trains would cause road traffic chaos due to the large numbers of level crossings between Putney and Staines. The solution would be to run longer trains (12 or even 16 carriage trains - depending on how feasible platform extension at other stations is), and split them at Staines for Heathrow and Reading. Same number of trains - double the number of carriages.

Waterloo International's platforms, with under-platform access, could work well for this. Departures and Arrivals, and hence delays, would need to be carefully controlled to ensure safe passenger flows.

Lee, Manchester

Not a very good headline to be broadcast across the web, especially as we are now embroiled in HS2! It makes me cringe that we invented the intercity railway, we invented 'high speed' rail, exported railway technology around the world and now have issues like this to deal with, along with the West Coast franchise debacle, import everything from Europe, Canada, the states and generally everywhere else in the world and will take 20+ years to deliver one railway line. I think the West Coast and East Coast mainlines, Great Western mainline and Great Central routes were all largely completed in less time, though I conceded I might be wrong on this point.

Michael Pantlin, Sutton, Surrey, ENGLAND

Does anyone know whether the disused international platforms are required as a back up diversionary terminus should the regular terminal at St. Pancras become unusable for some contingency?

(Yes we do know, and the answer is no. The traction systems are no longer compatible, for one thing (Eurostars were stripped of their conductor shoes and associated DC equipment after the move to St P.) The fallback London terminus is Stratford International, I believe -- because Stratford was designed to handle international passenger flows, even though it doesn't normally see any.—Editor.)

SHAUN SPENCER-SALLIS, BASINGSTOKE

Why not actually do a planned and controlled test during the morning peak and evening peak on one day to test the conditions that could be experienced, computer models etc don't work, only a real live test would work, using services from Reading/Windsor/Weybridge.

Tim, Devon

Apparently the platforms are the wrong height for domestic trains. Also the rail network outside the station couldn't cope with more than 8 trains per hour.

Still I think it would be worth it. It's better to have them in use for only a few services every hour than have them stand empty whilst the rest of the main station is crowded.

Philip Russell, Carlisle

Im sure we have some of the UKs finest engineers developing our railways future, but in reality we dont always have the time or money to implement their gold plated ideas straight away. In the past BR knew this and was very good at getting things done quickly on a tight budget and recently we have seen the rapid completion of the Paisley Canal electrification, its a shame similar willpower cannot be applied to this project.

Lorentz, London

This was to be expected, and has been anticipated since 2007 as far as I recall. The platforms are too narrow for commuter traffic, and it would be difficult to meet safety requirements around passenger flows with the current layout, and would effectively prevent simultaneous arrivals on adjacent platforms. Pretty much what has now been admitted.

There is also the other consideration, that any major re-work of Waterloo International may only see a few years service before it too is made redundant, this time by the proposed Crossrail 2.

Once again the Ministry have messed up on this and it should have been left to the private sector to resolve.

Jamie, Sheffield (formerly of Farnborough)

How hard can it be to knock a few walls through?

Chris Neville-Smith, Durham, England

Oh dear. Some serious questions need asking over why this was never thought of back in 1994, when plans for HS1 were well underway. Still, this was back in the day when the government thought the WCML upgrade was a good idea, so maybe we should keep it in context.

How much would it cost to link platforms 20-24 straight to the station concourse without having to go up and down the stairs? Surely it can't cost more than that mezzanine they've just opened?

Hugh Collins, Cheltenham

What a pathetic line of reasoning! Use the transport resources we have - now - please

Tim, Devon

I too am amazed that they can't sort something out. Why does everything have to be so complicated? Stick in a few more escalators and replace the ticket barriers. What other problems are there?

Mark Savage, Feltham, Middlesex

The big question has to be, surely, why has it apparently taken the powers that be so long to work out this "setback"? Surely it should have been evident from the start that the very different former needs of Waterloo International might cause some challenges for a return to domestic operation?

But, from the account that Railnews has given here at least, I cannot really see where the problem lies. Indeed, potentially having a "one way flow" could actually enhance passenger flow, surely? I'm no expert, but for most trains arriving at Waterloo there will be two pedestrian flows- one of passengers leaving the train, the other of waiting to board. Why cannot the arriving passengers be directed along the "exit" route, i.e. the one through which arriving passengers would normally have walked to clear immigration and customs, while departing passengers wanting to catch the same service on its next journey out use the "outbound" lane to get back to the platforms?

At present, the neighbouring Platform 19- which carries most of the busy Reading line services originally displaced from Platforms 20-24 when Waterloo International was built (the other Windsor Line services also used this platform group) is often very congested at the gateline, with arriving passengers conflicting with departing passengers, even though of course the layout at Waterloo "domestic" now allows access to all platforms through any gate. An innovative "one way" system on the former Waterloo International platforms could surely be used as a way to speed up both boarding and leaving of commuter trains?

Unless, of course, somebody can explain the problem better for me...?

Melvyn Windebank, Canvey Island, Essex

Think about it commuters are also one way flows with passengers arriving in the morning and departing in the evening so their must be a way to sorte Waterloo International out!

Have Your Say

* Name:

* Email:

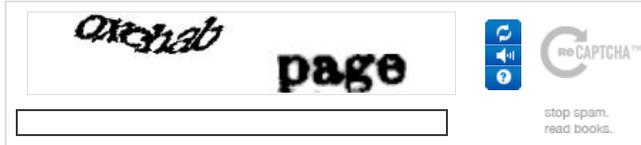
* Town / City:

Remember me on this computer

Submitted comments are subject to approval prior to public posting. Railnews reserve the right to reject, alter or censor any submissions. Railnews also reserve the right to reproduce submissions in any format.

Railnews may, from time to time, send out marketing emails to subscribers and website users. If you would prefer not to receive these emails, please tick this box.

* Your Comment:



Submit Comment

[Return to top](#)