



Tonbridge Civic Society

September 2023

SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

Chairman's note



TCS Chair
Tom Freke

The railway has had a central role in the development of Tonbridge for more than 150 years. Indeed, 100 years ago light railway pioneer Colonel HF Stephens used the town as the headquarters for his empire of railways across the UK. (Visit the fascinating museum in Tenterden for more on him.)

But there now appears to be upheaval ahead. There's just a few days to respond to the first round of the train companies' consultation on closing ticket offices, with a deadline of Sept. 1 for responses. It's likely that many small and medium-sized stations will be affected though so far Southeastern have only clarified details on 40 stations in the greater London area. For Tonbridge, as a designated 'travel centre' it will likely retain its ticket office as part of a "combination of travel information and ticketing solutions".

Further details can be found here: <https://www.southeasternrailway.co.uk/help-and-contact/get-in-touch/ticket-office-consultation>

Comments can be made via:

Southeastern.Consultation@Londontravelwatch.org.uk

By chance, this month's newsletter includes an interview with Rob Mansfield of Tonbridge Line Commuters, our local watchdog for the railway line. Their response to the consultation can be found here:

<https://tonbridgecommuters.org.uk/tlcs-response-to-ticket-office-closure-consultation/>



Tonbridge Railway Station

PLANNING

It appears the second phase of the review of the town centre by TMBC's consultants is focused on the area east of the High Street, and includes the Angel Centre. According to a document that appeared on Facebook in August, purporting to be the Leisure Trust's business plan for 2023-2025, the Trust's preferred option is to rebuild the centre next to the swimming pool (where the miniature railway is situated), "recognizing the political sensitivity and construction challenges of that site".

Separately, the council has just filed a planning application (23/01657/PDV14J) seeking to install 180 solar panels on the roof of Tonbridge swimming pool, set to generate about 80,000 kWh a year.

Ahead of work to build 125 homes on the land north of Lower Haysden Lane, an application (23/01753/RD) has been made to dig more than 70 trenches as part of an archaeological investigation of the site.

TCS DESIGN AWARDS

Hilden Oaks has attached the Design Award plaque to the front of the school.



EVENTS

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|-----------------|--|
| Aug. 31-Sept. 1 | Outdoor cinema – Tonbridge School |
| Sept 2-3 | Food & Drink Festival – Tonbridge Castle |
| Sept 3 | Tonbridge Lions Dragon Boat Race – River Walk |
| Sept 16 - Oct 1 | Walk Tonbridge Festival – Walkton-bridge.co.uk |
| Sept 20 | RSPB Backyard Safari talk with Kevin Sawford – St Phillip's Church, Salisbury Road |
| Oct. 13-14 | Oktoberfest Tonbridge – Racecourse Sportsground |

INTRODUCING ... Tonbridge Line Commuters

The town is at the junction of two railways and the station plays a big role for many of us. Tonbridge Line Commuters campaigns to ensure our line gets the attention it needs. We spoke with TLC's Rob Mansfield to find out more.

What's the main purpose of Tonbridge Line Commuters?

TLC is a watchdog for public transport passengers with a focus on railways. We seek to preserve, maintain and enhance services for everyone. At a time when government does not seem to care much for the railway, we focus on preventing managed decline and maximising value.

How long has TLC been around?

We were founded in 1959 and the height of our membership was when the dining car service was threatened - it appears we did not win that battle!

What are you focusing on now, and what are your plans for the next few months?

We believe strongly in constructive engagement and aim to suggest improvements rather than just oppose plans. The Tonbridge to Redhill line is a great example, when Southern Rail presented us with a draft proposal where almost every other train would be cut due to low usage numbers and pressure to cut costs. We felt this would be a significant step towards losing the line and so we built a full alternative timetable that protected the key user group (schoolchildren), protected service frequency (at least 1 per hour), saved money and gave a fighting chance of long-term growth by pitching an extension down to Gatwick Airport. Southern have been very supportive and we are very keen to see Kent be connected to Gatwick Airport by a direct rail service.

The next few months will see us respond to the ticket office consultation Southeastern phase 2, which covers Tonbridge. All we know so far is that the ticket office will become a travel centre and that we will likely lose staff members and so we have concerns for those that may need a little extra help navigating our complex fare structure or for those who need physical assistance in travelling by train. We will also be seeking volunteers for our committee as our workload keeps increasing whilst our lives get ever busier!

How should people get in touch if they want to learn more?

Please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you! you can email on enquiry@tonbridgecommuters.org.uk or via our social media channels – we can be found on Twitter(X) and Facebook.

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