



Les feuilles sur les voies font partir les trains plus tôt

Plusieurs opérateurs ferroviaires ont pris les devants pour lutter contre le problème des retards occasionnés par la chute de feuilles sur les voies en mettant en place des horaires spéciaux pour l'automne. De nombreux trains partiront ainsi plus tôt qu'à l'habitude afin de compenser la progression ralentie sur les voies jonchées de feuilles mortes. Selon la compagnie South West Train, dont l'horaire « chute de feuilles » vient d'être mis en place, les végétaux tombés sur la voie sont écrasés par les trains, ce qui crée un film glissant. *« Cela rend l'accélération au départ des gares plus difficile et signifie que nos conducteurs doivent approcher les arrêts plus doucement »* a déclaré South West trains. Network Rail utilise un train spécial pour nettoyer les voies, ce qui atténue le phénomène sans l'éliminer. Dans le cadre d'un programme de gestion de la végétation, Network Rail coupe les arbres sur les voies les plus touchées par le problème. Les compagnies National Express, Southern et Chiltern ont également annoncé la mise en place d'horaires spéciaux.

The train on platform 2 has already departed. Why? Leaves on the line

AUTUMN MAY have arrived late, but the trains should be more punctual as rail companies use a new tactic in their battle against the seasonal blight of leaves on the line: Earlier trains.

Several operators have braced themselves for delays by releasing "leaf-fall timetables", with many services running early to compensate for slow progress on leaf-strewn tracks.

South West Trains announced changes last week to services on some of the main commuter routes into London, which came into effect on Sunday. Rush-hour trains into the capital from Reading, Portsmouth, Weymouth and other stations have had their departure times pushed forward.

"Leaves falling on the rails are crushed by passing trains to make a slippery film," South West Trains said. "This makes it harder for trains to accelerate away from stations and means our drivers have to approach station stops more slowly. Network Rail run special rail cleaning trains but these can only reduce, not

completely eliminate, this problem." The company said it had run altered autumn timetables since 2004. National Express, Southern and Chiltern trains also released new "leaf-fall" times.

Network Rail said that the problem of leaves on the line was one that would not go away, but was being dealt with by cutting back trees on the worst-affected routes as part of a "vegetation management programme". The Campaign for Better Transport said that it received complaints from passengers every year about the issue. Many commuters were baffled that fallen leaves could stop a train.

Alexandra Woodsworth, public transport spokesman for the Campaign for Better Transport, said: "We need much better information around these timetable changes. SMS Texts and email updates are an effective way of keeping passengers informed. A lot of the train operating companies could do a lot better in this respect."

A spokeswoman for South West Trains said: In common with other

train operators, for a number of years we have introduced a slightly amended autumn timetable to minimise the impact of leaf-fall on the tracks. This is nothing new. It affects only around a fifth of our daily services and impacts journey times by an average of just two to three minutes."

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said: "We welcome leaf-fall timetables if they provide passengers with a more realistic timetable on which to plan their journeys.

However, it is essential that it is well publicised and that all information given to passengers during this

By Charlie Cooper

