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### Our Latest Pictures



Early Breakfast presenter Mark Powlett speaks to Sardine Man at Coventry Train Station. Sardine Man is a disgruntled commuter protesting about some of the most overcrowded train lines in the UK.

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**BBC COVENTRY & WARWICKSHIRE**

94.8, 104 & 103.7 FM  
Digital Radio



Circulation ('000): 62  
 Readership ('000): 175  
 Display Rate (£/sqcm): £3.71

31 MAR 2007

# Sardine Man packs in to crush hour for commuters

## Fishy character on one of worst crowded trains

BY SAM LISTER  
 Daily Post Staff

COMMUTERS shared their packed rush-hour train with a man dressed as a sardine yesterday morning.

The fishy character was gathering evidence after the 7.53am Eccleston Park service to Liverpool was named one of the top 10 worst in the country for overcrowding.

Campaign group Transport 2000 organised the stunt to highlight cramped conditions. They want more government investment to increase capacity and relieve congestion on the rail network.

They will send their findings to the Secretary of State for Transport Douglas Alexander in the run-up to this summer's expected 30-year rail strategy.

Julia Thomas, Transport 2000's public transport campaigner, said: "It's very easy to blame rail operators for overcrowding problems, but actually a lot of it is down to the government's rail policy.

"They have issued 'no growth' franchises for the past 10 years and they've been promoting a policy of fares hikes to get people to travel off-peak, but passengers really don't have that much flexibility.

"In addition, the very short time periods covered by franchise agreements does not encourage big infrastructure investment by the rail operators."

According to Network Rail,



The Transport 2000 campaign's mascot, Sardine Man, was yesterday kicking off a two-week tour of the UK's most overcrowded train lines

trains during the morning peak between Eccleston Park in St Helens and Liverpool Lime Street are running at 85% over capacity.

Passengers start standing at Hayton station and from there on into Liverpool Lime Street it is standing room only. It costs £73.30 a week to stand on the cramped train.

Sardine Man was on the 7.53am train from Eccleston Park yesterday.

The service was joint second in a list of the most overcrowded trains, topped by the 7.59am Durham to Newcastle service at 88% above capacity.

Other packed carriages can be found on the 8.14am Humphrey Park to Manchester Oxford Road service (75% over capacity).

Passenger Clare Gillot said: "The train was really busy from Roby station with people standing in the central aisle by Huyton – both doorway ends were blocked.

"There were probably 30 people standing.

"Some people have been standing for 17 minutes, which is a long time under cramped conditions."

Sardine Man was on the 7.53am train from Eccleston Park yesterday. He is keeping a blog

while he travels on the overcrowded lines and is encouraging people to email their MP at [www.sardineman.org.uk](http://www.sardineman.org.uk)

■ COMMUTER chaos struck Lime Street station yesterday after all trains were stopped from travelling in and out after a points failure at lunchtime.

Commuters faced hours of delays as the backlog was cleared after the mechanical failure near Edge Hill Station.

All routes were blocked from 12.19 until 13.35, bringing Virgin, Central, and Transpennine services to a halt.

[samlister@dailypost.co.uk](mailto:samlister@dailypost.co.uk)

The train was really busy from Roby



27 MAR 2007

## Sardine Man bids to squeeze life back into the railways

A commuter route into Birmingham has been named among the most overcrowded train journeys in England and Wales.

That came as an organisation campaigning for improved public transport yesterday kicked off a UK tour to highlight some of the most serious problems travellers face.

Chiefs at Transport 2000 are sending their mascot "Sardine Man" out on a two-week journey on the nation's packed trains to call on the Government to spend more money on relieving congestion on the rail network.

The organisation claims the worst train lines include: Durham to Newcastle at 88 per cent over capacity; Cambridge to London Liverpool Street and Eccleston Park to Liverpool Lime Street 85 per cent over capacity; and Northampton to Birmingham New Street 45 per cent over its capacity.

Transport 2000, which



Sardine man kicking off his UK tour in Eastleigh, Hampshire

represents 40 environmental groups, transport organisations and transport unions, revealed overcrowding has become the number one passenger concern following a 40 per cent increase in passengers since 1996.

Campaigners want urgent action as Government experts are predicting a further 30 per cent increase in passenger numbers by 2016.

Transport 2000 has identified the ten most overcrowded train lines and Sardine Man will travel on

them over the next 14 days to gather evidence to send to the Secretary of State for Transport, Douglas Alexander. The campaign comes ahead of this summer's expected 30-year rail strategy and Sardine Man will be keeping a blog while he travels at [www.sardine-man.org.uk](http://www.sardine-man.org.uk)

Transport 2000 wants Government to ensure an increase in capacity of the rail network is at the centre of this summer's new 30-year rail strategy.

BARNSELY STAR

Circulation ('000): 1

Readership ('000): 3

Display Rate (£/sqcm): £0.01

26 MAR 2007

# South Yorkshire railway shame

## County is among worst in country for overcrowding

By Tony Belshaw

SOUTH Yorkshire rail routes are among the most overcrowded in the country, according to a new report by transport campaigners.

Transport 2000 named the Sheffield to Leeds route and the Barnsley to Leeds route in the top 10 most crowded in Britain.

The 7.14am Sheffield to Leeds train was 53 per cent above capacity – the seventh worst in the country, while the 7.31am Barnsley to Leeds service was 57 per cent over capacity – the sixth worst. Both services are operated by Northern Rail.

Transport 2000, whose president is Sheffield's Michael Palin, is pointing the finger of blame at the Government, which it says is not investing enough in the railways.

Julia Thomas, Transport 2000's public transport campaigner, said: "It's very easy to blame rail operators for overcrowding problems, but

### WORST ROUTES

- Durham to Newcastle (7.59am train) 88 per cent
- Cambridge to London Liverpool Street (7.18am) 85 per cent
- Eccleston Park to Liverpool Lime Street (7.53am) 85 per cent
- Cardiff to Maesteg (5.21pm) 78 per cent
- Humphrey Park to Manchester Oxford Road (8.14am) 75 per cent
- Morpeth to Newcastle (8am) 58 per cent
- Barnsley to Leeds (7.31am) 57 per cent
- Sheffield to Leeds (7.14am) 53 per cent
- Sutton to Luton (4.33pm) 50 per cent
- Northampton to ■ Birmingham New Street (7.26am) 45 per cent

actually a lot of it is down to the Government's rail policy. They have issued 'no growth' franchises for the

past 10 years and they've been promoting a policy of fares hikes to get people to travel off-peak, but passengers really don't have that much flexibility.

"In addition, the very short time periods covered by franchise agreements does not encourage any infrastructure investment by the rail operators."

The most crowded service in the organisation's list is the 7.59am Durham to Newcastle service which can operate up to 88 per cent over capacity.

Transport 2000 has looked at all the data available for England and Wales and identified 10 train lines they say most urgently need their capacity increased.

The organisation is gathering evidence of rail overcrowding to send to the Secretary of State for Transport Douglas Alexander in the run-up to the summer's 30-year rail strategy. Overcrowding has become

a major passenger concern. The country has seen a 40 per cent increase in passenger rail kilometres travelled since 1996.

The Government's own figures forecast a 30 per cent growth in rail passenger miles by 2016.

Transport 2000 is calling on the Government to take action to ensure an increase in capacity of the rail network is at the centre of its 30-year rail strategy.

It wants the Government to ensure all future rail franchises are more flexible and longer to allow operators to improve timetables, work together to resolve overcrowding and invest in infrastructure.

It also wants to set maximum levels of overcrowding for the whole country, not just the South East and London and set up systems for monitoring levels of overcrowding, including requiring train operators to provide overcrowding data on a regular basis.





**ORDEAL** Rail passengers across the country face journeys in overcrowded conditions like this.

# Sardine Man hunts overcrowded trains

**Gavin O'Connor**

## WORST ROUTES

RAIL passengers in South Wales are facing some of the worst conditions in the UK, with one service so crowded it is regularly 78 per cent over capacity.

The 5.15pm Cardiff Central to Maesteg train is the fourth most overcrowded and is often so packed, commuters get left behind.

Tomorrow, in a bid to highlight the problem, campaign group Transport 2000, who carried out the research, will send their troubleshooter Sardine Man out to get first-hand experience of the problem.

The Arriva Trains Wales service is one of 10 routes identified by Transport 2000 as having exceeded the Department for Transport's ceiling of 14 per cent of overcrowding.

Roland Pittard, member of independent passenger group Railfuture and regular train user said: "The train can be so crowded on leaving Cardiff that some people can't get on. The rest have to stand in cramped conditions until Llantrisant when it eases off.

"If passengers travelling to Maesteg can't get on, there isn't another one for an hour."

It is backed up by passengers who regularly use the route.

Bank worker Islwyn Davies, 40, from Brackla, Bridgend, who regularly uses the service, said: "It's so overcrowded and congested it's unbelievable. They are heaving

the time but you have to try to get on the train first and it's a bit of a bustle to get through the doors. They should put on more carriages."

- Durham to Newcastle, 7.59am, 88%.
- Cambridge to London Liverpool Street, 7.18am, 85%.
- Eccleston Park to Liverpool Lime Street, 7.53am, 85%.
- Cardiff to Maesteg, 5.15pm, 78%.
- Humphrey Park to Manchester Oxford Road, 8.14am, 75%.

Sardine Man is gathering evidence of rail overcrowding to send to the Secretary of State for Transport, Douglas Alexander, in the run-up to this summer's expected 30-year rail strategy.

Julia Thomas, Transport 2000's public transport campaigner, said: "It's very easy to blame rail operators for overcrowding problems, but actually a lot of it is down to the Government's rail policy.

"They have issued no growth franchises for the past 10 years and they've been promoting a policy of fares hikes to get people to travel off-peak.

"But passengers really don't have that much flexibility."

Sardine Man has also found many passengers are forced to stand on the Cardiff Central to



**'IT'S UNBELIEVABLE'**  
Regular passenger Islwyn Davies.

The Welsh Assembly Government has paid for two additional carriages to run on this line during the week, but not at weekends, when the most severe overcrowding occurs.

Today, a spokeswoman for Arriva Trains Wales said the problems on the Cardiff to Maesteg service had been exacerbated by First Great Western's decision to cancel its 5.18pm Cardiff Central to Swansea service.

This was used by many commuters from Bridgend, who have been forced onto the Cardiff to Maesteg service.

But she said the problems should have eased by December when new trains, paid for by the Welsh Assembly Government, and extra carriages are commissioned.

You can follow Sardine Man's blog ([www.sardineman.org.uk](http://www.sardineman.org.uk)) while he travels. He is also encouraging people to e-mail their MP



**CAMPAIGN** Sardine Man at