

So winter finally arrived with a snowy fanfare, much to the excitement of small children, dogs and those pining to show off their master craftsmanship in sculpting. It all seems so much fun until the child is crying from being cold and wet, the dog keeps running off with the arms of the snowman, and that ball that hits you and drips down the back of your neck turns out to be ice not compact snow.

That is pretty much where the fun ends. By the time everyone gets back home, drapes gloves and socks over radiators and starts sipping a hot drink, the news is full of chaos and disruption on our rail network.

I dread my inbox after snow, especially when arguably our fall this year was perhaps little more than what you'd expect in winter. Compared to the snow of two years ago, when we had a heavy dump in just a few hours, last weekend's was lighter but over a longer period of time. I have certainly had no complaints about accessibility and safety of the major roads, and the gritters were whizzing in and out of their Aylesford depot constantly.

The same cannot be said of the trains. Those who use the trains in the county understand that without overhead power, services can be disrupted in exceptional weather conditions, but Network Rail and Southeastern reassured MPs that winter resilience plans were in place and that any disruption would be minimal and certainly handled better than in previous years.

Sadly this was not the case and yet again the service and, as importantly, communication between passenger and operator, was sub-standard. I'm in no doubt that colleagues will be asking Southeastern and Network Rail for an explanation; it is not as if snow in winter comes as a surprise.