



Greater Western franchise
December 2006 timetable consultation

Passenger Focus response

Timetable consultation
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Dear Sir

Greater Western franchise - December 2006 timetable consultation
Passenger Focus response

I am writing on behalf of Passenger Focus to record our response to the draft Greater Western Timetable consultation for the new franchise.

Whilst we admire the skill with which much of the timetable planning has been done, we are disappointed at the rather London-centric emphasis which appears to have been applied to the thinking behind this document. The timetable also seems to have been driven by operational considerations indicating lack of local intelligence, such as flows generated by the needs of schools or of particular employment or leisure patterns particularly in the far reaches of the South West.

Significant locally negotiated timetables on local services and on branch lines such as those on the Devon & Cornwall branches to Barnstaple, Newquay and St Ives have been swept away and the suggested replacement timetable would appear to provide a much lesser service to passengers in those areas.

The importance of retaining early and late evening services has also been missed across large sections of the region which will rob early commuters of their only form of transport to get to their place of employment.

Peak services have also suffered in the important travel to work area of Plymouth, Truro, Exeter, Greater Bristol, West Wiltshire and on the Cardiff/ Portsmouth routes.

We are extremely disappointed at the proposed withdrawal of the London/Plymouth semi fast services which has created severe problems in respect of availability of services at Newbury, and the exacerbation of connectivity issues at Westbury. This action has also created the loss of three of the four three hourly services each day to



Plymouth which will significantly impact on the business community in the Plymouth Cornwall areas.

The new Greater Western Franchise as specified represents a significant **missed opportunity** to review and improve the Bristol to Weymouth service to meet rapidly escalating demand and to encourage further transfer to rail from the private car. In particular, this should have been the moment when the Westbury to Weymouth section of the route finally ceased to be viewed as a rural “branch line”, and recognised for what it in fact is – part of a key inter regional direct route from Bristol to Weymouth serving both rural *and* substantial and rapidly expanding urban markets along its entire length. This is an almost entirely retrograde specification for service to the majority of communities along the route, most specifically between Westbury and Weymouth. Unless First Great Western are able to successfully negotiate more viable alternatives to train timings, this will result in a negative impact on existing rail demand/revenues, local economies and the environment, and will be likely to create further social exclusion and unemployment.

We also have serious concerns with regard to capacity issues particularly in respect of what we understand to be the planned rolling stock allocation where it has been suggested that current three coach formations are likely to be reduced to two particularly on the cross Bristol and Cardiff/Portsmouth routes. If this is your plan then we would urge you to re-examine your information on these routes as a matter of urgency. Passengers using these services regularly experience severe overcrowding during peak times and with projected urban growth, the situation is only going to get worse.

I therefore attach for your information and consideration, copies of comments which I have received from passengers and interested groups across the region.

- appendix ‘A’ relates to my composite response
- appendix ‘B’ is a comprehensive response received from the Severnside Community Rail Partnership
- appendix ‘C’ is a comprehensive response received from the North Devon Rail Users Group.

We would ask that you give serious consideration as to how you may improve the draft timetable to provide a more robust service than that proposed in your recent draft timetable document.



If you wish to discuss any particular issues in detail then please do not hesitate to contact me further.

Yours sincerely

Mike Greedy
Passenger link manager

Appendix A – general comments on draft timetable

The issues that I have identified in this appendix are not exhaustive and represent passenger concerns that have been brought to my attention by a range of affected passengers.

I know that there are considerable comments being put forward in respect to other connectivity and service cut issues by community rail partnerships, rail user groups, local MPs and communities and these have been forwarded direct under separate cover. I have concentrated my efforts in identifying those areas of the timetable that seem to cause the most disruption to the largest number of passengers - commuters of all ages who rely on the train during peak hours as their only means of getting to or from work, school or in going about their day to day business.

Paddington to Bristol and South Wales

Service to and from Didcot has been further reduced following earlier withdrawal of stops on Virgin CrossCountry, fast Paddington to Oxford service, most Cotswold line services, and discontinuance of direct Oxford to Bristol service. The paradox is that all these reductions are set against large current and future housing developments in Didcot.

The following alterations need to be made:

1. Down direction

7.30 Paddington to West of England – reinstate stop

Withdrawal of off peak Cheltenham trains but no proper connection at Swindon provided (wait of 31 minutes). Off peak pattern of calls at XX.41 and XX.56 does not provide satisfactory interval service to Swindon.

Position would be improved if the XX.30 Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads called instead of XX.00.

This would also improve Cheltenham connection at Swindon and connections for passengers travelling from Oxford and local stations from Reading, where under the current proposals connections are missed involving a 30 minute wait.

17.00, 18.00, 19.00, 19.30, 20.00 Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads, reinstate Didcot stop

2. Up direction

Under the proposals, trains from Swansea will cease to call off peak, but services from Cardiff will call instead. As a result there will be no proper connection for Oxford from South Wales, but instead a wait of 36 minutes at Didcot. The status quo should be maintained.

Reading – Oxford-Banbury Local Service

Some long layovers at Didcot in the down direction have crept back into the timetable. This is not acceptable to commuters travelling to Oxford at peak times. Examples of these include 7.12 to 7.24, 7.42 to 7.52, 8.12 to 8.24, 8.42 to 8.52.

No up train from Oxford to Appleford between 18.22 and 22.52.

Suggest 20.52 should call. In down direction suggest 17.36 from Paddington should continue to call at Culham and Appleford for commuters.

No evening connection from Paddington for Tackley and Heyford between 17.52 and 21.22 because the 19.53 Oxford to Heyford has been withdrawn and not replaced.

Slough and the Windsor branch

Number of peak fast trains at Slough reduced: Morning from six to four, Evening from seven to five.

Please consider whether the frequency can be increased on morning peak

Maidenhead and the Marlow Branch

Number of peak fast trains at Maidenhead reduced (as specified by DfT): Morning from 11 to seven, Evening from nine to eight.

Please attempt to redress the morning shortage

Twyford and the Henley Branch

Number of peak fast trains at Twyford reduced (as specified by DfT): Morning from six to five, evening from nine to six.

This may create capacity issues during the peak

Whilst we accept that there are some positive changes within the LINK area the fact is, from December 2006 both Maidenhead and Twyford will receive even fewer fast and semi-fast services. This decision will have a catastrophic effect on the quality of life enjoyed by many local commuters and comes as a body blow for local businesses

North Cotswold line

18.22 Paddington to Hereford. Reinstate Didcot stop, as there is no Oxford connection and this is the last train to Hereford.

Saturday service to Oxfordshire Halts should be maintained

It is disappointing that services to Shipton are being reduced in view of ambition to develop this station as the railhead for Burford. Welcome increase in use of 125 mph stock in place of 90 mph stock, though note that the five year old Adelante will be replaced by 30 year old HSTs. Regret that some two hour gaps still remain – this is a missed opportunity. Condemn the removal of calls

at Combe, Finstock and Ascott-under-Wychwood on Saturdays, as this is completely against wider Government policy to reduce car use (e.g. for shopping and leisure trips to major centres such as Oxford, Worcester and London).

Please reinstate these calls

South Cotswold Line (via Stroud Valley)

Welcome the *attempt* to provide a clock face timetable, with two-hourly Cheltenham to London, and the other hour by trains to/from Swindon in part of the day.

However, it is not good enough

There is an 80 minute gap at peak morning time (between 07.15 and 08.35) in eastbound departures from Cheltenham and Gloucester.

This is unacceptable. Please therefore instate an additional service between these times

There is a 90 minute gap east-bound between 17.08 and 18.35 in the evening and then a huge 131-minute gap in the timetable between 18.35 and 20.46

This is totally unacceptable

There is a ludicrous frequency west-bound in the mid-evening, with a 19.51 departure from Swindon, followed almost immediately by a 20.02 departure. This is about stock-balancing, not about passengers, and ***must be changed to provide a much more even-interval service, both east-bound and west-bound***

The removal of the first through train from London and the loss of the last through train to London are to be condemned. The result is a substantially poorer through service in the early and later parts of the day.

Please reinstate

Worcester-Ashchurch-Gloucester-Bristol

Regret that first southbound service runs 40 minutes later, which prevents not only an early arrival in Bristol (for Bristol Airport), but also prevents early arrivals at stations further in the South West. This flies in the face of Government policy to increase modal shift to rail, and to increase public-transport airport access! (Doubtless the DfT timetable planners had no thought of the wider repercussions when constructing this timetable).

Please reinstate

The later departure north from Bristol means a too-late arrival into Gloucester for commuters from intermediate stations.

Please reinstate

The loss of the last Cheltenham–Bristol service means the last train is over 90 minutes earlier, and is to be deplored.

Please reinstate

The loss of the late Bristol to Gloucester service is to be condemned — this prevents trips for evening meetings/functions/events in Bristol, as it will be impossible to get home.

Please reinstate

West of England line

Further reduction of services between Newbury and West of England is totally unacceptable. Newbury continues to grow and until the introduction of the semi-fast service to Exeter in 2004, there were eight or nine services to and from the West of England per day calling in each direction. With the withdrawal of the semi-fast service as proposed by the DfT, Newbury should revert to the same pattern of through services as before the introduction of the 2004 timetable changes.

What is the justification for Reading West losing its through commuter services to and from Paddington?

North Downs line

The later departure of the first train from Reading to Gatwick means that the earliest arrival will be 6.20 instead of 5.53. This may well be significant for passengers checking in for early flights.

The skip stop pattern should be reviewed after a short time to see whether in the light of experience the right combination has been achieved

London to Swansea timetabling fails to take into account Hereford-Manchester connection

Regarding the London-Reading-Bristol Parkway-Newport-Swansea route:

The **20.15 depart Paddington** arrives 22.09 Newport; The Cardiff-Newport-Hereford-Manchester connection departs Newport at 22.08. This means passengers have to wait for over an hour for a connecting service to Hereford and Manchester.

Can this be corrected so that the connection meets that running to Hereford / Manchester?

The last train to Hereford via Newport is now 21.15. It used to be 22.00 which was better, with less of a wait at Newport. Can a later train be reinstated? The 21.15 arrives Newport 23.09, the connection is 00.44 meaning a one hour 35 minute wait on a station in the middle of the night.

If a later train was reinstated this long wait would no longer be necessary

Hereford to London through trains are slower, and necessitate getting to Hereford Station much earlier in the morning

Whilst the 05.45 is a slight improvement, the 06.30 shows a drop in performance. There is one additional (and, in our view unnecessary) stop at Didcot on the service.

Hereford customers would also welcome a later return train from London (e.g. post 22.00), via either the Newport or the Evesham route

Bristol to Weymouth

(Reference is to proposed departure time from Bristol Temple Meads unless otherwise stated)

06.45hrs. Eliminates viable commuter service Somerset/Dorset. A service ideally departing **half an hour earlier** is required to maintain an option for rail travel to the major employment centres of Yeovil, Dorchester and Weymouth, and for Somerset and Dorset students attending Weymouth College.

Is it possible to re-time this service to better suit the commuter market identified?

08.54hrs. The leisure market is currently served by two departures from Temple Meads – 08.40 and 09.40. Both trains are already subject to overcrowding (even when both are strengthened to four or more carriages) principally due to April to September demand for day trips to Weymouth. **Custom for these two trains** would now be **concentrated onto this one service**. Some dampening of demand may result from the fact that cheap day returns would (presumably) not be available between Bristol and Bradford-on-Avon, but this would not reduce custom sufficiently to avoid the necessity for frequent provision of supplementary road transport.

This change will represent a substantial loss of revenue to the company and does raise serious concerns as to future capacity issues on this line

10.56hrs Too late for principal leisure demand, with arrival time in Somerset/Dorset only after mid-day. Weymouth arrival at 13.25 will not be of interest for day trips.

This will effectively kill off the day tripper market and disadvantage those passengers who do not have access to vehicles and will also effect the business economy of Weymouth

Both 08.54 and 10.56hr trains depart from Westbury at the same time as the Paddington service arrives, eliminating connection from London onto the route.

Please re-consider the obvious connection issues here?

12.56hrs. Discontinuation of direct Bristol to Weymouth service (currently 11.40), replaced by 12.00 Cardiff to Brighton service (already subject to overcrowding) with change after 17 minute wait at Westbury. A very unattractive travel choice, likely to significantly dampen demand. Again departs Westbury at exactly the same time as Paddington arrival, negating connection.

Another example of a serious connection issue which needs resolving

14.56hrs. Again departs Westbury as Paddington service arrives, eliminating connection to the line from London.

As above

16.56hrs. Damages commuting from Yeovil to Weymouth - at least half an hour too late with 14.56 too early as alternative. We need to try and provided at least **one service** that provides a **viable commuting** option for all stations on that section of the line. Departure half an hour earlier would maintain the existing market, departure even earlier could be slightly more attractive than current service

Is there potential to re-time this service

Similar effect to the 08.54, i.e. concentrating **two trainloads** (current 16.40 and 17.40) **onto one train**. The 16.40 in particular is prone to chronic overcrowding year round from Bath to at least Westbury. Key markets: Return from leisure and shopping in Bath (important market along the

entire route). Students from Bath, with major volume down to Bradford on Avon/Trowbridge, but also beyond Westbury as far as Castle Cary (particularly Frome).

Misses connection from Paddington at Westbury by five minutes.

Serious capacity issues and connectivity once again needs addressing

Weymouth to Bristol

05.46hrs: Misses connection to Paddington at Castle Cary by three minutes. Must be restored to current timing i.e. 05.40. Some Weymouth to Dorchester customers might be able to switch to the South West Trains service to Waterloo, but Maiden Newton to Yeovil Pen Mill inclusive do not have even this option.

If not corrected will substantially affect the existing commuter market

Loss of 06.30 departure. Significant impact along entire length of route. This is a key train serving all markets from Weymouth, including long distance and local commuters to Bristol/Bath/Filton Abbey Wood. As just one example, it is currently the single most important train of the day for Frome.

The loss of this service represents a serious blow to the commuter market identified

The current 08.13 train is one of the route's top three or four trains in terms of demand, subject to overcrowding at least from Yeovil. It currently provides the principal local commuting opportunity between Weymouth/Dorchester/Yeovil, and is also the day trip train for leisure and shopping Wiltshire/Bath/Bristol.

Please reinstate this service

11.49 and 13.49 trains both miss Paddington connections at Castle Cary by 2 minutes. Any opportunity to connect to West of England services from Castle Cary departing 26m and 17m earlier? Otherwise we are not aware of any market south of Bristol Temple Meads for which the timings of these mid afternoon trains are particularly crucial.

Please review the connectivity issues identified

15.49hrs. The Weymouth/Dorchester/ Yeovil commuter market, currently served by the 17.16 departure, for which the 17.50 is too late to fully compensate, is not addressed with this service, which runs too early to offer an alternative. A later departure would be needed. Also too early to attract any significant proportion of return day trip custom from Weymouth.

The service has two 'near misses' on connections – the usual two mins at Castle Cary, and an 8 minute 'miss' at Westbury for Paddington

17.50hrs. This would take over from the current 17.15 as probably the single most patronised train on the Bristol to Weymouth line, at least between April and September. 'Most patronised' (without exaggeration) can mean four 'sardine packed' carriages departing Weymouth. If the 15.49 could be moved forward sufficiently to supply a more viable commuter option from Weymouth to Yeovil, this would also help to spread total demand. The need to change at Westbury onto the extremely busy Brighton to Cardiff service (Fridays being particularly severe) would have been a demand dampener, but we now understand that these units will in fact attach to the Brighton to Cardiff train. Capacity, however, is likely to be a major issue on this service, whether or not any other changes are made elsewhere.

The communities of Avoncliff, Freshford, Oldfield Park and Keynsham lose their opportunity for a worthwhile day out in Weymouth. They will not wish to spend an hour at Westbury waiting for the next connection home, particularly if they have young children. Another market that could be saved by a later departure for the 15.49.

This section flags up reservations re capacity and connectivity for the leisure market

Portsmouth to Dilton Marsh

The current local Bristol-Southampton services will largely be curtailed to end at Westbury. At present, these trains provide valuable additional capacity at peak periods for passengers at Dean and Dunbridge. The proposal provides a very much reduced service and will provide a service to get people to work at Southampton but provides no service for them to return home until between 15.25 and 20.20.

This is not acceptable and needs reviewing

Tamar Valley Line and Plymouth/London – first and last trains

The Golden Hind is recognised as being **the** main commuter service for business passengers travelling from Plymouth to London and the proposed changes to services on the TARKA line will completely wipe out connections with the Hind for the early morning and late return connection.

Please reinstate the connections to join the Tarka line with the Golden Hind service

Cornwall issues

There are a wide range of issues affecting services in the Cornwall area which have been brought to our attention and these changes amount to huge reductions in service from those currently enjoyed by passengers in the area and which were the result of many years lobbying by local and national groups. As a result of the re-introduction of these services, passenger numbers have steadily grown and passengers of all ages have relied on the services to take them to and from their respective schools or places of work. Turning the clock back in this way will cause hardship to many of these passengers. The problem areas have been summarised as follows:

Saltash and St Germans

Services halved from 12 trains per day to only six. With a four hour gap in service provision from midday onwards.

Please review this decision

Calstock to Plymouth

Current first train of the day at 06.08 has been axed.

Please reinstate

Looe Branch line

Reduced from current level of 13 trains per day to eight with a later start time and earlier finish time.

Please review and come up with more sensible timings

Newquay Branch line

Scheduled for four trains per day all year round with no indication that there will be a summer increase to the current seven trains per day which run during the main summer months.

Please clarify summer schedules

St Ives Line

The current half hourly winter service was introduced after a very long campaign and formed part of the Community Rail pilot. This is a well used service with growing patronage and which has been hailed as an excellent example of how a Community Rail service should be run. The reduction to an hourly service a day is seen as an extremely retrograde step.

Please reinstate to a half hourly service

Truro to Penzance

The current overcrowded commuter service from Truro at 17.16 to Penzance would appear to have been withdrawn with no services available between 16.24 and 18.04 leaving an unacceptably long gap at the height of the rush hour.

Please rectify this obvious omission in service provision during the peak time for travellers

Truro to Falmouth

Evening peak connections at Truro for Falmouth passengers travelling towards St Austell and Plymouth are unacceptable with almost an hours wait for connections at Truro. This substantially increases commuter travel home time.

Please review these connection times at Truro

Appendix B – Severnside Community Rail Partnership

Commentary on the Greater Western Draft December 2006 Timetable

1. This note sets out the Severnside CRP's comments on the proposals in the draft Greater Western December 2006 timetable circulated on 13 February.

General

2. The consultation document is in two parts – a station-by-station review of the principal changes on Mondays to Fridays, and a complete draft timetable for each service. Unfortunately, the narrative does not always reflect the actual detail in the timetable pages, and in general the narrative presents a slightly rosier picture than the actual timetable. For example at Oldfield Park, Keynsham and Freshford the timetable shows evening peak services are reduced; this is not “comparable with current services” as stated in the narrative. Bridgwater, Highbridge, Weston Milton, Parson St and Bedminster also have 1 less train (and worse service than at present) than the picture presented in the narrative. If the narrative is correct, this is welcome, but the timetable pages then need to be re-issued to reflect this. The timetable pages are taken as the definitive version and the following comments are all based on the tables.

3. The timetable is however only one half of the picture. The timetable has to go hand-in-hand with the provision of an adequate number of train carriages to cater for passengers. If all the peak period local trains in the greater Bristol are actually formed with the correct number of coaches (usually 3 or 4), then generally all passengers can be accommodated, albeit that some may have to stand for short distances, which is acceptable. In practice, because of the continuing and growing shortage of serviceable trains, many peak period Wessex services are now regularly short-formed and consist of only 2 (or sometimes even 1) coach. This means severe overcrowding, with passengers often being left behind, unable to board local trains. **The overcrowding in greater Bristol is now far worse than anything found on FGW Link service in the London area.** So this must be tackled as a priority, and an adequate number of train carriages allocated to the Bristol area for the December 2006 timetable. **In particular the Partnership needs assurance that**

- **there will be no reduction in the passenger seat capacity allocated to the Bristol area local services, and that trains which are currently diagrammed for more than one train unit will not have reduced seating allocation from December**
- **all the Cardiff-Portsmouth trains will continue to be formed of three coach trains, and no two coach trains will be diagrammed for this service**

4. While most morning peak services are (with some exceptions) broadly comparable in number of trains and frequency to the present service, in the evening peak only the basic day-time service is operated to many stations without any increase in services. The only extra evening peak trains appear to be 16.18 and 17.48 from Filton Abbey Wood to Westbury, and the extension of 2 additional HSTs to Weston-super-Mare. This makes it all the more important that extra coaches are provided on the basic service trains.

5. Early morning services have been reduced, as have mid and late evening journeys.

6. Clarification is needed as to what flexibility there is for FGW to make adjustments to the timetable, and what is fixed by DfT. There currently appears to be considerable confusion over this. It is very important that local train services should be responsive to changing, and growing, local needs. In the greater Bristol area the number of passengers using local trains grew by 7% in the last 12 months, compared with forecast growth figures of 1.5% used in the RUS and for other government planning purposes. Indications are that this level of growth is likely to continue.

Comments on the route timetables

Bristol-Weston-Taunton

7. The basic services proposed will be an hourly semi-fast Cheltenham-Taunton train, plus an hourly stopping service Filton Abbey Wood- Weston (which for the first time gives a regular hourly service at Parson St and Bedminster). There will be a half-hourly clock-face service over the Bristol-Weston section northbound, but southbound the departures will be at xx.05 (slow) and xx.48 (semi-fast). **This uneven (roughly 15/45 minute) interval is unsatisfactory and should be re-visited. Once the additional platform at Bristol Parkway is constructed, there should be a commitment to extend these trains to Bristol Parkway** (which will not involve any additional resources).

8. Connections from London services at Bristol are considerably worse than now. **The timings of departures from Bristol TM to Weston/Taunton should be reviewed to see if connections can be improved**

9. At peaks there are additional HSTs. In the morning the 7.40 Highbridge-Cardiff is replaced by a new Highbridge –London HST. While the additional capacity of the HST is very welcome, the short platform means this train will not be able to stop at Worle. In the evening HST services leave Bristol at 16.12, 17.12 and 18.15. Worle again loses out and will only be served by the xx.05 and xx.48 local services, meaning a ¾ hour gap at the height of the peak. Peak service to Weston Milton will be reduced to one train an hour (at 17.05); there are currently 3 trains between 17.00 and 18.00. Parson St and Bedminster, also currently have a half-hourly evening peak service, which will be reduced to hourly. **The peak service frequency needs to be reviewed to give a more balanced spread, and the peak service to Parson St, Bedminster and Weston Milton maintained at least at 2 trains per hour. All peak trains (other than HSTs) should call at all stations**

10. The mid-late evening service from Bristol is bunched and reduced. There will be trains from Bristol at 20.48, 21.00 and 21.13, followed by a gap of just over an hour then a further gap of 90 minutes. There will be no service from London, nor any connection at Temple Meads to the Weston line, between 19.00 and 22.00 from Paddington. The last train from Bristol to Weston Milton will be 21.00 and Worle 22.15 (22.55 at present), thus in effect eliminating the use of the train service for evening trips. **The existing resources should be re-timed to give a better spread of services, and to maintain connections from London. The last local stopping train should retaining its current departure time, call at all stations and give a connection from London**

11. At present, if FGW London-Weston services are running late, the policy is to turn the services short at Bristol, leaving Weston passengers without their train, and to wait for the next local service. The new timetable relies on the capacity provided by the extra HSTs to Weston to cater for local passengers. **It will not be acceptable to turn these trains short at Bristol, and FGW needs to recognise this, and the train supervisors need to be briefed accordingly.** However there is a problem in that these trains are very tightly timed – it is doubtful whether they will actually in practice achieve an xx.12 departure time from Bristol to Weston and the turn-round time at Weston is only 22 minutes. **So there is a significant timetable robustness issue.** At 17.12 there will also be a potential clash of timings with the Virgin service to Plymouth.

Bristol – Gloucester – Cheltenham

12. The service continues to be hourly, but all train will now stop at Cam and Dursley, which is welcome.

13. Southbound the timings will be as now (xx.14 from Gloucester, xx.41 from Yate) apart from the morning peak, where the first train from Gloucester will in future be 06.15 (05.25 at present), and the main peak train, currently 07.29 from Gloucester, will depart 15 minutes earlier, giving a Temple Meads arrival at 08.02. The last train from Gloucester is currently 22.50. In future it will be 21.14.

14. Northbound the Temple Meads departure time continues to be xx.44, but the first train will not arrive in Gloucester until 08.34 (08.02 at present). This has long been a contentious issue. The last train to Yate, Cam and Gloucester is currently 23.13 from Temple Meads. In future it will be 22.00.

15. **The last trains in both directions need to be at least one hour later. An earlier first arrival in Gloucester is necessary. The Worcester trains should be extended to Foregate Street and not terminate at Shrub Hill.** Currently some trains continue to Great Malvern, and this traffic is growing steadily. Given the extended lay-over time at Worcester, the train service could continue to go to Great Malvern at marginal cost. **Retention of the Great Malvern service should be the aim.**

Bristol - Bath - Westbury - Portsmouth/Weymouth

16. The basic Cardiff- Portsmouth service continues broadly as now, on similar timings, with all trains stopping at Filton Abbey Wood and most continuing to Cardiff Airport (Rhoose). Weymouth services will be 2 hourly (but some will start from Westbury, with a connection to/from Bristol). We are concerned that the proposed 2 hourly interval to Weymouth does not reflect the traffic requirements of the route. **It is important that the current facility of services timed suitably for day return traffic to Weymouth is retained. The current local Bristol-Southampton services** will largely be curtailed to end at Westbury. At present, these trains **provide valuable additional capacity at peak periods and the effect of their removal on the loadings of the Portsmouth services needs to be re-visited.**

Southbound

17. Portsmouth trains will leave Temple Meads at xx.22, as now and with the same stops. The local Westbury service will leave at xx.56 (xx.40 at present) and continue to call at Keynsham, Oldfield Park, Bath, Freshford and stations to Westbury/Weymouth. However the Brighton through service will run at 12.56, but will not call at local stations, producing a 2 hour gap. **This conflicts with statements from Ministers that the service at local stations would be hourly. The 2 hour gaps need to be filled by additional local services**

18. The first southbound train is currently 05.42. It is this early because it conveys empty stock from Cardiff to Bristol and Westbury to form the main services. In future FGW intends to maintain trains at Bristol, rather than Cardiff, which is very welcome, and as a result the first train will be put back to 06.10. **To cater for Keynsham –Bath commuters the 8.22 from Bristol to Portsmouth should continue to call additionally at Keynsham at 8.28.**

19. In the evening peak period, under the new timetable the local trains will leave Temple Meads at 15.56, 16.36, 16.56, 17.56, 18.06 18.56 (with Portsmouth services at xx.22, the 17.22 stopping additionally, as now, at Oldfield Park). The gap between 16.56 and 17.56 will have a considerable adverse affect on local commuters – at present their trains in the high peak are 16.40, 17.08, 17.40, 18.07. **A local train needs to be provided at about 17.30 from Bristol; this could be achieved, without any additional resource, by retiming the 17.48 from Filton Abbey Wood to run half an hour earlier.**

20. The mid-late evening trains from Temple Meads are currently 20.22 (Portsmouth), 20.50 (Weymouth), 21.56 (Portsmouth), 22.25 (SWT Salisbury), 23.10 (Westbury). Under the new timetable they will depart 20.22 (Portsmouth), 20.56 (Weymouth), 21.22 (Portsmouth), 22.54 (Westbury). We do not know whether the SWT service will continue – it is proposed for withdrawal as part of the SWT re-franchising. **The mid/late evening service pattern needs to be revisited to give a better spread and a later last train; and after mid-evening all trains should call at all stations**

Northbound

21. Morning peak. At present there are 7 Wessex arrivals into Temple Meads before 09.30, plus one SWT service and one train which runs direct to Filton Abbey Wood avoiding Temple Meads. The first train from Oldfield Park is currently 06.16 (06.24 at Keynsham). The new timetable alters the current departure times, but the spread is reasonable. (First train 06.31 Oldfield Park) 7 trains continue to arrive at Temple Meads before 09.30, but the direct service to Filton Abbey Wood is lost. So in total there is one train less. The SWT train is not shown, and is proposed for withdrawal under the SWT refranchising. Under the new timetable all trains up to 09.30 will stop at all stations from Westbury, which is helpful. **Assurance is needed that the rolling stock allocated to the peak service will be adequate to cater for the number of passengers.**

22. There is a 2 hour mid-day gap at Freshford, Oldfield Park and Keynsham towards Bristol (because the train from Brighton will no longer call at local stations.). **The gap needs to be filled** (see para 16 above). There are no extra evening peak services (as now).

23. In the late evening, the last stopping train will leave Westbury at 21.29 for Bristol (22.18 at present). There will be a train from Portsmouth half an hour later, but this will not call at local stations. This will mean Keynsham residents will no longer be able to travel by train for an evening out in Bath. **The last train from Portsmouth should call additionally at Bradford-on-Avon, Oldfield Park and Keynsham.**

Bristol to Cardiff

24. The Portsmouth line service will call hourly at Filton Abbey Wood and Newport (and be extended to Cardiff Airport Rhoose), leaving Temple Meads at xx.54.

The service from Weymouth/Westbury will go forward from Temple Meads hourly at xx.24 and call at Filton Abbey Wood, Patchway, Severn Tunnel Junction and Newport.

25. From Cardiff, Portsmouth trains will continue as now to leave at xx.30 with the Westbury/Weymouth stopping train leaving at xx.00

26. On the December 2006 timetable the first train to Cardiff (and Rhoose) will leave Temple Meads at 05.54 (06.30 at present). The last train will leave Temple Meads at 22.54 (23.17 at present); this train will no longer call at Patchway, for where the last train will leave Temple Meads at 21.24. This considerably reduces the attractiveness of the train for evenings out. **Mid-late evening trains to Cardiff should call at all stations. The last train should leave Bristol no earlier than 23.00.**

27. Going towards Temple Meads, the first train from Patchway is currently 06.37. Under the new timetable this train will no longer run and the first service from Patchway will be 7.38. **The earlier train at 06.38 from Patchway should be maintained.** The hourly service will run from Patchway until 20.38, with a last train at 22.38. At present the hourly service finishes at 18.38 with later trains at 21.38 and 23.43.

28. There is no mention either in the narrative or the timetable of any service calling at Pilning. **The status of Pilning needs to be clarified**

Severn Beach

29. The number of trains will remain the same as now, but there will be considerable changes to the timings.

30. The hourly pattern continues but in the morning the departure times from Avonmouth - at present 06.20, 07.30 and 08.36 - are changed to 06.48, 07.48 and 08.48 then hourly until 16.48 then 18.05, 19.20, 20.35 and 22.05. Only the first train and those in the evening will start from Severn Beach – the first 2 currently start there, so an extra connecting bus to Avonmouth will be necessary. **The funding of this needs to be clarified – is it part of the Franchise specification?**

31. From Bristol, services will run at 06.02 (to Severn Beach) then 07.20 and hourly until 16.20 to Avonmouth, then 17.20, 18.35, 19.50 and 21.20 to Severn Beach. Currently daytime service usually leave Temple Meads at xx.31.

32. The proposed departure time from Temple Meads of xx.20 is not deliverable, as this would cause delay to the following xx.24 to Cardiff and xx.28 Virgin. **Given the fragility of the school traffic on this line, and the potential for growth to serve new office developments at Temple Meads there ought to be a further consultation with passengers on the effect of revised timings**

Services from Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road to Filton Abbey Wood

31. There are currently 2 services from Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road in the morning peak to Filton AW and one in the evening. The new timetable proposes 3 from Lawrence Hill and 5 from Stapleton Road. In the evening peak there is currently one service, but this would not continue.

32. From Filton Abbey Wood there are currently 3 trains in the morning peak which stop at Stapleton Road and Lawrence Hill, 2 in the middle of the day and 3 in the evening peak (one of which does not call at Lawrence Hill, but it can be reached by changing at Stapleton Road to the following train from Avonmouth!). The new timetable proposes 4 trains in the evening peak only (with 2 trains omitting Lawrence Hill).

33. **The stations at Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road are located in an area of social deprivation, where ease of access to jobs and education is a priority task. It would greatly facilitate this, and encourage social inclusivity and mobility if the hourly Weston – Filton Abbey Wood trains called additionally at Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road.**

Bristol – London

34. Train services from Paddington are broadly as now to both Parkway and Temple Meads. The main change is in the late evening; the half hourly pattern on both routes will end at 20.00 (Temple Meads) and 20.15 (Parkway). There will then be a gap until 21.00, which will cause overcrowding. **This evening gap from Paddington needs to be filled.**

35. From Temple Meads the current xx.00 and xx.30 clock-face pattern of departures will be replaced by departures at xx.05 (xx.07 some hours) and xx.33 (occasionally xx.30). This is a retrograde step. **Can this please be re-visited?** The fast morning peak service (07.30 from Temple Meads) which currently runs non-stop from Swindon will now call additionally at Didcot and Reading, and accordingly will take longer. From Parkway the present pattern of xx.00 and xx.30 departure will continue.

Sevenside Community Rail Partnership

2 March 2006. Keith Walton, Chairman, 077 400 47812

Appendix C – response from North Devon Rail User Group

Tarka Line - Barnstaple and North Devon issues

By way of background, we would point out that use of the line has increased by 26% over the last five years with a 4.2% increase in 2004-5 alone to 250,000 passengers. The recent Winter Sale promotion has demonstrated beyond all doubt that there is a huge potential market in “Greater” Barnstaple waiting to be exploited and also that the Barnstaple area is an attractive destination for residents living elsewhere in Devon. Add to that the fact that there is no effective end to end bus competition and it will be seen that not only is the line an essential communication corridor, but has great potential to attract ever increasing use especially if an attractive fares package can also be agreed.

The following comments are written without prejudice to our view that in order to be really successful, the Tarka Line warrants an hourly daytime service.

As a starting point therefore, we considered the proposed reduction in the number of trains from 12 to 11 each way. We would observe that all the evidence suggests that this level of service continues to be successful in increasing passenger numbers. Any reduction would, of course, be likely to have the opposite effect. Careful examination of the draft timetable would indicate that the existing service of 12 trains each way could be maintained at no additional cost having regard to the proposed extended layover times at Barnstaple, even taking into account the additional fuel that would be consumed. The statement accompanying the Timetable Consultation is, we believe, erroneous in stating that no additional trains can be run. Whilst accepting that this does apply on the main routes out of Paddington, there is no restriction on running additional services in the West Country, especially on (proposed) Community Railway lines.

A Therefore we would ask that a service of 12 trains each way should be provided, albeit we accept that the standard pattern of departures may need to differ in order to improve and/or maintain connections at Exeter St Davids.

Turning now to the Consultation Draft Timetable, our first major concern relates to the morning train timed to depart Barnstaple at 0635 and which would connect with the up Golden Hind for which there is little, if any, demand. This totally ignores the needs of the majority of users who work in Exeter (including locations such as served by Digby and Sowton Station). Whilst it is true to say that there is a demand for two early morning trains, a considerable amount of effort and negotiation has been carried out to achieve the present service which arrives in good time to enable people to reach their places of work in the City Centre. Since the introduction of the current timetable usage has increased, not least by students attending Exeter College. For many passengers the timing of this train is crucially important.

B Therefore we ask that the morning train should be re-timed to give an arrival at Exeter St Davids and Central between 0815 and 0830 and that the train should (as currently proposed) continue to Exmouth in order to serve Digby & Sowton.

The Franchise specified an hourly peak service. Whilst one train may meet most needs in the morning, the afternoon/evening peak is more spread out (shoppers, students and people leaving work at different times. The proposed evening train serving intermediate stations does not meet those needs nor the franchise specification.

C Therefore, we consider that an afternoon service departing from Exeter Central between 1630 and 1650 should serve intermediate stations between Exeter and Barnstaple.

The erstwhile PSR specified that all trains from Barnstaple should serve Exeter Central and with very good reason. Approximately 2/3 of journeys and income are generated by passengers travelling between stations on the line (Barnstaple and Exeter Central) and not making connections with other rail services. From Barnstaple 53.5% of journeys are made to Exeter Central, compared with just 6.2% to St Davids. Next comes London BR (ie to both Paddington and Waterloo) 5.6%, followed by Bristol at 2.4%. It will be seen therefore that Exeter Central is crucial not only to existing passengers but also to potential growth in business, especially in the light of the fact that Central Station is in the heart of the City which is currently seeing a major redevelopment and expansion of the shopping and other facilities. It is interesting also to note that the proportion of through journeys to Exmouth increases to 7% of the total during the summer months.

D Therefore we insist that all trains should serve Exeter Central (*although we would have no objection to evening trains terminating at St Davids provided there is a reasonable connection to Exeter Central within approximately 10 minutes*).

Recent discussions with North Devon District Council and North Devon District Hospital have shown that there is a latent demand for greater peak hour use at the Barnstaple end of the line. Thus there is satisfaction at the proposed 0830 arrival shown in the draft timetable. The catchment area for Barnstaple extends broadly to Eggesford, and so with any adjustment of the first up train to Exeter, it may be necessary to revert to the practice of a few years ago in holding the down train for 15 minutes or so to give a convenient arrival time at Barnstaple. Similarly a departure from Barnstaple at approximately 1745 would be attractive to potential users.

E Therefore we request that the proposed 0830 arrival at Barnstaple is retained and that an afternoon departure at approximately 1745 be provided.

Considerable research by NDRUG resulted in the publication of a document entitled "Securing the Future". This can be viewed on NDRUG's web-site (ndrailusers.wikispaces.com) and considered the need for a reasonably fast service to make it more attractive for people in the Barnstaple area whilst at the same time providing a reasonable timetable to enable the line to serve its social role for the communities along its length. In order to do this five intermediate stations (Umberleigh, Eggesford,

Copplestone, Yeoford [because of its isolated location] and Crediton) were identified as railheads at which all off peak services would be concentrated and improvements to facilities (eg car parking) would be made.

The railhead concept was endorsed by both Wessex Trains and the ExeRail Partnership. The current timetable is based upon those principles, although the lack of sufficient rolling stock combined with infrastructure constraints means that Copplestone and Yeoford have very long afternoon gaps in service which makes successful marketing very difficult. All trains, all week call at Umberleigh. Consequently this has been a success story with usage showing steady upward growth since the current service was introduced.

F Therefore we request that all trains continue to call at Umberleigh and also progress be made towards stopping all trains at Copplestone and Yeoford beyond what is currently achieved even if this means initially adopting a skip-stop policy in respect of these two stations.

Whether or not it is possible to continue with a 12 trains per day service, there is a need for a departure from Barnstaple at around 1000. If there are only 11 trains per day, we believe that it would be preferable to have a 0944 departure instead of the proposed 1545.

G Therefore, we request that a train departing Barnstaple between 0940 and 1000 and calling at the railhead stations should be provided.

The evening service has been developed over the years to meet the needs of passengers either returning from longer journeys, longer working days, late night shopping etc. It also recognises the Rail Ale Trail.

H Therefore we request the opportunity to discuss, in detail, stopping patterns for evening services based on local knowledge and known demand.

It has long been recognised that the last train from Exeter to Barnstaple leaves too early – indeed the draft Timetable makes it even earlier than at present. This means that passengers are lost to Tiverton Parkway or Taunton because they cannot return from business and leisure trips in time to connect with the last Barnstaple train. This may be because of, for example, the length of the business day or ticket restrictions. Neither can the railway fulfil its social as well as commercial role in adequately serving the communities along its length in that it is not possible to use the train for leisure activities such as theatre or cinema visits in Exeter.

J Therefore, we seek a later last train, ideally to permit an evening out. If this cannot be achieved in the short term the last train should be timed to connect with services from the Bristol, Plymouth and Salisbury directions as well as Paddington, so as to maximise use and journey opportunities.

(NB for the longer term we hope that appropriate facilities can be provided at Barnstaple to facilitate overnight berthing thereby eliminating what are effectively empty trains to and from Exeter early morning and during the evening. This would then make all twelve (or

even more importantly all eleven) journeys operate at times convenient to passengers and therefore be more productive.)

K We wish to be assured that the Saturday service will be the same as the Monday – Friday service (as is the present case) and that the number and pattern of Sunday trains remains the same, albeit with consideration being given to the provision of an additional morning service to meet demand.



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