



Passenger Group

Promoting Britain's  
Railway  
for Passengers  
and Freight

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25<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Dear Sirs,

#### Great Western Franchise Specification Consultation

Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation structured in England as twelve regional branches, and two national branches in Wales and Scotland. We are completely independent of all political parties, trades unions and commercial interests, funded almost entirely from our membership. We campaign for improved rail services for passengers and freight. Whilst pro-rail, we are not anti-car or aviation.

We are delighted to be able to respond to this consultation. The response is the result of feedback from our seven branches within the GW franchise area plus input from members of the Passenger Group and the Infrastructure and Networks Group.

We have responded to all of the 22 questions as they appeared in Appendix 1 of the Consultation document. For ease of reference each question is reproduced in bold type. Our response is attached at Annex A.

We trust you will find our views of use. If you should have any further questions or wish for clarification of any our points raised please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

*NBray*

Nigel Bray  
Railfuture  
GW TOC Liaison  
for Head of Passenger Group

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**1. Respondents are encouraged to consider whether any additional objectives should be reflected in the franchise specification for the five year period from 2015.**

Objectives should include a modal shift from road to rail; better interchange with other modes (see Q7) and with other TOCs services in the spirit of DfT's Door to Door Strategy; achieving the Seven Day Railway, if necessary by negotiation with Network Rail to amend the Rules of the Route; accelerating the delivery of rail enhancement schemes, particularly those being proposed by Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The whole journey experience is vital for passengers. The operator should, where applicable, be required to take over responsibility for integration of connecting bus services, ensuring that these always respond to out-of-course running of trains. Examples include the X8 Kingham station- Chipping Norton and the C1 from Charlbury station.

A more integrated approach to services on the South Wales main line with Arriva Trains Wales is needed to improve connections, e.g. between FGW and the Heart of Wales and West Wales lines at Swansea. The present westbound pattern of services in South Wales, i.e. FGW and ATW trains leaving Cardiff for Swansea within 5-15 minutes followed by a 45-55 minute gap, needs to be revised. Reliable connections are needed from FGW into the last ATW services to all South Wales destinations. Timekeeping of FGW services in South Wales needs to improve because of the effect on local train services.

**2. Respondents are encouraged to consider and identify any specific local factors that they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand, which should be reflected in the specification for the new franchise.**

Expected population growth at certain locations would justify more frequent services of higher quality than at present. Gloucester's population is forecast to rise from 112,000 in 2011 to 153,000 by 2030 yet it has few fast trains to Bristol. Worcester (pop. 85,000) is a major centre of tourism but arguably has few fast trains in any direction. We therefore propose a Worcester- Bristol semi-fast service calling at Ashchurch for Tewkesbury (see next paragraph), Cheltenham, Gloucester and Bristol Parkway, supplementing the existing two-hourly local service to give Worcester an hourly train to Bristol.

Existing and proposed housing developments would support new or reopened stations at Chineham, between Basingstoke and Bramley; North Filton and Henbury; and Hunts Grove, south of Gloucester. Plans for redevelopment of military land for housing would justify more frequent calls at Ashchurch for Tewkesbury and a new station at Wilton.

Significant housing and employment growth is planned for Oxfordshire. Key stations will and could provide important links (e.g. via high quality bus services) to these locations and will require additional or retimed services. Examples include Culham for the Oxfordshire Science Vale; and Hanborough for West Oxfordshire.

The growth and dispersal of higher education has created new flows which rail could serve. Bath Spa University has written to Bath & North East Somerset Council calling for reopening of Salford station. This university has an outbase at Corsham (see Q3).

The present five-car morning commuter trains towards Bristol from South Wales are full and standing but can just fit the present platform length at Filton Abbey Wood. If the new suburban electric stock can only be configured in three, four or six-car formations, either the platforms will have to be lengthened or additional services will be needed in the high peak.

**3. Respondents are encouraged to highlight interfaces with any other schemes that are likely to be delivered during the next five years, which the operator may need to consider.**

GW electrification to Oxford, Newbury, Basingstoke and the Thames Valley Branches will displace most of the Class 165 and 166 trains currently used in the London and Reading areas. They ought to replace Pacers and 150s on GW West services, which for too long have been the repository for outdated, uncomfortable rolling stock.

GW main line electrification would provide an opportunity for electrified local or semi-fast services in the Swansea - Bristol - Swindon - Oxford corridor. An electric Bristol - Oxford service would create another incentive to reopen stations such as Corsham, Royal Wootton Bassett and Wantage. Another opportunity is to expand South East Wales Metro services on the

relief lines between Cardiff and Severn Tunnel Junction with new stations at St. Mellons, Coedkernow, Llanwern and Magor & Undy.

Evergreen 3 (Oxford- Bicester- London Marylebone) and the Electric Spine (including East West Rail western section) will create a wide range of journey opportunities from connections with GW services at Oxford, e.g. a shorter route between Western England and Buckinghamshire or the East Midlands (see also Q14). Extension of East West services to Reading, Swindon, Bristol and Westbury should be considered.

Metro West Phase 1, including reopening of the Portishead line, is due for completion in 2019. This expansion of Bristol's suburban network requires better rolling stock, such as Class 165s and 166s. Utilising early Sprinter vehicles from London Midland or the Cardiff Valleys would diminish the appeal of more frequent services.

Resignalling in Cornwall will permit a considerable increase in frequency, including a main line local service of two trains per hour. An approximately hourly service on the Newquay branch, timed to suit connections at Par, could assist travel to/from Newquay Airport, which has assumed greater importance now that Plymouth Airport has closed.

Okehampton Park and Ride, supported by the Dartmoor National Park Authority, would make a case for weekday operation of the Exeter - Okehampton service, which currently runs only on Summer Sundays.

**4. Respondents are invited to identify any changes or reorganisation to the routes served by the GW franchise that they would recommend; and to explain their rationale.**

The Cardiff- Taunton service should be reformed as a Cardiff - Exeter semi-fast service to give Bridgwater (pop. 36,000) and Highbridge & Burnham more attractive journey times to Bristol. This would also permit reopening of Wellington and Cullompton stations, which is being considered by Somerset and Devon County Councils. Wellington (pop. 14,000) is the largest town on the Paddington- Penzance main line without a station. The underlying aim is a hierarchy of services on main lines with the emphasis on faster trains from stations further from the cities involved, i.e. Cross Country services non stop Taunton to Bristol Temple Meads; semi-fast Exeter to Cardiff; all stations Weston-super-Mare to Bristol Parkway. Rather than make the present Cardiff- Taunton service even slower with more stops at Bedminster and Parson Street, these two stations could have a half-hourly service by calling alternate Portishead trains each hour, supplementing the hourly Bristol Parkway- Weston stoppers.

Oxford and Stratford-upon-Avon are key linked tourist destinations. With East West Rail and the planned western link to Heathrow Airport, more tourists will go by train from the airport to Oxford. It would be helpful to have direct services from Oxford to Stratford. In the short term, this would best be achieved by extension of Oxford - Banbury local trains to Stratford.

The existing hourly Paddington- Cardiff service should be extended to Carmarthen via the Swansea District Line, thus providing half-hourly expresses from Port Talbot, Bridgend, Cardiff and Newport to principal stations between Bristol Parkway and London. This should run seven days a week instead of the present five and will provide better connectivity for West Wales where at present journey times are slow west of Swansea. HSTs will be needed to achieve this unless and until the GW IEP fleet is increased (see Q9).

Work to electrify the Cardiff Valleys network will begin after GW main line electrification to Cardiff in 2017. This will truncate the Maesteg - Cheltenham service operated by Arriva Trains Wales, resulting in its Cardiff- Cheltenham leg remaining diesel worked. Cardiff - Cheltenham should be transferred to the GW franchise, using more modern stock based at Bristol, and possibly extended to Worcester. This should be coordinated with the Cardiff - Nottingham Cross Country service to provide half-hourly trains between Cardiff and Cheltenham. A new Lydney - Bristol morning and evening commuter service, using the reversing facilities provided at Severn Tunnel Junction under the recent Newport Area Resignalling, would reduce road commuting to Bristol.

Devon Metro is likely to develop during the period of the Direct Award. Newcourt station on the Exmouth branch may open by 2015. The planned new station at Cranbrook, on the SWT Exeter - Waterloo route, would justify a new local service eastwards from Exeter. Extension of such a service to Yeovil Pen Mill would link with the Bristol- Weymouth line and could utilise GW rolling stock.

The Cardiff - Portsmouth stopping pattern favours short local journeys at the expense of long distance. Trains are often full and standing, making it difficult for refreshment trolleys to operate. Three-car Class 158s do not have enough capacity to serve the numerous travel along the route, which needs a mix of limited stop, semi-fast and local stopping services.

Our members report the 08.59 Brighton- Great Malvern service is often overcrowded between Salisbury and Bristol, a journey of over an hour. Although not classed as InterCity, Cardiff - Portsmouth serves seven cities (11 if the Great Malvern - Brighton services are included) and many important interchanges. Consideration should be given to using HSTs or Class 180s after the introduction of IEPs on Inter-City routes.

Dean and Mottisfont & Dunbridge stations are served only by South West Trains but are still managed by FGW, a legacy of the Regional Railways era. They should be transferred to the South Western franchise, along with Romsey, which has more SWT than GW services and a close affinity with Southampton.

**5. Respondents who wish to promote service changes should clearly identify these in their response to this consultation, as well as any supporting business case or value for money analysis.**

Kilbride Community Rail has made a business case for reopening the Bere Alston - Tavistock line to restore services between Tavistock and Plymouth. Our proposed semi-fast services Worcester - Gloucester- Bristol (Q2) and Cardiff- Exeter (Q4) are in tune with Network Rail's Regional Urban Market Study (see Q6), which concluded that regional rail commuter journeys need to be under an hour in order to attract significant numbers of passengers.

Wiltshire LEP is making a business case for electrification from Newbury to Westbury and Bathampton Junction (see Q11). This would not only release diesel sets for use elsewhere on the GW system but provide an electrified diversionary route between London and Bristol.

Bristol-Weymouth needs to be developed as a strategic route between the South Coast and Mid Western England. An hourly service, with alternate trains omitting the smaller stations, would benefit the regional economy for commuting (e.g. into Yeovil, see Q12) and tourism. Commuting and tourism would also benefit from regular direct trains between Paignton, Plymouth and Cornwall via Newton Abbot.

**6. Respondents are encouraged to bring to our attention research, evidence or publications which they believe should be considered in the development of the franchise specification.**

- Network Rail Market Studies: Long Distance, London & South East, Regional Urban, 2013.
- Railfuture Wales Rail Development Plan, 2014.
- *The Main Line they shouldn't ignore*, (a study of the South Wales - South Coast route), Rail Passenger Committee for Western England, 2004.
- Office of Rail Regulation Station Usage Files, 1997/98 to 2012/13.
- G. Duddridge, article on Dawlish resilience in *Railwatch*, July 2014.
- S.P. Blainey and J.M. Preston, *Assessing the potential performance of new local railway stations*, Association of European Transport technical paper, 2009.
- S.P. Blainey, *Forecasting the use of new local railway stations using GIS*, thesis for PhD, University of Southampton, 2009.
- S.P. Blainey, *Catchment areas and abstraction for British railway stations*, Transport Research Group, University of Southampton, 2011.
- Steer, Davies & Gleave, *Station Usage and Demand Forecast for newly opened railway lines and stations*, Final Report for DfT, 2010.

**7. Respondents are invited to propose any changes to the current service pattern which they feel should be considered and explain their rationale, for example by identifying specific local factors which might influence the future level of passenger demand which they consider should be reflected in a revised specification.**

Service and stopping patterns need to be based on usage and potential growth, not the existing specification. 19 stops at Severn Tunnel Junction have been estimated by the local user group to be carrying 50 % of commuters at the station despite not being in the existing specification. The ORR Station Usage Files (Q6) show trends in patronage since 1997.

Creating more parking spaces, especially at rural stations, will significantly increase loadings. Cam & Dursley station has an hourly service for most of the day but its car park is often full by 08.00. Ashchurch for Tewkesbury has free parking for rail users but they are sometimes squeezed out by long stay parking by groups of motorists who meet there to share cars. There may be a sizeable additional market for rail which is frustrated by difficulty in accessing stations. Chiltern Railways has added upper decks to car parks at Banbury, Bicester North, Haddenham & Thame Parkway and Warwick Parkway; FGW has done so at Bristol Parkway. Where there is a charge for parking, it should be set at a level which would not deter rail commuting to the main local centres of employment, i.e. the proportion of parking charge to rail fare needs to be considered carefully, particularly for shorter journeys. Discounted parking charges should be offered to season ticket and Local Railcard holders.

There is still much work to do in terms of bus/rail integration. Filton Abbey Wood is well served by trains but very few bus routes in the main road stop within 600 metres of the station. Bus connections advertised in pocket timetables, e.g. Bedwyn - Marlborough, should be maintained and be held if possible during disruption of train services.

First and last trains on each route need to be specified and be no worse than today. Sunday services should be enhanced to reflect increased retail, leisure and sporting activities since the GW franchise was created. A later evening train from London to Plymouth would improve connectivity between the South East and the far South West. Currently there is no service Mondays to Fridays between 20.35 Paddington and the overnight sleeper.

The proposed off-peak IEP frequencies for the North Cotswold Line (1 tph) and electric multiple units (EMUs) between Oxford and London (2 tph) are generally supported. However, the North Cotswold Line is made much less attractive by the early last train from Paddington at 21.45. There should be a last train at around 23.00, at least as far as Worcester Shrub Hill. We endorse the proposal that current Slough stops on the hourly North Cotswolds be dropped but would propose a Slough stop in the planned Westbury semi-fast trains to provide improved connectivity along Berkshire's spine.

In keeping with the international importance of Oxford to economic development and technology, it is vital that the EMUs proposed for its fast services are of high quality and capable of speeds of at least 110 mph, creating a good passenger experience.

At certain times of the day on trains leaving Paddington, passengers for destinations on the North Cotswold Line with only 1 tph can be unable to find a seat because of large numbers of passengers going only as far as Reading. Not advertising the Reading stop on these services at Paddington might be considered as an option to address this.

Shipton, Ascott-under-Wychwood, Finstock and Combe have only one train each way daily, which is therefore only attractive to passengers with very specific working hours in Oxford. Consideration should be given to at least additional peak hour services Mondays to Fridays and more leisure services at weekends.

**8. Respondents are invited to say whether they value a faster headline journey time, or more intermediate stops, on a particular journey that they make (and to identify that journey).**

The benefits of faster headline journey times may be diluted if the actual service is not frequent. A passenger who has just missed a very fast two-hourly train might well prefer a slightly slower but hourly service. This is also true of inner (but less so for outer) suburban services, where a half-hourly frequency is an attractive alternative to travelling on congested city roads.

A Plymouth- Paddington journey of under three hours is a legitimate aspiration, but so are regular stops at intermediate stations serving sizeable rural catchment areas or which, as at Westbury, are important interchanges between routes. The solution is to have a hierarchy of GW train services, connecting into/out of each other, to cater for these different markets. On the Reading- Exeter section of route these would be (i) Paddington- Plymouth/Penzance expresses, generally non stop between Reading and Taunton; (ii) Paddington- Exeter semi-fasts, some of which might extend to Paignton, calling at stations such as Newbury, Hungerford, Pewsey, Westbury, Frome, Castle Cary, Taunton and Tiverton Parkway; (iii) local trains such as Reading- Newbury all stations.

There is a time penalty for fast Plymouth and Penzance services if calling at Westbury because of the 40 mph speed restriction at Fairwood Junction. If line speed over the junction into Westbury could be raised to 70 mph, some of these services could call there without unduly lengthening journey times.

The proposed IEP stopping pattern on the North Cotswold Line and Oxford-Paddington fast services is an appropriate balance between journey times and stations served.

There are aspirations in South Wales for faster trains to London but we would oppose the elimination of stops at Bristol Parkway to achieve this. Apart from having a large and populous catchment area of its own and being a major local transport hub, Bristol Parkway also provides connections between South Wales and Cross Country services to/from the North East and Scotland. The only alternative solution would be semi-fast trains Swansea - Bristol and Swansea - Birmingham.

We would advise against omission of Reading stops to achieve marginally faster end-to-end journeys, as has happened with 17.42 Paddington - Cheltenham. Reading is the largest hub in the GW network in terms of interchange between routes and offers enormous scope for inter-regional travel avoiding London.

**9. Should any elements of the indicative modelled InterCity service pattern be mandated and can it be improved? What should be the priority for InterCity services where IEP trains are not planned to operate?**

It is difficult to comment when the model is shown only for weekdays and without the actual timetable of trains, their stopping points and available connections. We support mandating the proposed clock face pattern in fig. 7.1 as a *minimum* and propose a number of enhancements in the following paragraphs.

High density IEPs should be used for peak hour Bristol and South Wales (from Swansea) commuting in the same way as HSTs currently provide capacity in the Taunton - Bristol corridor and from Bath Spa and Keynsham on the 06.30 Paddington. If sufficient rolling stock can be obtained, it should be possible to introduce hourly Paddington - Cheltenham services ahead of the IEP hourly service because the Swindon-Kemble redoubling is due for completion in September 2014.

The proposed hourly IEP between Paddington and Worcester is a significant improvement on the existing service which, despite the redoubling of much of the North Cotswold Line, has gaps of more than an hour in the schedules, often resulting in poor connections at Worcester. We would like to see more through trains between Hereford and Paddington. At present many Hereford passengers take the more expensive route to Paddington via Newport because of gaps in the service via Worcester.

For non-IEP routes, the priority should be to maintain journey times (if necessary, through improved same platform/cross platform connections). There is concern that journeys from west of Cardiff will take longer after electrification because of the proposed IEP stopping pattern omitting calls at Bristol Parkway, Swindon and Didcot. This could reduce the opportunities for travel between South Wales and Swindon or Didcot from the present half-hourly to hourly. The Summer Saturday direct service between London and Pembroke Dock should be retained (if necessary using an HST) as it assists the tourist economy of West Wales and supplements the sparse daily service between London and Carmarthen. HSTs should be considered for a high capacity Swansea-West of England service, which is needed especially on Summer Saturdays.

HSTs will be needed for services between Paddington, Plymouth and Cornwall. Some of the HSTs displaced by electrification should be used to expand the Paddington - Exeter semi-fast service to hourly (see Q8). Class 180s displaced by IEPs from the Paddington - Worcester/Hereford route could provide much needed additional capacity on prime regional routes such as Cardiff-Portsmouth (see Q5).

Services have in the past been reduced when longer diversions take place for Engineering work especially at weekends because of the lack of availability of staff and rolling stock. We are concerned that work between Bristol Parkway and Severn Tunnel Junction could result in service reductions in South Wales. There could be insufficient diesel powered IEPs to maintain a half-hourly service and adequate seating capacity between London and South Wales when diversions via Gloucester are required. Swindon - Gloucester/Cheltenham - Severn Tunnel Junction should be a priority for electrification after the current GW electrification scheme is completed.

The Paddington-Penzance overnight service should be upgraded by extending the order for the new trains with en suite facilities which will be built for the Caledonian Sleeper franchise. The viability of the service could be increased by broadening its traffic base to include parcels and mails (see Q22).

**10. What do you feel the GW operator's priorities on the suburban network should be once it is electrified in 2016, e.g. for additional higher capacity, fast commuter services, or improved journey times?**

Higher capacity is the key priority. We support maintaining as a minimum 2 tph off-peak outer suburban (Oxford, Radley, Didcot, all stations to Maidenhead, Slough, Hayes, Ealing Broadway) overlaid on Crossrail and/or eight-car trains, with 12-car formations in the peaks; also in the peaks, 12-car Oxford - Paddington calling at Didcot, Reading and Slough to provide much needed extra capacity. Passengers from west of Reading should not have to change onto Crossrail trains (which will have mainly standing accommodation and no toilets) to reach intermediate stations; passengers from stations Reading to Slough inclusive should have the option of faster and more comfortable services to Paddington. Some of the main line suburban stations (e.g. Slough and Ealing Broadway) are themselves major commuter destinations and should not have to rely mainly or entirely on Crossrail. Fast direct peak hour trains from Henley and Bourne End to Paddington should be retained. Longer trains would improve capacity if frequencies cannot be increased.

A fifth running line into Paddington would accommodate additional trains in the peak hours. This would utilise platforms which will become spare when many GW suburban services become part of Crossrail. These platforms would stable the additional trains until the morning and evening peaks are finished because there would not be spare paths to send them in or out during the peaks.

Truncation of the Greenford branch service at West Ealing will result in an additional change for some passengers, although connections into Crossrail will be available at West Ealing. There is a case for transferring the route to the Chiltern franchise and extending it to South Ruislip. Whether operated by Chiltern, FGW or London Overground, the Greenford line needs more frequent trains and upgraded stations as have been provided on London Overground routes.

The North Downs route needs an extra hourly service to Gatwick stopping at most stations; and acceleration of the all stations Reading- Redhill services.

Current plans post-electrification appear to retain Basingstoke-Reading as a local shuttle. Given the current and anticipated congestion on the SWT main line to Waterloo with few plans to resolve it, we believe that the new electric service might be extended to Paddington by combining with Newbury trains at Reading. When the western link to Heathrow is built it would allow a much easier journey for workers and air passengers; it could become a direct destination for the Basingstoke - Reading line, opening up easier access to the airport for a wide area of southern central England.

There should be a new build of electric multiple unit (EMU) stock capable of 110 mph to ensure that there are no delays to long-distance trains, especially when the relief lines are out of use for maintenance purposes.

**11. After the electrification to Newbury, expected in 2016, would passengers' needs be best served by a diesel service from Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury to Newbury connecting into a fast service to Paddington, or a diesel stopping service from Bedwyn to Reading, or other options?**

Through services to Reading would seem to be the best option because Newbury station lacks step free access between platforms. It also lacks a west facing bay, so that a Bedwyn - Newbury shuttle would have to reverse in the main platforms. A through train might well have reached Reading by the time Bedwyn passengers had detrained and boarded their onward connection. Experience elsewhere suggests that truncation of train services resulting in an additional change can lead to a large fall in usage, as happened on the Rhymney - Bargoed section of the Cardiff Valleys in the early 1980s.

Until the line west of Newbury is electrified, the optimum solution would appear to be an hourly bimodal IEP service between Westbury and Paddington, limited stop between Newbury and Reading, connecting at Newbury with the electric all stations service and at Westbury with Exeter- Paddington semi-fasts. Alternatively, some Paddington/Reading- Bedwyn

services could be extended to Westbury, supplemented by Hungerford and Bedwyn stops in the Exeter- Paddington semi-fast services.

**12. Respondents are invited to suggest ways in which Community Rail Partnerships could deliver more of the beneficial outcomes for passengers achieved so far.**

CRPs need to look more at timetable improvements which could generate significant new flows of regular, rather than occasional, business. Heart of Wessex CRP identified a lack of trains on the Bristol - Weymouth suitable for normal office hours in Yeovil. This is a market for the GW operator to exploit, if necessary with additional or redeployed rolling stock. There is still scope for CRPs to expedite better information about onward travel from stations, e.g. at Bridgwater and Highbridge & Burnham, which recently had a complete absence of timetable displays for the nearest bus routes. There is scope for CRPs to develop off-peak and counter-flow traffic on the Henley and Marlow branches.

**13. While maintaining end-to-end service frequency, could the needs of passengers be better met by providing the operator with some flexibility over calling patterns on branch lines?**

Each branch line is unique in terms of its markets and operating constraints. Timetables should not try to chase every minor flow of business at the expense of the major flows which sustain the line, although request stops do accommodate some small flows. On single track routes, end-to-end journey times are often influenced more by line speeds and the location of passing loops than by the number of intermediate stops. Most branch lines in the GW franchise have significant feeder business into/from InterCity services, including those of other operators, which means that connections can be as important as journey times on the branch itself. Some discretion should be allowed for the operator to omit certain stops on longer branch lines, provided the decision is based on accurate passenger counts. The strategy should be to improve frequency and line speed but not necessarily more intermediate stops. On shorter branches, stopping patterns are less of an issue but well timed, reliable connections are important.

**14. Respondents are asked to suggest what mitigating actions and steps the GW operator should be expected to take to meet the needs of its passengers both during the planned disruption to the GW franchise as a result of planned upgrade works and when 'force majeure' events such as extreme weather, impact the network.**

When amended timetables are in operation, and especially during bus substitution, Station Managers should ensure these are displayed at stations on or near the affected routes. TravelWatch South West noted in March 2014 that some Cornish stations were still displaying un-amended timetables for weeks after the GW main line was severed at Dawlish.

When bus substitution is unavoidable, station toilets and waiting rooms should remain open. Station staff should normally be on duty for the whole period of bus substitution. The member of staff should inform passengers when the bus has arrived and ensure that onward connections are identified and if possible maintained. Where staff are deployed at normally unstaffed stations, they or the bus driver should check for waiting passengers. This is essential for last services of the day, which for some long distance destinations could be as early as midday. The use of separate buses for local stations and longer distance travellers should always be considered.

At the starting point of bus replacement journeys a bus should always be waiting for passengers, who should not have to await an incoming bus which might be late. There should be clear and unambiguous signage to the bus picking up point and directional maps if it is some distance from the station. Station information screens should show bus departure times.

**15. Where the provision of temporary, alternative service is unavoidable, respondents are invited to suggest what alternative provisions they would prefer the GW operator to put in place.**

Bus substitution should be a last resort. Diversionsary routes should be used even if train crews have to be hired from other operators to provide route knowledge. It should be made a condition of the franchise that the GW operator maintains route knowledge over key diversionsary routes. A Passenger Focus report published in 2013 concluded that passengers preferred longer rail diversions to substitute buses. Rail diversion between Cardiff and Bristol via Gloucester should be introduced instead of buses when the Severn tunnel is closed.

When the Evergreen 3 project involving a new chord at Bicester is completed in 2016, there will be a potential new diversionary route between Paddington and Didcot without the need for reversal at Banbury. This may involve diversion via the Ealing- Greenford branch if Old Oak Common West Junction - Northolt Junction is severed by HS2. When work starts on quadrupling of Filton Bank, hopefully in 2015, it would make sense to divert trains via Henbury and Avonmouth as was done during the enlargement of Filton Abbey Wood station in 2003/04.

Passengers who wish to use alternative rail routes instead of replacement buses should be allowed to do so at no additional charge. Such alternative travel arrangements should be offered to passengers, e.g. by local announcements and timetable booklets. FGW's booklet showing amended timetables during recent Swindon- Kemble redoubling work is to be commended for advising alternative stations at which tickets over the affected route would be honoured.

The practice of scheduling trains earlier to maintain normal arrival times at Paddington when there is Engineering disruption en route, removes many connections especially in Wales, where ATW has a standard pattern timetable. Rather than retiming trains to start earlier, the next available train path should be used if possible.

Where disruption occurs on shared routes such as the South Wales main line with ATW and Cheltenham - Penzance with Cross Country, it is essential to provide an integrated service and maintain connections. One operator should be responsible for bus/coach replacement services. This was well illustrated in a recent Newport to Cardiff blockade where ATW arranged all replacement coach services and coordinating staff.

The hourly Cardiff - Paddington service is frequently cancelled when unplanned disruption takes place. Consideration should be given to running part journeys, e.g. Cardiff to Bristol Parkway or Swindon if the disruption is in the London area.

**16. Respondents are encouraged to consider what steps the GW operator should be expected to take when reacting to changes in passenger demand, and what targets for capacity should be set.**

There needs to be a pool of main line stock with high route availability such as HSTs which can cater for special events such as fixtures at the Millennium Stadium. The GW franchise provides a substantial proportion of passenger capacity in South Wales. ATW was set up as a no growth franchise and would not be able to provide additional stock if there is a reduction in seating capacity as a result of the GW operator using smaller trains. A pool of main line stock is also needed to cope with expected peaks of holiday traffic, e.g. the deployment of a HST set between Bristol and Weymouth on Summer Saturdays this year.

Passengers should not have to stand for more than 20 minutes (see next paragraph). They are likely to be particularly unhappy if they have to stand on relatively highly priced journeys. It may be possible to declassify some First Class accommodation if the proportion of First Class passengers is low; or, alternatively, to reduce the differential between First and Standard Class fares if this would relieve overcrowding in Standard Class in the longer term.

'Passengers in excess of capacity' targets should be tightened following the introduction of longer electric trains on London area suburban services. A PIXC target of 15 minutes maximum standing time on these services should be considered.

**17. Respondents are invited to highlight if there are specific stations or services where they feel particular attention should be paid to reliability or punctuality.**

HSTs often lose time at Stroud and Kemble because of passengers loading/unloading bicycles or luggage from slam door stock at these minimally staffed stations. We trust matters will improve when IEPs are introduced. 08.50 Great Malvern- Westbury is often regulated for Cross Country at Abbotswood Junction and resulting delays can be aggravated by passenger numbers in the summer. This train is popular with young families heading for Weston-super-Mare from Worcestershire and Gloucestershire but is normally formed of only two cars and needs strengthening at times of high demand.

HST services from the west are frequently regulated at Airport Junction in favour of Heathrow Connect services from the Airport to Paddington. These delays should be removed and priority given to long-distance trains.

Hereford- Paddington services can be delayed at Shelwick Junction waiting for down trains to come off the long single line section from Ledbury. Consideration should be given to redoubling a short section eastwards from the junction to provide more operational flexibility. This enhancement would also reduce delays to ATW and London Midland. Better use of the platforms at Worcester Shrub Hill could release paths to improve the service on all routes radiating from Worcester.

**18. Are there any areas of the GW franchise where you feel cost savings could be made?**

Closer working between the GW operator and Network Rail would improve customer information and resolution of delays. Now that Bristol Temple Meads and Reading stations are managed by NR, it ought to be possible to make announcements directly from the signalling centres at Bristol and Didcot respectively. Adversarial practices such as Delay Attribution should be replaced by a more collaborative approach between NR and train operators.

**19. Respondents are encouraged to consider which locations merit consideration for future improvement under these schemes.**

The Access for All programme is excellent in principle but has not been applied logically. At Gloucester the new footbridge has no roof because the old one did not have one, despite high footfall (1.3m passengers in 2012/13) and high rainfall. The station will see many more passengers when the nearby Kingsholm stadium hosts Rugby World Cup matches in 2015. The new footbridge at Newport leaks and causes missed connections as a result of its convoluted walkways. The criteria for design of AfA footbridges must include station usage; average local rainfall; and improved access to car parks and bus stops.

Bridgwater, Exeter Central, Stroud, Worcester Shrub Hill and Yeovil Pen Mill should be high priorities for passenger lifts. Footbridges with ramps or lifts should be provided at Ash and Bramley (Hants) so that passengers would not need to use the level crossing to transfer between platforms. If possible, designs should avoid the very convoluted ramps installed at Honeybourne.

A proposed additional platform at Redhill could enable more North Downs line services to extend to Gatwick Airport (see Q10).

**20. Respondents are encouraged to consider how best to communicate information with passengers during the franchise and how best to keep passengers informed during times of disruption.**

The *Station News* newsletter, which has a Reading edition and another for Bristol, Bath, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, has been useful in communicating events such as the rebuilding of Reading station and train service improvements. A similar approach should be adopted for other major developments, e.g. IEP introduction and electrification, supplemented by regular press releases.

Live announcements from well informed staff are likely to be more effective during disruption than are taped announcements or a helpline based in Mumbai. It is important for information given by different channels, i.e. CIS screens, platform staff, public address announcements and social media, to be consistent; currently new information is not delivered to all channels simultaneously, causing conflicting information to be relayed to passengers. The location of and information shown on CIS screens should be reviewed to ensure that passengers arriving at stations, either from the street or by train, can easily see the departures listed with platform numbers without having to look behind them or walk to a different part of the station (e.g. from the platform to the concourse).

All possible forms of communication should be used but it should not be assumed that every passenger has a smartphone or an 'app'. Staff should be empowered to communicate verbally or via public address systems on train or on stations.

**21. Rail Executive is considering what the appropriate approach for monitoring and improving service quality in the new franchise would be. Respondents are invited to say what matters most to them (for example, cleanliness of trains and stations, or the helpfulness of staff) in terms of the service quality they receive.**

The heart of the matter would seem to be whether the travel experience would encourage one to use rail in preference to other modes. Frequency and timing of train services, comfort of rolling stock, clarity of information and attitude of staff are all major factors. Staff must go the extra mile to deliver excellent customer service. The aim should be at

least 90 % passenger satisfaction (as measured by Passenger Focus surveys) across all criteria by the end of the franchise.

Ease and simplicity of purchasing tickets is also important. Getting the basics right is essential, e.g. opportunities to buy a ticket when travelling from an unstaffed station. User friendly ticket vending machines (TVMs), ticket selling at non-rail retail outlets and sufficient ticket issuing staff both at stations and on trains, are all conducive to a good travel experience. The operator should provide sufficient ticket office windows and staff, so that passengers making complicated enquiries or buying advance tickets do not hold up those wishing to travel immediately. It should not be necessary to provide separate travel enquiry offices provided there are enough trained staff. TVMs should be provided at smaller stations such as Kingham and Radley to improve revenue protection.

Security is important, particularly at unstaffed or minimally staffed urban stations. Bridgwater is an example where anti-social behaviour has been greatly reduced by a human presence (retail outlets, a taxi office and a security guard) after ticket office hours.

Station toilets must be well maintained. The cascading of trains without toilets should be a last resort and they should certainly not be deployed on medium and longer distance routes. The absence of toilets on Crossrail trains is less of an issue because of their high frequency and the availability of toilets at or near urban stations. By contrast many GW stations are in rural areas with no facilities nearby; in any case, station toilets are generally closed outside staffing hours. Any difficulties will be exacerbated when trains are cancelled or heavily delayed. The absence of toilets on trains, or at some interchange stations such as Filton Abbey Wood, does not endear people to rail travel and is probably a commercial mistake.

**22. Please indicate if there are any additional areas that you think Rail Executive should consider consulting on and that have not already been addressed during stakeholder engagement.**

Seat design in trains has implications for the security of luggage. The traditional arrangement of seats around tables provided secure space between the seat backs. It also made rail travel a social experience and good working environment.

Space on IEPs to carry mail and parcels needs to be considered in view of the growth of internet shopping and the faster station to station times after electrification. We understand that the internal fittings of IEPs could be adapted to do this.

The GW operator should liaise with Heritage railways to arrange integration such as through services and through ticketing. Regular connections with the West Somerset Railway would give faster access to West Somerset for tourists and produce more revenue for both operators.