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Railfuture response to the DfT South Western Rail Franchise consultation

Dear Sir,

Railfuture is a national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a bigger, better railway in Britain, so we welcome the opportunity to provide an informed response to the questions this consultation. The response has been coordinated by David Brace (david.brace@railfuture.org.uk) the Raifuture TOC liaison for this franchise.

Railfuture recognises the importance of the provision of improved rail services offering more journey opportunities to a wider range of travellers in contributing to wider economic, employment and skills, social inclusion and environmental issues.

Our response is attached. If you require any more detail or clarification please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully

Chris Fribbins

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Head of Passenger Group

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Response to South Western Rail Franchise consultation

Chapter 2 Existing Franchise

Passenger Satisfaction (P19)

Do you support the key priorities that have been identified through the Transport Focus research?

Generally yes.

The key priorities will vary from route to route and it is necessary to recognise that the infrastructure has to be maintained, renewed and enhanced.

Are there other priorities you believe should be included to inform the new franchise specification?

Help to strengthen the economy of the South West and other Regions by reviewing connectivity overall at key interchanges so as to maintain a good service for optimal customer satisfaction and to provide overall resilience to transport networks.

Include the need for the operator to cooperate with other stakeholders in network development, development of new services and re-opening of stations and lines. e.g. on routes west of Exeter.

Initiatives to promote integrated transport should be developed.

Chapter 3 The South Western Franchise

Franchise Objectives (P25)

Do you feel that these are appropriate objectives for the South Western franchise?

Yes

Are there any further objectives you believe should be included?

Prepare for the provision of services from Southampton to Heathrow via Reading and the planned Western access to Heathrow.

Prepare for the transfer to TfL of future Crossrail 2 services

Make better use of all rolling stock.

Chapter 4 Operational Specification

Capacity (P30)

Considering the planned schemes to deliver additional capacity, what are your views on additional opportunities to deliver more capacity elsewhere within the franchise area?

Planned schemes for capacity enhancement are rightly and clearly addressed to the currently most overcrowded routes namely the inner suburban and Windsor lines (10 car formations, extended platforms and conversion of the International station at Waterloo).

Very little in comparison has been spent on the main lines and this is the next priority. The NR Wessex Long Term Planning Study published in the summer of 2015 indicates the priorities to meet the capacity demands along the main routes west of Surbiton. These must be developed and adopted in Control Period 6 and the new franchise must include its part in providing further capacity (new trains, longer trains, more trains, double-decker trains) and not by decreasing the space per passenger. Capacity expansion is needed on the main line via Woking to Portsmouth, Basingstoke, Southampton and Weymouth plus the West of England line. Other non-London routes also need assessing for increased capacity.

Capacity initiatives which have been started by the current operator should be completed. SWT had a proposal for lengthening the fast line platforms at Clapham Junction and this should be reconsidered.

Consideration should be given to providing more paths by closing the Windsor line platforms at Queens Road Battersea station when the Northern Line Extension is completed, to enable more paths on the Windsor Lines.

The operator should be required to cooperate in the development of Crossrail 2 to bring about the earliest possible implementation.

The operator should be required to work with other relevant parties to develop a long term solution for Clapham Junction so that main line services can stop without affecting overall capacity on the route.

Are there particular services or routes where you believe there is a need to introduce additional capacity to address overcrowding?

Passengers do expect a seat on all off-peak and weekend services. Many such services are currently short formation and need extending to meet that aspiration. For example, late evening trains out of London on the South-Western main line are usually only formed of a single unit but are often overcrowded.

It may be possible to increase overall passenger carrying capacity by introducing different rolling stock that has more standing space and/or modifying the internal configuration of trains, including rebalancing first and standard class seating. Do you have views on these potential rolling stock changes?

It is accepted that in peak periods standing may be needed for journeys of 20 minutes duration or less (the PIXC rule). In off-peak and weekends passengers expect a seat and so we cannot support any proposal to reduce seating or to reduce the standing area per person in the existing rolling stock. We believe that new rolling stock should be appropriate for the type of service being provided. For journey times greater than 40 minutes metro stock metro stock with narrow 2+2 seating (like 455 stock) is not appropriate. For journey times of 60 minutes or more stock should have wide 2+2 seating (like 444 stock). We support some reduction in first class accommodation, but there must always be sufficient first class seats to avoid any loss of revenue. We support some reduction in first class accommodation, but there must always be sufficient first class seats to avoid any loss of revenue.

Future impacts on demand (P30)

What factors may impact on demand for travel on the new South Western franchise, drawing on local impacts in particular? Please provide any evidence you may have.

There is a growing demand for a limited service throughout the network on Boxing Day for shopping, sports and other leisure activities. Sports events, for example at Twickenham, impose a heavy demand on services which should be fully catered for.

Ensure there is the ability to strengthen services at short notice in response to predicted high demand, e.g. major events and seaside destinations in hot weather.

Many young people cannot afford cars or motor insurance and are therefore likely to use public transport to a greater degree than do their parents. They find trains very convenient for using hand held gadgets. A high proportion of rail passengers are under 30, as is evident from most train journeys and they should be encouraged to continue using the train.

Equally, the increasing number of retired people should be encouraged to travel by train.

The very high cost of housing in London, Surrey, Berkshire and Bristol is likely to increase the demand for longer-distance commuting.

Train Service Specification (P32)

Where, if anywhere, would you like to see any changes to first and last trains on the South Western network and why? Do you have any evidence to support this?

Consider providing later main line services (departing up to 23.00) both from Waterloo to principal towns and cities and between principal towns and cities. Initially these could be trialled on Friday and Saturday evenings, the two busiest days for leisure activities such as concerts and shows. Examples of current poor late evening services are Waterloo to the West of England, Godalming and Alton.

On the Island Line, the last service from Ryde Pier to St Johns Road was recently retimed to connect with the last catamaran from Portsmouth. This should be included in the base timetable at the start of the new franchise.

Where, if anywhere, would you like to see any changes to weekend trains on the South Western network and why? Do you have any evidence to support this?

Better Sunday services, both in frequency and capacity, are needed generally across the network. For example, Sunday services at intermediate stations south of Guildford are only hourly but trains are overcrowded – more frequent services are required. Similarly more frequent Sunday services on the Hounslow loop (currently hourly) are required.

Would you support a specification which is flexible enough to allow the operator to review how station calls are allocated to train paths in order to improve overall line capacity? What impact might this have on passengers?

We support allowing flexibility to maximise capacity and reduce journey time, but do not support skip-stopping if that would remove significant journey opportunities between intermediate stations.

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

The timetable should be reviewed generally to see where connections to other services, including other franchises' services, can be improved with a view to minimise the overall door to door journey times for passengers. Examples include good connections with GWR at Basingstoke, Bath Spa, Bristol Temple Meads, Exeter, Salisbury, Westbury and Yeovil Pen Mill. Good connections in the Weymouth area with GWR are also important, whether on foot via the two Dorchester stations or by changing trains at Upwey or Weymouth.

Bournemouth/Southampton to London

The Bournemouth conurbation is arguably the worst served "city" in England for its population at 100 miles from London, having only really an hourly service which is reasonably fast. The successful franchisee should assess the current train paths from Bournemouth/Southampton to Waterloo in the peak hours and ensure that all available paths are being used and that every train is operating at maximum length. Line speeds should be reviewed with Network Rail to see if speeds can be increased and journey times cut to accommodate more trains. The Driver Advisory System (DAS) should be introduced for all main line services inbound from Basingstoke and Guildford to maximise capacity.

If there is insufficient rolling stock, as passenger numbers increase, provision should be made to purchase/lease more trains.

There is a need for faster journey times between Weymouth and London, a journey which currently takes around 3 hours

Consideration should be given for a through service to run from Bournemouth/Poole via Eastleigh and Southampton Airport to Bristol.

The operator should be required to cooperate with the Swanage Railway in developing services both into Wareham and possibly to Bournemouth.

Portsmouth – Guildford – Waterloo

Review sectional running times and recovery times to see if journey times could be improved.

Consider improved connection times into the Reading – Gatwick service at Guildford.

West of England Line

The Winter 2015 timetable should be the base West of England timetable for the new franchise, including the recently introduced services that run via Westbury and Castle Cary to Yeovil.

There is a need to improve connectivity between Southampton and the far South West, with some direct trains at weekends and/ or extension of some Waterloo services west of Exeter. In the short term possibly consider splitting or combining trains at Salisbury.

The line should be reviewed for a more frequent service west of Salisbury.

Extend the xx50 from Salisbury to Yeovil Junction to give a half hourly service (some xx50 trains were extended as part of the Winter 2015 timetable improvements).

Consider, in the short term, running more local services between Exeter and Honiton within the existing track capacity.

More frequent Waterloo – Salisbury - Bristol services would increase journey opportunities (e.g. army personnel between Andover area and Warminster).

South Coast

Consideration should be given to providing a fast direct service along the South Coast from Poole/Bournemouth via Southampton and Fareham to Portsmouth and possibly eastwards to Brighton.

Consideration should be given to introducing a metro-style service between Portsmouth and Southampton, both via Netley and via Southampton Airport Parkway, with at least 30-minute frequency. Extend the metro concept with services radiating from the Solent conurbation to Havant, Winchester, Romsey, Brockenhurst, Lymington and (recommended) Hythe.

Portsmouth/Salisbury/Bristol

Consider transferring Romsey, Dean and Dunbridge from GW to the new SW Franchise in view of the high proportion of services now operated by SWT. Romsey station, particularly, is looking neglected – the town deserves better in view of its significance. Dean and Dunbridge stations have no Great Western Railway services stopping there at all.

Consideration should be given to integrating the Salisbury- Romsey- Eastleigh loop service with the GWR TransWilts (Swindon – Westbury) and Westbury- Salisbury / Southampton services.

Bristol- Waterloo services have sufficient turn-round time at Bristol Temple Meads to be able to stop at the proposed Wilton Parkway station which is being progressed by Wiltshire County Council. The station would be adjacent to an existing park and ride site.

London Area

All stations within the London zonal area should have a frequency of at least 4 services per hour evenly spaced.

Currently peak fast line services do not stop at Clapham Junction. This makes it difficult to commute from Woking or stations further west to West London, and by forcing passengers to travel to Waterloo and then use the tube adds to Central London congestion. Stopping fast line services at Clapham Junction would reduce capacity so is not practical without additional platforms, but if schedules were aligned so that the services which switch from slow to fast lines at Surbiton started from stations such as Basingstoke, Alton and Guildford and made a quick connection with a following slow line train from Hampton Court or Effingham Junction at Surbiton, then new journey opportunities would be created.

Windsor & Reading Lines

Camberley is an affluent town with a population of approximately 37,000, about the same as Farnham, and yet the passenger usage of the station is less than 500,000 compared to 1,600,000 at Farnham. This is because of the long journey time from Camberley to London, with a change at Ascot except for a few peak services. There is an urgent need for a faster through service to Waterloo for the Camberley route.

The Reading line service is comparatively slow – in fact the off-peak journey from Wokingham to Waterloo takes 9 minutes longer today than it did 35 years ago, whilst a peak hour journey takes 19 minutes longer. Schedules should be reviewed to reduce journey times.

Schedules should be reviewed generally to improve connections – for example at Weybridge the service to Chertsey and Staines is scheduled to depart at exactly the same time as a train from the West arrives, so that passengers have to wait 30 minutes for the next service.

Consider introducing Metro style services from Reading to serve the corridor via Wokingham and Bracknell to Ascot.

Alton Line

Off-peak Alton services take approximately 12 minutes longer from Woking to Waterloo than off-peak Portsmouth services, despite only having 2 more stops. Timings should be reduced.

Consider improving travel opportunities around the M25 corridor by introducing an Alton-Guildford service, better connections at Aldershot for the Ascot line and planning for eventual southern rail access to Heathrow.

An Alton-Guildford service and an improved Camberley-London service could be achieved by splitting the Ascot-Guildford service into two parts; the Guildford-Aldershot service could be extended to Alton, and Ascot-Aldershot trains could be joined to Alton-London trains at Aldershot to provide the through Camberley – London service mentioned above.

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 (VfM) analysis.

Performance and reliability (P33)

Are there any specific stations or services where you believe reliability or punctuality should be improved? Where possible, please explain your reasoning when responding to this question.

No specific stations.

There is a need to reduce journey times; one way to achieve this is by reducing station dwell times. Adoption of operation of opening and closing passenger doors by the driver would contribute substantially to this. This does not mean single manning; the train manager/guard would then be able to focus on customer service and revenue protection duties. This measure would also contribute to future speeding up of services.

Managing disruption (P33)

Respondents are asked to suggest what mitigating actions and steps the South Western operator should be expected to take to meet the needs of its passengers both during the planned disruption to the franchise as a result of enhancement works and when 'force majeure' events, such as extreme weather or unplanned events that impact the smooth operation of the network.

Provide better, more consistent, training for front line staff interfacing with travellers for when there are unplanned disruptions to the normal timetable. Better briefing from Control is needed so that local, passenger facing, frontline staff can advise travellers.

Supply better advice on use of other permissible routes at times of unplanned disruption, particularly those run by other operators and negotiate with the latter to accept tickets from the disrupted route.

Planned disruptions generally work well with advanced notice and reasonable alternatives. Try to divert trains rather than use buses. When buses have to be used, provide local staff on the ground to give advice to travellers. Make sure the buses have adequate capacity overall. Make specific provision for accompanied bicycles – some customers may have travelled a long way and not be aware of the substitution. Make sure the alternatives bus services are wheelchair accessible.

When a section of the railway has to be closed for planned maintenance, the operator should be required to provide rail services to stations at either end of the closed section, provided the infrastructure permits reversal there, rather than extending bus substitution beyond the closed section.

A weakness of bus substitution is that the buses are provided as a contract with little or no incentive towards customer care. As a minimum, bus drivers must be instructed to look out for passengers waiting on station platforms. The franchise operator must display timetables for (not just a summary of) the amended services at all the affected stations. The timetables must be included on the appropriate web pages as well. Also, when bus substitution is required, the rail operator should be

required to provide staff at all stations or on the buses to ensure that buses do actually stop as required and to guide passengers between station entrances and bus stops.

When planned maintenance overruns, provision should be in place for the bus substitution to continue.

It is well known that passengers prefer their trains to be diverted via alternative routes rather than have bus substitution for part of the journey. This is especially true for passengers with luggage or who are elderly or disabled. The availability and resilience of diversionary routes needs to be enhanced during the life of the franchise, e.g. Waterloo- Exeter was the first route between London and Exeter to reopen after the Somerset floods of February 2014. Whilst this is primarily a matter for Network Rail, the operator should be required to participate in discussions and studies to achieve this.

Information on how to access Rail Replacement services must be clear with relevant signage at the bus/coach stop. Staff should be available to help passengers affected by the disruption.

Passengers need to be made aware of consequential impacts of blockades (closure of car parks etc.) and alternatives provided and clearly sign-posted.

Respondents are asked to consider whether they would support replacing first/last train services with alternative transport where it can be demonstrated that a longer period of engineering access for Network Rail would improve the infrastructure reliability and reduce disruption overall.

This is acceptable provided an auditable process is in place for making the decision to replace first/last train services by bus and Network Rail can demonstrate each time that there has been a net benefit. It should not become the norm. Substituted services should be provided with accessible buses (not coaches) fitted with bike racks (as approved by DfT) and/or also with vehicles (vans if no suitable buses available) able to transport luggage/bikes/buggies.

Chapter 5 Working with Stakeholders

Partnership working and collaboration (P35)

We are interested in your view on the best way to achieve efficient operation of this railway through partnership and collaboration. Please describe how such working arrangements might support this objective.

Consideration should be given to restoring the original alliance with Network Rail that was partially terminated in 2015. The development of the joint Control Centre at Basingstoke is an ideal opportunity to develop the alliance further to increase Network Rail's customer focus. The two parties should look initially to jointly improve the Public Performance Measure (PPM) and customer satisfaction.

Closer links need to be developed with TfL particularly at the points of interchange, with joint ticketing and other areas where currently there may be conflicts of interest.

To support increased devolution to a local level, the new operator should work more closely with all local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to educate them and to encourage them to be more pro-rail.

Railfuture is willing to work with the operator to improve services and have appointed Davis Brace (david.brace@railfuture.org.uk) as our TOC Liaison contact.

Community rail and other local partnerships

What opportunities are there for Community Rail Partnerships and other local partnerships to expand their role and range of activities to support local communities, businesses and other organisations?

Railfuture response to the DfT South Western Rail Franchise consultation

Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) can help identify untapped markets, e.g. the Heart of Wessex CRP has highlighted the lack of trains suited to normal office hours in Yeovil.

The operator should be required to provide support for CRPs in the franchise area, and to consult with Rail User Groups. There should also be further financial provision to support additional partnerships.

There are still some rural routes where there is potential to introduce CRPs, the next one is likely to be the West of England line between Tisbury and Crewkerne. Other possibilities are the Weymouth to Bournemouth route, the Alton branch and the Guildford to Ascot route.

Expansion of CRPs, rail user groups and station adoptions is needed throughout the network.

Island Line (P36)

What factors do you consider should be taken into account in assessment of options for the Island Line?

We are not in favour of separating the Island Line from the rest of the network. This line has always been treated as part of the national network with through ticketing and other national benefits.

Unlike many other branch lines, the Island Line is isolated physically from the rest of the network and it is too easy to point out the gap between income and expenditure. Before any moves are made to devolve ownership to a local level, funding should be made available for renewing and enhancing both infrastructure and rolling stock to put it on the same footing as any other branch or rural line and in line with Network Rail's asset management policies involving whole life costs. We believe that this should be carried out prior to any decision on ownership change.

Do you have any innovative proposals for how the Island Line might operate on a more self-sustaining basis?

Consider introducing EITHER a regular 20 min service (no infrastructure changes needed) OR a regular 30 min service (passing loop needs to be at a suitable location to permit a 30 min service). Connections to/from catamaran crossings should be optimised (less important with a 20 min service since the wait would be more acceptable).

Third party funded changes (P37)

*Are you aware of any proposals for third party funded changes?
Please provide details in line with the requirements set out above, or provide sufficient detail for further dialogue to take place to understand the proposals.*

Not at present. However, as a general rule we cannot support any new or improved services promoted by a specific party if, as a result, existing services and passengers are disadvantaged.

Chapter 6 Meeting Passenger Requirements

Stations (P39)

What improvements would you like to see at the station(s) you use to enhance your journey experience? Please indicate the name of the station(s) and the rationale for your specific comments.

Better coordination generally in maintaining station infrastructure between the train operator and Network Rail. At Basingstoke and Salisbury, for example, there can be extensive leakage and flooding in times of heavy rain due to poorly maintained gutters and drains or even leaking subway

roofs where passing under the track. The two parties should coordinate and resolve all such problems. The image of flood warning signs and buckets put out to catch leaks is just not acceptable in the 21st century.

The reopening of the north side entrance at Salisbury is also needed to serve potential passengers.

The current staffing levels should be maintained as the minimum provision. Adequate staffing improves customer service while reducing vandalism and ticketless travel. We expect the new franchisee to build on the booking office network through innovative means such as partnerships with community groups or business partners.

Toilets at medium and large stations should be kept open throughout service, not just during booking office hours. For small stations we suggest the use of auto-locking toilets, or developing partnerships, e.g. with businesses at stations, to manage toilets. It might also be possible to extend the opening hours of toilets and waiting rooms if a local authority, station retail outlet (such as a café) or voluntary group were prepared to help maintain and supervise these facilities.

Small businesses should be encouraged to set up premises at stations because their trading hours are often later than those of ticket offices and therefore provide a reassuring human presence later in the day.

Identify stations with inadequate waiting facilities and upgrade as necessary.

Identify stations that lack step-free-access to platforms, prioritise according to footfall and aim for, say, 90% step-free-access platforms across the network over the period of the franchise.

For stations in the London zonal area, the operator should be required to meet the same standards as are applied to stations operated by TfL at least for stations with an annual footfall greater than 0.5m passengers per year.

Gatelines should be staffed whilst stations are manned, to minimise fraudulent travel.

At interchange stations (e.g. Ash) passengers should be able to cross lines safely (footbridges) without having to use level crossings.

Station lifts should be capable of remote supervision (as is done at West Brompton and Wembley Stadium) so that they can be used at any time of day. Currently the lifts at Brentford are only operational until mid-morning.

Identify stations with inadequate car parking facilities (both peak and off-peak) and provide additional spaces as necessary. In particular, car parking needs to be extended at rural stations where these act a local railhead for a wide geographic area e.g. Gillingham, Grateley and Crewkerne).

Door-to-door journeys (P39)

What are your proposals for providing passengers better and safer access to different modes of transport at stations (including bus, car, cycling and walking)?

A key to encouraging access to other modes of transport is clear information at the station entrances about routes, times and pick up points for buses and trams.

In conjunction with local bus operators Onward Travel posters need to be updated regularly and positioned to be easily seen by passengers on their way out of a station.

There should be improved integration between bus and rail services, by improved bus facilities on the station forecourt as has already been done at Farnborough, bus services routed via the rail station, real-time bus information displays at stations.

What opportunities exist for improved integration between modes, citing relevant examples to support your comments?

There should be better coordination between rail and bus companies. This could best be achieved by nominating a specific management position and local employees at major stations to champion the cooperation. That manager should also explore potential new bus links integrated with national rail ticketing. Examples include Bordon to Liphook; Waterlooville to Petersfield; Shaftesbury to Gillingham; Dorchester to Lyme Regis then Axminster.

Using Basingstoke station as an example there is a display of next bus departures but it seems rarely current and it is not clear which buses depart outside the station and which from the bus station five minutes walk away. Both rail and bus are operated by the same holding group but there appears little cooperation or coordination.

Examples of best practice with inter-modal information include Bristol Temple Meads and Reading. Both stations are managed by Network Rail. In both cases there is a screen in the station foyer showing the next 10 or so buses departing from nearby bus stops. Reading Buses has installed screens inside its buses which display departure times (including any lateness or cancellations) for the next 10 or so trains from Reading as the bus nears the station.

Fares and Ticketing (P40)

What are your views on the availability of retail staff and the ability for passengers to have widespread access to ticket buying opportunities (e.g. through new and improved approaches such as smart ticketing, increased advance purchase ticketing or via mobile phones), adequate measures to ensure vulnerable passengers are not disadvantaged, and more effective customer service by both station and on-train staff.

All customers must be treated equally, whatever method they choose to use to buy their ticket. They must receive the information they need to choose the best value ticket for their journey and fully understand any limitations applying to the use of the ticket, irrespective of whether they buy at a ticket office, from station staff, online, from a ticket machine, or use a smartcard or their smartphone. For at least the duration of the franchise, there will be a section of the community which will want the reassurance of a paper ticket. For customers to have confidence that they are being treated fairly, the anomalies in the fares system (for example those which encourage split ticketing) must be resolved.

Stations in the London zonal area which have a footfall in excess of 500,000 per year should be manned from first to last train, as is already done at stations operated by TfL. Other stations should be manned for longer, with improved retail facilities, toilets and cafes. This does not necessarily mean that the ticket office must be manned, but that there must be a visible staff presence on the station, ideally at the gateline, capable of selling tickets and providing advice on the correct ticket and assisting vulnerable passengers, to provide a higher level of security and confidence. Opportunities to combine ticket sales with retail facilities should be explored.

Currently ticket vending machines cannot cope with the range of queries passengers will present; until they can always give explicit information about routes or services on which a particular ticket may or may not be valid, retail staff will be needed to assist. More ticket machines should be made available; if the station is unstaffed and the ticket machine is not working, purchase of the intended ticket (i.e. with the same discount) on the train should be allowed. Ticket machines should give a better explanation of ticket validity.

Staff should be better trained to offer the correct ticket, and to use discretion when the wrong ticket is being used; penalty fares should be used for fare evaders, but not for passengers who have made an innocent mistake.

Carnet-style tickets for regular travellers should be introduced to reflect modern flexible-working practices (which incidentally help to relieve peak-hour crowding).

Tickets should be available for all journeys which can be made on the South Western network; for example, it is not possible to buy a ticket from Farnham to Bristol.

The differential between First and Standard Class fares should be adjusted to ensure that first class accommodation is always available for those who wish to use it whilst easing overcrowding in Standard Class as far as possible.

The operator should have the commercial freedom and incentives to make fare offers available which encourage more people to travel by train.

Incentives should be provided to ensure that on-train staff work the train to check tickets.

Do you have any evidence to support your views?

Observation and discussion with occasional travellers.

There have been occasions when the ticket machine at Milford has failed and passengers have not then been allowed to use their railcard when buying a ticket on the train.

Smart ticketing (P42)

What are your experiences of using smartcard technology within the franchise area to date?

When using the Oyster card on London orbital routes there is a need to make it clear what to do to avoid being charged for a more expensive central London route e.g. if going from Wimbledon to Watford via Clapham Junction and the West London line.

To what extent do you believe that smartcard technology could be used to manage passenger demand and to create an integrated journey experience for passengers?

For many commuters, arrival and departure times at work still dictate travel times. Benefits of smart ticketing are therefore greater for those who can vary their work times, those who are occasional travellers and those who need multi-mode journeys.

The anomalies in the fare system need to be resolved, for example cheaper journeys using split ticketing, and the examples of more expensive family fares with Oyster (because the reduced fare for accompanied children is not available with Oyster) from stations near the Zone 6 boundary. Only when it can be clearly demonstrated that smart card technology can handle such situations, is much more widely available, is highly reliable and accurate and can cover most forms of public transport (trains, buses, ferries, trams, underground) would we support it fully.

However, the right to buy individual journey tickets anonymously in cash at no extra cost should be protected. Older passengers, in particular, will prefer the reassurance of a paper ticket.

If smart ticketing is used in managing passenger demand, it must mean that more money will be deducted from the card at peak times. This makes it difficult to track spending so leaving passengers having to keep a higher balance on their smart cards – an obvious benefit to the operator and a dis-benefit to the passenger.

Passenger Information (P42)

Are there areas of improvement in customer information and engagement you would like to see before, during and after your journey?

During periods of unplanned disruption more timely and useful information must be provided by all means possible including via the guard on every train affected. Passengers need reliable information on whether to be patient and wait, whether to change to different services or whether to change to other operators including non-rail modes.

During normal services information should be kept to a minimum.

Repetitive audio announcements should not be made as passengers tend to switch off and so miss important announcements.

Service Quality (P43)

What areas of customer service within your end-to-end journey would you expect to see monitored and reported on to improve the service quality for passengers?

Late running at key junctions and main stations should be monitored, not just at final destinations.

Failure to provide facilities such as ticket halls and toilets open when required by the franchise should all be monitored.

Lack of availability of Wifi on any service should be monitored.

Passenger compensation (P44)

Please provide details of your experience with the current delay repay passenger compensation arrangements, and suggestions for how this might be modified in the new franchise to make compensation more transparent and convenient for passengers.

The present system works adequately for regular season ticket holders, albeit with variable delays before receiving any form of recompense (normally only when renewing the ticket).

For the occasional and leisure traveller it would help if guards and station staff provide compensation forms at the time of the delay and explain the procedures to follow both on the trains and at the destination station.

The 28 day limitation for submitting compensation claims for delay is too restrictive, particularly for those going away for several weeks.

Security and Safety (P46)

Do you have any proposals to improve security and safety at stations and on trains that you would like us to consider? Please provide details of the stations(s) and/or train(s) where appropriate that have informed your comments, and provide supporting information where available.

Community Rail Partnerships and station adoptions can act as useful ears and eyes and provide security, particularly at rural locations. More should therefore be created and their role in making stations more secure should be encouraged.

At busier stations more British Transport Police and Community Rail Officers should be present.

Issues Not Covered Under the Formal Questions

Rolling Stock

Class 444 and 450 units will need a mid-life refresh during the course of the new franchise.

More comfortable seating is warranted for longer distance services. More luggage space is also needed, especially as most main line trains on the Waterloo to Weymouth and Portsmouth route serve Heathrow Airport (via RailAir bus), Southampton and Bournemouth Airports, and Southampton cruise-ship terminal. This need for more, better luggage space also applies to the West of England service.

Luggage space on longer-distance SWT services is generally good and any attempt to reduce it to provide more seats should be resisted. However, when new rolling stock is ordered, luggage space appropriate to the predominant type of journey being made should be provided, particularly for the longer distances. Such provision should also allow for the luggage to be stored near the owner. Adoption of more back to back seating gives additional luggage space close to the owner.

In the future, new trains with good seating and more luggage space will be required for the proposed service from Southampton/Basingstoke via Reading and the western link to Heathrow and also the southern link via Staines.

In the short term increase the pool of Class 158/159 units by reclaiming those currently covering for shortage of electric stock, those leased to other operators and by cascading units displaced from elsewhere on the network by electrification schemes. Refurbish and complete C6 overhauls as necessary. These additional units would then provide more capacity and/or greater variety of destinations (e.g. by running 9-car Waterloo to Salisbury then splitting to form 3 semi-fast to Exeter, 3 slow to Exeter and 3 to Bristol). This can only be an aspiration as it is not possible to path semi-fast and slow trains from Salisbury to Exeter until there is almost continuous double track between the two.

However, the Class 158s and 159s will be nearly 30 years old at the start of the new franchise and planning their replacement will be a high priority. Consideration should be given to introducing a fleet of bi-modes (similar to Class AT300 on the Great Western). They should be designed to take power from the 3rd rail between Waterloo and Basingstoke and be diesel driven for the remainder of the journey to Salisbury and Exeter. If electrification was completed as far as Salisbury in the medium term, these trains would still be suitable.

New/Reopened Lines and Stations

Work with partners to establish passenger services on reopened lines, most notably the Waterside Line (Totton-Hythe) and the Swanage Branch (see above).

Consider introducing passenger services on the Ludgershall to Andover line.

Work with partners to investigate the provision of new stations at Chard Junction plus Wilton South on the Salisbury to Exeter route (as well as the TransWilts proposal for Wilton North on the Salisbury to Westbury route).

Ditto for providing a new station at Farlington Parkway (A3M/27 junction) on the South Coast line west of Brockhampton to provide a park and rail ride facility which would also provide a station that could be linked by bus service to the Langstone Technology Park and recently started Dunsbury Hill Farm development.

Miscellaneous

Catering on longer-distance services is important, particularly between Waterloo, Bristol and Exeter. Both these West of England routes offer an alternative to GWR and the Exeter services are well used by holidaymakers. Hot meals should be offered, particularly on the Exeter- Waterloo route.