

ENGINEERING WORK TIMETABLE CHAOS

Railfuture is to complain to all train operators and Network Rail after considerable confusion over the timetable in Cornwall during recent main line engineering work.

On Saturdays and Sundays throughout January the line between Par and Plymouth has been closed for repair and maintenance work. Generally there has been a non-stop replacement bus between St Austell and Plymouth, with another bus running from Par calling at intermediate stations to Plymouth.

However getting accurate timetable information for the first two weeks proved difficult as train operators failed to work together to produce a single timetable. First Great Western produced a booklet which only listed buses and trains that connected with its Paddington services at Plymouth. Wessex Trains went a stage further and displayed timetable posters listing trains and buses operated by itself and First Great Western plus some, but not all, Virgin Trains services. The posters left off all Arriva Trains Wales services even though Wessex Trains crews operated them.

Virgin Trains mentioned the engineering work on posters displayed at stations and on its website without timetable details. Arriva Trains Wales produced no publicity at all.

National Rail Enquiries, which is supposed to provide the most up to date information, also had incomplete details. Telephone calls on the Friday before the start of the work, resulted in advice that some trains were running through from Plymouth to Penzance and others would be replaced by buses. When it was pointed out that the line would be closed to all trains, the operator had to admit that the information on the system may be incorrect and suggested passengers should contact the train operator direct or



Passengers join rail replacement buses at St Austell on Saturday 22 January during weekend engineering works between Par and Plymouth.

ask 'on the day'. The National Rail website journey planner gave the same information.

On the day, passengers starting out from Penzance were shown two trains departing at 0535 on the departure screens. One operated by Virgin Trains to Par and another at the same time operated by Wessex Trains to Truro.

Correspondence between Railfuture and train operators revealed that the lack of information is partly due to each train operator making their own timetable plans and being responsible for agreeing this with Network Rail, and the time taken for Network Rail to up date the Train Service Database—the source of information for National Rail Enquiries website and call centres.

Meanwhile passengers wishing to purchase cheap book-ahead fares such as Apex for weekend travel are finding it near impossible. The tickets are normally available for quotas of seats on individual trains, but as the database does not carry accurate information on weekend timetables, station booking clerks and telephone sales are unable to confirm which trains are running and whether a quota is available. Failure of reservation ticket printing at Penzance has also meant that (with the exception of Virgin) trains leaving Cornwall do not indicate which seats are reserved.

Network Rail says its is 'working towards' making revised timetable information available 12 weeks in advance, but cannot say when this will happen. Recent experience suggests there may be a long wait.

THE GREATER WESTERN FRANCHISE—WHAT WILL IT DELIVER?

Railfuture Devon and Cornwall AGM

1:30pm Saturday 12 March
Unitarian Church
Notte Street
Plymouth.

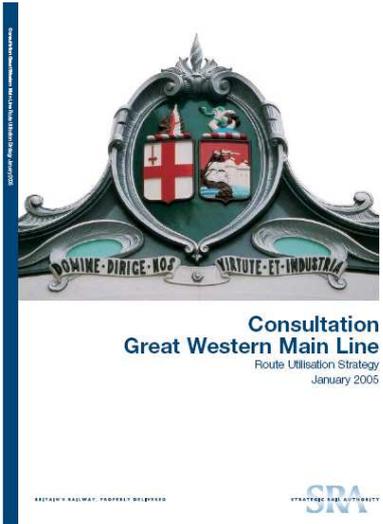
Branch Secretary, Stuart Walker will put forward ideas for improvements that could be delivered under the new Greater Western Franchise and ask for comments and suggestions.

Representatives from the three known franchise Bidders have also been invited.

Meeting open to Members and Non-Members. Admission Free

For more information call 01736 796456 or Email
railfuturesw@swalker79.fsnet.co.uk

Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy— Consultation Starts



The SRA has published its consultation document on the Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). This covers all lines in Devon and Cornwall apart from the Exeter to Waterloo line, and attempts to identify the best use of existing capacity on congested Routes.

The consultation was welcomed by all train operators, but condemned by the local press as it proposed a slight reduction in train services between Plymouth and Bristol. In fairness this is seen as necessary to reduce duplication. For example there are currently services leaving Exeter St. Davids for Penzance at 1609, 1614 and 1618—a frequency better than some London underground lines and clearly unnecessary.

The emphasis of the consultation is on the Thames Valley and services from Paddington to Bristol and South Wales. The only proposal for Cornwall and Devon is to provide more 3-hour fast journeys from Plymouth to Paddington by calling at less intermediate stations. Instead these stations would be served by more semi-fast services from Exeter to Paddington.

Between Taunton and Penzance, which the SRA acknowledges as having an “irregular pattern” it is proposed to run two trains per hour Taunton to Plymouth and one per hour between Plymouth and Penzance. The SRA says that demand is unlikely to be sufficient to justify two trains per hour between Plymouth and Penzance nor a local service between Totnes Ivybridge and Plymouth.

Okehampton Plan Supports Commuter Train Service

The Okehampton Area Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) has published its plan to regenerate the area. Amongst the proposals is to set up a commuter train service from Okehampton to Exeter and improve connections with the national rail network.

The scheme would involve building a second station at Okehampton—Okehampton East, estimated to cost £45,000. Land near Exeter Road industrial units was safeguarded for a station by the Okehampton United Non-Ecclesiastical Trust in 2003. The land would also provide parking for 200 rail users’ cars. However funding for the station and train service has not yet been identified.

As well as serving Okehampton, it is hoped that the station would be used as a park and ride site by rail users from North Devon and Cornwall, although through services to London may be necessary to persuade drivers to leave their cars outside of Exeter.

The MCTi is run by the South West Regional Development Agency, Government Office South West, the Housing Corporation, English Heritage, South West Acre Network and the Countryside Agency. The initiative was announced in the Government’s Rural White Paper in November 2000.

Station for East Devon New Town?

A new railway station, close to the site of the former Broadclyst station, is to be included in the controversial plans for an East Devon new town near Rockbeare.

Details of the station together with the already well known plan for a freight terminal was discussed during the public inquiry into the East Devon Local Plan. If the station was opened, it is proposed to run local trains providing 2 or 3 journeys during peak times.

The site of the station is on the presently single track line between Pinhoe and Honiton and conversion to double track plus acquisition of more trains would be necessary to provide the proposed service frequency. Consultants WSPGroup states that the project has the support of the Strategic Rail Authority. However, Railfuture’s understanding is that neither the SRA nor train operators will fund the track doubling, station or the trains out of their own resources. Presumably the cost would need to be met by the developers and the local Council Tax payer.

Of 22,500 comments submitted on the Local Plan, 14,500 have been objections to the new East Devon Community. Railfuture’s view is that it is for the local population to decide on the appropriateness of a new town. In Railfuture’s view a rail link to Exeter will be the most sustainable transport link between the town and Exeter.

The only 'aspirations' listed for new stations in our region are Carn Brea, Cullompton and South Brent—The SRA's view on both is that they need "...to be proved in value-for-money terms. Likely demand for rail services appears to be relatively low. Assessment of potential effects on performance and line capacity required". Other stations such as Plympton, Exminster, Kingskerswell, Okehampton and Marazion and Tavistock are not mentioned.

On rolling stock, the RUS states that a replacement for the 30 year old High Speed Trains used on services to Paddington is unlikely within the next ten years, although there may be some prototype testing. Thus Paddington to Devon and Cornwall services will be in the hands of 40 year old trains by the end of the RUS period—the oldest on the main line network.

For freight, the only possible expansion mentioned is the proposed intermodal freight depot near Broadclyst. The RUS refers to this scheme as "...a medium-scale intermodal and warehousing development going through the pre-planning process at present. In the long-term this could generate 3- to 4-trains per day but the rail element of the scheme is conjectural at present".

On Engineering work, the RUS states:

"where possible, the route between Exeter St Davids and Plymouth will be maintained during the periods when no trains are scheduled to operate or within midweek night possessions. Key locations, within the Exeter and Newton Abbot areas, will continue to be targeted with annual weekend possessions of between 10 hours and 30 hours. The Devon branches will be maintained within midweek night possessions. In Cornwall key locations on the main line will continue to be maintained within annual 11- or 12-hour weekend possessions. Other locations and the Cornish branches will be maintained in either the periods when no trains are scheduled to operate or within midweek night possessions".

There is no mention of the current strategy of closing branch lines for whole two week periods so is this expected to cease under the RUS proposals?

The Route Utilisation Strategy can be down-loaded from the SRA's website using the following internet address: www.sra.gov.uk/publications/consultation_default

Is There A General Election Coming?

The newspapers are full of speculation over when the next General Election will be held. In anticipation Railfuture Devon and Cornwall has emailed the main political parties in the region asking what their plans and policies are for our local railways. So far we have only received a reply from the Conservatives. In the interests of political impartiality we will not publish their statement until (and if) we get responses from the other parties.

So if you work for the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, UK Independence Party, Green Party, Mebyon Kernow or any party we do not yet know about lets hear about your policies so we can publish them in a future edition of News from Railfuture Devon and Cornwall.

St Ives Goes (Not Quite) Regular Interval

In a clear attempt to focus the branch line on the lucrative park and ride traffic to the detriment of 'traditional' passengers, Wessex Trains have completely recast the St Ives branch timetable from 28 March.

Described as 'clockface' most trains will depart St Erth at 11 and 41 minutes past the hour and return from St Ives at 25 and 56 minutes past the hour. However constraints caused by a 5mph speed restriction over an ungated level crossing at St Erth has meant that Carbis Bay will see a reduction in service to hourly and at times two hourly, whilst Lelant loses all daytime services. Carbis Bay passengers wishing to travel to/from St Erth will be able to double-back via St Ives if the train does not call at Carbis Bay on the way down.

However, closer inspection of the timetable reveals that it is not as regular interval as Wessex make out. There are one hour gaps in the frequency in the morning and afternoon, and a one hour twenty minute gap in the evening. Park and ride passengers that miss the 18:25 from St Ives after a long day at the beach will find they have to wait until 19:45. Similarly, commuters travelling on the 17:16 from Truro will face a 25 minute wait at St Erth instead of the present 5 minutes and those using the 18:19 from Truro will face a 45 minute wait instead of 5 minutes from 28 March.

The one hour gaps in the 30 minute frequency are probably necessary to provide personal needs breaks for the train crews or to allow for recovery time in the event of late running. Most services face a 3 minute turn-round time at both St Erth and St Ives which may be difficult to achieve at the busiest times of the year.

An analysis by Railfuture has revealed that only around 8 of the 20 main line services at St Erth will have a connection time of 15 minutes or less, and five services to Penzance will face a connection time in excess of 40 minutes. All through trains between St Ives and Penzance will be withdrawn except for the morning commuter service and the first and last trains of the day.

Railfuture has asked that a regular interval timetable is delayed until the main line itself becomes regular interval—a possibility under the Greater Western franchise— but Wessex says it strongly believes the new timetable is the best way forward for the branch.

"Penzance Station Closed"—National Rail Enquiries.

According to a report in The Cornishman newspaper, a prospective passenger enquiring about times of trains from Penzance was told the station was closed and all services had been moved to Truro. Despite protestations to the contrary, the call centre operator insisted his computer was correct. Re-dialling National Rail Enquiries later resulted in the same response.

The newspaper report wondered if the mistake had happened because calls are now handled by a new centre in Bangalore whose staff may not be familiar with Cornwall. However a more likely explanation may have been due to the replacement of trains by buses between Penzance and Truro due to engineering work, and the computer system not having details of the replacement buses in the timetable. More recent calls by Railfuture to National Rail Enquiries resulted in the correct information that Penzance station is still open.

Combined Rail/Bus Ticketing Expands

Although receiving little publicity, it is now possible to book a combined rail and bus ticket for many destinations off the rail network in Cornwall and Devon, although only available when booking at rail stations, rail call centres rail websites and the dwindling number of rail enabled travel agents. There are now some season tickets, but no rover or travelcard arrangements.

Listed below are the known current rail/bus ticket arrangements in our region: Note that day return trips may sometimes work out cheaper if a separate ticket is bought on the bus.

PlusBus Schemes

Bodmin Plus Bus Bodmin Parkway to Bodmin, Cooksland, The Beacon, Turfdown, Kirland, Halgavor Moor, Cutmadoc, Newton.

Camborne/Redruth Plus Bus Redruth or Camborne stations to Roseworthy, Kehelland, Portreath, Illogan, Scorrier, Tuckingmill, Pool, Croffthamdy, Reawla, Troon, Carnkie, Lanner, Leedstown, Praze-an-Beeble.

Exeter Plus Bus Exeter St Davids or Central to Exwick, Cowley Bridge, Pennsylvania, Pinhoe, Exeter Business Park, Sowton, Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, Clyst St Mary, Crossmead, Alphington, Exminster. (Not at St Thomas, nor for rail journeys between Exeter and Tiverton Parkway, Newton St Cyres, Dawlish, Exton)

Falmouth Plus Bus Falmouth Town, to Gylngvase Beach, Swanpool Beach, Boslowick, Budock Water, Tregonhay, Mabe, Kergilliack, St Gluvas, Penryn. (Not available at or for rail journeys to/from Falmouth Docks, Penmere or Penryn)

Liskeard Plus Bus Liskeard to Dobwalls, St Cleer, Higher Tremarcoombe, Crow Nest, Merrymeet, Pengover Green, Lower Clicker, Hernington, Lamefton Mill, St Keyne, Lodge Hill. (Not available for rail journeys to/from St Keyne and Coombe)

Newquay Plus Bus Newquay to Porth, Tregustick, Trevelgue, St Columb Minor, Tren creek, Hendra Tourist Park, Treloggan, Treninnick, Trevemper Bridge, Trenance, Pentire Head.

Newton Abbot/Torquay/Paignton Plus Bus Newton Abbot, Torquay, Paignton to Barton, Babbacombe, Brixham, Churston, Kingswear, Roselands, Foxhole, Shipway. (not available for rail journeys within Paignton branch nor to Torre)

Penzance Plus Bus Penzance to Heamoor, Madron, Bone Valley, Trevaylor, Ludgvan, Crowlas, St Hilary, Marazion, Perran Crossroads, Newlyn, Mousehole, Paul, Sheffield, Tremethick Cross.

Plymouth Plus Bus Plymouth to Crownhill, Derroford Hospital, Yelverton, Lee Moor, Cornwood, Plympton, Elburton, Plymstock, Wembury, City Centre, Devonport, Torpoint, Keyham, St Budeaux, Saltash. (not available at stations between Saltash/St Budeaux to Plymouth)

St Austell Plus Bus St Austell to Trethowel, Ruddle Moor, Scredda, Boscoppa, Tregrehan Mills, Mount Charles, Crinnis, Charlestown, London Apprentice, Polgooth, St Mewan School, Trewoon.

Totnes Plus Bus Totnes to Swallowfields, Bridgetown, Follaton.

Truro Plus Bus Truro to Treliske, Threemilestone, Kenwyn, Shortflanesend, Tregurra, Trispen, Tresillian, Trelander, Malpas, Playing Place, City Centre.

Other Bus Add Ons

Appledore from Barnstaple

Bideford from Barnstaple

Bridport from Axminster

Buckfastleigh from Totnes

Bude from Exeter St Davids

Callington from Plymouth

Camelford from Exeter St Davids

Clovelly from Barnstaple

Combe Martin from Barnstaple

Cullompton from Tiverton Parkway

Dartmouth from Totnes

Dorchester from Axminster

Eden Project (including admission) from St Austell

Fowey from Par

Helston from Redruth

Holsworthy from Exeter St Davids

Ilfracombe from Barnstaple

Instow from Barnstaple

Kingsbridge from Totnes

Lands End from Penzance

Launceston from Plymouth

The Lizard from Truro

Lydford from Plymouth

Lyme Regis from Axminster

Lynton from Barnstaple

Lynton from Taunton

Mevagissey from St Austell

Mullion from Truro

Okehampton from Exeter St Davids

Padstow from Bodmin Parkway

Perranporth from Truro

Porthtowan from Truro

St Agnes from Truro

St Just from Penzance

St Mawes from Truro

Sidmouth from Honiton

Tavistock from Plymouth

Tiverton from Tiverton Parkway

Wadebridge from Bodmin Parkway

Westward Ho! From Barnstaple

And finally, First's One Day Bus Rail Card costs £10 includes buses and trains Totnes to Penzance **but only First Group's**

ENGINEERING WORK

This is the latest advice of engineering work received at time of publication. However plans can change and you should check the day before travel.

Bristol Temple Meads—Taunton

Sundays 6, 13, 20 and 27 February
Trains replaced by buses

Bristol Temple Meads—Bristol Parkway

Saturdays and Sundays 12,13,19,20 February
South West to/from Birmingham services diverted via Newport.

Castle Cary—Taunton

Sundays 6, 13, 20 February
Some First Great Western Paddington services will run from Exeter St Davids via Yeovil Junction replacing South West Trains Waterloo services and calling at intermediate stations. Passengers to Waterloo will need to change at Yeovil Junction. In other cases buses will operate between Taunton and Castle Cary.

Exeter to Exmouth, Paignton and

Barnstaple Sundays 13, 20, 27 February.
Minor re-timings to train services.

The following branch lines will be closed and trains replaced by buses:

Newton Abbot to Paignton

Monday to Friday 14 to 18 February 2005

Exeter to Barnstaple

Mondays to Fridays 21 February to 4 March 2005 (trains run Saturdays and Sundays)

Plymouth to Gunnislake

Mondays to Fridays 7 to 18 March 2005 (trains run Saturdays and Sundays)

Note – Passengers at Gunnislake, Calstock, St Budeaux, Keyham, Dockyard and Devonport wishing to travel to/from Bere Alston or Bere Ferrers will need to change buses at Plymouth.

Exeter to Exmouth

Monday to Friday 21 to 25 March 2005
Also Monday 28 February to Friday 3 March the last train of the day will be replaced by bus.

Liskeard to Looe

Mondays to Fridays 4 to 15 April 2005 (trains run Saturdays)

Par to Newquay

Mondays to Fridays 18 to 29 April 2005 (trains run Saturdays)

St Erth to St Ives

Mondays to Fridays 2 to 13 May 2005 (trains run Saturdays)

Truro to Falmouth Docks

Mondays to Fridays 16 to 27 May 2005 (trains run Saturdays and Sundays)