



campaigning
by the
Railway Development
Society Limited

Department for Transport
Great Western franchise replacement
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26 March 2012

Dear Sir or Madam

Great Western Franchise Replacement Consultation

Please find enclosed the unified response of Railfuture, which represents the collective views of our seven Branches within the Franchise area; our Passenger Committee; and our Policy, Lobbying and Campaigns Committee. This response **replaces** our earlier submission dated 15 March 2012.

The response is divided into three sections as follows:

Section 1 (pages 1-3) discusses General Principles regarding the scope and direction of the new Franchise.

Section 2 (pages 3-16) answers all of your Department's 34 questions as they appeared in Appendix 1 of the Consultation Document. For ease of reference each question is reproduced in bold type and prefixed by the number 2, i.e. Question 1 is identified as 2.1 and so on.

Section 3 (pages 16-19) outlines Railfuture's recommendations for specific Train Service Routes within the Franchise.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Consultation and hope that our constructive criticism will assist the process.

If you require any clarification or further detail, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Bray

Nigel Bray
Hon. Secretary,
Railfuture, Severnside Branch.

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
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Section 1.

General Principles

1.1 The Seven-Day Railway

The franchisee should be expected to provide a seven-day service throughout the year. If necessary, it should negotiate with Network Rail to modify the Rules of the Route so that there is always at least one rail route between main centres open for traffic at any one time. This is particularly important in view of the massive infrastructure works scheduled during the life of the franchise, including GW electrification, Reading remodelling and Crossrail. The need is for continuity of services, by more use of diversionary routes (see item 2.22), wrong line working and bi-directional signalling, with far less emphasis on bus substitution.

1.2 Consultation on Timetable Changes

The franchisee should be required to consult on Timetable revisions with a wide range of stakeholders, not only with Network Rail and the DfT. First Great Western is to be commended for consulting widely with user groups and local authorities and also for setting up Customer Panels.

1.3 Bus/Rail integration

In the interests of making rail travel as seamless as possible, there needs to be an obligation on the franchisee to work with other TOCs, bus operators and Network Rail to improve interchange at stations and ensure the continuation of feeder bus services currently advertised in rail timetables, e.g. from Kingham station to Chipping Norton and Exeter St. Davids to Bude.

1.4 Rolling Stock Design

New stock should be able to accommodate bicycles, pushchairs and parcels (see items 2.15 and 2.25). For all new and refurbished rolling stock at least 50 % of seats should be arranged in table bays aligned to the windows and grouped together so that space for luggage can be provided between seat backs. Cascade of second-hand stock should occur only if it is of suitable configuration and can be operated without additional running costs.

1.5 Additional trains for Special Events

For special events attracting massive numbers of additional passengers, such as the Glastonbury Festival, local users should not be crowded off their train services at stations such as Castle Cary. Nor should the operator withdraw other services in order to cater for special events such as fixtures at the Millennium Stadium. There needs to be a national pool of trains with good route availability (e.g. HSTs) which the operator could draw upon.

1.6 Possible unintended consequences of introduction of ERTMS

We understand that the IEP fleet and other electric stock will be compatible with the European Rail Traffic Management System which is due to be implemented across the network by 2025. There is concern that older fleets may not be able to operate over electrified routes if not ERTMS-fitted, resulting in possible truncation of through services from locations away from the GW main lines, such as Portsmouth. This may not be a problem if the existing Sprinter fleet, already 20-27 years old, has been replaced before the ERTMS deadline.

1.7 Fares

We believe it should be an objective of the franchise to increase rail usage. Local Railcards such as the Cotswold Line Railcard and the Devon & Cornwall Railcard help to stimulate revenue growth by offering attractive discounts on fares. These should continue, as should Rover and Ranger tickets. We are concerned that Rovers covering bus as well as rail travel might be lost in the event of First Group not winning the new franchise.

There are some enormous variations in fares levels which would appear to be a legacy of the historic Passenger Business Sectors of British Rail. The Standard Anytime Return from Reading to Swindon (there being no Anytime Day Return between these points) is now £62 for a distance of 41 miles. Gloucester to Bristol is the same distance but the Standard Anytime Day Return is £15. Standard Class fares from Cardiff and Swindon to Reading and London are possibly the highest per mile in Europe and their cost would seem to conflict with the Government's Growth Agenda by discouraging journeys to work, business and leisure. Between Paddington and Exeter, fares on the route via Taunton and Westbury are typically much higher than on the parallel route from Waterloo, resulting in people driving 20-30 miles in order to obtain a lower fare. This cannot be a good use of the transport system all round, as well as being unfair to communities on the Paddington route.

High fares exclude low earning passengers from train services and cheaper non refundable advanced purchase tickets present a financial risk. All tickets should be upgradable to a higher fare if the intended train is missed or refunded in travel vouchers if a passenger requests a cancellation in advance.

1.8 Car parking at stations

There should be provision to expand existing station car parks, although this should not be a substitute for reopening other stations and improving access to stations by bus. The cost of parking should normally be free at unstaffed stations. Care needs to be taken not to price motorists away from rail travel with parking charges that are high in relation to local rail fares. Parking charges should be lower after 12.00 and could be free after 17.00.

1.9 Future electrification

The benefits of the authorised GW electrification to the national economy would be maximised by additional infill electrification schemes, e.g. Bristol Parkway- Avonmouth and into Wentloog freight terminal; Cardiff- Swansea and Reading- Basingstoke. Newbury- Westbury- Bradford Junction could be electrified to provide a diversionary route for Paddington- Bristol; and Swindon- Gloucester- Severn Tunnel Junction for Paddington- South Wales. We hope there will be a clear statement of the scope of future electrification before the franchise is awarded.

Section 2.

Answers to Appendix 1 of Consultation document.

2.1. Respondents are encouraged to consider whether the proposed franchise objectives are an appropriate expression of the priorities that should apply to the new franchise.

The objectives should take account of realistic forecasts for population and travel growth, which will vary between localities. We would suggest the following additional objectives:

Access to employment opportunities throughout and beyond the franchise territory.

Reduction of road congestion and carbon emissions.

Reduced dependency on expensive and potentially insecure supplies of imported fuel by encouraging modal shift to rail and further electrification.

Affordability to both passenger and taxpayer.

Co-ordination of services with other operators using the same route.

Co-ordination of connections with other operators.

2.2 Respondents are encouraged to consider any specific local factors that they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand and to comment on any specific HLOS recommendations that they believe the franchisee should be required to implement.

Local factors include population growth, e.g. Gloucester is predicted to grow from 112,000 to 153,000 by 2030. Other major growth areas (for employment and housing) are Cheltenham, Greater Bristol, Newport, Swindon, Taunton, Exeter, Torbay, Plymouth, Oxfordshire Science Vale (west of Didcot), South Hampshire and West Cornwall. New stations are needed to serve growth areas such as Llanwern, North Filton and Portishead.

Population growth along the M4 corridor in South Wales cannot be accommodated by Arriva Trains Wales alone because this was designed as a no growth franchise. There must be an increase in capacity and frequency within South Wales and from South Wales into England.

Bidders should be asked to identify what changes are required to attract more passengers and increase market share profitably.

2.3. Respondents are encouraged to consider issues arising from the planned schemes and identify any local factors that should be considered.

The approved GW electrification scheme would permit an electric Cardiff-Bristol- Oxford service via Bath Spa. Some trains could start back from Swansea if Cardiff- Swansea were to be electrified. As well as calling at existing stations, it could satisfy aspirations for reopening those at Corsham, Wootton Bassett and Wantage/Grove. This should be timed to connect at Oxford with East-West Rail to Milton Keynes and Bedford.

Swindon- Kemble redoubling should allow for a new station at Swindon North proposed by Swindon Borough Council.

A western access line to Heathrow is essential because Wales and the South West provide a high proportion of UK passengers using the airport.

2.4. Respondents are asked to consider any specific local factors that they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand and to comment on any specific RUS recommendations that they believe the franchise should be required to implement.

RUS recommendations which ought to be written into the franchise include an enhanced Swindon- Westbury service (see 2.7); longer and more frequent cross-Bristol and cross-Exeter services; hourly Exeter- Paddington semi-fasts (see 2.11); restoration of Swansea- Bristol Temple Meads, Portsmouth/Brighton services; a new Chepstow- Severn Tunnel Junction- Bristol Parkway service. Additionally, bidders should be asked to identify areas of latent demand as options.

2.5. Respondents are encouraged to consider investment priorities for the franchise and are asked to highlight interfaces with any other schemes that are likely to be delivered during the life of the next franchise. We also welcome proposals for alternative approaches to enable the proposed investment programme to be delivered at a reduced cost.

Schemes should be planned and phased throughout the life of the franchise. This would reduce start-up costs by ensuring a regular programme of work. The same principle applies with introduction of new rolling stock.

Our priorities for infrastructure would be:

(a) capacity enhancements to relieve bottlenecks on intensively used routes, e.g. Filton Bank (Dr. Day's Junction- Filton Abbey Wood) quadrupling; Radley- Wolvercot Junction quadrupling; Wolvercot Junction- Charlbury redoubling.

(b) electrification of Bristol- Weston-super-Mare, Cardiff- Swansea and all lines between the Severn Tunnel and Cardiff West.

(c) infill electrification to reduce reliance on diesel traction, eg the Greenford, Windsor, Marlow and Henley branches; Reading (Southcote Junction)- Basingstoke; third rail electrification of the missing sections between Reading and Gatwick, i.e. Wokingham-Ash and Shalford Junction- Reigate.

(d) enhancement of suburban networks, particularly schemes already being developed by Network Rail or proposed in the 2010 GW RUS, e.g. Portishead line reopening which has reached GRIP 3 stage; Bere Alston- Tavistock reopening, for which we understand all funding has been identified. Also schemes that have local support must be progressed later in the franchise period, e.g. Barnstaple- Bideford reopening. The successful bidder should fund a study into all rail options for reopening Oxford- Witney/Carterton.

2.6. Respondents are encouraged to consider any changes to the services included in the GW franchise that they would like to propose as part of a remapping exercise.

Worcester (pop. 85,000) and a major tourist city, has few fast trains. A case exists for a Birmingham- Bristol (or at least Worcester- Bristol) semi-fast service which would also provide faster trains between Gloucester and Bristol (see 3.6). Reading- Basingstoke and Reading- Redhill/Gatwick services could transfer to the South West franchise on completion of the gaps in electrification (see 2.5). The existing Cardiff- Taunton service should become a Cardiff- Exeter Central semi-fast to restore a direct link between South Wales and the South West, providing also faster trains from Bridgwater (pop. 36,000) and serving suggested new stations such as Wellington.

2.7. Respondents who wish to pursue increments or decrements should make these clear in their response to this consultation.

The 40-minute frequency service on the Bristol- Severn Beach line, underwritten by Bristol City Council since 2008, ought to be incorporated in the new franchise because of its outstanding success, i.e. a 90 % increase in passenger journeys to 2011. Stops at Severn Tunnel Junction which were reinstated in Cardiff- Portsmouth trains should continue because they meet a known demand for commuting to Bristol and Bath, including connections from the Chepstow line. An incremental improvement would be for all existing Cardiff- Portsmouth trains to call at Severn Tunnel Junction because of the high level of passenger growth at the station. Swansea- Cardiff service levels in the new franchise should be half-hourly Mondays to Saturdays.

We support Wiltshire Council's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) bid which would fund a two-hourly service between Swindon and Westbury via Melksham, connecting growing towns, improving rail journey opportunities across Wiltshire and serving a reopened station at Wootton Bassett.

Basic stabling facilities should be provided at remote termini (e.g. Barnstaple) to permit later last trains from the main line and earlier first trains back than at present.

2.8. Respondents are encouraged to consider

(a) which responsibilities and types of services on the GW franchise might be suitable for more local decision-making ?

Enhancements to stations, local SMART ticketing also involving buses, bus/rail interchange and new ticket sales outlets could be devolved to local authorities and in Wales to transport consortia.

(b) which options for devolving decision-making should be considered further and which should be rejected ?

Local authorities could be given powers to *enhance* services but not to have final responsibility for whether existing services should continue. There is a danger that some Councils might see this as an opportunity to redirect funding for other purposes. Rail services must be considered in an inter-regional, not merely local, context.

(c) to which bodies might decision-making be devolved and how would governance, accountability and transparency be demonstrated, especially if consortia of sub-national bodies are formed ?

Local Transport Authorities or Local Economic Partnerships with a record of investing in rail and a programme to enhance their local rail networks should be considered for devolution. Funding must follow any devolution. Public scrutiny through open meetings (as with the West of England Partnership; SEWTA and SWITCH) and regular Consultations should help keep decision-making transparent.

(d) How might risk be dealt with if responsibilities are devolved ?

Any incentives associated with devolution must involve enhancement of rail services and station facilities, not merely savings in expenditure. All participating authorities must be required to monitor and demonstrate evidence of passenger numbers and other measures of customer satisfaction.

2.9. Respondents are encouraged to bring to our attention research, evidence or publications which the Department should consider as part of this refranchising process.

Railfuture's publication, *Britain's Growing Railway*, published in 2010, has evidence of the success of new and reopened stations and train services in exceeding official forecasts of usage. Railfuture Wales has published its Wales Rail Development Plan calling for expansion of train services and a Progressive Electrification Plan for Wales.

The former Rail Passenger Committee for Western England produced a study of the Cardiff- Portsmouth route, *The Main Line They Shouldn't Ignore*, in 2004. The Cotswold Line Promotion Group has undertaken passenger counts when trains stopped experimentally at Ascott-under-Wychwood on Saturdays in December 2011 in a bid to reinstate regular Saturday stops at the station.

2.10. The final specification will seek to avoid a prescriptive approach and to balance passenger, taxpayer and stakeholder interests. Respondents are encouraged to consider which aspects of the specification they believe should be mandated and which could be left to greater commercial discretion.

Specification of first and last trains, average daytime frequency and peak seating capacity should be mandatory for Mondays to Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. There must be a co-ordinated interval service in South Wales. The present pattern of two westbound services between Newport and Swansea by two TOCs within five minutes followed by a 55 minute gap is unacceptable. Other aspects could be left to commercial discretion.

There is a distinction between profit making services for which greater freedom is arguably of benefit and the commuting and local services for which specification is essential to ensure they meet wider economic and social needs.

2.11. What balance should be struck between end-to-end journey times and intermediate stops on long distance services ?

End to end journey times are often extended by poor connections. Good connectional opportunities provided by the existing franchise should be improved, not weakened. There is a need to reduce some connectional times with other operators, e.g. with Cross Country at Bristol Parkway.

There should be an appropriate mix of services on main lines to cater for different markets, i.e. fast end-to-end journeys for main centres; semi-fast trains to serve significant intermediate towns; and a possible third tier of stopping services for local commuting. These all need to conform to a “clockface timetable” to facilitate “clockface” connections. There must be the infrastructure for fast trains to overtake slower ones but also to maintain connections between them at major stations.

Taking the Paddington- Penzance route as an example, Plymouth City Council aspires (reasonably) to journey times of no more than three hours (ideally 2¾ hours) between Plymouth and London in both directions. Intermediate towns between Reading and Exeter aspire (also reasonably) to more regular calls by longer distance trains. Newbury and Frome are particularly badly served for westbound travel. The solution would involve a two-tier service in which the hourly train between London and stations west of Exeter would normally be fast between Reading and Taunton. The semi-fasts would also run hourly to serve intermediate towns and connect into the faster trains. We believe there will be sufficient HSTs displaced by electrification to provide hourly Exeter-Paddington semi-fasts but there may also be other trains available: for example, many of the Class 180s were originally used on the Paddington- West of England route. Some of the semi-fasts should be extended beyond Exeter to serve Torbay.

2.12. Can the indicative modelled InterCity service pattern be improved (noting the IEP availability in Table 3.5 and the availability of other fleets) ?

We would prefer the starting point to be the service pattern required by passengers rather than the composition of the fleet. The proposed hourly Paddington- Westbury IEP service might be better extended to Exeter (see 2.11 above), unless the Exeter- Paddington semi-fasts are worked by HSTs (see also 2.13). Five-car trains would be inappropriate for many services currently worked by eight-car. We would not like to see a reduction in the number of seats provided as the indicative timetable suggests a 50% reduction in seating between Cardiff and Swansea. Nine-car Pendolinos operated by Virgin West Coast are being extended to 11 cars, an example of costly alteration to a fleet which was too small to meet demand.

2.13. Whether and, if so, how many of the current HSTs should be subject to life-enhancement refurbishment and what would their revised life-expectancy be ?

The HST remains a popular train. We would ask what refurbishment (e.g. retention toilets?) is actually required and what will happen to the eight sets owned by First Group if it does not win the franchise. The GW HST fleet was refurbished in 2007 and should be capable of at least 10-15 years' further useful life. HSTs will be needed to provide services west of Exeter and Swansea, as well as the Exeter- Paddington semi-fast trains. The London & South East RUS proposed additional fast peak high-density Reading- Paddington services. HSTs starting at Basingstoke and Newbury could cover this initially to avoid the high capital cost of new stock used only during peak periods.

2.14. Should other InterCity rolling stock, either new or cascaded, be procured for these services ?

Yes, if necessary to maintain and enhance non-electrified long-distance services. Class 180s could be used on routes such as Paddington- Worcester- Hereford and Cardiff- Portsmouth. Class 165s and 166s displaced by electrification of Thames Valley services could provide additional capacity on Inter-Urban routes.

2.15. What should be the future of the overnight service between Paddington and Penzance, given that the sleeping cars and, especially, the locomotives, are ageing ?

The overnight service and its Reading stop should be retained for its importance to the economies of London, Devon and Cornwall. It is competitive with long car journeys in view of the high cost of petrol and allows a very full day for business or pleasure without the need to travel up to five hours each way sitting upright! The Class 57 locomotives could be replaced by Class 67s, which are under 15 years old. Displaced HST power cars might be used as traction for an interim period. Growing freight traffic will probably see more locomotives being built during the life of the franchise.

The viability of the service could be improved by broadening its traffic base by carrying parcels and mails as suggested by McNulty (see also 2.25) and by better marketing, e.g. for travel to the Scilly Isles.

2.16. What is the best balance between fast outer commuter services and intermediate stops? How could the residual suburban services best be optimised once Crossrail starts?

Peak journey times and frequencies between Reading, Twyford, Maidenhead, Slough and Paddington should not be degraded from the times offered by current peak semi-fast services as a result of the introduction of Crossrail. Longer trains would improve capacity if frequencies cannot be increased.

The combination of stopping and semi-fast services on the North Downs line does work but consideration should be given to whether increasing frequencies would generate an economic return. Service frequency on the Greenford branch should be increased to four per hour to match the Transport for London (TfL) target for Metro services.

There is also a need for connections to Heathrow from the west because the South West Region is the second largest source of UK passengers using this airport. Some outer London stations such as Ealing Broadway which are major centres of inward commuting need semi-fast trains. Some journeys from stations west of Reading on the Newbury line could be served by Exeter-Paddington semi-fasts. Newbury-Bedwyn services should extend to Westbury or via a reopened line to Marlborough.

2.17. Under current plans for electrification, direct services from the Henley and Bourne End branches to Paddington would still have to be diesel-operated. Respondents are encouraged to consider if these services would represent a good use of timetable slots on the main line, given that these slots could be used by higher-capacity electric trains.

Portion working should be considered, either splitting/joining Henley and Bourne End services at Maidenhead, or splitting/joining Reading and branch line services at Twyford and Maidenhead. Peak journey times and frequencies between Henley/Bourne End and Paddington should not be degraded from the times offered by current peak through services. These two branches should be electrified, with provision for reopening Bourne End- High Wycombe.

2.18. Are the services that extend eastwards from Portsmouth to Brighton the best use of GW diesel rolling stock, in view of the fact that there are frequent electric services provided by Southern on this route, or could this rolling stock usefully be redeployed elsewhere?

Great Malvern/Cardiff- Brighton trains must continue to offer through journey opportunities between Western England and South Wales and the South Coast. Many people connect from Devon and Cornwall into these trains at Westbury now that South West Trains no longer operates west of Exeter. The essential point is that what the passengers want is more important than optimising stock utilisation. Through trains are a great asset and it is well known that

passengers, especially older people and those with luggage, dislike changing trains.

2.19. Should branch line services continue to call at all branch line stations, or could the needs of most passengers be better met by omission of some of the intermediate stops on some or all of the trains, so that the final destination is reached more quickly ?

Every branch line is unique, with its own core flows of traffic which determine its priorities for stopping patterns, main line connections and any seasonal variations. The health of any line depends on developing its largest potential flows. It would be futile to chase every minor flow of business, although some can be captured by means of request stops, as is already done on many of the Devon and Cornwall branches. Longer branch lines such as Exeter-Barnstaple, which depend on through traffic from main lines, would attract more passengers and revenue if the branch line journey were faster. In some cases low average speeds are due more to infrastructure constraints, e.g. the location of passing loops. There should be an element of discretion for the operator to omit certain stops, based on passenger demand. Journey times are less of an issue on shorter branches.

2.20. Do the medium-distance regional services (e.g. Cardiff- Portsmouth and Worcester/Gloucester- Weymouth) adequately serve the needs of all passengers along their lines of route, or would shorter-distance services, targeted on local travel requirements, be more beneficial ?

These services link major centres of tourism and should not be truncated but ought to be faster to attract business passengers. It is local journeys from the lesser intermediate stations which would be better served by shorter-distance trains. Direct journeys between sizeable towns and cities, e.g. Cardiff-Bath, Gloucester-Bath, Newport-Southampton, should continue to be available. Cardiff- Portsmouth at 142 miles should be regarded as a long-distance service.

2.21. Taking into account the current service pattern and the future changes, respondents are encouraged to suggest train service changes that they believe will be affordable, deliver value for money and provide a strong commercial, social or economic case.

The East-West Rail proposals include services from Milton Keynes to Reading. If the “missing links” between Reading and Gatwick (see item 2.5 (b)) were to be electrified, an electric service could operate between Gatwick and Oxford, using dual voltage Class 319s, to connect with East-West Rail and thereby create an orbital route avoiding London. Connection times between North Downs and Tonbridge line services at Redhill should be optimised.

Main line services should be operated via the Dartmouth Steam Railway to Kingswear and via the West Somerset Railway to Minehead, by agreement with the respective heritage railways and funded by the contributory revenue from journeys originating on the GW network. The potential income is likely to be sufficient to support worthwhile infrastructure upgrades on the heritage lines concerned (e.g. to improve capacity and raise speeds). At the moment,

only a small percentage of the longer-distance traffic for Kingswear and Minehead is being captured by the parallel bus services.

2.22. Respondents are encouraged to consider appropriate train times and service frequencies during planned disruption for the life of the new franchise.also to consider alternative service propositions.

Substitute bus services ought to be a last resort during planned disruption. Difficulties often arise in accommodating passengers on trains running at a reduced frequency and in maintaining bus/rail connections. Where there are diversionary routes they should be used, if necessary with pilot traincrews including those from other operators. Passengers should also be advised to travel by alternative routes and/or other TOCs' services at no additional charge (see also 2.30).

Traincrew route knowledge needs to be maintained for diversionary routes including the following:

Old Oak Common West Junction- Greenford East Junction- Hanwell Junction.

The new Bicester curve (when it opens).

Hawkeridge curve, Westbury.

Thingley Junction- Melksham- Bradford Junction.

Yeovil Pen Mill- Yeovil Junction- Exeter St. Davids.

Bristol Parkway/Filton- Avonmouth- Narrowways Junction.

Cardiff- Bridgend via the Vale of Glamorgan.

Briton Ferry- Llanelli via the Swansea District Line.

Electrification of all four tracks between Severn Tunnel Junction and Cardiff would allow electric trains to use the relief lines if the main lines were disrupted.

2.23. Respondents are encouraged to consider (a) the steps which bidders should be expected to take to meet passenger demand and the most appropriate mechanisms for ensuring additional capacity is provided when it becomes necessary.

The franchise should be structured to make the franchise holder responsible for taking whatever steps (including the necessary investment) are needed to meet growth in demand, so that increased capacity is provided profitably rather than at a cost to the taxpayer.

For example in the Bristol area, longer trains on the Cardiff- Portsmouth and Bristol-Weymouth services would improve revenue and be a more efficient use of train paths. A half-hourly service on Bristol suburban routes might be largely self-financing, based on the experience of the enhanced service on the Severn Beach line which has required less subsidy from the City Council because of a dramatic rise in usage (see 2.7). The necessary investment for half-hourly local services would be re-quadrupling of Filton Bank (see 2.5) and implementation of the Greater Bristol Metro scheme being progressed by the West of England Partnership. This would include reopening of Saltford station.

Class 165s and 166s displaced from the London area by electrification would attract more passengers by offering higher standards of passenger comfort than Class 150s.

and (b) how capacity should be measured and appropriate targets set.

The operator should propose performance and customer satisfaction measures (including value for money, punctuality/reliability, crowding, station satisfaction, dealing with delays, fleet performance) and targets to be achieved against each measure after 5/10/15 years. Benchmarks could include actual loadings as a percentage of seats on the train and the length of time or distance for which a predetermined level of overcrowding occurs on particular trains or routes.

2.24. Respondents are encouraged to highlight any performance areas of particular concern.

There has been too much emphasis on Punctuality at end destination, which ignores the ability to maintain connections at intermediate locations. Connections are particularly important where an incoming train normally supplies a significant proportion of passengers for a less frequent branch or secondary service. TOCs already have Contingency Plans agreed with Network Rail which include policies for connections at specific stations and for regulation of trains at critical junctions. Their effectiveness could be measured by monitoring the percentage of advertised connections which are maintained between specified train services at a selection of locations.

Breaches of the Passenger Charter need to be reported so that underlying problems such as infrastructure constraints can be addressed.

2.25. Respondents are encouraged to consider how best to improve the overall efficiency of the rail industry to enable reductions in unit costs to be achieved.

Faster journey times reduce costs by improving stock and staff utilisation. An alliance between the operator and Network Rail, along the lines proposed for South West Trains, would reduce costs by aligning objectives and improving cooperation. Motivating Conductors to go through the train rather than sitting in the back cab (as often happens on the North Downs line) would reduce fare evasion. When trains are crowded, this is often not possible, so mobile Revenue Protection teams should work areas where fare evasion is likely. The busier unstaffed stations, eg Blackwater (footfall of 400,000 passengers p.a.), Highbridge and Radley, ought to be staffed to combat ticketless travel.

Longer trains would also make better use of route capacity, particularly on main lines where paths need to be available for freight. Class 153 railcars operating alone are an inefficient use of a signalling section and are best confined to Winter services on rural branches. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to divide and combine sets at places such as Gloucester and Westbury. This said, suburban services in conurbations (Bristol, Exeter etc.) need to be relatively frequent (half-hourly) to attract passengers from cars.

Widening the scope of the franchise beyond passenger traffic could improve the economics of longer-distance trains. There is a growing market for internet shopping which the railways are well placed to exploit by carrying parcels at speed. As well as the overnight service discussed in item 2.15, IEPs and HSTs could carry parcels on all the main routes from Paddington.

The rail industry would become more cost-effective through closer working relationships between TOCs and Network Rail, e.g. joint Control Offices as at Banbury (Chiltern Railways) and Cardiff (Arriva Trains Wales). Adversarial practices such as Delay Attribution, expensive in terms of staff time and energy, need to be replaced by more constructive dialogue within the industry.

2.26. Respondents are encouraged to consider the best method for funding major station enhancements and any local accessibility issues that they believe need addressing.

TOCs should take over this work from Network Rail (as ATW has done at some stations in Wales) as they have first hand knowledge and experience of passenger needs. At Gloucester NR has installed a partly covered walkway between Platforms 1 and 2 but it is open at the sides and so does not shelter people properly from driving rain. We feel sure that FGW would have specified a higher standard of weather protection! Equally, new facilities should not be over-engineered as with the new £22m footbridge at Newport which causes great inconvenience for passengers and staff as well as lengthening connectional times.

The operator should work with local bus companies to optimise connecting times and physical interchange between bus and rail services. Wiltshire Council's proposed transport hubs at railway stations are an example. Opportunities may arise to improve rail stations when adjacent land is redeveloped, e.g. plans to rebuild Gloucester bus station as part of a commercial development may offer scope to improve walking routes to the railway station. It seems unacceptable that there are major towns off the rail network, such as Ilfracombe and Chard, whose main bus service does not provide a link to either town's main railhead (Barnstaple and Taunton in these two cases).

2.27. Respondents are encouraged to consider which merit consideration for future improvement under these schemes and how such schemes could be funded.

Key station improvements should be made a franchise commitment to be funded by the operator, so that its profits are a fair reward for its investment risk. Other methods of funding include commercial redevelopment of adjacent land (see 2.26 above). Local authorities could also make LSTF bids or raise funds via the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Stations where congestion would be reduced by reinstating or opening new platform lines include Cardiff Central, Chippenham, Westbury and Oxford. At Chippenham and Westbury, track needs to be relaid into currently disused platform faces, while at Oxford a new bay has been proposed south of the

Botley Road bridge. Reinstatement of the main line platforms at Pangbourne would remove the need to hire buses when the relief lines are closed for Engineering work. When resignalling becomes due at Cheltenham, the opportunity should be taken to improve operational flexibility by making both platforms bi-directional and providing additional sidings and crossovers.

More weather protection is needed at Barnstaple, Bridgend, Didcot (Platform 1), Newport (Platform 1), Newton Abbot, Plymouth, Severn Tunnel Junction, Taunton (on the island platform) and Trowbridge. Gloucester and Taunton, for example, need better interchange with buses.

2.28. Respondents are encouraged to consider how security and safety might be improved, together with any local safety issues that they believe need addressing.

Adequate staffing levels are the most obvious and passenger-friendly way to achieve these aims. Some specification in the franchise will be necessary.

The franchisee should be mandated to increase the number of Secure Stations. Existing British Transport Police (BTP) offices at stations should be retained. Security firms could be used at smaller stations considered to be a risk, as now at Bridgwater. Rail user groups and local authorities could meet BTP regularly to discuss ways of fighting antisocial behaviour on trains and at unstaffed or partly staffed stations. Frome Public Transport Users Association already does so. Retail outlets, including cafes and taxi offices, maintain a human presence outside ticket office hours and should be encouraged to sell tickets.

2.29. Respondents are encouraged to consider how ticket purchase could be made easier and how to minimise revenue loss across the franchise.

Ticket machines need to be more user-friendly, i.e. show routes and travel restrictions unambiguously. In rural areas shops and post offices could be encouraged to sell rail tickets. All London area stations should have card readers to handle Oyster or Oyster-compatible tickets. Similar readers should be introduced with SMART ticketing in other suburban networks. At larger stations such as Oxford and Reading, Travel Centres (or at least separate desks to handle enquiries and advance ticket purchases) should be reinstated to reduce queues at the ticket office.

More innovative fares are required, e.g. carnet tickets which would encourage people working three days a week to travel on the train and so could be self funding.

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

All stations should have a minimum of one information screen and an announcing system on each platform. FGW has replaced most if not the whole of the information systems it had inherited from Thames Trains and Wessex

Trains. The latter system was unsatisfactory because it did not track trains at all TRUST reporting points. The latest FGW announcing system appears to be accurate, clear and not too repetitive and should be provided at all stations.

At larger stations, where trains may arrive out of sequence or be re-platformed, the ideal solution would be live announcements made after dialogue with signalling centres. During disruption, passengers deserve to be made aware of alternative trains and routes.

2.31. The Department is considering the appropriate approach for monitoring and improving service quality in the new franchise and respondents are encouraged to consider the proposals suggested, to highlight any alternative proposals and to make recommendations on any issues that may be identified.

The operator should be tasked and incentivised to improve against a range of clearly defined and understood quality measures, similar to those set by TfL for the London Overground concession, e.g. value for money, Punctuality/Reliability, seating capacity, station satisfaction, fleet performance, managing delays, overall customer satisfaction. Please see also 2.24.

2.32. Respondents are encouraged to consider what levels of catering should be provided.

On longer-distance express trains, full meal services should be available for both First and Standard Class passengers. Vending machines could be installed on some regional trains. At stations, small independent outlets should be encouraged as their food is likely to be cheaper and more local.

2.33. Respondents are encouraged to consider local accessibility and mobility issues and suggest how improvements could be made.

At the larger stations which currently do not have easy access for Disabled passengers, it may be better to install lifts rather than convoluted footbridges which slow down the vast majority of users. For new or reopened stations, more economic ways of improving access (such as the ramps from a road bridge as at Llantwit Major) need to be considered so that the cost of accessibility does not undermine the viability of opening the stations.

Bramley (Hants) is on a busy main line but has no footbridge. The only means of getting from one platform to the other is the level crossing, which may be closed for up to 10 minutes at a time. The same is true of Ash, with the added problem of missed connections when travelling between Reading and Aldershot. Bidders should be invited to resolve the questions of access and parking at these stations.

2.34. Respondents are encouraged to consider what environmental targets could be set within the franchise specification.

In view of the need to reduce carbon emissions and dependency on oil, there should be a target to increase the percentage of services worked by electric traction.

Recycling of waste collected from trains and at stations should be encouraged. We regard FGW's stated achievement in recycling 96% of waste at Oxford station as a gold standard for the new franchise.

Section 3

Recommendations for specific Train Service Routes

3.1 Paddington- Bristol

There should continue to be a minimum half-hourly Paddington- Bristol service via Bath as at present. In addition some trains should call only at Bath and Reading so as to provide a faster service at some times of the day.

The services via Trowbridge and Newbury (05.20 Bristol T.M. and 17.06 Paddington, both SX) should continue because they provide a useful link (and traincrew route knowledge) between West Wiltshire and the Thames Valley.

More trains should call at Keynsham in view of its potential as a railhead for North East Somerset and South and East Bristol.

The Didcot-Bristol section via Bath should accommodate the suggested Oxford-South Wales east-west link service (see 2.3).

3.2 Paddington- South Wales

The existing hourly Paddington- Swansea service should be retained, including the four additional peak services. At present the last Saturday departure from Paddington to Swansea is at 20.45. We believe there is a case for two later services, e.g. at 21.45 and 22.45.

The Paddington- Cardiff services should run seven days a week, not just five as at present and some could be extended to Carmarthen via the Swansea District Line.

It is essential that all South Wales trains continue to call at Bristol Parkway for connections with Cross Country. Priority should be given to connections to the North East and Scotland rather than to Manchester because there are direct trains between South Wales and Manchester operated by ATW.

We are concerned that replacing eight-car HSTs with five-car IEPs will not provide adequate capacity between Cardiff and Swansea in the peak hours, at weekends and when major events are held at the Millennium Stadium.

3.3 Paddington- Exeter- Plymouth- Penzance

As already suggested (item 2.11), there should be two trains per hour between London and Exeter via Westbury: one being a fast train calling only at Reading and Taunton en route to Plymouth and Cornwall; and the second being a semi-fast between Paddington and Exeter, calling at Reading, Newbury, Pewsey, Westbury, Frome, Castle Cary, Taunton and Tiverton Parkway, with some trains extended to Paignton. Potential new stations at Somerton, Langport, Wellington and Cullompton could also be served by these semi-fasts.

Between Paignton and Plymouth there should be a new hourly local service calling at all existing stations, plus new ones such as Kingskerswell, Brent and Plympton. Some trains could be extended into Cornwall as a cross-Plymouth service.

In view of the boom in surfing holidays, the Newquay branch deserves a more frequent service, at least during summer.

3.4 Reading- Basingstoke

We are very concerned that this route, which is a major artery between the South Coast and the Midlands, the North and Scotland, is being considered as a GW branch line. Elderly Class 150s have recently largely displaced superior Class 165s on this FGW service.

The service must not be left to wither. Possible solutions are

(1) electrification as part of the GW scheme because the route shares the two-mile section from Reading to Southcote Junction with Newbury line trains. Basingstoke could then enjoy more direct access to Crossrail, HS1 and HS2. Pressure on overcrowded SWT services to Waterloo would be relieved. This would also support Cross Country Voyagers converted to bio-mode.

(2) transfer of the line to the SW franchise. This would allow trains from the South Coast and Salisbury to terminate at Reading.

3.5 Paddington- Worcester- Hereford via Oxford

To maximise the benefits of a double track railway between Charlbury and Evesham, there should be a regular interval hourly service between Paddington and Worcester, calling at Reading, Oxford, Hanborough, Charlbury, Kingham, Moreton-in-Marsh, Honeybourne, Pershore and Worcester with some extensions to Great Malvern/Hereford. Direct trains to/from Reading and London must be retained after electrification to Oxford, by using IEPs and Class 180s.

The Oxfordshire halts (Combe, Finstock, Ascott-under-Wychwood and Shipton) should have a Saturday service for shoppers; and additional peak hour services at Ascott and Shipton for commuters. Despite recent redoubling of the line which has provided a second platform at Ascott, this station and Shipton have a very poor service. Transfer of the existing Slough stops to Bristol and South

Wales services would allow additional calls at Ascott and Shipton to test the market from these stations.

A later last train from Oxford would cater for London theatre visits.

Railfuture supports reopening of the line from Stratford-upon-Avon to Cheltenham which would link major tourist centres. The first stage from Stratford to Honeybourne is currently proposed to be the subject of detailed studies. It may be that a service over this route could be operated as part of the Great Western franchise or there could be collaboration with other operators.

3.6 Bristol- Gloucester/Worcester

As very few of Cross Country's North East/Manchester services call at Gloucester, journey times between this city and Bristol compare unfavourably with those between Cheltenham and Bristol. Another major deficiency along this corridor is the poor service between Worcester and Bristol, despite Worcester's importance as a centre of tourism and as the hub of train services from five directions. The result is that rail journeys between Bristol, Gloucester and stations such as Bromsgrove, Kidderminster or Stourbridge are slow and often involve changing at both Worcester stations.

Our proposal is for a semi-fast Birmingham/Worcester- Bristol service, on the alternate hour, to supplement the existing two-hourly trains. South of Worcester the semi-fasts should call only at Ashchurch, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Bristol Parkway and Bristol Temple Meads. Ashchurch would then have an hourly service for the greater benefit of Tewkesbury. The existing Worcester- Gloucester- Paddington services should also call at Ashchurch.

Existing stopping trains on this route would serve potential new stations at Hunts Grove (Quedgeley), Stonehouse Bristol Road and Charfield.

3.7 Cardiff- Bristol - Taunton

As stated above (item 2.6), the existing Cardiff- Taunton service should be upgraded to semi-fast status and extended to Exeter Central, serving new stations at Wellington, Cullompton and Willand. The service should be non-stop between Bristol Temple Meads and Worle, with existing stations between these points being covered by the Greater Bristol Metro service between Yate/Bath and Weston.

3.8 Bristol suburban services

Half-hourly cross- Bristol services should be introduced on weekdays by means of the Greater Bristol Metro scheme. A half-hourly service at Keynsham could be achieved by supplementing existing calls with proposed Clifton Down- Bath, Bristol- Oxford and some London trains. Bus/rail integration could be improved

with through ticketing and easier physical interchange at stations such as Stapleton Road which are on Showcase Bus routes.

After the Portishead line is reopened, restoration of passenger services on the Henbury Loop should be a high priority. In the longer term, consideration should be given to restoring rail services to Clevedon and Norton-Radstock. The case for reopening the former lines from Bristol to Yate and Bath via Mangotsfield should also be explored.

3.9 Cardiff - Portsmouth/Brighton

This service links nine cities and a number of important junction stations connecting with radial routes. The normal train formations are three-car Class 158s but overcrowding can occur, particularly between Bristol and Bath, and more generally at weekends. The 16.59 Brighton- Bristol is always crowded. Timings need to be accelerated, trains need to be longer (minimum of four cars) and to include First Class accommodation to attract business passengers. This may be best achieved by operating some *additional* limited stop services aimed at the business user.

One anomaly which needs addressing is that Dean and Mottisfont & Dunbridge stations are served only by SWT but managed by FGW. It would make sense to transfer these two stations, along with Romsey, to the SW franchise.

3.10 Bristol - Weymouth

This line is both a scenic journey and a key link to the South Coast as will be demonstrated during the Olympic sailing events this summer. The route has experienced tremendous growth in usage from 565,000 passenger journeys in 2002/03 to 1,489,000 in 2008/09, a rise of 163 % (source: Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership). There is enough business to justify an hourly service. Additional and more modern rolling stock is required, especially in summer, with faster journey times and trains timed to suit office hours in Yeovil. Additional track capacity is required, e.g. redoubling Castle Cary - Yeovil or Yeovil- Maiden Newton; and longer term consideration should be given to installing a south-to-west chord to enable trains to call at Yeovil Junction, to exploit the market for travel between the Dorset coast and Devon and Cornwall. The ultimate aim should be for an hourly service between Weymouth, Dorchester, Yeovil and Bristol.