

Ms Claire Mann
Managing Director
South Western Railway

please reply to:
63 Church Lane
Wool
Wareham
BH20 6DD

dec22consultation@swrailway.com

tony.smale@railfuture.org.uk

13th September 2021

Dear Ms Mann,

South Western Railway Timetable Consultation December 2022 Supplementary Response.

Further to our response dated 26th August 2021, Railfuture do have some additional points that they would wish you to consider following the “round table” discussions. These comments should be read in conjunction with our original submission.

Original Generic Point 4. Recent observations support the contention that leisure travel has recovered strongly with many off peak and weekend services very well loaded. Indeed, we have had several reports of crush loading on services. The proposal to reduce off-peak services looks even more bizarre in the light of emerging experience and this needs to be addressed as a priority.

Original Generic Point 8. It is clear from the “round table” discussion that many stakeholders share our concerns about the methodology used to justify these changes. Whilst noting the commitment to come back to consultees with more detail, we would like to understand the extent to which the survey of user intentions was influenced by notion that responders assumed that a return to “normal” meant they expected a normal (i.e. pre Covid) timetable would be operated. Were users aware of the likely frequency reductions you proposed as this may well have affected their response? It is also an established fact that peak hour overcrowding suppresses demand and therefore if a full pre Covid peak service were to be provided, it is likely that passenger numbers in the peaks might well recover faster than the survey indicates. Railfuture would like to suggest that a full explanation of the methodology is provided to stakeholders as soon as possible so the conclusions can be validated or challenged.

Line Specific Comments.

Comment 18 (Waterloo to Portsmouth Route). Railfuture failed to raise the issue of the loss of peak frequency at stations South of Haslemere in its original response. We did so at the appropriate “round table” and note the response by Phil Dominey that he thought the issue had been addressed. A reduction of 50% to the peak frequency at these stations, but particularly Liphook and Liss is not acceptable given the volume of peak travel from these stations and the rapid development of housing in the area. We look forward to seeing your proposals to address this issue.

Comment 24 (Waterloo to Exeter St David’s Route). Since our original submission, we have discovered following a GWR timetable consultation exercise, that GWR will not be providing any additional services between Exeter and Honiton /Axminster. One can only

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conclude that your comments on page 34 are either misleading, or it shows a marked lack of coordination between SWR and GWR on this very important local issue. This matter needs to be resolved as matter of urgency.

Comment 30 (Salisbury to Bristol Temple Meads Route). As in item 24, Railfuture have discovered as a result of a GWR timetable consultation exercise that far from “continuing to meet demand” (page 37 of the SWR proposal) Great Western propose to withdraw a number of services on this route. At the “round table” discussion it was clear that the SWR team were not aware of this. Again, one can only conclude that the comments in the SWR document are misleading, or that there has been a lack of coordination in developing these proposals jointly. This matter needs to be addressed urgently.

We look forward to a detailed response to our comments and welcome the commitment made at the “round table” to ongoing dialogue.

Yours sincerely

Tony Smale
Railfuture
Secretary Wessex branch