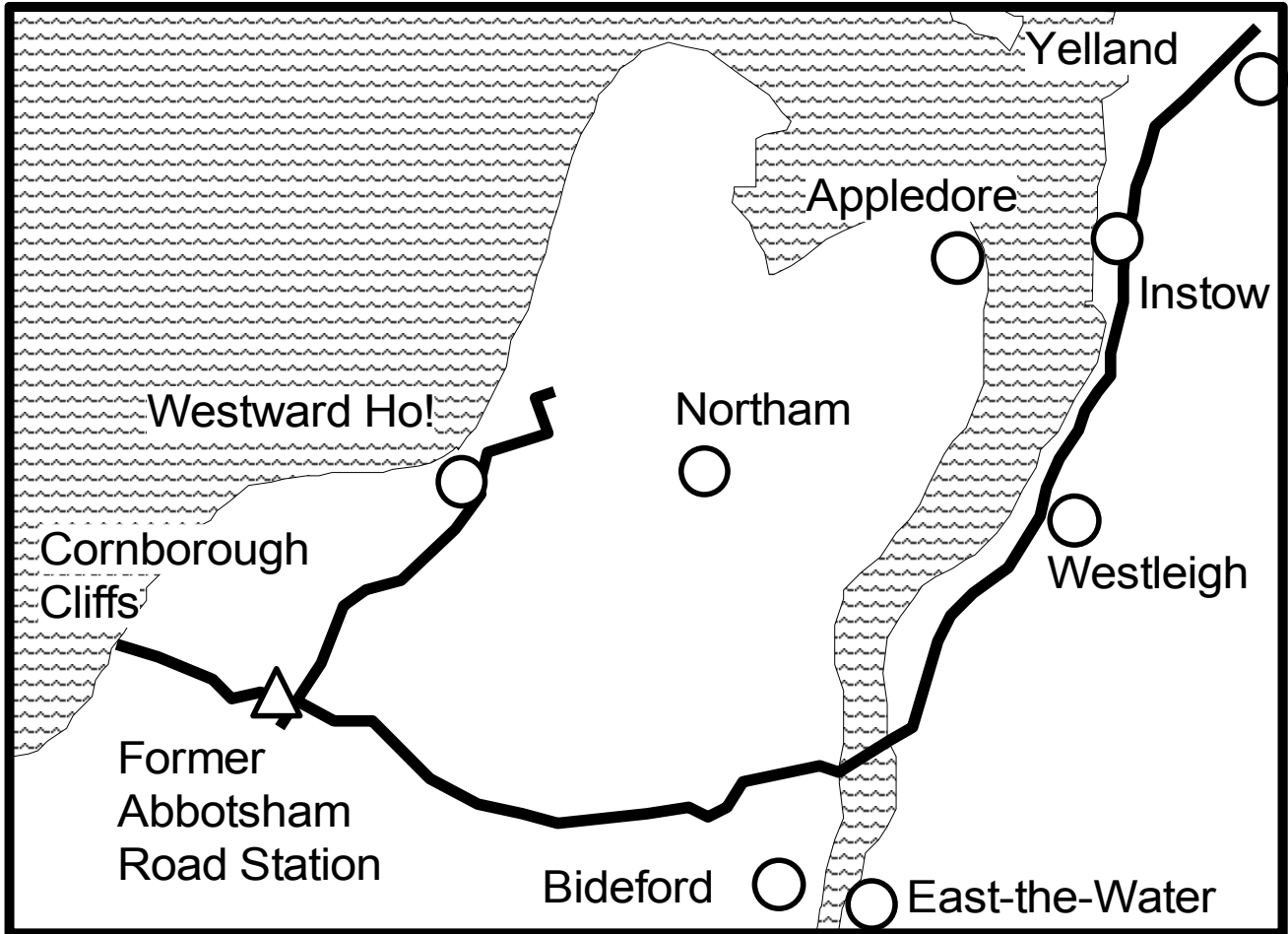


RAILFUTURE, SOUTH WEST BRANCH NEWSLETTER.

Number 21, April 2002.

Editor: Gerard Duddridge



The Taw - Torrridge Project - Unfortunately, not a railway & a threat to the Bideford Reopening.

THIS ISSUE

Report of the 2002 AGM in Plymouth
Sewage Pipeline
Dawlish Sea Wall Work
Trams for Exeter
Tiverton Parkway Cycleway Link
Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton
Bodmin and Wenford
Helston Branch
Bus/Rail Links
Tipton St. John
Disused Station Sales
Goss Moor Bridge Hit Again and Again
First Great Western Under Attack

First Great Western Bids for Extension
First Great Western Pledges
For First Great Western Read First
Wessex Trains Take Over Wales and West
New Sunday Services for Cornish Branches
Cornish Bus Service Improvements
Liskeard Station Transport Interchange
Exeter St. Thomas
Devon Railcard
The Way Ahead
Lyme Regis
Local Plans
Diary

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In proposing the extension of the Exeter to Barnstaple railway to Bideford I have often thought it a pity that the railway could not continue to the coast at Westward Ho! The Taw-Torridge Project appears to do just this with a network recreating the old Bideford, Westward Ho and Appledore Railway, and then linked from the main railway network by bridge across the Torridge at Bideford.

Unfortunately the Taw-Torridge Project is not a railway, but a sewage disposal enhancement scheme for South West Water. East of the former Abbotsham Road station about a ½ mile section of the pipeline is to use the trackbed of the long closed Appledore Railway. Railfuture has no real regrets about this, but more seriously the project threatens the reopening of the Barnstaple to Bideford railway. From Yelland the pipeline joins the Bideford trackbed on the north side of Instow and now runs beneath it for 1½ miles as far as Westleigh. From there it transfers to the east side of the main road almost to Bideford East the Water. It then passes under the Torridge to an outfall on Cornborough cliffs, plus the branch from Westward Ho!.

There must be something about north Devon and water. Last winter's floods from the River Taw devastated rail travel on the Barnstaple line. Now, South West Water has dealt this blow. Informally, Railtrack sources have told me that a pipeline would be OK if it was to the side of the ballasted formation, buried at least 2 meters deep and additionally cased. However, this has not been done and it has been laid no deeper than 1 meter and with just a polythene sheathing.

Railfuture learnt about the scheme just before Christmas, when it was really too late to do anything about it. You will see elsewhere in the newsletter our letter to South West Water. They replied claiming they were unaware of any interest in reopening the railway. They had not troubled themselves to contact the Rail Passengers Committee, who have included the line in their document 'Western Advance'. Just a few minutes spent on the internet would have revealed the Bideford and Instow groups world wide web page (see <http://bidefordrailway.freeserve.co.uk>) and their clear statement, '*We are committed to re-opening the railway between Bideford and Barnstaple*'. Clearly the landowner, Devon County Council, who have always been antagonistic to the reopening did not object.

In their reply South West Water also confirm that they would object to the railway reopening. If any readers knew about this scheme it would have been very helpful if you could have told us before it was too late. To a great extent we are reliant on our members to help stop all sorts of developers destroying our Railfuture for the South West. If you object to South West Water determining transport policy in this way please write to them. Perhaps this will persuade them to consult more widely in the future. Remember the presence of the pipeline does not stop us from campaigning for the reopening, but it will increase the cost of restoring the railway to Bideford and make it less likely to happen in the foreseeable future.

RDS South West Branch Officers

Chairman: Gerard Duddridge, 67 Higher Exwick Hill, Exwick, Exeter. EX4 2AW

Secretary: Stuart Walker, 149 Polwithen Drive, Carbis Bay, St. Ives, Cornwall. TR26 2SW.

Report of the 2002 AGM in Plymouth

The South West Branch's Annual General Meeting was held in Plymouth at the Swarthmore Centre on 23rd March.

The Committee was elected as follows:

Chairman: Gerard Duddridge
Secretary: Stuart Walker
Vice Chairman: Derek Buttivant
Committee: David Bailey
Hugh Butterworth
David Duckworth
Peter Mulley
George Palin

The branch remains without an elected Treasurer and this job continues to be undertaken by the Secretary.

Our guest speaker was Charles Belcher, Wessex Trains Managing Director.

Charles Belcher, at our AGM, made it clear that national Express Group would not support a single franchise for the main Paddington to Penzance service and local stopping and branch line services. One of the options the SRA are now considering for the future of Wessex is its merger with the Great Western franchise to form a 'Greater Western' franchise. Mr Belcher felt that merging the franchises would make an unwieldy and cumbersome franchise and that resources would be concentrated on services that make money which would adversely affect the branch lines.

He failed to point out that Wales and West had previously deliberately reduced branch line services to introduce new competing services with Virgin and First Great Western - something that would be unnecessary with a merged franchise. The potential for using profits from the lucrative Paddington services to 'cross-

subsidise' loss making stopping and branch line services was also not explored. The earliest a Greater Western franchise could be created was 2006 when the existing First Group contract ends.

Regardless of the future, Mr Belcher said that Wessex would be run as a 'going concern' with a focus on customer service and quality. Plans are also in place to create separate business units for Devon and Cornwall and for the Bristol area.

There are also a number of Rail Partnership Programme schemes under development including:

- - addressing capacity on the Exmouth branch so that the half hourly service applies to all stations and there are longer trains,
- - Re-opening Bere Alston to Tavistock. Providing planning issues can be resolved this could happen in 3-4 years time,
- - Half hourly service to Falmouth and an all year Sunday service,
- - Additional 2 trains per day for Barnstaple. The SRA have asked for this to be reviewed so unfortunately this will not happen this summer.

Being considered are:

- Station improvements on the Barnstaple and Exmouth lines, at Newquay, Plymouth suburban stations and at Torre.
- Okehampton served at weekends all year round,
- Looe to have an all year round Sunday service.

Other improvements include the long over due refurbishment of the Class 150/2 Sprinters. Twenty five will be 'severely' refurbished from the end of March, one being delivered every four weeks. Seating will be replaced and tables provided.

Secretary Stuart Walker expressed disappointment that there were no improvements planned for the St Ives branch line. This was supported by members of the audience who felt that a year round Sunday service would carry a greater justification for this line than for Looe and Tamar Valley. One of Europe's most scenic railways, St Ives is to get no improvements to its services.

Sewage Pipeline under the Barnstaple to Bideford Railway Trackbed

As you will have seen from the cover and editorial Railfuture has become concerned about a sewage pipeline that is being constructed under the Bideford line trackbed. We wrote to the Chief Executive on 29th January 2002 and our letter is shown here and their reply on page 5.

We have also written to Railtrack for more technical information, but to date have not had a reply. However, we have learnt enough to realise that the pipeline will have to be moved. This was also the general view of South West Water's project manager for the sewerage scheme. The key issue in the future is likely to be who pays.

If any member has further information about the project can they tell the South West branch committee. If you are as concerned as we are please also write to South West Water:

The Chief Executive,
South West Water,
Peninsula House,
Rydon Lane,
EXETER
Devon EX2 7HR

29th January 2002.

Dear Sir,

We have become aware that South West Water is planning to lay a sewage pipeline beneath the track bed of the Barnstaple to Bideford railway line (Instow to Westleigh). Railfuture (formerly Railway Development Society) has been actively campaigning for the reopening of this railway and we are surprised that we were not consulted by South West Water about your pipeline proposal.

Could you please give us more information about the pipeline, such as the exact alignment, depth, the material to be used and the mode of construction? Are you aware of any other examples of similar sewage pipelines laid under active railway lines? If yes what problems have occurred?

We are of course concerned that your project may prejudice the railway reopening. Will South West Water become a future objector to the reopening? If the pipeline and railway are incompatible will South West Water ask for the costs incurred in diverting the pipeline? We are of course seeking assurances that South West Water will not actually object to and add to the costs of the railway project.

I would be grateful for your urgent help in this matter.

11 February 2002

Dear Mr Duddridge

**TAW TORRIDGE SEWAGE
TREATMENT SCHEME -
BARNSTAPLE TO BIDEFORD**

Thank you for your letter dated 29 January 2002.

I am sorry to say that we have not been made aware of your interest in this matter during the progression of the scheme over the last five years. We have consulted with the landowner, Devon County Council, throughout the design and agreed that reinstatement of the trail will improve the surface of the cycle track to meet their needs.

The pipeline is being laid using ductile iron, approximately 350mm diameter, backfilled with selected excavated material. It runs from our sewage treatment works at Yelland along the Tarka Trail towards Westleigh, but does divert onto farmland where shown on the enclosed plan.

As to the future laying of a railway track over the pipeline, I regret that South West Water would object to this and the cost of diverting the rising main would fall to those responsible for any future development.

I am sorry not to be able to give you a more positive reply, but with the project already committed and contractors laying the pipeline, we are in no position to change our proposals.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Programme Leader for the project,.....

Yours sincerely

R J Baty
Chief Executive

Devon and Cornwall Business Council

The Devon and Cornwall business council has recently become quite supportive of rail. Although we have not been in contact we seem to share many of their objectives. Mr Mitchell in the Western Morning News (12th October 2002) is reported as saying that the Business Council wants urgent action:

- to prevent flooding closing the main line at Cowley Bridge, Exeter,
- track improvements to allow shorter times to the Westcountry,
- double track for the Exeter-Waterloo line,
- a permanent solution to the problem of the Dawlish sea wall,
- replacement of the low bridge at Goss Moor,
- improvements on the branch line to Falmouth,
- a new rail link to Exeter Airport,
- Heathrow Express extended to Reading so as to serve the Westcountry.

Dawlish Sea Wall Work

A £2.3 million project to protect the sea wall has started. The project is building concrete defences at bedrock level installed below and in front of the wall so as to stop the sea undermining it. The two most vulnerable stretches will be covered from Langstone Rock to Dawlish and Parsons Tunnel to Sprey Point.

Hydrological work will also be done to stabilise the cliffs above the line.

Trams for Exeter

Some City Councillors have suggested trams for Exeter in the Express and Echo (e.g. 21st September 2001). The supporters called for a feasibility study for a route to the East Devon new town from the Exe Bridges roundabout via Fore Street, High Street and the Exeter to Exmouth line as far as Digby.

It was not made clear where trams would join the Exmouth line or whether they would replace the existing heavy rail service. However, the idea has been rejected by the majority of Councillors.

Railfuture is not disappointed by the rejection as we consider there is enormous scope to develop the heavy rail service. In our Rail Strategy (Section 14.1 page 107) we envisage a 'Metro-Style' service radiating from Exeter Central station which serves Exeter High Street. The East Devon new town station (Clyst Hayes/Broadclyst) can be served by a more frequent service of trains running to Honiton and Waterloo. They would only take 6 to 8 minutes from Exeter Central.

Railfuture is not against the idea of trams for Exeter, however, any kind of street network will face fierce competition for road space from existing users. A well developed heavy rail service would demonstrate the value of rail based public transport in the city. It might then be logical to evaluate tram routes such as Exeter St. Davids to Heavitree via the city centre.

Please send your views to us on the subject of developing light rail systems in the South West.

Tiverton Parkway Cycleway Link

A £250,000 cycle route between Tiverton Parkway and Willand 2 miles to the south was completed in September 2001. Part of the new route can be seen from the train on the east side of the railway.

Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton

The Western Morning News reported on 19th September that work on the Coast to Coast cycleway on the railway trackbed had been completed between Sourton and Lake.

Bodmin and Wenford

Due to increased costs Fitzgerald Lighting is no longer using rail for their shipments to Warrington and Leith.

The application by Bodmin and Wenford Rail freight Ltd. for a Light Railway Order, made on 23 December 1992 has now been withdrawn. The idea to reopen the Wenford line for china clay freight to take lorries off the local narrow roads was vigorously opposed. Now Stannon Pit and the clay dries at Wenford have closed.

Helston Branch

There is a proposal to re-open the Helston Branch between Truthall Halt and Nancegollen (clearly only as a tourist attraction). Bearing in mind that this is probably the most complete section of track bed on the branch (apparently the platform at Truthall is still there although hidden by vegetation), it might just come to fruition.

The only difficulty would be finding enough space for a terminus at Nancegollen. Onward progress to Gwinear road is not being considered because of the problems at Praze.

Digby Park and Ride

An experimental bus link has been started from Digby to the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital in the Wonford area of Exeter. It is operated by Dartline and runs every 15 minutes from 7am to 7:15pm on Mondays to Fridays. It is supported by the hospital to reduce parking and congestion problems there.

Bus/Rail Links

First Great Western have published a map of their bus/rail links, 'Connecting the West'. These are the links where it is possible to buy a through rail to bus ticket, and vice versa if bought in advance from a travel agent. This covers a large area including South Wales and the Thames Valley.

In our area it shows links such as Tiverton Parkway to Cullompton and Tiverton, Exeter to Bude and St. Austell to Mevagissey and the Eden Project. Importantly the map shows the areas where bus zone tickets have been developed. The Torbay zone is wide ranging and allows onward travel to Brixham and by bus to Kingswear. The zone also includes Newton Abbot for Chudleigh, Bovey Tracey and Ashburton.

The Plymouth zone is detailed by a leaflet published by First Western National, Plymouth City Bus, Plymouth City Council and Wales and West. It divides Plymouth into an inner and an outer zone beyond the A38 trunk road (Marsh Mills to St. Budeaux bypass) and includes Plymstock, Ernesettle and places reached by the 58/59 service (Shaugh Prior and Cornwood). Prices range from 50p for a single to the inner zone to £2.00 for an outer zone return. The ticket allows one change of buses to be made per journey.

Since February 17th the N bus from Exeter St. Davids station (also the H service) has been diverted to run via Musgrave Row near the library instead of the High Street. The idea originates from Exeter City Council who wish to reduce the number of buses running in Exeter High Street. However, the arrangement makes it less easy for passengers needing to change to other services in the High Street. Passengers may also find the stop too isolated to use in the evening after the library has closed.

Tipton St. John

In newsletter No. 20 Railfuture's objection to Planning Application Ref: 00/P2059 was mentioned. This was for a bungalow in the Grounds of Station House, Tipton St. John.

The Western Morning News (7th July 2001) reported that the station was for sale by Redferns of Ottery St. Mary. The asking price including one and half acres of level ground was £295,000. No mention was made of the planning permission to which we had objected, but outbuildings which are currently let were mentioned.

In December 2001 the station and grounds were being advertised by Savills of Exeter (joint agents with Redferns).

Disused Station Sales

The former Bramford Speke station on the Exeter to Tiverton line came on to the market with Stag's Estate Agency in June for an asking price of £225,000 (Express and Echo 14 June). The sale included 8 acres of land which has been organically farmed for 9 years, whilst the former trackbed has been planted as a wildflower meadow.

Railfuture is not campaigning for the Tiverton line to be reopened, but instead wishes to see an Exeter to Tiverton train service established via Tiverton Junction (Willand). However, Bramford Speke is in need of improved public transport as there are only 3 buses per week to Exeter. The nearest bus stops are 2½ miles away at Cowley and 1 mile across the fields at Stoke Cannon.

Bishops Nympton and Molland station also came onto the market in June. The £375,000 asking price included the entire site of about 1.5 acres with stationmaster's house, converted station building, various other buildings and a small paddock. Later the site was advertised in split lots for sale by public auction on the 16th August at the George Hotel, South Molton (Western Morning News 28/7/01). Guide prices were £125,000 for the station house and £80,000 for the station bungalow.

In Torridge District the former Torrington station (the Puffing Billy pub) came on to the market around November 2001. The asking price was £249,950 (Western Morning News 29/11/01).

The former goods shed at Ashburton was shown for sale by tender on March 25th (Western Morning News 9th March). It was described as a Freehold Grade 1 listed Commercial Building with potential for further development.

In St. Austell there are plans to use the former Carlyon Road goods depot site for a new housing project. The idea is to create a similar development to Poundbury village near Dorchester.

Goss Moor Bridge Hit Again & Again

The low 4.3 m Goss Moor bridge was hit at 10:15 by an westbound lorry carrying plastic bottles on Friday 17th August 2001. The lorry became stuck under the bridge, but Carlton Westcountry television reported that trains were running across it at reduced speed.

The bridge was hit again on 12th September by a lorry operated by Dukes Transport Ltd. According to the Western Morning News this was the 5th collision in 2001.

Finally on the 12th November morning services were disrupted when a man threatened to jump from the bridge. The WMN for 13/11/01 reported that he also lay down in front of the Newquay train.

First Great Western Under Attack

After the major disruption faced by the Westcountry last winter and First Great Western's cuts in services to improve frequencies in Bristol and South Wales, the company faced a backlash from business leaders, politicians and the media. The complaints come at a time when First Great Western wanted its current franchise to be extended by two years.

The result is the first ever, formal investigation by the Rail Passengers Council into a train operator's service. The RPC's for Western England and for Wales are using powers under the 1993 Railways Act because of the volume of complaints received, comments made by local authorities, 'relevant assemblies' and the media, and what the RPC describes as 'persistent failure' to achieve punctuality and reliability targets. A series of public hearings have taken place in Swindon, Plymouth and Bristol.

Despite the bad publicity and First Great Western's decision to replace InterCity 125 trains with older slower stock, Railfuture wonders why First Great Western has been singled out in this way. There is plenty of evidence to show that the other operators in the region have shortcomings, many of which happen without significant media comment. When Virgin Trains withdrew most of its Cornish services in October (restored by the end of the month), we issued a press release asking why the RPC had not mounted an investigation into that company. The reply was that it did not have sufficient time. As the other operators do not serve London, and consequently do not attract the custom of politicians, journalists and business leaders, we suspect that this is the reason First Great Western has received most attention.

It is worth remembering that First Great Western attempted to run a normal service either side of the post Hatfield engineering work, when Virgin Trains simply withdrew many of its Westcountry services without replacement. First Great Western also consistently published weekly revised timetables when other operator's information was virtually non-existent.

Railfuture's submission to the Inquiry has listed some of First Great Western's shortcomings. These include its punctuality, the withdrawal last Summer of the evening peak service between Truro and West Cornwall, the cuts in the timetable and the replacement of InterCity 125s with older locomotive hauled stock. However, we have also suggested that the RPC investigation should be extended to the whole of the region's network, not just one operator.

First Great Western Bids for Two Year Extension

The Strategic Rail Authority has opened consultations with Local Authorities about extending the current First Great Western franchise for a further two years until 2008. A number of improvements were suggested, including:

- Obtain a complete picture of the work possible to upgrade signalling and infrastructure, and allow the SRA and Railtrack to plan the upgrade works with minimum disruption to passengers,
- Obtain four experimental gas-turbine units to evaluate them as replacements for the InterCity 125s,
- A 'modifications package' for existing InterCity 125s,
- Significant (but unspecified) investment and other initiatives aimed at improving service quality.

This would mean that the earliest the InterCity 125s could be entirely replaced would be around 2012 when they will be approaching 40 years of age. No infrastructure or signalling upgrades would take place until the next decade, ruling out the use of the current European Objective 1 and 2 grants programme. All this was agreed before Railtrack plc was placed into Administration.

First Great Western have since said that fares will be frozen in 2002, and that there will be improvements to the InterCity 125's air conditioning and toilet facilities - putting right the unsatisfactory performance of some aspects of the earlier refurbishment. More significantly

they have promised to look at running two trains an hour to Exeter, by extending some Paddington - Bristol services.

Railfuture South West has objected to the two year franchise extension, not because of First Great Western's recent performance, but because it will delay any major improvements to the region's rail service for up to 15 years. We have written to First Great Western's Managing Director, Mike Carroll, suggesting that his shareholders would benefit most from the certainty of a twenty-year franchise now rather than a two year extension with no certainty that they will have the franchise after that. He has not replied to our letter.

Mike Carroll has been more willing to speak to local authorities and the Devon and Cornwall Business Council albeit with mixed success. Both the Devon and Cornwall Business Council and Devon County Council have decided to support First Great Western's two year extension, despite the lack of significant benefits to the region. Cornwall County Council has decided not support the extension, and it is understood that Plymouth City Council will not either, although this has not been confirmed.

In the meantime, the only noticeable recent improvements are the restoration of two Plymouth-Paddington services that were axed last summer, and the re-introduction of the 05:06 Penzance to Paddington service on Saturdays, originally axed by BR in the 1980s. There have also been a number of off-peak fare offers for passengers prepared to book in advance.

First Great Western Pledges

The Western Morning News of 22nd November 2001 reported on a letter sent to the SRA to support its case for a minimum 25 year franchise extension. Key points from the eight pledges are summarised from the newspapers report below:

1. FGW commits itself to a safe, punctual and reliable train service.....equal priority to Torbay and Penzance as given to South Wales and Bristol.
2. FGW commits itself to re-introducing HST resources.....as soon as possible.
3. FGW will seek to improve journey times....to Exeter (aspiration 1 hour and 58 minutes), Plymouth (2 hours 55 minutes).....
4. FGWwill present a short, medium and long term vision for the South West including a standard journey pattern....
5. FGW continues to commit to the £16 million reliability package.....
6. FGW intends to present a full package of improvements.....
7. Negotiation of punctuality and reliability standards.....
8. FGW is committed to improving dialogue with customers, key opinion formers and representative groups.

For First Great Western Read First.

At an unspecified cost in changing stationery, signage and Websites, First Group has renamed all its operations as 'First', dropping all the local names. In Cornwall and Devon this means the end of the Red Bus, Southern National and Western National names. It is not clear whether Great Western will disappear, but their new train livery (the third repaint since privatisation) excludes the Great Western name. It may be that the Strategic Rail Authority will insist on the Great Western name being retained (as they did for Stagecoach's South West Trains) so that passengers are clear which franchise they are travelling with.

Needless to say the change is only skin deep. The local companies will continue as now, acting almost entirely independently of each other when planning timetables and providing information to passengers. Readers can prove this for themselves by asking for 'First' bus timetable information at Plymouth North Road station or rail information at the Bretonside Bus station enquiry office, both run by First.

Wessex Trains Takes Over Wales and West - Well Almost.

From 15th October, National Express created a new subsidiary, Wessex Trains, to take over most Wales and West Services outside Wales. The change was required by the Strategic Rail Authority in preparation for its Wessex Trains franchise that it intends to start in 2004. By then, the Waterloo Exeter/Paignton/Plymouth services will also be added.

In fact not all Wales and West services in Cornwall and Devon have been transferred. The Cardiff - Paignton and Penzance services have been transferred

to Wales and Borders Trains, increasing the number of operators between Exeter and Plymouth to a staggering five. Quite why the SRA wanted these in the Welsh franchise when only 20 miles of the journey is in Wales is not clear. Railfuture has been told by Charles Belcher that the Cardiff to Penzance and Paignton services will transfer to Wessex in 2003.

The process of further fragmentation has already started. Wessex Trains have created a Control office in Exeter whilst the passenger information system at their stations continues to be operated by Wales and Borders Trains in Cardiff - causing delays in getting information on disruptions to passengers. We are promised that the passenger information systems will be transferred to Exeter some time in 2002. At present Wessex Trains and Wales and Borders Trains and crews seem to be interchangeable, but they are currently being split between the two companies - will Wales and Borders Trains apply Virgin Train's approach of sending crews to Penzance by taxi to work their services rather than using local Wessex Trains crews?

The effect has also been felt in the Timetable. Cornwall and Devon loses its early morning Waterloo - Penzance service, and the Wales and West Penzance-Birmingham services have been diverted to Cardiff instead.

Railfuture South West met the new Managing Director of Wessex Trains, Charles Belcher, and local manager Bob Houghton in September. He was keen to hear what our aspirations for the region would be. We have given him a summary of our Rail Strategy together with a list of easy wins. He has promised a reply to each point.

Sunday Services for Cornish Branches

Three Cornish Branch lines have seen their Sunday services extended following a package of funding agreed between Cornwall County Council, Devon County Council, the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, Wessex Trains and the Countryside Agency.

First off was the Tamar Valley line to Gunnislake that now sees four Sunday return services throughout this winter. It consists of 4 trains eachway operating as part of a winter Sunday Dartmoor Rover network. Trains run at 09:20, 11:20, 15:28 and 17:28 from Plymouth and 10:13, 12:13, 16:20 and 18:25 from Gunnislake. Funding is in place until at least the Spring of 2004.

The services are tied in to a year round bus service from Gunnislake station to Exeter, serving Tavistock and Okehampton. There is no train service from Okehampton to Exeter, but the two X9 Exeter to Bude buses are complemented by the 187 service three times each way (one from Tavistock and two from Gunnislake via Tavistock).

Inexplicably the bus service will not serve St Davids station and rail passengers connecting there will have to make their own way to Paris Street bus station. Only the morning service gives a connection at Exeter St. Davids station, plus two X9 Bude - Okehampton Exeter buses. The Dartmoor Sunday Rover will continue all winter, valid on these services and the 82 Transmoor bus link (which does serve St Davids station!).

From June 1st, the Falmouth Branch will operate on Sundays all year for an experimental three year period, and the

Liskeard to Looe branch will operate on all Sundays between 1st June and the end of September. Currently both branches only have Sunday services on Spring Bank Holiday Sunday and in July and August.

Falmouth, which is one of the largest towns in Cornwall, was long overdue for a year round Sunday service. The extension of Sunday services on the Looe branch in the Summer probably reflects the perception by some that the Looe Valley is a tourist line rather than a service for locals. One of the bidders for the Wessex Franchise have suggested handing the branch over to steam operation.

Neither the St Ives nor the Newquay branches will receive any extended Sunday services beyond their current summer operations. This is probably because there is no Working Party for these branches as there is for Falmouth, Looe and Gunnislake.

Cornish Bus Service Improvements

Cornwall County Council has extended many of Cornwall's evening and weekend services this Winter. Lands End (via St Just and Sennen) now has a year round Sunday bus service from Penzance and Liskeard station enjoys a 30 minute interval bus service with the Town Centre during Monday to Saturday daytimes.

The First Western National's Service 55 link from Bodmin Parkway to Wadebridge and Padstow has been increased and runs to an hourly regular interval timetable. This would be ideal if the train service was also regular interval, but as it is not, passengers will now face some lengthy waits at Bodmin Parkway

and some cases of missing connections by only a few minutes. There is even one case of the bus and train departing at the same time!

Western Greyhound has increased its service 556 which Links Newquay to Padstow along the north coast, and has introduced a two hourly link (service 555) from St Columb to Padstow. Both these services connect with Service 55 to Bodmin Parkway station at Padstow and through tickets valid on both companies services can be purchased. Services 126/136 from Bodmin Parkway station to Camelford has also been amended.

A promised supplement detailing the new timetables was not available one day before the start of the new services as they were still at the printers. The only information available was on Western Greyhound's website as neither Cornwall County Council nor First Western National post timetables on their websites.

Liskeard Station to be Developed into a Public Transport Interchange

Objective 1 funding plus matching funds from local authorities, Railtrack, Wessex Trains and voluntary and business groups, is to be put to good use in developing a public transport interchange at Liskeard station. Total funding will be £413,000 (including 'inkind' funding).

The main station building will be upgraded to provide an improved waiting area, toilets, refurbished cafe and a 'cash-point' machine. The building on the Looe branch line platform will be converted into a Visitor Centre and Tea Room. The concrete waiting shelter on the Penzance bound platform will be replaced, and 10 CCTV security cameras installed.

Disabled access to all station facilities will also be improved., and 8 cycle stands provided.

Outside the station, bus shelters will be provided together with a 'bus-boarder' (raised pavement) and pedestrian crossing.

Exeter St. Thomas

The station has been recognised by Exeter City Council as one of a number of buildings at risk in the city (Express and Echo 10/11/01). The Echo reports that a Section 215 Amenity notice was to be authorised to require proper maintenance of both the station building and active parts of the station. Work on increasing the height of the low platform has still to be done.

Railfuture would like to see more comprehensive improvements to Exeter St. Thomas as we point out in our Rail Strategy (Pages 108, 109 Section 14.2.1 and 14.2.2.). We included the following in our response to the City Council's transportation strategy.

'There is enormous potential to develop this as the third city station, which would exploit the large number of bus routes that pass the station. For St Thomas station we wish to see in order of priority:

1. retention of the cross city buses e.g. route C,
2. a general renovation and cleaning,
3. sheltered waiting facilities on the platforms,
4. improvements to platforms as necessary,

5. information screens and public transport interchange information at platforms and street level,
6. disabled access,
7. introduction of staffing,
8. more trains to stop,
9. new pedestrian access bridge, direct from Fore Street across the River Exe.'

We also commented on their key objectives, Digby and Sowton, ticketing and trams for Exeter. Our response was acknowledged and thanked, but we were too late for our comments to be considered for the final published document of 12th November 2001.

If you know about a consultation to which Railfuture should respond please tell us. Don't assume that we know.

Devon Railcard

A new railcard has been launched for Devon **residents** giving one third off off-peak rail tickets in the county. It can be used as far as Axminster, Tiverton Parkway and across the Tamar to Gunnislake.

Unlike the Cornwall card savings cannot be made for those using standard day return tickets for early morning journeys. After around 09:00 cheap day return tickets can be used for which the Devon rail card will be valid. The cost is £10 (£5.00 for the first 6 months) and a passport sized photo is needed.

The Way Ahead

At their November 2001 AGM in Barnstaple the North Devon Rail Users Group outlined their ideas for the Barnstaple line in a 12 page booklet called the 'Way Ahead'. They are calling for a clockface hourly timetable, better rolling stock with adequate luggage and cycle storage facilities and attention to the flooding problem. Reopening of the railway from Barnstaple to Bideford is also called for by the users group, as well as for there to be some through trains to London and a regular service on the associated Okehampton line.

Flooding is the issue which needs very urgent attention. It has been reported elsewhere that in the year from November to November 2001 the line lost 25% of its passenger income. In the same period the Exmouth line gained a 4% increase.

Lyme Regis

Out of the blue Railfuture was contacted about a local initiative to reopen the Lyme Regis branch. A group of about 24 attended a meeting in Axminster on February 24th. The group resolved to hold another meeting in March, form a committee and do further research.

We were unable to attend the meeting, but sent copies of the comments we had just sent about the East Devon Local Plan (see page 20) and the extract from our March 2000 Rail Strategy (see below).

If any member wishes to become involved they can write to:

Mr. D. Prosser,
Goldini's Wine Bar,
West Street,
AXMINSTER,
Devon. EX13 5NX

It is envisaged that if the former Axminster to Lyme Regis railway was reopened in the future it would be additional to the bus service, rather than in place of it. There may be potential for private enterprise to develop the railway as a summer tourist line to the economic benefit of the town, especially for park and ride passengers from the edge of Axminster near the A35. This would produce a scheme similar to that which has developed on the reopened Swanage branch where a park and ride point has been built at Norden. Cannington Viaduct the major structure on the Lyme Regis line still stands, a few cuttings have been landfilled, the bridge across the main line removed at Axminster and a bridging problem has been created by the new A35 Axminster bypass. The building of a new medical centre on the trackbed in Lyme Regis (Mac Hawkins 1993) is the strongest indication that some at least have rejected the idea of a reopened railway, but it is not thought that any of the adverse developments are sufficient to entirely rule out a reopening of the line. The success of the Swanage scheme and the 1997 to 1998 summer service from Exeter to Okehampton suggests potential for tourist rail services and accordingly it is suggested that the remaining trackbed is preserved for the foreseeable future.

Extract from **Page 15** SOUTH WEST RAIL STRATEGY: A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT March 2000



Local Plans

In recent months a number of local plans have been deposited for public consultation. Railfuture South West has been able to respond to that for North Devon, East Devon, Teignbridge (by internet) and Plymouth. We have supported or objected to specific proposals on the given forms as required. Below shows our responses (some editing).

North Devon Local Plan

Barnstaple Chapter 12.

Anchorwood Bank, paragraph 12.17 and policy BAR1a

Railfuture would like any development on the south bank of the River Taw to take into account and not prejudice the potential to reopen the former Barnstaple to Ilfracombe railway to Braunton.

A study needs to be done to determine whether it would be best to use the original railway alignment or choose a new one for the connection between Barnstaple station (Junction) and the trackbed alongside the Pottington Industrial Estate.

The main options for the railway connection are:

- Option 1. Reinstatement of the old route through the former Barnstaple Town station. Probably the least favoured due to adverse developments and the planned Western bypass link road to the Long Bridge.

- Option 2. A new railway bridge over the River Taw to a new Town railway station near the Civic Centre, then over the former route across Rolle Quay to Pottington. A deviation could be made to take the railway under the first span of the Western bypass downstream bridge. This would avoid creating a railway junction with the suggested Bideford line beneath the proposed Western Bypass roundabout.
- Option 3. A new railway bridge parallel to the proposed downstream bypass bridge on its west side. So long as the Bideford line is protected, then the new railway could diverge from it at a point just west of the proposed Western Bypass roundabout. This option has the advantage of providing a faster more direct route from Barnstaple station to Braunton than options 1 or 2, but Barnstaple town centre would be missed out.

Chapter 6. Travel, Transport and Communications

Paragraph 6.19 Walking and Cycling

Railfuture would like the wording '**redundant railways**' changed to '**closed railways**'.

This is to remove the implication that the former railways were not needed then, today and in the future.

Paragraph 6.25. Rail Services

Railfuture supports the proposal for a rail freight facility at Barnstaple (Seven Brethren).

Paragraph 6.26 Rail Services

Policy REC4 supports the protection of some of the disused railway lines in North Devon, but Railfuture considers it is necessary to specifically protect the Barnstaple to Instow (Bideford) and Barnstaple to Braunton and Ilfracombe railway trackbeds within the Transport policy section.

The protection needs to take into account any deviations that might be necessary to allow railway reopening . See our comments for Anchorwood Bank Chapter 12, policy BAR1a, paragraph 12.17.

Paragraph 6.26 should remove the implication that the disused railway lines can be developed as railways or recreational routes/cycleways. In most cases the two would be able to run parallel. The former Barnstaple to Ilfracombe railway was double track and there would be few problems in widening the Barnstaple to Bideford line trackbed. Instow tunnel is the only location where it would not be possible to accommodate a railway and path alongside each other.

Chapter 10.

Policy REC4

Railfuture supports the proposal to protect former transport routes as outlined in REC4. However, we consider that the Barnstaple to Ilfracombe railway should have its own policy within the transport chapter 6. It is of greater importance than the other routes listed, such as South Molton to East Anstey.

Chapter 6 should also specifically include the Barnstaple to Instow (Bideford) and Barnstaple to Braunton lines. Please see our comments on Chapter 6, paragraph 6.26.

TEIGNBRIDGE

TRN8 Proposed new or improved public transport interchange facilities.

Railfuture supports proposals to improve the interchange facilities at Newton Abbot railway station. To gain full benefits from this we suggest that where possible bus routes currently terminating at Sherborne Road are extended to the railway station, e.g. from Ashburton and Buckfastleigh. Local bus services from Milber should be linked with those serving the west side of Newton Abbot so as to improve bus/rail links.

6.71 to 6.75 & Policy TRN20 Heathfield Freight Interchange Facility

Railfuture supports the proposal to use the Heathfield branch line for more freight. The site is close to the Heathfield industrial estate and has good access from the A38 trunk road. It is good transport and environmental policy to develop local rail freight depots across Devon that are adjacent to industries that wish to use rail transport. This is better than a few large sites that will still require long distance lorry movements to serve them.

Paragraph 6.29 and TRN6 Principal Public Transport Network

Railfuture is not directly objecting to the current wording, but we consider there should be additional policies and paragraphs inserted into the Local Plan to protect railway development. Railfuture would like to see in order of priority:

- 1) Protection of land for serving Teignmouth Docks by rail (primarily for ball clay export),
- 2) Protection of the disused railway beyond the former Heltor oil terminal siding at Heathfield as far as the Pottery roundabout at Bovey Tracey (for possible future passenger service),
- 3) Protection of land to allow an inland rail route to be built in the future between Dawlish Warren and Bishopsteignton (Langdon Farm to Shutterton Bridge alongside the Shutterton Brook),
- 4) Protection of the former Teign Valley railway between Heathfield and Exeter (Marsh Barton).

HSG1 Dawlish Area Centre, page 85

The land proposed for housing allocation in the Secmaton Lane area is close to land, in the valley of the Shutterton Brook, which would be needed if an inland rail route is built in the future between Bishopsteignton and Dawlish Warren.

More detailed work to identify the exact route, that an inland railway would need to follow, should be undertaken before land is allocated for housing. Railfuture has done some preliminary work on this, but further studies are required.

PLYMOUTH

Policy 49 Light Rapid Transit system

Part 4 Page 18 & Objective 8 Transport Part 2 Page 16.

Railfuture South West raises a strong objection to the terminology Light Rapid Transit system (LRT) as it could be construed to include guided busways.....a Light Rail Rapid Transit system (LRRT)..... could be used for moving occasional rail freight wagons off peak and LRRT vehicles can share heavy rail routes if capacity is available.

It also supports.....LRRT system integrating with frequent heavy rail cross city services at stations such as Plympton, North Road, Keyham or St. Budeaux. A new station at Plympton west of the old one should meanwhile be provided with park and ride.

Objective 8 Targets Part 2 Page 17.

The 1.5% yearly increase in use of buses should not only apply to buses.....an annual increase in the use of other forms of public transport particularly rail passengers should also be incorporated.

Land Adjacent to Plymouth Railway Station. Part 3, Page 5, Proposal 7.

This proposal appears to exclude the Railway Station itself, which is fundamental to the importance of this area. Nor is an adjacent bus station implied, necessary to provide the infrastructure for an integrated transport policy. The proposal for linkages to Armada Way suggest that this development would remain peripheral to the City Centre development.

We suggested that, this area including the Rail Station and a new Bus Station should be redeveloped as an integral part of the City Centre and that Armada Way should be extended through to a new integrated transport concourse with escalators down to the existing platforms and also down to new platforms adjacent to the Rail Station. This new Bus Station is not envisaged as A Terminal but that most bus routes would pass through on a Cross City basis.

We also said that land with potential for the promotion of rail freight or rail passenger traffic should be safeguarded (Strategy Statement Part 2 Page 5). Similarly for former railway land and bridges (Part 4, page 16 Policy 41).

Chapter 11 Transport.

Paragraph 11.21.

Paragraph 11.21 fails to recognise that the two park and ride sites within Exeter (Honiton Road and Sowton), only reduce traffic within Exeter. Some rewording may be appropriate. It is better to develop better rail and bus services from Exeter to places such as Exmouth, Whimble, Ottery St. Mary and Honiton. This will reduce the daily commuting distances travelled by car.

Railfuture agrees with paragraph 11.21 where it states that a park and ride car park on the north side of Exeter may be difficult to site without being, '*unduly prominent in the landscape*'. A large bus park and ride site on the north side of Exeter for the A377 road may not even be necessary. The rail park and ride site at Crediton in Mid-Devon should be developed. Devon County Council as well as Railfuture have aspirations for an hourly train service, and this would become more frequent if the Okehampton line can be reopened as well. In addition to the trains at Crediton there is a frequent bus service nearby, provided by Stagecoach and other operators into Exeter.

For the A396 Tiverton to Exeter road Railfuture suggests that as well as improved bus services that a new Tiverton to Exeter train service is provided via Willand and Cullompton. The park and ride point would be at Tiverton with a small local facility at a new station for Stoke Cannon. Railfuture concludes that the main park and ride facilities for the north of Exeter (whether bus or rail based) are located within Mid-Devon. It would be appropriate for paragraph 11.21 to make reference to the need for a joint study with Mid-Devon.

Paragraph 11.22.

Railfuture supports paragraph 11.22 and in particular the last sentence relating to disused railways where it states that, '*... the Council will endeavour to safeguard such land from other development*'. However, in practice land has not been protected and adverse developments have taken place such as the Bulverton Park houses in Sidmouth with this wording in place in the current Local Plan. Also at Whimble the former goods yard land that could have been used for station car parking has been allocated to residential development.

Railfuture would like a new Policy to be inserted to specifically protect land needed for associated railway activities (e.g. goods and car parking) and protection of the following former railway routes (including deviations that might be needed as in Tipton St. John):

1. Feniton to Sidmouth,
2. Tipton St. John to Budleigh Salterton,
3. Axminster to Uplyme (Lyme Regis).

Railfuture has not suggested other routes in East Devon as they are either too heavily developed or there are alternative routes that could be used. The recent designation of the coast as a World Heritage site increases the importance of protecting these former railway routes for railway reopening.

Chapter 13. Towns of East Devon

Paragraph 13.11 Housing and 13.12 Employment, plus Inset Map 3 (Axminster)

Railfuture would like the Inset Map 3 of Axminster to be modified where it shows employment allocation land adjacent to the A35, and residential allocation land AX02 nearby. We wish a corridor of land to be left free to allow for the future possibility of reinstating the Axminster to Lyme Regis railway.

The possibility of a park and ride site for the railway should also be taken into account.

Paragraph 13.72 Housing & 13.73 Employment, plus Inset Map 37 (Ottery St. Mary)

Railfuture wishes to identify a route for a reopened Feniton to Sidmouth railway to pass through Ottery St. Mary. In our Rail Strategy (*SOUTH WEST RAIL STRATEGY: A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT. MARCH 2000*) we identified a deviation from the original route to avoid the buildings of the Finnimore Industrial Estate. However, the proposed employment land to the west of the Industrial Estate and residential land to the north would block this (paragraph 13.72, 13.73 and Ottery St. Mary Urban Inset Map 37).

Railfuture asks that the Ottery St. Mary Inset map is modified to show land protected for a reopened railway on either the original or new alignment.

Appendix 1. Uplyme (Inset Map 51)

The inset map 51 shows residential development encroaching onto the former Axminster to Lyme Regis railway. This runs counter to PPG13, the spirit of the current Local Plan and the current First Deposit version (paragraph 11.22).

Given the recent designation of the coast as World Heritage Site there may be a future case for reopening this railway for a tourist link to Lyme Regis from a park and ride site near the A35 in Axminster (in addition to Axminster station). The Local Plan should not permit residential development to prejudice this opportunity.

Disruption Diary

To help us to see where in practice we really need alternative rail routes please send any examples of disruption you experience. Below are examples we have already collected:

Date	Problem	Duration	Reference
21/8/01	Broken rail at Ivybridge	3½ hours	WMN 22/8/01
24/8/01	Cow killed on line near Tiverton Parkway	2½ hours	WMN 25/8/01.
07/10/01	Yacht washed on to line north of Starcross		WMN 08/10/01
08/11/01	Fire adjacent to Exeter St. Davids station	3 hours	WMN-9/11/01

Diary Dates

Saturday, 27 April 2002, Railfuture Annual General Meeting. Nottingham Trent University. Saturday, 25 May 2002, Railfuture Reopenings Conference.

