



Railfuture affiliated

Briefing Note for Railfuture Devon & Cornwall Branch - 28 September 2023

I am unable to join D&C Branch Zoom on the 30th September 2023 so a note here to explain my / our background and an offer to help.

I have previously been Chair of Rf Wessex Branch and am currently a Committee member of that Branch.

SERUG (www.serug.co.uk has a detailed background, with history from 2016, objectives, news and much information)

Our input for the west of this line, ie Exeter links, has been huge, a synopsis follows. A list of 2021 objectives currently subject to review is at the end of this note. The current priority, however, is to ensure service levels, SWR management and resilience are maintained to good standards as there is little chance of any investment in our railway by Government.

- Daily access to SWR and NR for information, policy, service specification and running performance etc.
- Links with relevant MP's (8 of them), DfT, and supporters.
- Full and complete attendance for the CMSP and final Report, as passenger stakeholder, with SWR, Network Rail, TWSW, Devon and Somerset Counties. Outcome being the proposed (subject to Government funding and policy) 1) double track and signalling at Whimple, and 2) increase double track at Honiton, and 3) Tisbury. Items 1 and 2 enable Devon Metro ie Okehampton and Barnstaple to Axminster by GWR. Current status with Devon County funding, at SOBC stage.
- Input with NR for re-signalling at Exeter (as CP8), and Salisbury (CP8) for co-ordination with CMSP works. Station specification at Exeter and Salisbury.
- Consideration of new rolling stock and de-carbonisation for this diesel-operated line.
- Working with NR Wales and West and Wessex areas.

The current position looks to ensure that SWR will employ a Director with responsibility for the West of England line and reinstatement from December 2023 of the xx.50 WAT-SAL service. That would give a substantial copy of the 30-minute WAT-SAL service, giving the intensively used xx.20 WAT-EXD more seating capacity.

SERUG AGM on Wednesday 25th October at 17.00 is at Raleigh Hall, Digby Rd, Sherborne DT9 3NL - (2 mins walk from Sherborne station) when Matt Barnes from GWR will talk about enabling Devon Metro, GWR services and Project Churchward – GWR's work to replace diesel fleets. All welcome.

In March 2024 there will be a Forum on Railways of the South West – their future, probably Exeter based.

Overall, then I and SERUG are able to help the D & C Branch at Committee level to bring our knowledge and experience to support a revitalised Rf Branch.

Bruce Duncan, Chair SERUG

SERUG Summary of Post-pandemic Objectives – February 2021

SERUG's goals are to support moves to improve the reliability and resilience of our railway, to campaign for investment and to focus our lobbying on improving the passenger experience.

At this time (2021) we are setting out our priorities as we recover from the pandemic:

1. Encourage Passengers Back to the Railway – NB now achieved -

- Re-instatement of a daily resilient hourly service between Exeter and Waterloo. NB achieved
- Supporting a simplified fares structure that offers better value for money.
- Ensure a safe travel environment.
- Better connections between rail and local transport networks.

2. Maintaining Staffed Stations and Improving Facilities

- Maintain existing levels of station staffing.
- Disabled access provided to/from all platforms at all stations.

3. Improved Resilience and Capacity Between Salisbury and Exeter

The current infrastructure struggles to provide a reliable and resilient timetable.

Infrastructure improvements (more passing loops and double track) would allow:

- Introduction of Devon Metro service between Axminster and Exeter.
- Improved capacity to allow reliable diversion of GWR services.
- A half hourly service throughout the day between London Waterloo and Yeovil Junction, when demand is sufficient.

NB achieved from December 2023 TT.

4. Replacement of the current (30 year old) trains

- Must meet de-carbonisation targets. Bi-mode (diesel/electric power) to be considered.
- 100mph capability
- Specification to include corridor connections to all carriages, fully accessible toilets, and a good passenger environment including comfortable seating, WiFi and power points.
- Both standard and first-class accommodation. More luggage space than at present.

5. Electrification and Faster Journey Times

- Electrification from Basingstoke to Salisbury (as a minimum). Increased line speed to 100mph.
- Target 20 min saving on typical London/Yeovil journey when combined with resilience improvements and new rolling stock (as above).

6. Maintain Recently Increased Seating Capacity on all Trains

- Six-carriage trains will provide better capacity when services and passenger numbers return to normal.
- New rolling stock should match the current capacity.

7. Re-instatement of Catering Services on all Trains.

- Passengers will not be attracted back to the railway without on-train catering. Re-instatement is essential.

8. The Ability to Join and Split Trains at Yeovil Junction

- Enables better use of rolling stock and a wider range of journey opportunities, including improved connections to Weymouth, Westbury, Bath and Bristol.

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