

South Western Railway  
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London SE1 8NZ

**please reply to:**  
Mr David Brace  
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Old Basing  
Basingstoke  
RG24 7EB

For the attention of Mr Phil Dominey

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13<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Dear Phil,

### **Optimisation of Train Services**

Please find attached the Railfuture response to the questions you posed in your letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> January. We have collated the views of all our branches that the 5 service groups run through.

Yours sincerely

**David Brace**

Mr David Brace  
Railfuture  
Wessex Branch

## South Western Railway

### Optimisation of Train Services

- (a) Brighton - Exeter via Southampton and Salisbury;
- (b) Portsmouth - Southampton – Bristol;
- (c) Bristol – Yeovil/Weymouth;
- (d) Southampton Airport – Salisbury – Swindon; and
- (e) Reading – Guildford – Gatwick Airport (North Downs Line).

Q1 Do we have any plans or aspirations where we think we could work more closely together for the five specified lines/routes and, if so, what are they?

Q2 Do we have any specific suggestions as how could work more closely to meet stakeholder aspirations?

Q3 Do we have any information on anticipated demand that we could share for any of the five specified routes?

As a voluntary organization with the stated objectives of encouraging the improvement of our existing railway services and identifying and promoting new stations and services we do not have the resources to carry out detailed investigations and analysis for specific routes or services. However, we do have a good understanding locally on what existing and potential passengers expect from you as the current franchisee.

We have had a long-held belief that through services are needed between the South Coast and the West Country without travelling via London. The route you suggest via Southampton and Salisbury is currently the only practical one. We believe there is a demand, particularly from leisure travellers and students where time is less important, for perhaps up to four daily services each way. This could also be of benefit for passengers travelling to or from Southampton and Gatwick airports. However, we recognize that such a service would be particularly difficult to provide at present due to capacity constraints between Havant and Southampton and on the West of England line. Until demand builds up such a service would best run as part of the West of England service from Exeter to Salisbury and splitting/joining at that latter station. Alternatively, could you initially consider a Summer Saturdays (or Sundays) Only service from Bournemouth, reversing at Weymouth and Yeovil?

Also, we have not majored on infrastructure investment in this note, as it appears outside the scope of your study. However, in the long run, both TOC's should work together to help define priorities for such investment, as there is unsatisfied latent demand for services, on the assumption that connectivity must be good and robust.

New rolling stock to replace the Class 159 trains will be needed soon on the West of England service between Exeter and Waterloo and introducing new services would be a good time. As more capacity on that line is required now, as is required on the Portsmouth/Salisbury/Bristol services, the TOC's should work to ensure that loading patterns are known and alleviated by timetable planning where possible. An example is the SWR services that continue at Salisbury to Bristol.

The Portsmouth – Southampton – Bristol (and on to Cardiff) service is currently operated by Great Western Railway and it would make sense to combine the service with the Brighton to Exeter service in some way, using common rolling stock. With the projected changes to the Great Western Railway franchise in the next 5 years, again this would make a good time to

transfer the service to SWR or to cooperate with the GWR. This route suffers chronic overloading already. Ideally it needs an hourly service with a minimum of 4 car trains, combining with a 3 car set between Salisbury and Cosham for ongoing travel to Brighton.

The Bristol to Weymouth service via Yeovil is currently operated by the Great Western Railway and would benefit from more capacity, particularly in the summer months. There is a long-held target of an hourly service on this line, but in view of SWR services (Yeovil Pen Mill / Frome/Westbury, more timetable consultation could achieve a better pattern with possible extensions of some SWR services to Bristol, picking up Trowbridge and Bath passengers to reduce capacity issues on GWR services.

The Southampton Airport – Salisbury – Swindon route is something that we believe has a lot of potential. Great Western Railway currently operate the TransWilts service between Swindon and Westbury and is actively supported by the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership (CRP). Phase 1 is already working well between Swindon and Westbury. TransWilts web site also shows a proposal for Phase 2 to extend the service to Salisbury, Southampton and Southampton Parkway. Are your plans to take over the entire route or is the proposal a joint venture with GWR? TransWilts currently want the GWR service to continue.

Railfuture has long held the view that the intermediate stations between Salisbury and Romsey should be transferred to the SWR franchise as currently no GWR trains stop at Dean or Dunbridge .

For the Bristol to Weymouth route via Yeovil, the service run by GWR is not attractive. Route timings and service intervals are poor. We believe there is potential for improvements particularly in summer months. Summer Saturdays services are grossly overcrowded and so capacity and frequency of service both need improvement. Is this another proposal for SWR take over this route? Again, new trains with more capacity with a speeding up and more frequent services (hourly with the second train making limited stops) are needed. A common approach with the other services discussed above would make sense. A new maintenance depot at Yeovil could service a new fleet on most of the routes discussed.

Finally, we understand that GWR propose to improve the Reading, Guildford, Redhill to Gatwick route by providing a more frequent service (3 trains per hour). The route is currently served variously by three franchises (GWR, SWR and Southern) and, in the absence of full electrification of the line we see no benefits overall for SWR sharing that service with GWR. However, there would be a significant passenger benefit of cooperation between the operators on timetabling of services at Guildford..If travelling from stations between Crowthorne and Ash (except North Camp) to London Waterloo, the most convenient route would be via Guildford, but because of the long wait for a connection at Guildford it is actually quicker to connect at Farnborough (despite the walk between stations) or to connect at Wokingham (despite the slow journey from Wokingham to Waterloo). For customers using stations between Gomshall and Shalford to London, the connections are better, so travelling to London via Guildford is quicker than via Redhill. We need equally good connections with trains from and to the Reading direction.

We do believe that SWR should support the North Downs CRP as you do share part of the route with GWR (Guildford – Ash and Wokingham – Reading).

In summary Railfuture would support improvements on all routes by cooperating with the current operators but recognizes that new rolling stock will be needed, at least in the medium term, and this will also require limited infrastructure improvements to raise line speeds and improve resilience and reliability. We are happy to support SWR in their response to the DfT.