



Department
for Transport

Government Response to 2014 Great Western Franchise Consultation

March 2015



Government Response to 2014 Great Western Franchise Consultation

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Transport
by Command of Her Majesty

March 2015



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Print ISBN 9781474116374

Web ISBN 9781474116381

ID P2715172 03/15

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by the Williams Lea Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

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1. Introduction and Purpose

Purpose

In March 2013 the Secretary of State announced that a franchise period of two years and ten months would be procured by direct award to ensure continuity of services. On the Great Western franchise, this was to be reviewed and announcements made on the length of the franchise. Accordingly, an initial direct award of 23 months was negotiated with First Great Western (FGW) and put in place in October 2013, with the expectation that a further, second direct award would follow, as the initial direct award could not exceed two years under the relevant regulations.

The Department published an Information Notice in the Official Journal of the European Union in March 2014, which confirmed that the Department was currently planning a second direct award of at least 10 months followed by a competed franchise. The Information Notice also confirmed that the Department's Rail Executive ("Rail Executive") was exploring the possibility of whether a longer direct award of up to 5 years could create better overall value and facilitate wider government rail projects.

A public Consultation took place as part of the development of the specification for the franchise during May and June 2014 (the "Consultation"). The aim of this document is to inform stakeholders of the results of the Consultation and to provide a summary of what has been included in the next Great Western franchise, which will run for 3.5 years from September 2015 to March 2019 with an optional extension of up to 13 rail reporting periods available at the Secretary of State's discretion.

The purpose of the Consultation was to outline the planned approach for securing Great Western franchised services when the current direct award franchise ends in September 2015, as well as to seek respondents' views on the franchise specification with a focus on the changes planned during the 5 year period from September 2015, and in particular to:

- Provide stakeholders with background information about the current services on the Great Western Railway;
- Provide information about the impact of major projects on the franchise;
- Advise stakeholders of the objectives and expectations for the franchise;
- Inform stakeholders of the options being considered for the franchise;
- Seek the views and input of stakeholders; and
- Give potential promoters of incremental schemes the opportunity for meaningful engagement in the process, including the opportunity to comment on these proposals and formally notify the Department of any specific increments or decrements they may wish to purchase.

The results of the Consultation helped to inform and define the franchise requirements which were set out in the Request for Proposal (RfP) issued to FGW last year. FGW submitted their response to the RfP in October 2014 and an appraisal and negotiation process followed. Feedback from the Consultation will also feed into Rail Executive's priorities as we refine the requirements for the

franchise over the next five years. 478 responses were received, many of very high quality, bringing insight and experience to the process.

Rail Executive is grateful for the time and effort of all the people and organisations who took part in the Consultation and for the benefits this will help to bring to the next Great Western franchise.

The Consultation Document remains available for reference on the Gov.UK website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/great-western-specification-for-the-future-franchise>

Timescales and Methodology

The Consultation was launched on 8th May 2014 and closed on 26th June 2014. The Consultation was primarily published on the Gov.UK website and responses were invited in electronic format to a dedicated email address: GWConsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk or in hard copy by post.

84 requests for printed copies were received from individuals in the Wiltshire area and these were provided by 1st class post.

In order to help stakeholders prepare their Consultation responses, Rail Executive staff also attended two stakeholder events, on 6th June in Taunton and 17th June in Reading. These consisted of a series of presentations by the Great Western Direct Award team, as well as representatives of Passenger Focus and First Great Western, followed by an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and clarify issues.

2. The Responses

Locations and Respondents

A total of 478 responses to the Consultation were received, both electronically and in hard copy, of which 240 supplied a valid UK postcode. All responses were logged to identify where they originated from, whether the correspondent was writing in their capacity as a private individual or on behalf of an organisation, and in the latter case the type and name of organisation.

The responses came from a diverse range of individuals and organisations from a wide geographical area, representing the entire franchise map. The largest response by region came from Wiltshire, followed by Somerset and Bristol.

Of the 478 responses, the majority were from members of the public (327) followed by Local Authorities (55) as set out in Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 responses by type

Airport	2
Council	13
Charity	3
Community rail partnership	4
County or Unitary Authority	11
Devolved government	1
Local Enterprise Partnership	15
Interest / User Group	37
Public	327
Other	7
Parish, Town or District council	31
Parliamentary	14
Trade body or business	13
Total	478

Figure 2.1: Responses by type

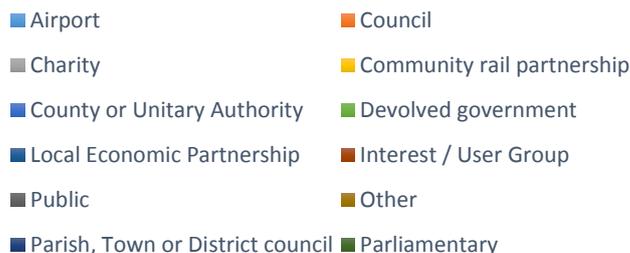
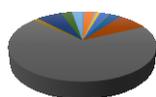
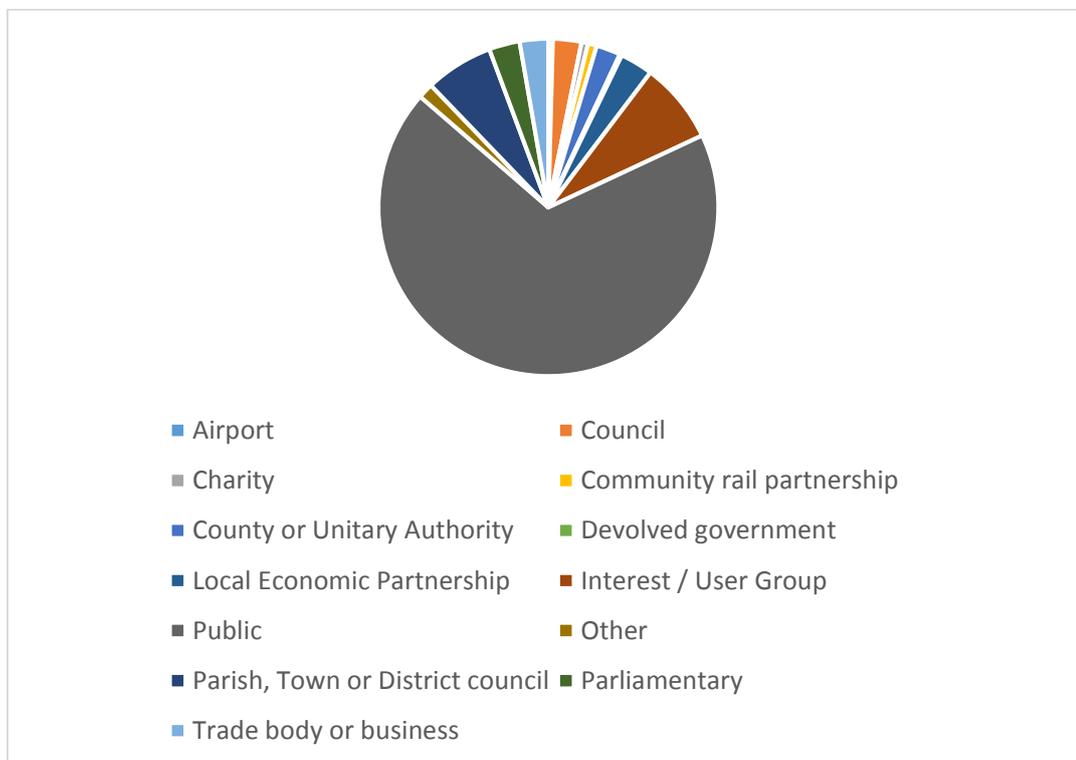


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Council	13
Trade body or business	13
County or Unitary Authority	11
Other	7
Community Rail Partnership	4
Charity	3
Airport	2
Devolved government	1

Figure X: Responses by organisation type



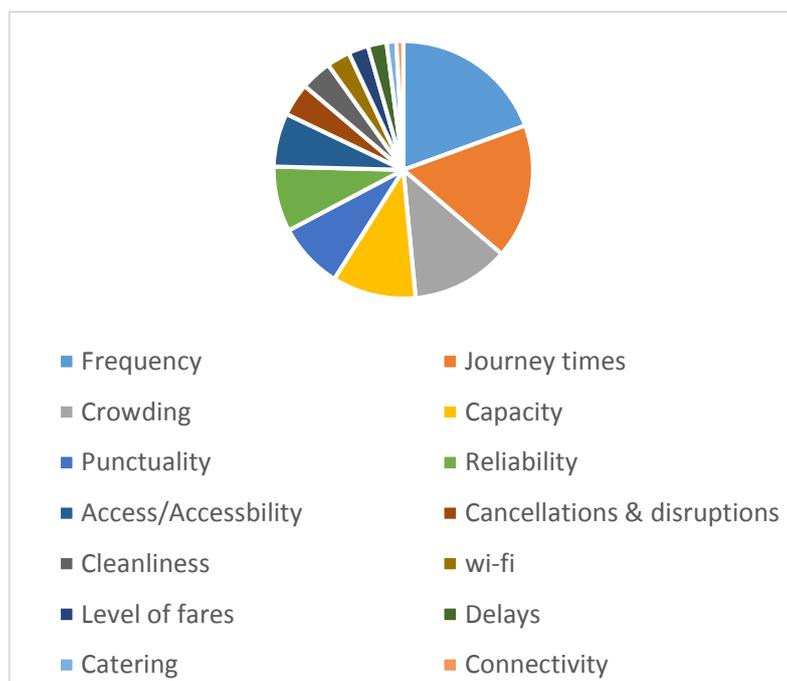
Key Themes

Responses were analysed for recurring themes, and key words, so as to build a picture of the main issues of importance to readers, and to help establish a priority ranking for these. The results are shown below in Figure 2.2 and Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2 Key Themes

Frequency	225
Journey times	196
Crowding	141
Capacity	121
Connectivity	113
Punctuality	96
Reliability	95
Access/Accessibility	78
Information Provision	77
Cancellations & disruptions	48
Cleanliness	45
Wi-fi	34
The Level of fares	29
Delays	27
Catering	14

Figure 2.3 Key Themes & Keywords

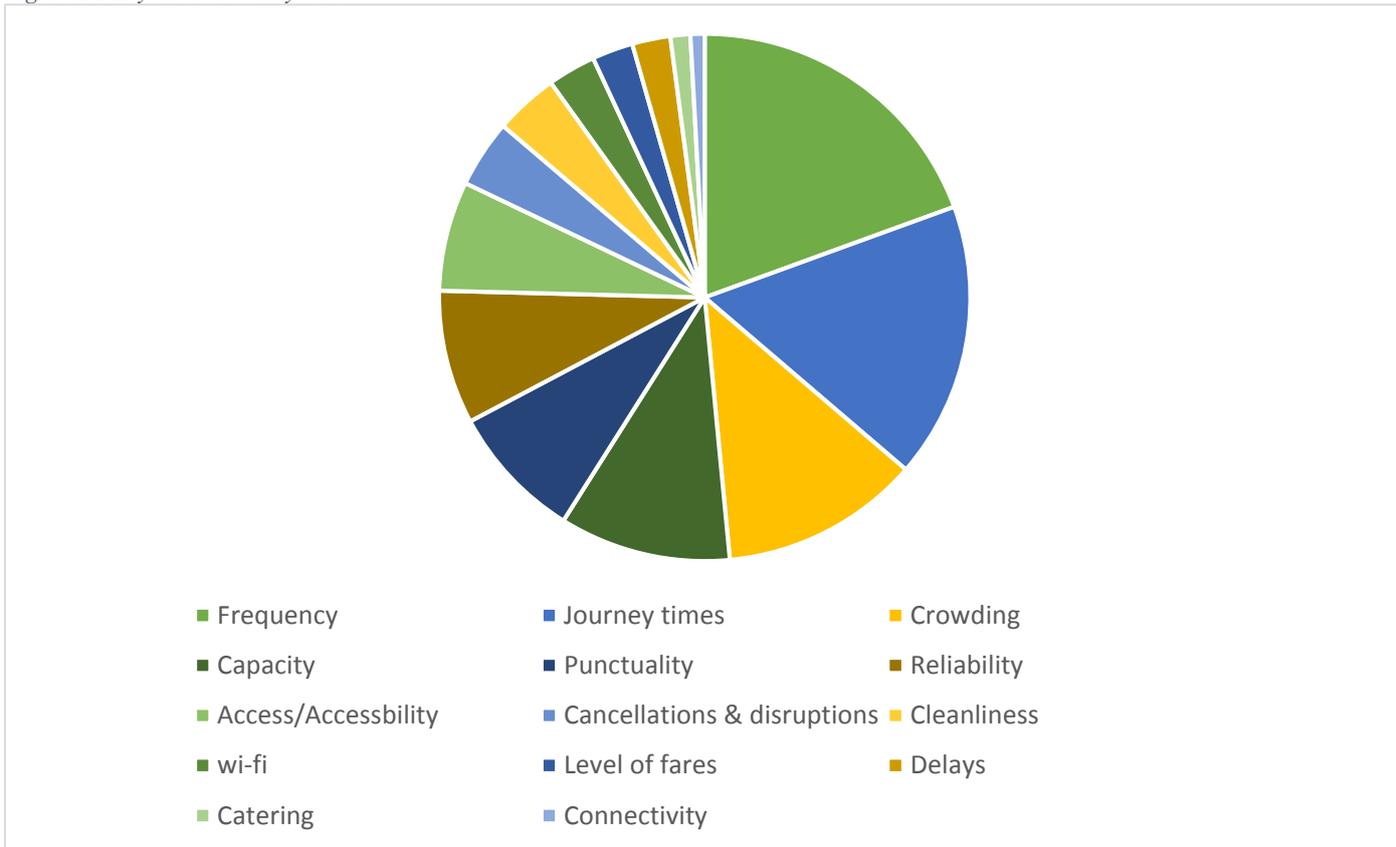


Recent Passenger Focus research¹ based on a larger sample of data concluded that value for the price of a ticket, capacity and frequency, punctuality and reliability are among the highest priorities for passengers on Great Western. The ability to get a seat was identified as the second highest priority and closely related to perceptions of value for the ticket price; and punctuality was identified as the most significant driver of passenger satisfaction. Handling of disruption and provision of information are were also identified as key passenger concerns, and so the evidence from the Consultation response is broadly consistent with the Passenger Focus findings.

High, and increasing, forecast passenger demand on Great Western is well documented and it is well understood by the Government and the rail industry that crowding exists on some services. It is therefore understandable that the need for increased frequency, more capacity and faster journey times, as well as the issue of crowding, feature prominently in responses to the Consultation. These will clearly remain key priorities which the Great Western franchise will need to continue to address.

1. NRPS Survey: Spring 2014, Passenger Focus.

2. Figure 2.2 Key Themes & Keyword



Responses by Question

Responses were also analysed by response rates to the 22 numbered Consultation Questions in order to build a picture of both which questions drew the most interest from stakeholders, and how they replied. The detailed breakdown of responses to individual questions is in the next section, but the overall response rate is set out in Table 2.3 on page 11:

Table 2.3 Responses to individual questions		
Question No	Topic	Responses
11	Bedwyn connections	165
7	Changes to Service Level Commitment (SLC)	156
8	Calls vs Journey time	142
2	Local factors	129
1	Objectives	114
9	Intercity Express Programme (IEP) service pattern	107
6	Research	80
12	Community Rail	76
14	Disruption mitigation	74
19	Locations for funding	72
20	Communications	72
3	Scheme interfaces	70
17	Performance/Reliability specifics	65
16	Reacting to demand	65
4	Remapping	62
10	Priorities for suburban	62
13	Flex on branch lines	62
15	Rail replacement	61
21	Monitoring service quality	61
18	Cost savings	54
5	3 rd party promoted changes	53
22	Any other issues	49

3. Campaigns

The Consultation responses included a significant number of single-issue campaigns. Although these did not correspond directly to the questions in the consultation, we are grateful for the significant number of responses received about:

- Maintaining Pewsey to London services (138 responses)
- Support for the TransWilts and Paignton incremental services (Approx. 60 responses)
- The length of the second Direct Award (42 responses)

In some instances the Consultation response consisted entirely of the single issue, in others it was included within a broader response. Responses relating to Pewsey services have also been counted under responses to Q11 (Bedwyn connecting service) as they relate directly to the same issue; that of the extent of GW mainline electrification, which is expected to terminate at Newbury by May 2017.

Pewsey

Pewsey station is the next station beyond Bedwyn on the ‘Berks and Hants’ route of the franchise between Reading and Westbury. Pewsey benefits from a number of direct trains to London achieving a journey time of 1hr 08 minutes to 1hr 32 minutes, mainly provided by a stop in an Intercity service from the West. Passengers from Pewsey can also travel to London by changing at Westbury and Bath Spa although the corresponding journey time is longer, of between 2hr 30 minutes and 3 hours. The table below sets out the number of direct trains that currently operate, which it should be noted is in excess of the contracted minimum in the current franchise:

Table 3.1, Number of daily train calls by direction		Mon-Fri	Sat	Sun
May 14 FGW timetable	To London	9	6	5
	From London	10	7	4
SLC	To London	6	5	4
	From London	9	5	3
Difference timetable v SLC	To London	+3	+1	+1
	From London	+1	+2	+1

Under current plans, when electrification of the GW route reaches Newbury in 2017, it is likely that the train service pattern will need to change to reflect the new infrastructure. The 138 responses showed significant concerns that this could mean a reduction or cessation of through services from Pewsey to London.

Currently there are no plans or expectations that the service pattern to Pewsey station will change as a result of electrification, as calls at this station will be provided by through trains to the South West of England. When the HST fleet becomes life expired, an alternative solution to rolling stock

will be needed, and a key priority of the second Direct Award has been to work with the train operator to establish the best, affordable, long term solution for the South West routes. A choice will be made on either retaining and life-extending the existing HST fleet, or opting for new trains, and proposals have been brought forward by FGW for them to procure a new fleet of trains, which the Department for Transport will make a decision on by the end of June 2015.

We acknowledge that maintaining calls at Pewsey, and other intermediate stations on the Berks and Hants line (and indeed across the franchise as a whole) will need to be considered as part of the balance between journey time and calling patterns on long distance services. This issue is explored more fully in the response summary to question 8 below.

TransWilts and Paignton incremental services

Until December 2013, Melksham station on the Swindon to Westbury line had two passenger trains per day in each direction and there had been a long-standing stakeholder aspiration for a more frequent service. Wiltshire Council has signed a bilateral agreement with FGW providing for six additional train services to operate on the Swindon - Melksham - Westbury line ('TransWilts' – funded through the Department's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF fund)).

Also, in the same month an additional 12 trains per day began to operate the 20 minute journey between Newton Abbot and Paignton so as to provide a half hourly service. There are long standing aspirations, supported by recommendations in Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) to expand this service to Exeter and, eventually, Exmouth, under the Devon Metro concept. The additional service was promoted by Torbay and Devon County Council and part funded by a European Union grant.

We received a large number of responses welcoming and supporting the continuation of these new services.

There are no plans to reduce these incremental services in the new franchise, which are performing well and attracting new passengers. The Department has a standard process for assessment of locally funded enhancements three years after introduction. Value for money analysis will be carried out in due course (2016 or when the 3rd party funding expires, whichever is sooner) to establish whether they can be incorporated into the base specification as per the published process.

Length of the Direct Award

The Department has carried out analysis of the risks and benefits of each of a short list of different franchise duration options for the 'up to 5 year' period and welcomes that a number of organisations have expressed their views. 42 responses drew our attention to this specific point, of which the majority (76%) supported a longer DA term to provide stability for the operation during a period of change: Local authorities in the South West, Herefordshire and Oxfordshire, as well as the majority of Local Enterprise Partnerships, and Network Rail, were particularly supportive of a longer second DA. Some are directly quoted below:

'It is imperative to award a five year contract'

'We support a 5 year term in order to enable the full delivery of projects' 'We support no less than a five year term for the next franchise'

"We strongly support a 5 year franchise term due to the uncertain nature of major projects' 'For the purposes of stability, a five year franchise term would be most beneficial'

Rail Executive has considered options for successor contractual agreements to the current, first direct award which expires in September 2015 in order to best meet the needs of the franchise over a period of significant infrastructure and rolling stock change.

We carefully considered whether the opportunity presented by the investment on the franchise and the need to manage the disruption that the upgrade works will cause would best be met by a shorter direct award followed by a competed franchise, or a longer direct award for the whole period (more details on this are given below). This is a difficult and complex issue and we have balanced a number of factors, primarily including the value for money and affordability of the different options. The decision was taken to negotiate a contract for 3.5 years with an optional extension of up to 13 rail periods (around 1 year) on the basis that this represented the best overall solution to ensure continuity of a stable operation, delivery of the projects and growth in the franchise, while providing the best opportunity to provide good value in the next competed franchise.

The Rail Executive considers that the bulk of the changes brought about by electrification, new and cascaded rolling stock, the InterCity Express Programme (IEP), Crossrail and HS2 infrastructure will take place during the 3.5 year period from September 2015. Therefore there will be benefits to having in place, over this period, an appropriately incentivised operator, which will be well placed to work with the industry to deliver the changes. We have taken the view that, subject to appropriate risk protection for matters outside of its control, and profit cap and profit sharing mechanisms, that the party closest to the operation, that is the incumbent operator, is best placed to take ownership of supporting the successful delivery of these changes on the Great Western franchise.

4. Analysis of individual questions

This section contains a breakdown by question of how the majority of responses answered the 22 specific Consultation questions. Table 4.1 is repeated for ease of reference:

Table 4.1 Responses to individual questions		
Question No	Topic	Responses
11	Bedwyn Connections	165
7	Changes to the Service Level Commitment (SLC)	156
8	Calls vs Journey times	142
2	Local factors	129
1	Objectives	114
9	IEP Intercity Express Programme service pattern	107
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13	Flex on branch lines	62
15	Rail replacement	61
21	Monitoring service quality	61
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5	3 rd party promoted changes	53
22	Any other issues	49

The top six questions (highlighted in blue within the table) attracted the highest number of responses and are therefore answered in detail within this document. The other questions are addressed in briefer detail, highlighting the key points raised. All other questions are addressed by the key points highlighted by respondents. Questions are addressed in the order shown in the table.

Question 11

After electrification to Newbury, expected in 2016 would passengers' needs be best served by a diesel service from Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury to Newbury connecting into a fast service to London Paddington, or a diesel stopping service from Bedwyn to Reading connecting to a fast service from Reading to London Paddington, or other options? The former would give faster journey times to London but add a change at Newbury for passengers to Reading.

A large number of written responses to this question explicitly called for electrification to be extended to Bedwyn, with some respondents calling for electrification as far as Westbury. Around 30% of the total responses to the Consultation opposed both of the options set out in the question; calling for no changes to the level of direct service from Newbury to London Paddington, largely due to the perceived impact on the commuter population of Pewsey. In addition to this there were a notable number of responses which proposed no impact on the current Bedwyn to London Paddington service due to potential impacts on Marlborough and the commuter population that reside there. Passenger Focus said that the Department should "think long and hard about the acceptability of depriving well established commuting routes of even peak hour through trains" and added their support for an extension of GW electrification to Bedwyn.

In addition to the above, there was suggestion in responses from other areas that it may be inappropriate for South West peninsula fast trains to call at Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury due to the impact on journey times to longer distance destinations. This is explored more fully in the response to question 8 below.

Where respondents chose to comment directly on the above options, the vast majority stated that a change at Reading would be preferable, however many respondents stated that if this is to be the case, the change must be within a short timeframe to avoid any substantial increase in journey time. Around 30 individuals responding in a private capacity regarding Swindon – Westbury, called for the current service to be maintained as a minimum, with additional peak services on Mondays to Saturdays.

While the scope of planned electrification is not a matter for the specification of the franchise, Rail Executive recognises the strength of feeling on this issue as well as the impact of the loss of through Bedwyn services to London on the Berks and Hants line. We will therefore continue to work actively with the GW operator and Network Rail to find an affordable solution which could include the extension of electrification along the route, perhaps rephased to meet the CP6 delivery plan, or a more bespoke option, for example deployment of a hybrid train able to run on independent power from Newbury to Bedwyn. However the current plan will see a connecting service to/from Newbury from 2017. The specification will set a maximum time between the connecting services at Newbury and Rail Executive will continue to work actively with the industry to find a solution.

Question 7

Respondents are invited to propose any changes to the current service pattern which they feel should be considered and to explain their rationale, for example by identifying specific local factors which might influence the future level of passenger demand which they consider should be reflected in a revised specification

This question yielded the most detailed and in-depth responses to the Consultation. Virtually all responses sought to maintain, and increase, the current level of services based on the May 2014 timetable and so on this point, responses to question 7 were unanimous.

Beyond that, responses to Question 7 contained an enormous variety of recommendations, suggestions and aspirations for changes to the current service pattern, covering all areas of the franchise map. Careful analysis of responses has been carried out in order to identify the major and recurring themes and bring out a consensus view of how the franchise could respond to the needs of its customers. The summaries below encompass responses for the whole South West region. The key emerging themes for which responses to Question 7 demonstrated strong demand were:

West of England

Respondents indicated a strong demand for the provision of two trains per hour from London to Exeter (one fast and one semi-fast), with one train per hour extended to Plymouth and Penzance. Maintenance of the current level of Paignton through services and improvement in journey times were also highlighted as requirements.

We are pleased to confirm that we have been able to address this requirement with the new Franchise from the timetable change date in December 2018.

In addition, a potential 'quick win' identified concerns the timetable gap between the last Eastbound HST service which currently leaves Plymouth at 21.25 and the Sleeper service at 23.55 as currently an empty HST coaching stock move operates within the interval. As part of the DA process we are in discussions with FGW to see if this can be converted to a passenger service during the franchise term.

Cornish mainline enhancement

Respondents indicated a strong demand for a half-hourly mainline service to be provided between Penzance and Plymouth that would comprise the hourly Intercity Great Western service and other current Intercity services overlaid by a regional Penzance to Plymouth service.

This requirement is also addressed directly by the new Franchise with a timetable from December 2018 which moves much closer to a 2 trains per hour (TPH) Cornish mainline service. Where it is economically and operationally viable, the regional Penzance – Plymouth services will be extended to/from Exeter.

Cardiff – Portsmouth enhancement

The crowding of services on this route is well documented. The Direct Award franchise will see the provision of more services on the Bristol – Weymouth route, particularly to augment the service south of Westbury, in addition to two trains per hour on the Cardiff – Bristol

Temple Meads route. The franchise will also deliver 5 car DMUs on the vast majority of services on the Cardiff – Portsmouth route, replacing the current 3 car Class 158 formation, in order to provide much needed extra capacity.

Cotswold line enhancement

Responses indicated the need, where possible, for improved journey times to London from Gloucestershire and between Hereford and Worcester; and the provision of a later departure from London, in addition to a later through service to Great Malvern. Respondents also expressed the wish for an hourly Hereford to London service calling at Great Malvern & Pershore. A number of enhancements are being made to the Cotswold line service in May 2015, and the Direct Award will preserve these. In 2017, EMUs will replace HSTs on fast services to and from Oxford, and additional Worcester and Great Malvern services will be provided. In 2018, IEP trains will provide an hourly, Intercity service to Worcester with extensions to Hereford.

Devon Metro (including RUS recommendation)

Respondents sought the provision of half hourly ‘clockface’ services from Exmouth to Paignton via Exeter, expanding on the current Newton Abbot to Paignton incremental service as part of an overall ‘metro’ proposition on routes into and across Exeter, from Barnstaple, Okehampton and Axminster. Responses also included aspirations for new stations at Cranbrook, Newcourt and Marsh Barton. In the longer term, an aspiration for 2 TPH from Exeter to Waterloo was expressed.

The franchise contains appropriate cooperation provisions and we will continue to work closely with both the operator and colleagues in the South West Local Enterprise Partnership to progress the Devon Metro proposals. Services to/from Waterloo are outside the scope of this direct award, but may be considered as part of a replacement South West Trains franchise.

Heart of Wessex Line

Responses proposed the introduction of hourly services on the Heart of Wessex line between Bristol and Weymouth, with the summer Sunday pattern provided all year round. They also sought the provision of an increased service frequency on the Weymouth/ Great Malvern route (via Yeovil / Bath / Bristol) from 2 hourly to hourly.

While it was not appropriate to address this directly in the Direct Award, the franchise agreement includes a cooperation provision so that work on this proposal can be considered and progressed further as appropriate.

Improvements to South West to Bristol & Wales service

Respondents sought the provision of an hourly stopping service from Exeter to Bristol and an hourly fast diesel service from Cardiff to Bristol, extended on to Plymouth.

This has not been included in the specification for the second Direct Award. However, the franchisee is free to propose additional services if these are commercially justified, and these services could be included in a future franchise specification. In the meantime, the Direct Award will ensure that the current South West to Wales service continues to be provided.

MetroWest

Rail Executive supports the development and delivery of the MetroWest Phase 1 and 2 proposition, creating a ‘metro’ style, frequent service proposition on routes into and across Bristol

serving the Bristol travel to work area. This includes reopening of the Portishead line to passengers and provision of a half-hourly service on the Severn Beach line, in combination with hourly services on a reopened Henbury line and aspirations for additional stations at Ashley Down and Horfield.

The franchise contains appropriate cooperation provisions and we will continue to work closely with both the operator and colleagues in the West of England Partnership to progress the MetroWest proposals.

TransWilts line

The franchise will maintain the third party funded additional services at from Swindon to Westbury via Melksham. There has been a campaign opposing any changes to the Swindon – Westbury service with a view to incorporation of the additional services into the franchise base specification when their initial funding expires in December 2016, subject to a VfM assessment in the normal way.

Thames Valley Core enhancements

A desire was expressed for more evening trains back from London, in addition to an hourly night service between Reading and London; and further provision of semi-fast services to Twyford in combination with a later last train to Henley from Twyford.

This has not been included in the specification for the second Direct Award. However, the franchisee is free to propose additional services if these are commercially justified, and these services could be included in a future franchise specification.

It will not be technically feasible to create electrified services over the Maidenhead – Marlow route during the next franchise and retention of Class 16x Turbo trains on the route is now planned. FGW is working on plans to increase the frequency of trains serving the line, working with the Bucks Thames Valley LEP, DfT, NR and other key partners on potential infrastructure improvements. The line is expected to benefit from FGW's new Customer & Communities Improvement Fund, and a package of station improvements on the line is planned in partnership with the Bucks Thames Valley LEP. Ticket vending machines will be installed at Cookham and Marlow.

Other services

Respondents expressed a desire for the Monday – Friday off peak Oxford – Banbury service to be upgraded to two trains per hour, and for an improved service to Ashchurch for Tewkesbury and Worcester where it is deemed to be feasible.

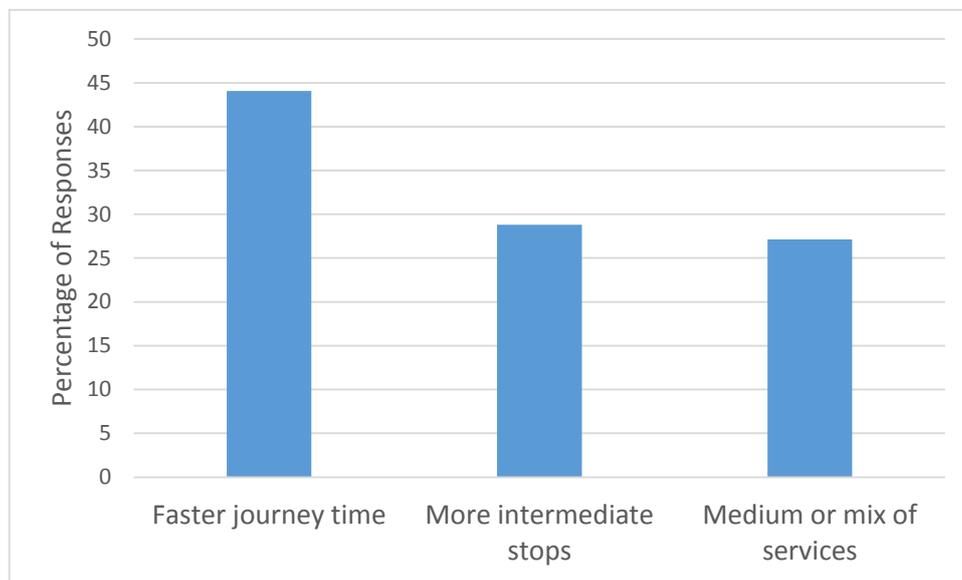
This has not been included in the specification for the second Direct Award. However, the franchisee is free to propose additional services if these are commercially justified, and these services could be included in a future franchise specification.

Question 8

Respondents are invited to say whether they value a faster headline journey time, or more intermediate stops, on a particular journey that they make (and to identify that journey).

The Consultation document sought views on whether respondents valued a faster headline journey time or more intermediate stops on a particular journey that they make. A relatively high proportion cited this question as a consideration in their answer. Across all respondents that provided a comment on this question, 26 (44%) stated that they would prefer a faster journey time, compared to 17 (29%) who valued more intermediate stops and 16 (27%) who stated that a medium between the two could be achieved.

The graphs below shows the percentage of respondents valuing faster journey times, more stops or a mix of services



Respondents valuing Journey Time

The prospect of faster journey time was the most popular answer to this question. Most of the responses in favour of faster journeys favoured;

- Journeys to and from London from locations such as Oxford, Reading, South Wales, Worcestershire, Plymouth, Exeter, Henley, and the South West Peninsula; and
- Local journeys within areas such as Portsmouth, Oxford, Swindon, Plymouth, Hampshire and the South West Peninsula.

Respondents valuing more intermediate stops

The potential for more intermediate stops on certain routes was most popular for;

- Journeys to and from London from locations such as Hereford, Exeter and Newbury; and
- Local journeys within areas such as Cornwall, Oxford, Melksham, Corsham, Swindon, Salisbury, and on the Heart of Wessex and TransWilts lines.

Respondents advocating a medium/mix

A number of respondents did not choose either faster services or more stops, instead choosing to advocate that a medium could be achieved on most routes by offering a balance of connecting fast, semi-fast and stopping services. Respondents suggested that this would be most appropriately determined by catering to demand on certain routes and could be made possible by IEP. Of those respondents who cited where they believed a mix could be achieved, the following lines/areas were the most popular;

- The Heart of Wessex line
- South West Peninsula area

In addition to the above, popular additional comments also included;

- Frequency, capacity and reliability of services as a preference over faster journey times and more intermediate stops;
- Level of service to stations such as Reading, Maidenhead, Slough and Westbury to be retained.

It should be noted that many responses also advocated that all proposals which seek to alter journey times or number of intermediate stops should be subject to detailed consultations with stakeholders, and adequate local engagement.

There is always a balance to be struck between providing fast end-to-end journey times and sufficient calls at intermediate stations. The franchise specification aims to achieve this, e.g. by providing a mixture of fast services to/from Exeter and slower services calling at intermediate stations such as Newbury and Castle Cary. The franchisee is free to propose changes to the specification or to the timetable if it can demonstrate a suitable commercial and operational case and these changes would be subject to a period of consultation.

Question 2

Respondents are encouraged to consider and identify any specific local factors that they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand, which should be reflected in the specification for the new franchise.

Respondents were encouraged to consider and identify any specific, relevant local factors that they believed could potentially influence future levels of passenger demand, so that they could be reflected in the specification for the new franchise. 129 (27%) of the total respondents to the Consultation chose to answer this question, with the overwhelming majority citing growth as a contributory local factor influencing demand. The Community Rail Steering Group report¹ shows high level sustained year on year growth in passengers travelling on Community Rail lines and local rail services in the last ten years. It is important to note that the majority of responses referenced growth in the following sectors as the most influential for passenger demand;

- Growth in passenger numbers on certain lines and at certain stations;
- Current and planned growth in housing and regeneration which could add pressure to rail travel demand

¹ Community Rail Line Development (September 2013), ATOC and ACoRP

- Recent and forecast employment growth with numerous Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plans and Enterprise Zone Plans referenced
- Growth in educational developments such as further education colleges and universities

The majority of respondents provided similar answers to this question, citing growth as a major contributory factor. It should be noted that whilst the majority of respondents provided similar answers to this question, where larger growth is occurring, the majority of this is linked to, or born from strategic growth plans which include major transport infrastructure and adequate consideration of the likely demand for rail travel. These plans are specifically designed to manage growth and the consequent demand for infrastructure that occurs in parallel.

The specification includes increased services on a number of routes and a significant increase in capacity of circa 3 million additional seats across the franchise to accommodate growth in passenger numbers on these routes. The franchisee is also free to provide further increases in services on any route, over and above the specification, if these services are commercially justified. These services, and the outputs from strategic growth plans, could also be included in a future franchise specification.

Question 1

Respondents are encouraged to consider whether any additional objectives should be reflected in the franchise specification for the 5 year period from September 2015.

114 (24%) of respondents gave an answer to this question, with 64 (13%) providing detailed suggestions on additional objectives. Responses were predominantly received from local and county authorities, local interest organisations, charities and members of the public. The most common suggestions for additional objectives included;

- Reduction in connectivity inequalities;
- Better working with Local Transport Authorities, Network Rail and Train Operating Companies;
- Economic growth as a primary objective;
- Stronger emphasis on better integration with other transport modes;
- Stronger emphasis on providing direct services;
- Objectives surrounding improved frequency, journey time and capacity; and
- Rebalancing of regional disparities.

In addition to the above responses, less popular suggestions for objectives included maintaining the current level of services as a base, promoting a more work-friendly environment on trains (through measures such as the wider adoption of Wi-Fi and more seating) and the delivery of the Crossrail project. Respondents also called for better ticketing processes and more efficient use of information and communication to be adopted as additional objectives. Other responses included more attention to demand and improved resilience of the rail network.

The specification for the new franchise includes objectives for improved co-operation with Network Rail, particularly during upgrade work, and with other parts of the railway industry. It also includes co-operation provisions with local authorities, to reflect local plans for improved and expanded services in some areas. As stated above, the specification includes increased services on a number of routes, to reflect growth in passenger numbers on these routes. The franchisee is free

to provide further increases in services on any route, over and above the specification, if these services are commercially justified.

The new franchise will include challenging targets for the operator to achieve in terms of delays, cancellations, and overall passenger satisfaction measures as set out in Section 5 below. FGW will also continue to invest in better systems for the provision of real time information to passengers.

Provision of free Wi-Fi connectivity on trains is specified for the direct award, and will be available on all trains by the end of the direct award period.

Question 9

Should any elements of the indicative modelled Intercity service pattern be mandated, and can it be improved? What should the priority be for Intercity services where IEP trains are not planned to operate?

107 respondents (22%) chose to provide an answer to this question with many giving a detailed answer. Below are the most popular responses for elements to be mandated;

- First and Last train times and peak hour trains
- Maintenance of existing services
- Maintain key calls
- Maintain frequency of services
- Maintain number of calls
- Maintain capacity of services
- Maintain existing provision of special events services

A notable amount of respondents also mentioned that it would be advantageous to retain a degree of flexibility, to enable effective response to changes in demand. In addition to the above elements, respondents also expressed the view that particular services should be mandated- below are the most popular responses:

- Cheltenham – London via Gloucester and Swindon
- Plymouth – Exeter evening trains
- Swansea – London via Bristol Parkway
- London – Hereford via Worcester
- Severn Tunnel Junction – Reading & London
- Key Intercity calls in Wiltshire

Improvements to services include:

- Fast IEP services from Bristol stations to London Paddington
- More through services to Hereford on the London Paddington – Worcester service
- Hourly service from London Paddington – Cheltenham
- Upgrades to the Penzance sleeper service
- Provision of more appropriate stock on Intercity services
- Cardiff – London trains calling at Bristol Parkway

Respondents stated that where IEP trains are not planned to operate, priorities for Intercity services should include improved connectivity, journey times, capacity and frequency improvements. The DA will deliver a step change in capacity, frequency and journey time savings across the franchise.

The specification for the new franchise protects the existing level of service, and includes requirements to protect elements such as first & last trains, frequency of services, improved journey times and key calls in the indicative service pattern for the new franchise. The franchisee is free to propose changes to the specification or to the timetable if it can demonstrate a suitable commercial and operational case.

Summary of responses from this point address only the key issues raised for each question.

Question 6

Respondents are encouraged to bring to our attention research, evidence or publications which they believe should be considered in the development of the franchise.

A wide range of responses to this question yielded the following document types for consideration:

- Major Local Plans, Growth Plans and development plans
- Passenger demand forecasting study and rail development plans
- Strategic Economic Plans
- Cases for line improvements & station re-openings
- Current planning applications

We appreciate these being drawn to our attention and a wide range of documents, including some of those specified in responses, were consulted by Rail Executive and its advisers when developing the plans for the new franchise.

Question 12

Respondents are invited to suggest ways in which Community Rail Partnerships could deliver more of the beneficial outcomes for passengers achieved so far.

Respondents called for an overall more developed working partnership with Community Rail Partnerships, encompassing security of funding, more efficient provision of information to CRPs and more joined-up working between CRPs and Train Operating Companies. A number of responses advocated the appointment of a specific, locally based, Community Rail post within the TOC, dedicated to management of the relationship with the CRP. There were also calls for partnerships of this type to be written into the franchise specification.

Rail Executive are fully supportive of the contribution made by Community Rail Partnerships. There are 5 CRPs on the GW franchise, covering ten designated community rail lines, including some of the fastest growing in the UK.

Devon and Cornwall
Heart of Wessex
Sevenside

Under the second DA, FGW will expand its funding for Community Rail Partnerships to increase passenger numbers, support local communities and drive economic growth. Complementing this activity, in April 2016 FGW will introduce a Customer Communities Improvement Fund. This will be focussed on improvements in areas where this a real social need, or where normal business investment criteria are challenging. FGW has indicated its intention to seek to apply this funding to initiatives including: additional cycle spaces at stations, the improvement of highway signage near stations and recommendations from the new station travel plans it has committed to develop by March 2017.

Question 14

Respondents are asked to suggest what mitigating actions and steps the GW operator should be expected to take to meet the needs of its passengers both during the planned disruption to the GW franchise as a result of planned upgrade works and when force majeure events such as extreme weather, impact the network.

The two primary themes that emerged in response to this question involved;

- Timely provision of up-to-date (where possible real-time) information across all platforms including traditional methods such as well-informed staff; as well as more modern platforms such as the use of technology and/or social media channels.
- The use of diversionary train routes with longer journey times would predominantly be preferable to bus replacement services where delays are unavoidable.

Respondents also called for greater communication surrounding planned disruption including advance consultation with passenger groups and councils to effectively distribute information in advance, therefore minimising disruption to journeys. Respondents called for the franchise to be required to work with passenger groups to improve the management of rail replacement operations to ensure that passengers receive a value for money alternative when planned works require the closure of the railway.

The new franchise will include challenging targets for the operator to achieve in terms of delays, cancellations, and overall passenger satisfaction measures as set out in Section 5 below. FGW will also continue to invest in better systems for the provision of real time information to passengers, including via social media and joined up communications programmes with Network Rail.

Question 19

Respondents are encouraged to consider which locations merit consideration for future improvement under these schemes.

Responses to this question were wide ranging and included a variety of responses, around 60 – 70% of responses raised the issue of poor accessibility of stations and many respondents raised the issue of a lack of car and cycle parking facilities. The most commonly referenced stations were:

- Exmouth Station
- Castle Cary Station
- Bristol Station(s)
- Paignton Station
- Lostwithiel Station
- Bridgwater Station
- Bruton Station

In addition to parking and access improvements, respondents also requested greater coverage of CCTV in stations to enhance security, better station facilities including shops and kiosks and better attention to toilet facilities, such as longer opening times to cater for passengers on later services.

The new franchise will see major investments in stations, additional car parking, revenue protection measures, CCTV and security enhancements as set out in Section 5 below.

Question 20

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.

Key feedback regarding information communication between the franchise operator and passengers included similar views to question 14 where passengers desired better usage of real-time information in a wide variety of formats. Respondents also wished for timely advance notice where possible, particularly for passengers who do not travel daily, and availability of this information at the point of their ticket purchase. There were also calls for the operation and promotion of a 24 hour helpline for passengers along with sufficient prominent information displays and remote announcements to communicate with passengers during disruption.

The new franchise will include challenging targets for the operator to achieve in terms of delays, cancellations and overall passenger satisfaction measures, as set out in Section 5 below. It also includes a commitment to invest in additional interactive screens and information systems, roving microphones and gateline PCs totalling at least £1.8m to improve the delivery of real time information to passengers. FGW has also committed to provide, during times of disruption, a social media information service providing travel information and information on the disruption, with information made available through social media (including Twitter and its website). This service shall be provided during times of disruption on a 24 hours a day basis.

Question 3

Respondents are encouraged to highlight any interfaces with other schemes that are likely to be delivered during the next five years.

Respondents were asked to highlight interfaces with other schemes likely to be delivered within the next five years, the most commonly provided answers included;

- Crossrail
- Phase one of the MetroWest scheme – plan for suburban service in the West of England, more information can be found at <http://www.travelwest.info/MetroWest>
- Devon Metro – more information can be found at <http://www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=13434&listid=9938>
- Western rail access to Heathrow Airport – A new rail access between the Thames Valley network and the UK's hub network, more information can be found at <http://thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/wrath>
- South East Wales Metro scheme – integration of rail and bus services in the South East of Wales

To help ensure that these projects are successfully delivered, the specification includes co-operation provisions with local authorities, to reflect local plans for improved and expanded services in some areas. It also includes provision for co-operation with the Crossrail project, High Speed 2 and other infrastructure projects on the network.

Question 17

Respondents are invited to highlight if there are specific stations or services where they feel particular attention should be paid to reliability and punctuality.

Responses for this question generally included stations or services which were within the respondent's immediate catchment area, therefore no real patterns emerged. However the stations and services that are important to note consist of;

- The TransWilts service
- Heart of Wessex line
- Corsham station
- Local services in the South West peninsula
- Night Riviera sleeper service
- Connections at Westbury station
- London Paddington Westbound services

The new franchise will include challenging targets for the operator to achieve in terms of delays, cancellations and overall passenger satisfaction measures as set out in Section 5 below. FGW will also continue to invest in better systems for the provision of real time information to passengers.

Question 16

Respondents are encouraged to consider what steps the GW operator should be expected to take when reacting to changes in passenger demand, and what targets for capacity should be set.

Key responses to this question included;

- Planning for growth using more diverse methods to capture realistic growth rates
- Formulate action plans for dealing with and meeting passenger demand which can be monitored by the franchisee's general customer base

- Adopt a benchmark of no customer standing for over 20 minutes
- A requirement and incentive within the franchise agreement for the operator to provide additional train capacity to mitigate regular overcrowding

This question prompted strong response on the importance of capacity and argued that it is too important not to be robustly targeted and managed. Respondents called for the regular publication of clear disaggregated crowding data and the use of a traffic light system to signify where free seats are available. Passenger Focus called for the operator to be incentivised to utilise its full fleet and develop business cases where additional rolling stock is required.

Under the new franchise, significant additional capacity of approximately 25% will be provided by new and cascaded trains which we expect will provide a seated load factor of circa 74% during the peak on routes into London. Although it has not been possible to introduce all of the suggestions from the responses in the Direct Award, the Franchise Agreement ensures that the operator must plan to meet demand, targeting the capacity of the train fleet to meet the needs of passengers. We will also consider how these proposals could be put forward in the specification for the next competed franchise.

Question 4

Respondents are invited to identify any changes or reorganisation to the routes served by the Great Western franchise that they would recommend; and to explain their rationale.

Aspirations in response to this question included:

- Addition of the Bristol – Swindon – Oxford service
- Stroud valley services beyond Cheltenham
- Addition of the Cardiff – Cheltenham service
- Transfer of Reading – Gatwick service to another operator and possible combination with East West rail.

Although these suggestions are outside the scope of the immediate direct award, they will be kept in mind for the design and specification of the long-term franchise following this direct award.

Question 10

What do you feel the Great Western operator's priorities on the suburban network should be once it is electrified in 2016 e.g. for additional higher capacity, fast commuter services, or improved journey times?

Responses to this question were varied and many respondents referenced particular lines or services where they wished to promote changes. Of the three priorities of increased capacity, fast commuter services and improved journey times, higher capacity was mentioned the most on all networks in all periods, this was particularly prevalent in growth areas such as the Thames Valley, with many respondents viewing capacity as 'absolutely crucial', particularly on the suburban network during peak periods. After capacity the order of preference was as follows:

- Better reliability
- Good service at respective stations

- Good onward connections
- Shorter journey times

In general respondents viewed better reliability, good services at their respective stations and good connections in priority over shorter journey times.

The Franchise Agreement requires that the operator must plan to meet demand, targeting the capacity of the train fleet to meet the needs of passengers. As included in the response to earlier questions, the new franchise will include challenging targets for the operator to achieve in terms of delays, cancellations, and overall passenger satisfaction measures as set out in Section 5 below and we expect the new rolling stock will provide a higher degree of reliability; the IEP contract for example, has specific targets for this built into it. FGW will also continue to invest in better systems for the provision of real time information to passengers.

Similar to the reply to Question 8, there is a balance to be struck between providing fast end-to-end journey times and sufficient calls at intermediate stations. The franchise specification aims to achieve this, e.g. by providing a mixture of fast services to/from Oxford and Newbury and slower services calling at intermediate stations such as Maidenhead. The franchisee is free to propose changes to the specification or to the timetable if it can demonstrate a suitable commercial and operational case. Under the new franchise, significant additional capacity will be provided by new and cascaded trains which we expect will provide a seated load factor of circa 74% during the peak on routes into London.

Question 13

While maintaining end to end service frequency, could the needs of passengers be better met by providing the operator with some flexibility over calling patterns on branch lines?

There was a varied response to this question; overarching responses included a strong opposition to any reduction in intermediate station calls on a number of lines, particularly where this could interrupt commuter journeys. Respondents accepted that a degree of flexibility would allow the Train Operating Company to respond to fluctuations in demand more readily. Many respondents felt that this matter should generally be agreed between the Train Operating Company, Community Rail Partnership and the Local Transport Authority.

The specification will protect intermediate calls at stations on branch lines where these exist in the current timetable. However, the franchisee is free to propose changes to the specification or the timetable if it can demonstrate a suitable commercial and operational case.

Question 15

Where the provision of temporary, alternative service is unavoidable, respondents are invited to suggest what alternative proposals they would prefer the GW operator to put in place.

As echoed in question 14, the majority of respondents stated that diversionary train routes are preferable to bus services and any changes should be supplemented by high quality information distribution, and increased dialogue with local authorities where these measures are used. When planned disruption occurs, the specification should ensure consultation with the public and stakeholders over changes to timetables. Customers also highlighted that a reduction in fares

proportional to the inconvenience caused to their journey would be desirable. Customers also responded that when alternative services must be used, the operator should seek to ensure that all passengers can reach their destination at all costs and no alternative provision should be discounted.

The specification includes objectives for improved co-operation with Network Rail, particularly during upgrade work, and with other parts of the railway industry. The new franchise will include challenging targets for the operator to achieve in terms of delays, cancellations, and overall passenger satisfaction measures as set out in Section 5 below. FGW will also continue to invest in better systems for the provision of real time information to passengers, and will seek to mitigate the effects on passengers of upgrade work, e.g. by diverting trains via alternative routes where available.

Question 21

Rail Executive is considering what the appropriate approach for monitoring and improving service quality in the new franchise would be. Respondents are invited to say what matters most to them (for example, cleanliness of trains and stations, or the helpfulness of staff) in terms of the service quality they receive.

Much of the key information regarding this question has been captured in the key themes section of Chapter 2 in this document. Outside of those keywords respondents predominantly focused on the following;

- Availability and cost of car parking
- Cleanliness and facilities available at stations
- If the journey is not direct, waiting times for connecting trains
- Communication of information at the station and on the train

Respondents called for the specification to contain clear requirements for delivering improved satisfaction across the range of passenger priorities, in addition to highlighting the role of staff in providing both information and perceptions of security. Many responses cited the National Passenger Survey Results and called for a service quality management system based around them.

The new franchise will see investments in stations, additional car parking, revenue protection measures, CCTV and security enhancements as set out in Section 5 below. Additionally, it will include challenging targets for the operator to achieve in terms of delays, cancellations, and overall passenger satisfaction measures as set out in Section 5 below.

Question 18

Are there any areas of the GW franchise where you feel cost savings could be made?

The overwhelming majority of responses to this question related to more effective measures for revenue protection, both for the purposes of cost savings and to provide a more accurate and usable overview of patronage which can inform analysis of demand and provision of future services. Many respondents acknowledged the importance of cost savings in delivering value for money for tax payers and passengers, and highlighted partnership working between Train

Operating Companies and Network Rail as key to this. Broader deployment of a variety of ticket types as highlighted in question 22 (which invites respondents to comment on any other issues they would like to see consulted upon) would contribute positively to enhanced revenue protection.

The specification includes objectives for improved co-operation with Network Rail, particularly during upgrade work, and with other parts of the railway industry, which is expected to contribute to cost control. As set out in Section 5 below, the franchisee will also invest in the purchase of additional ticket machines for on-train purchase of tickets, and additional ticket gatelines to help protect revenue and improve security.

Question 5

Respondents who wish to promote service changes should clearly identify these in their response to this Consultation, as well as any supporting business case or VfM analysis.

Question 5 was predominantly aimed at potential promoters of incremental, third party schemes to identify proposals which they may wish to pursue within the franchise period. Understandably, some overlap was encountered where potential scheme promoters also included their proposals under Question 7, which was designed to identify desirable changes to the current, May 2014 service pattern. Also in a number of instances different respondents identified the same scheme. Passenger Focus also responded on this point about the need for clear communication and mitigating actions for any proposed decrements – however, none were proposed. Please bring any errors or omissions to our attention.

The Department has compiled a shortlist of potential third party schemes identified in response to this question which may require action on the part of the GW franchisee during the five year period from September 2015. As in the current Franchise Agreement, there will be a 'reasonable co-operation' provision in the Franchise Agreement, which will incentivise the train operator to work, where appropriate, with third party promoters of schemes to secure their development and delivery, as this is something which has worked well during the course of the current franchise. The main proposals identified in responses are:

Promoter	Incremental Proposal
Henley branch user group	Additional Henley branch services
Railfuture	Bere Alston - Tavistock
Totnes rail user group	Better frequency to Plymouth
Slough Borough Council	Chalvey new station
Plymouth City Council	Cornish mainline 1/2 hourly
Cornwall County Council	Cornish mainline 1/2 hourly
	Cornish branches hourly
	Looe Valley service extensions
Peninsula Rail Task Force	Cornish mainline 1/2 hourly
Somerset County Council	Cornish mainline 1/2 hourly
FGW West Customer Panel	Cornish mainline 1/2 hourly
Wiltshire Council	Corsham station reopening
East Devon District Council	Devon Metro
Devon County Council	Devon Metro, Heart of Wessex

TravelWatch Southwest	Devon Metro, TransWilts enhancement
Reading Borough Council	Electrification to Basingstoke
South Somerset District Council	Heart of Wessex
Sherborne Transport Action Group	Heart of Wessex
Bath & North East Somerset Council	Heart of Wessex
Dorset County Council	Heart of Wessex
West of England Local Enterprise Partnership	MetroWest Phase 1 and Phase 2
Saltash Town Council	More calls as Saltash
Ashchurch, Tewkesbury and District Rail Promotion Group	More calls at Ashchurch for Tewkesbury
Lostwithiel Town Council	More calls at Lostwithiel
Torbay Development Agency	New station at Edginswell
Torbay Council	New station at Edginswell
Thames Valley Berkshire	Reading Green Park new station
Jesse Norman MP	Rotherwas new station
Saltash rail users group	Saltash station calls
TransWilts Community Rail Partnership	TransWilts
Worcestershire County Council	Worcester Parkway station

The cooperation provisions in Schedule 6.2 of the Franchise Agreement will help to ensure that the GW operator continues to support and assist in the development of these third party promoted schemes.

Question 22

Please indicate if there are any additional areas that you think Rail Executive should consider consulting on and that have not already been addressed during stakeholder engagement.

Responses highlighting additional areas to be consulted comprised the following:

- More effective linkage with other transport modes
- More effective mechanisms for passenger and stakeholder engagement, particularly for gathering intelligence on local aspirations and developments, and for consulting on future proposals
- A synchronised and suitable 'smart' ticketing system- many respondents referenced more flexibility in ticketing and a move towards an 'Oyster' style system in addition to the use of mobile devices in the ticketing process
- Better fare structuring particularly for season tickets and arrangements where passengers are rewarded where they travel less frequently or outside the peak
- The ability to purchase the most appropriate ticket for the journey, regardless of how the ticket is purchased
- Clear and consistent guidelines for revenue protection, starting with better provision for the purchase of tickets at stations and on board trains, and establishing a system that filters out those who make an honest mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system.

- Information about revenue protection and the criteria for decision taking should be readily available to the passenger on the TOC's website.
- More robust compensation policies with a single set of arrangements including Delay Repay available to all ticket holders delayed for 30 minutes or more and additional compensation for customers who regularly experience delays of this nature.
- Detailed information about dealing with complaints including greater power to customer service advisors to apply discretionary justice when dealing with complaints and greater mechanisms for translating complaints into service improvements.
- Requirements to comply with equalities and discrimination legislation and to produce a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP).

5. The new Franchise & the Future Railway

The Request for Proposal (“RfP”) for the second direct award issued to First Great Western provided the basis upon which they made their proposal to the Department for the continued operation of the franchise, and reflected what Rail Executive wishes to procure, including elements that it may buy if these are affordable. Importantly, it set out the basis upon which the proposal would be evaluated.

The Department’s aim has been to deliver a franchise that is affordable and delivers value for money, as well as an improved service for passengers while also managing the inevitable disruption that will occur on the route during the upgrade works, and delivery of new and cascaded rolling stock.

Rail Executive has now completed negotiations with First Great Western and finalised contracts for the second, directly awarded franchise for the three and a half year period from September this year. It is acknowledged that any changes to the GW programme that should arise, for example later or earlier delivery of new signalling, electrification of the routes, or new trains will need to be reflected as appropriate as an in-franchise “Change” under the procedures set out in the franchise agreement.

Through extensive negotiation, Rail Executive has secured an overall package of passenger benefits, station enhancements, faster and more frequent services, and challenging targets for performance and overall customer satisfaction. This section sets out in more detail what the new Franchise will deliver and how it will approach some of the challenges that it will face.

The scale of change facing this franchise is unprecedented since the Great Western’s original construction, with a £7.5bn programme of infrastructure upgrades, new and cascaded train fleets and new systems, while continuing to manage complex interfaces with projects such as the requirement for the vacation of Old Oak Common required to support construction of High Speed 2. This is set against a background of strong and increasing passenger demand and ever increasing customer expectations. We have analysed the risks and benefits of the short listed options for the length of the second Direct Award, whereas the commercial case focuses on the requirements upon the franchisee for delivery of the Government’s programme, large elements of which will be comprised of franchisee led projects.

It is the Department’s aim for the Direct Award to deliver these improvements while maintaining services for customers during the Direct Award period, subject to being affordable and providing value for money. The Direct Award should also ensure that the franchise is in the best position to be competitively re-let at the end of the franchise period.

The Direct Award negotiated with FGW will deliver a significant recast of the service proposition following the £7.5 billion investment in rolling stock and infrastructure.

The Proposal in Summary:

- Today's timetable (SLC1) maintained and improved, with major step changes following suburban electrification in May 2017 (SLC2) and full electrification and new Intercity Express Programme trains in December 2018 – subject to delivery by Network Rail of the new signalling and Overhead Line Electric infrastructure.
- Significantly more capacity, improved service frequency and journey time savings across the franchise map.
- This is delivered by new IEP trains and a fleet of cascaded Class 387 and 365 EMU trains for the Thames Valley, allowing DMU units to cascade further south and west. This represents an increase in capacity of circa 25% across the franchise map.
- Better frequency to the West of England from December 2018 with 2 tph, 1 fast and 1 semi fast, running as far as Exeter.
- Increase to 2 tph on the Cornish mainline from December 2018, with more regular clock face connections to the branch lines.
- Investment of £30m to create at least 2,100 more car park spaces and a range of station improvements.
- Challenging targets to maintain and improve the level of delays and cancellations and NRPS scores.
- On train free Wi-Fi introduced across the GW fleet.
- Investment of at least £3.6m in replacements for 'Avantix' mobile ticket retailing.
- Investment of at least £2m in new ticket gatelines which have been demonstrated to protect revenue and increase security for passengers on the railway.
- Lengthening of most Cardiff to Portsmouth trains from three cars to five cars by May 2017 to relieve the crowding on this route.
- More car parking spaces, including at the following locations:

Station	Additional Spaces
Tiverton Parkway	185
Goring & Streatley	40
Didcot Parkway	810
Gloucester	240
Castle Cary	100
Hanborough	44
Charlbury	30
Stroud	74
Taunton	300
Kemble	332

- A new at least 650 space car park facility at St. Erth.
- Investment in new interactive screens and information boards.
- At least £2.3m investment in improved CCTV at stations and a further investment in CIS, roving microphones and gateline PCs.
- At least 56 “customer ambassadors” at stations.
- A fund of £2.45m for station access improvements, above and beyond Access for All main schemes and small schemes investment.
- Station Travel Plans at a further 20 major interchange stations.
- A £3.5m station development match fund, including £800 000 for St. Erth.
- Intention for 700 additional cycle parking spaces to be provided under the CCIF fund.
- Targeted improvements to National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) scores supported by up to £1m annual improvement spend.
- Ongoing reduction to incidents of Cancellation and Significant Lateness (CASL).
- Commitment to cooperate to revise the Passenger’s Charter to include “delay repay” or another improved passenger compensation scheme during the franchise term.
- In times of disruption, a 24-hour social media information service providing travel information and information on the disruption, with information made available through social media (including Twitter and the Franchisee's website).

Wider Government priorities

First Great Western was required to propose initiatives which contribute to and align with wider Government objectives, including:

- the door-to-door integrated transport strategy; including Station Travel Plans and better real time information;
- economic regeneration and growth;
- sustainable, long-term socio-economic benefits including help for long term job seekers, modern apprenticeships and maintaining IIP status and help for SMEs;
- reduced environmental impacts of operations including achieving and maintaining ISO 50001 certification and targets for increased recycling and lower energy use.

Initiatives to deliver these benefits have been contracted as committed obligations in the Franchise Agreement and will be monitored by Rail Executive Passenger Services team during the franchise period to ensure they are delivered.

Timetable Improvements

SLC 1: September 2015 to May 2017

The first period of operation will see today’s timetable, including recent West of England and Cotswold enhancements, maintained. As anticipated, the Greenford services will be replaced by an Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) service between Paddington and Hayes & Harlington from May

2017, with a connecting shuttle services between West Ealing and Greenford.

SLC 2: May 2017 – December 2018.

From May 2017, once suburban electrification and delivery of Class 365 and 387 electric (EMU) trains is complete, electric trains will commence operation on Thames Valley to London services. The much higher capacity of the fleet will see up to 32,225 seats and spaces arriving into London Paddington across the AM peak compared to a target of 31,200.

Electrification will also enable replacement of peak hour HSTs on the London to Oxford route with EMUs running at 100mph.

North Downs services (Reading to Gatwick Airport) will also see strengthening from the current 2 tph to 3 tph.

An additional early London to Cornwall service, and Weston-Super-Mare to London service will commence operation.

Cotswolds services are further strengthened with additional services to Worcester and Great Malvern.

On the Cardiff to Portsmouth regional route, 3 car Class 158 trains are replaced with Class 165/166 trains in 5 car formations on most trains, to provide badly needed additional capacity. This is in response to the well documented and understood crowding issues on this popular route. FGW also intend to revise High Speed diagrams so as to make the West of England a discrete HST fleet and to provide an additional service to Cheltenham at 16.42 and to Bristol at 19.12.

Turbo diesel (Class 165) trains that previously served the Thames Valley are then cascaded to the Bristol metropolitan area so that from 2018 a peak capacity of 8,700 seats is provided.

SLC 3: December 2018 to franchise end date

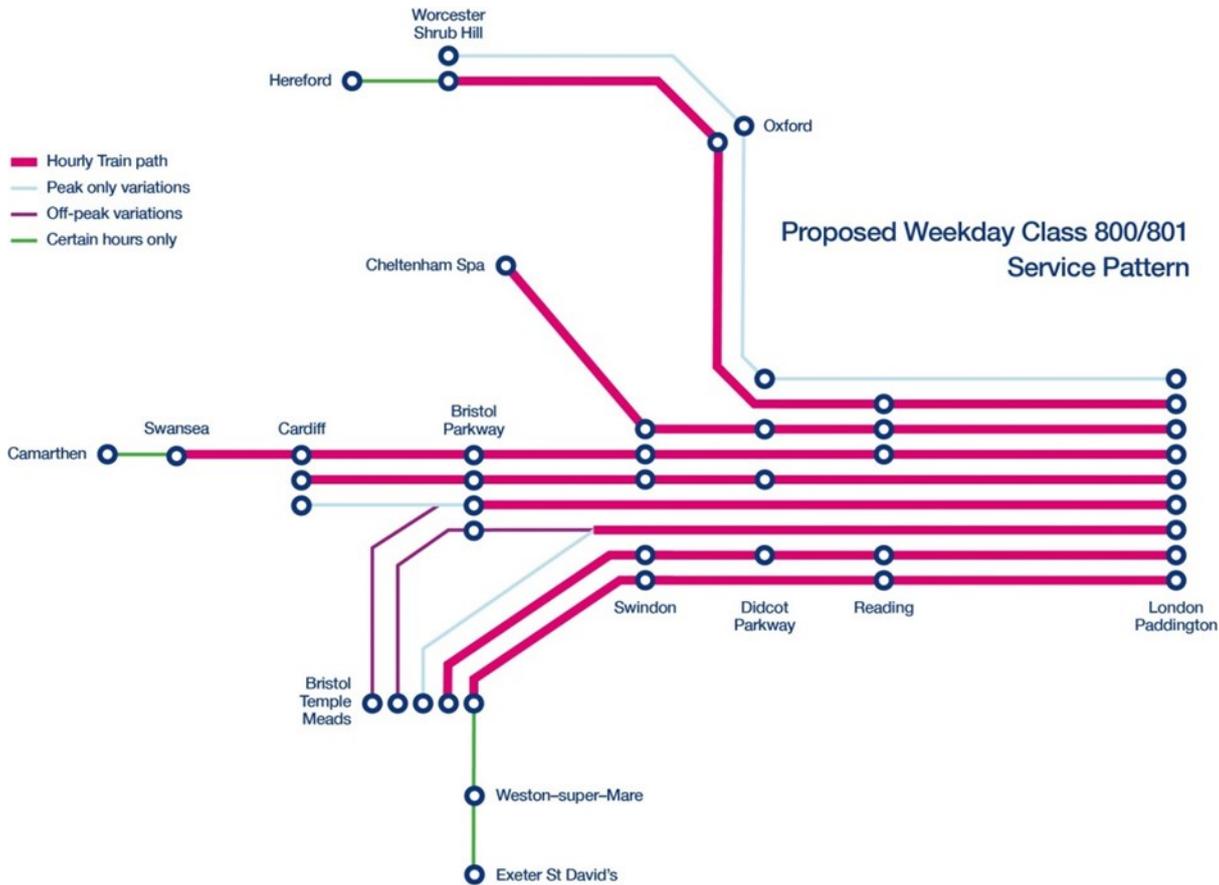
In December 2018, the timetable change will see the culmination of all the enhancement work and new and cascaded rolling stock in a recast of the timetable and 110 mph operation, providing additional capacity and faster journeys.

London & Thames Valley

To build on the enhancements in SLC2, the December 2018 timetable change will see 110 mph operation on the Main (fast) lines enabling faster Oxford and Newbury services as well as additional fast peak hour trains from Swindon and Didcot to London Paddington. EMU trains will operate in 12 car formation on the Main lines and 8 car on the Relief (slow) lines.

High Speed (HSS) services.

New electric only and bi-mode Intercity Express Programme trains will replace HSTs on the majority of long distance routes with a standard off peak pattern of 4tph from London to Bristol, 2 via Bath and Chippenham and 2 via Bristol Parkway, and 2 tph from London to South Wales. 1 tph operates from London via the North Cotswolds to Worcester/Hereford, with a further 1 tph to Cheltenham as illustrated below:



West of England services and New Trains

In the current timetable proposals, IEP trains will not provide services on the main West of England route (via Castle Cary, Taunton and Exeter). As set out in the previous section, stakeholders from across the South West of the country and Cornish peninsula have lobbied for some time for faster, more frequent services to Exeter, Plymouth and Penzance.

The December 2018 timetable provides a regular service of up to 2 trains per hour:

- An hourly service non-stop from Reading to Taunton, extending hourly to Plymouth and two hourly to Penzance – resulting in a journey time saving of 13 minutes as illustrated in the table below.
- A two hourly, stopping service between Paddington and Exeter.
- In addition, Class 158 trains will provide approximately 2 tph via the Cornish mainline from Plymouth to Penzance, with some extensions to Exeter, while also achieving better, more 'clock face' connections with Cornish branch lines. This again is being provided in response to feedback from stakeholders as it has been one of their long standing aspirations.

Due to the need to conclude the Direct Award around a known contractual base, this timetable is currently envisaged to operate with life extended, PRM compliant Class 43 (HST) trains. However it is acknowledged that the HSTs, most of which date from 1975 to 1982, are becoming life expired and do not have the characteristics, capability or environmental performance of a modern train fleet.

FGW is therefore pursuing a procurement for a new train fleet for the West and South West of England for delivery in time for the December 2018 (SLC3) timetable change. We expect this to conclude in June and accordingly the Franchise Agreement contains a 'switch' to enable the new build fleet option to be taken if the Department determines that the business case for this investment is value for money. At the time of writing, Rail Executive is optimistic that FGW will be able to successfully conclude its procurement and make a strong proposal to the Department. Subject to contract and the Department's decision to proceed, we could then look forward to having a modern, high quality offering for the South West which is capable of further journey time savings:

IEP Services: West & Cotswolds			
Destination	Today	2018	
Bristol	1hr 45	1hr 19	
Cardiff	2hr 6	1hr 50	Fastest 1hr 45
Hereford	3hr 4	2hr 55	
Cheltenham	2hr 12	1hr 55	
London Thames Valley			
Oxford	57 min	52 min	
Newbury	52min	41 min	
South West England			
	HST	New Build	
Penzance	5hr 21	5hr 08	
Plymouth	3hr 20	3hr 12	
Exeter	2hr 18	2hr 9	

Approach to ongoing challenges for the Franchise.

We hope that the majority of passengers and stakeholders will welcome the changes being brought about under the Direct Award franchise in terms of capacity, frequency and journey time improvements. However we also acknowledge that there are some challenging issues which the franchisee will need to manage over the Direct Award period.

Services to and from Bedwyn: As described in the previous section we recognise the strength of feeling around this issue as well as the impact of the expected change. We will continue to work with the GW operator to try to find a solution which preserves a better level of connectivity.

Thames Valley branches: We recognise the strength of feeling about the loss of through services to/from London from these branches and the potential inconvenience. However, we believe that electrification will provide a better service and more capacity on both branch and main line trains.

Driver Controlled Operation: Negotiations are continuing between the Department for Transport and First Great Western over the detail of the next Great Western franchise Direct Award. As a matter of general policy, the Department does not specify numbers of staff. However, we do support the resilience and efficiency offered by a train fleet and infrastructure which can operate as Driver Controlled Operation (DCO) as set out in the Intercity Express Programme (IEP) Specification which is in the public domain.

Station staffing levels: While this is again a front line matter which the operator is better placed to determine than the Government, FGW has committed to providing more Customer Ambassadors and passenger assistance staff in the new franchise.

Food & drink: FGW's research demonstrates research that there is a very strong preference amongst customers for an at-seat trolley service in standard class, rather than a standalone buffet bar. This is because they find it both more convenient, and it removes concerns about the security of luggage or personal items.

Unlike the current fleet, there will be a kitchen on every IEP train, which could provide hot and cold food to both first class and standard class customers on all our trains.

During in-service trials last year, FGW reports that 9 out of ten customers believed the trolley improved their journey experience and wanted to see it on more routes. In the same trial more than half of those who bought from the trolley wouldn't have left their seat to buy something from a buffet car.

This is good for customers, and would also have a positive impact on the viability of the food and drink offer, which would give greater security for staff. In this light it would be difficult for us to implement any other solution.

It is anticipated that more, rather than fewer, staff would be needed to operate a trolley service, particularly on a 10 car (2 x 5 cars) formation IEP. For this solution to work effectively FGW would need to recruit additional on-board staff and indeed we currently expect an increase in on board FTE of approximately 100 over the Direct Award period.

6. Conclusions & Next Steps

Following the mobilisation period, the new franchise will begin operation on 20 September 2015. Rail Executive will continue to work closely with both the operator and the wider industry to maintain and deliver the high standard of service that passengers expect and to ensure that the benefits secured under the Direct Award are realised and delivered to passengers.

Rail Executive recognises that with a franchise facing this level of change and scale of investment programme some of the contractual assumptions on which the Direct Award is based may need to change. Where changes occur we will respond proactively, consulting where necessary, and work closely with the GW operator and wider stakeholders.

We would like to repeat our thanks to the many organisations and individuals who have taken the time to participate in this Consultation, and the previous one in 2011-12, and we look forward to continued positive engagement with the many stakeholders with an interest in the Great Western railway.

ISBN 978-1-4741-1637-4



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