**Hogrider 160 (February – August 2019)**

**South Hampshire Rail Users’ Group Newsletter**

 **[Strategic Focus Edition]**

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**South Hampshire public transport**

**National perspective**

It’s widely recognised that public transport can make a huge difference to the quality of life in built-up areas.

The Government’s Office of National Statistics lists built-up areas in order of population, based on 2011 census data.

The ten largest such areas in the UK are:

1. Greater London

2. Greater Manchester

3. West Midlands

4. West Yorkshire

5. Greater Glasgow

6. Liverpool area

7. South Hampshire

8. Tyneside

9. Nottingham

10. Sheffield

How many of these don’t have significant local rail networks, light railways, underground railways or trams?

Just South Hampshire.

What do we have?

Frequent local rail services in the Fareham-Havant-Portsmouth triangle, and between Winchester, Southampton Airport and Southampton.

A fine new bus station at Portsmouth Harbour, next to a somewhat dilapidated rail terminal with one platform abandoned and two others which cannot carry diesel trains.

Gosport as the largest town in the UK with no railway station.

A long singled-track section on the Fareham-Eastleigh railway line (the result of saving the cost of a motorway bridge).

A short length of bus road from Fareham towards Gosport.

No bus station in Southampton.

No park and ride.

Just one semi-fast and one stopping train hourly between the main centres of Southampton and Portsmouth.

Generally hourly local train services around Southampton.

Virtually disused rail line to Hythe and the Waterside with congested parallel road.

Radial bus services around the two cities, with two companies fighting for supremacy. (A major onslaught against First Group’s City Red 3 by GoAhead, and against GoAhead’s Bluestar 12 by First Group will start on 22nd September 2019)

Longer distance bus services very circuitous and / or limited.

Some areas virtually bus-less, such as Upper Shirley in Southampton, and Cadnam on the edge of the New Forest.

People are living / working / travelling in areas of health-threatening pollution. What might be done?

Maximise use of existing rail network. Have an ambitious strategy for its enhancement. Revisit potential for trams or light railways.

Trams can advance various aims. They can move people quickly and cleanly.

They can promote regeneration, as in Hucknall (Nottingham system). Ashton-under-Lyne and the ship canal area (Manchester system).

They can complement new out-of-town residential developments such as Halfway (Sheffield system).

They can easily cope with very different terrains such as Sheffield’s hilly areas, or the long straight road from Manchester to Ashton-under-Lyne.

Much of Nottingham’s central area is remarkably car-sparse.

Main reason? Two tram routes which converge through the centre. Fifty-one tram stops. Seven park-and-ride sites with 5,000 free parking spaces.

Timetable leaflets are widely available. Travel centre opens to early evening.

In South Hampshire, millions spent on developing a tram system which was approved but then abandoned at the first hurdles rather than updated.

Once a tram line or light railway is built, extensions will follow. Even the long and troubled construction of the route to Edinburgh Airport has not precluded demand and approval for the first extension.

Extensions already achieved or under consideration on Croydon Tramlink, Docklands Light Railway, Newcastle Metro, Manchester Metrolink, Sheffield Supertram, Nottingham Express Transit and West Midlands Trams.

Not to mention the sole surviving first generation tram system in Blackpool, which is now linking with the main rail terminus.

What’s needed to kickstart public transport investment in South Hampshire?

An ambitious passenger transport authority which is prepared to pressure national government.

Will we get it? The political will appears very limited. Remember scrapping of a Solent Super Authority deal?

Kent got quality high-speed trains; Sussex has seen a huge expansion of Thameslink, with direct trains to a range of London stations and towns beyond. Devon and Cornwall have the new Inter City Express Trains. Hampshire is to see 18 of the Wessex Electric trains return, but they should never have been taken away as a petty cost-saving measure in the first place.

Ways to enhance the local rail network?

Capacity is a major issue, particularly because of Southampton Docks’ container traffic. Network Rail has plans for track enhancements such as flyovers at Woking and Basingstoke, and more platforms at Southampton Central.

The main pinch-points in South Hampshire are the routes from the Portsmouth rail triangle to the Harbour station, and through Southampton tunnel and St Denys junction.

The abandoned tram system (Portsmouth-Gosport-Fareham, and later on to Southampton via the Itchen Bridge) would have relieved these rail pinch-points.

A bold vision for the existing network might perhaps include quadrupling the track southwards from the Portsmouth triangle so that trains via Havant and via Fareham could reach the city centre and Harbour transport interchange independently.

In Southampton, a ‘short-cut’ tunnel from the Central station to Woolston would in particular leave more capacity on the main line through St Denys for increasing container traffic. Possibly with an underground station convenient for the Bargate Quarter and ferry terminals?

Let’s hope someone in authority gets thinking.

Meanwhile the transfer of the South Western franchise to First/MTR brought hope that passengers’ long-frustrated ambitions for a more sensible timetable might at last be realised.

What’s wrong with the timetable? In many ways it fails to reflect need. For example, BR pinpointed Southampton-Eastleigh as the second largest local passenger flow outside the London area on its busy Southern region. The busiest flow was Brighton-Worthing.

The position today? No Monday-Friday service from Southampton Central to Eastleigh between 07.38 and 08.35. During the daytime there is a 40-minute gap in the service every hour.

Trains from Brighton to Worthing at 07.41, 07.51, 08.00, 08.14, 08.22, 08.32. Similar frequencies all day.

Then there is Totton. Fourth largest intermediate town between Southampton and Weymouth. Population 30,000, but 60,000 including catchment area of Hythe and the Waterside. Congested and seriously polluted parallel road between Southampton and Totton. Known to affect health.

There is a table of station footfall figures on page 9. Footfall at Totton station grew by 71.7% in the five years between 2001-02 and 2006-07 after service frequency increased to twice-hourly. Growth fell to just 0.9% in the eleven years between 2006-07 and 2017-18 after Stagecoach returned the service to one stopping service hourly. Branksome, Lymington Town and Pokesdown have all overtaken Totton in terms of passenger footfall in the latter period.

Compare Hamworthy. Population 13,000. Situated in clean air zone between Upton Country Park and Poole Harbour. One fast train and one semi-fast hourly. With an arguably excessive service, the station manages 160,042 footfall (2017-18).

20/40-minute frequencies operate on services such as Southampton-Portsmouth; Southampton-Eastleigh and Weymouth-Dorchester. So two trains per hour don’t equate to a half-hourly service.

It gets worse further west: twice-hourly direct trains between Southampton and New Milton/Christchurch arrive and depart at Southampton a few minutes apart. The twice hourly eastbound services from Parkstone and Branksome run 10 minutes apart.

Then there are non-connections, such as for local journeys between Totton and Netley, where hourly trains fail to connect at Southampton by a few minutes in both directions.

**Most SWR committed timetable improvements in limbo, apparently because of power shortfall – A few diesel trains as a temporary solution?**

First/MTR commendably liaised with stakeholders and is committed to improvements including an additional hourly service between Southampton and Portsmouth, and running Waterloo-Weymouth semi-fast trains as 10-coach services, splitting at Southampton into fast Weymouth and semi-fast Poole services.

Network Rail now saying power supply can’t sustain a better service off peak.

Unless the power shortfall can be rectified quickly, could the SWR franchise agreement be revised to include hire of around half a dozen second-hand diesel units to run an hourly service between Portsmouth and Poole as an alternative way of delivering committed service levels to passengers? An additional hourly service between Southampton and Eastleigh would also seem highly desirable to reduce 40-minute service gaps.

The service network is complicated. Amateurs cannot precisely deduce what might be possible. But, based on public timetables, it is possible to devise templates which might point to possible solutions.

A tentative illustration follows. Principal aspects (broad timings) are:

* Weymouth-Waterloo services to run half-hourly instead of 40/20 minutes. One train per hour to serve the towns to New Milton, the other to be accelerated by 10 minutes and serve all stations to Wareham and then the busiest stations. Weymouth-Clapham Junction 15 minutes faster.
* The second of the above trains to connect perhaps at Wareham (rather than Poole) with the suggested additional (initially diesel-worked?) semi-fast service to Portsmouth.
* Much improved spread of services between Southampton and Portsmouth.
* Waterloo-Poole service (westbound) accelerated by 30 minutes from Eastleigh. Journey time from Totton to New Milton/Christchurch halved. Eastleigh to Totton cross-Southampton service accelerated by 15 minutes. Same platform interchange with faster Waterloo services at Southampton Airport and Winchester in both directions.
* Half hourly service between Southampton and New Milton/Christchurch instead of trains running in pairs hourly.
* Additional hourly service between Southampton and Eastleigh (initially diesel-worked?) so that no service gap longer than 30 minutes. This would provide Waterloo connections in/out of Hedge End line services.
* Cross Country custom increased by stopping at New Milton and Christchurch. Better than services no longer running west of Southampton (as suggested in DfT’s 2018 Cross Country consultation) – recognises student and holiday traffic at Bournemouth and high percentage of retired residents in New Milton and Christchurch for whom no-change journeys particularly attractive.

**Illustrative templates of revised hourly service:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | p | cc |  |  | d | d |  | c |  |  |  |  |
| London Waterloo | 09 |  | 35 |  |  |  | 39 |  | 05 |  |  |  |
| Clapham Junction |  |  | 42 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Woking | 34 |  |  |  |  |  | 06 |  | # |  |  |  |
| Farnborough | 45 |  |  |  |  |  | 17 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fleet |  |  |  |  |  |  | 23 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Basingstoke | 00 | 12 |  |  |  |  | 37 | 44 | 47 |  |  |  |
| Micheldever | 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Winchester | 19 | 27 | 33 |  |  |  | 53 | 59 | 03 |  |  |  |
| Shawford |  |  |  |  |  |  | 58 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Romsey |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 07 |
| Chandlers Ford |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 14 |
| Eastleigh arr | 27 |  |  |  |  |  | 03 |  |  |  | < | 20 |
| Eastleigh dep | 28 |  |  |  | 42 |  | > |  |  |  | 12 | 21 |
| Southampton Airport |  | 36 | 42 |  | 47 |  |  | 08 | 12 |  | 16 | 25 |
| Swaythling |  |  |  |  | 49 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 27 |
| Portsmouth and Southsea |  |  |  |  |  | 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fratton |  |  |  |  |  | 14 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cosham |  |  |  |  |  | 22 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fareham |  |  |  |  |  | 32 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Swanwick |  |  |  |  |  | 38 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Netley |  |  |  |  |  | 44 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Woolston |  |  |  |  |  | 49 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| St Denys |  |  |  |  | 52 | 55 |  |  |  |  |  | 30 |
| Southampton Central arr |  | 43 | 49 |  | 57 | 00 |  | 15 | 19 |  | 23 | 36 |
| Southampton Central dep |  | 45 | 51 |  |  | 02 |  |  | 21 |  | 25 | 37 |
| Millbrook |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 40 |
| Redbridge |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 43 |
| Romsey |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 51 |
| Mottisfont |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 56 |
| Dean |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 02 |
| Salisbury |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 15 |
| Totton |  |  |  |  |  | 07 |  |  |  |  | 30 |  |
| Ashurst |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 35 |  |
| Beaulieu Road |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 39 |  |
| Brockenhurst |  | 59 | 05 | 12 |  |  |  |  | 35 | 42 | 46 |  |
|  Lymington Town |  |  |  | 20 |  |  |  |  |  | 50 |  |  |
|  Lymington Pier |  |  |  | 23 |  |  |  |  |  | 53 |  |  |
| Sway |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 51 |  |
| New Milton |  | 06 | 12 |  |  | 25 |  |  |  |  | 56 |  |
| Hinton Admiral |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 00 |  |
| Christchurch |  | 13 | 19 |  |  | 32 |  |  |  |  | 05 |  |
| Pokesdown |  |  |  |  |  | 35 |  |  |  |  | 08 |  |
| Bournemouth arr |  | 19 | 25 |  |  | 39 |  |  | 50 |  | 12 |  |
| Bournemouth dep |  |  | 29 |  |  | 41 |  |  | 54 |  | 14 |  |
| Branksome |  |  |  |  |  | 46 |  |  |  |  | 19 |  |
| Parkstone |  |  |  |  |  | 49 |  |  |  |  | 22 |  |
| Poole |  |  | 39 |  |  | 54 |  |  | 04 |  | 26 |  |
| Hamworthy |  |  |  |  |  | 59 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Holton Heath |  |  |  |  |  | 03 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wareham |  |  | 49 |  |  | 07 |  |  | 16 |  |  |  |
| Wool |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 23 |  |  |  |
| Moreton |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 29 |  |  |  |
| Dorchester South |  |  | 05 |  |  |  |  |  | 37 |  |  |  |
| Upwey |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 44 |  |  |  |
| Weymouth |  |  | 15 |  |  |  |  |  | 48 |  |  |  |

# Connection from Woking at 16-past to Basingstoke (Waterloo-Salisbury train).

cc: Cross Country hourly service. c: Cross Country two-hourly service.

d: Additional services, possibly diesel-worked. p: To Portsmouth Harbour.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | c |  |  |  |  | cc |  | d | d |  |  | p |
| Weymouth |  |  |  |  | 31 |  |  |  |  |  | 04 |  |  |
| Upwey |  |  |  |  | 35 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dorchester South |  |  |  |  | 44 |  |  |  |  |  | 14 |  |  |
| Moreton |  |  |  |  | 50 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wool |  |  |  |  | 56 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wareham |  |  |  |  | 04 |  |  |  |  | 17 | 29 |  |  |
| Holton Heath |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 20 |  |  |  |
| Hamworthy |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 25 |  |  |  |
| Poole |  |  | 50 |  | 14 |  |  |  |  | 31 | 39 |  |  |
| Parkstone |  |  | 54 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 35 |  |  |  |
| Branksome |  |  | 57 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 38 |  |  |  |
| Bournemouth arr |  |  | 02 |  | 24 |  |  |  |  | 43 | 49 |  |  |
| Bournemouth dep |  |  | 05 |  | 29 |  | 40 |  |  | 45 | 54 |  |  |
| Pokesdown |  |  | 09 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 49 |  |  |  |
| Christchurch |  |  | 13 |  |  |  | 46 |  |  | 53 | 00 |  |  |
| Hinton Admiral |  |  | 18 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| New Milton |  |  | 22 |  |  |  | 53 |  |  | 00 | 07 |  |  |
| Sway |  |  | 27 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  Lymington Pier |  |  |  | 27 |  |  |  | 57 |  |  |  |  |  |
|  Lymington Town |  |  |  | 29 |  |  |  | 59 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Brockenhurst |  |  | 33 | 37 | 45 |  | 01 | 07 |  |  | 15 |  |  |
| Beaulieu Road |  |  | 38 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ashurst |  |  | 42 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Totton |  |  | 47 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 18 |  |  |  |
| Salisbury | 56 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dean | 08 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mottisfont | 14 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Romsey | 20 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Redbridge | 27 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Millbrook | 31 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Southampton Central arr | 34 |  | 53 |  | 58 |  | 14 |  |  | 23 | 28 | < |  |
| Southampton Central dep | 35 | 47 | 55 |  | 00 |  | 17 |  | 20 | > | 30 | 32 |  |
| St Denys | 40 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 25 |  |  | 37 |  |
| Woolston |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 42 |  |
| Netley |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 47 |  |
| Swanwick |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 53 |  |
| Fareham |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 00 |  |
| Cosham |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 10 |  |
| Fratton |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 16 |  |
| Portsmouth and Southsea |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 22 |  |
| Swaythling | 43 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 28 |  |  |  |  |
| Southampton Airport | 46 | 54 | 02 |  | 07 |  | 24 |  | 31 |  | 37 |  |  |
| Eastleigh arr | 49 |  | 05 |  |  | < |  |  | 36 |  |  |  | 46 |
| Eastleigh dep | 50 |  | > |  |  | 14 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 47 |
| Chandlers Ford | 55 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Romsey | 03 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Shawford |  |  |  |  |  | 19 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Winchester |  | 03 |  |  | 17 | 25 | 33 |  |  |  | 47 |  | 56 |
| Micheldever |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 05 |
| Basingstoke |  | 17 |  |  | 34 | 41 | 50 |  |  |  |  |  | 15 |
| Fleet |  |  |  |  |  | 54 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Farnborough |  |  |  |  |  | 59 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 30 |
| Woking |  |  |  |  | # | 08 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 39 |
| Clapham Junction |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 42 |  |  |
| London Waterloo |  |  |  |  | 20 | 34 |  |  |  |  | 49 |  | 07 |

# Connection from Basingstoke arrives Woking at 08 past (See next column).

 cc: Cross Country hourly service. c: Cross Country two hourly service.

d. Additional services, possibly diesel-worked. p: From Portsmouth Harbour.

**APPENDIX**

**Estimated passenger entries and exits at intermediate rail stations between Southampton Central and Weymouth (ORR data)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Town stations (in order of town population)** | Entries and exits 2001-02 | Entries and exits 2006-07 | **% increase****2001-02 to** **2006-07**  | Entries and exits2017-18(latest data) | **% increase****2006-07 to** **2017-18** |
| Bournemouth | 2,020,414 | 2,310,099 | **14.3** | 2,721,504 | **17.8** |
| Poole | 920,062 | 1,069,639 | **16.3** | 1,126,936 | **5.4** |
| Christchurch | 322,370 | 357,013 | **10.7** | 519,332 | **45.5** |
| Totton | 164,599 | 282,542 | **71.7** | 285,124 | **0.9** |
| New Milton | 468,700 | 560,406 | **19.6** | 623,434 | **11.2** |
| Dorchester South | 382,022 | 415,067 | **8.7** | 440,112 | **6.0** |
| Wareham | 265,307 | 295,262 | **11.3** | 339,868 | **15.1** |
| **Suburban stations (in alphabetical order)** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Branksome | 133,783 | 189,961 | **42.0** | 287,516 | **51.4** |
| Hamworthy | 82,298 | 114,505 | **39.1** | 160,042 | **39.8** |
| Millbrook | 10,288 | 21,992 | **113.8** | 36,826 | **67.5** |
| Parkstone | 97,128 | 139,383 | **43.5** | 236,962 | **70.0** |
| Pokesdown | 178,462 | 267,815 | **50.1** | 343,164 | **28.1** |
| Redbridge | 14,378 | 16,155 | **12.4** | 42,586 | **163.6** |
| **Village stations (in alphabetical order)** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ashurst | 31,812 | 71,275 | **124.1** | 144,608 | **102.9** |
| Brockenhurst  | 857,429 | 1,128,079 | **31.6** | 1,085,808 | **- 3.7** |
| Hinton Admiral | 92,690 | 145,839 | **57.3** | 167,178 | **14.6** |
| Holton Heath | 9,493 | 23,475 | **147.3** | 30,186 | **28.6** |
| Moreton | 35,822 | 49,112 | **37.1** | 58,768 | **19.7** |
| Sway | 78,271 | 88,056 | **12.5** | 105,652 | **20.0** |
| Upwey  | 26,872 | 33,744 | **25.6** | 49,964 | **48.1** |
| Wool | 133,106 | 151,192 | **13.6** | 190,936 | **26.3** |
| **‘Fair weather’ station used by walkers and cyclists** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Beaulieu Road | 8,393 | 2,246 | **- 73.2** | 9,034 | **302.2** |
| **Overall** | 6,333,699 | 7,732,857 | **22.1** | 9,024,939 | **16.7** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Branch line** |
| Lymington Pier | 101,697 | 115,176 | **13.3** | 134,914 | **17.1** |
| Lymington Town | 140,895 | 171,261 | **21.6** | 295,822 | **72.8** |

**Who’s going to run the railways?**

Through two decades of privatisation, Ministers and train operators have been declaring that the interests of passengers are paramount.

Yet privatisation cheers ‘innovation’ which can mean what an operator wants it to mean. Seeking a consensus on best practice would be more appropriate in many cases. This is evident for example in millions of different fares with hundreds of different restrictions.

The Strategic Rail Authority was meant to ensure that passengers’ interests were paramount. Yet under Richard Bowker its independence was seen to be compromised.

He was formerly a senior executive with Virgin Trains in which South West Trains’ operator Stagecoach had a 49% interest. He had worked with Graham Eccles, Chairman of South West Trains. His father was a senior Stagecoach executive.

Subsequently, South West Trains demonstrated that their alliance with Network Rail wouldn’t work because each would pursue its own interests.

First/ MTR and Network Rail are now offering joint apologies when services collapse, but it’s unclear how deep their alliance is.

Keith Williams, who is conducting a review of franchising, considers that a new post or organisation is needed ‘because someone needs to be accountable to the public’. He wants the Department for Transport to stop managing franchises and just focus on general policies and setting budgets.

On 24th June, new Network Rail Chairman Andrew Haines told BBC News that he didn’t rule out his organisation taking over the issuing of franchises. Would he have been any more independent than Richard Bowker, since he had been a Managing Director of SWT?

Mr Williams has dismissed Mr Haines’ idea. This is on the basis that you don’t create a customer-focused railway by putting engineers in charge.

Good point. Instead of saying ‘can’t do’ to First/MTR’s committed timetable improvements, he should surely have been lobbying for an enabling strategy for the improvements to go ahead. Time, for example, to revive the Electric Spine proposal which would have brought high voltage cables from Southampton to Basingstoke and on to the Midlands?

On 10th July (52nd anniversary of the then ambitious new Waterloo-Bournemouth electric timetable) SHRUG’s organiser was grateful for being invited by Network Rail to a small stakeholders’ breakfast in Southampton.

This was very friendly and the organisers were very ready listen to points raised. Chatham House rules preclude reporting of what was said. However, it was difficult to avoid the impression that no major timetable improvements were likely in the foreseeable future.

So, given SWR’s franchise commitments, Mr Williams is surely right to suggest that someone needs to be accountable to the public.

**Passenger satisfaction in South Hampshire: Improved Southern narrowly overtakes strike-hit SWR; Value for money remains very poor; Crowding worst on Cross Country**

The Spring 2019 National Rail Passenger Survey satisfaction scores for or including our area are:

Overall satisfaction Great Western (West): 88%; Cross Country Manchester / North East: 88% / 85%; Southern (coastal services) 80%; South Western (long distance and outer suburban services): 78%.

Value for money for price of ticket Cross Country: 54%; Great Western: 53%; Southern: 42%; South Western: 36%.

Punctuality / Reliability Cross Country: 86%; Great Western: 79%; Southern: 74%; South Western: 69%.

Crowding Great Western: 74%; Southern 72%; South Western: 71%; Cross Country 63%.

South Western hasn’t yet implemented the improvements expected. In particular, the big fare increases introduced by Stagecoach, such as by restriction of super off-peak fares at weekends, remain in force.

Cross country still suffers from the pint pot trains introduced by the Virgin Trains / Stagecoach partnership, despite the additional Southampton – North East services introduced by Arriva.

**South Western timetable changes from 19th May 2019 *South Hampshire highlights***

Changes are listed in full on the SWR website (‘Latest News’ entries during March 2019).

What are the principal changes for South Hampshire rail users?

**Sundays**

Crowd busting service from Poole (18.18), Bournemouth (18.31) and Southampton Central (19.00) to Waterloo (20.11). This becomes the fastest train of the week, and 4 minutes faster than in the new post-steam timetable of 1967 (Poole depart 18.23, Waterloo arrive 20.20). There is a 7-minute connection at Southampton for passengers from all stations Pokesdown-Totton.

Connections from Reading at 09.12 and hourly to 17.12 into the Waterloo-Poole stopping services at Basingstoke (no additional connections in opposite direction).

New semi-fast services between Waterloo and Portsmouth via Haslemere:

16.26/17.26/18.26 Portsmouth & Southsea-Waterloo.

18.55/19.55/20.55 Waterloo-Portsmouth & Southsea.

**Mondays-Fridays**

Additional commuter service each way Southampton–Waterloo and Bournemouth-Waterloo

Additional 06.28 Southampton Airport-Waterloo, calling at Eastleigh, Basingstoke and Woking. Connects out of 06.16 Southampton Central-Manchester.

07.38 from Southampton now starts from Bournemouth at 07.00, calling at Christchurch, New Milton and Brockenhurst. Then runs fast from Basingstoke, arriving Waterloo 17 minutes earlier at 09.12.

New 18.48 Waterloo-Poole calls at Woking, Basingstoke, Micheldever, Winchester, Eastleigh, Southampton Airport, Southampton Central (20.18), Brockenhurst, New Milton and Bournemouth.

New 19.48 from Waterloo calls at Basingstoke, Micheldever, Winchester, Eastleigh, Southampton Airport, St Denys, Southampton Central (21.17-21.30) and then runs as the last Poole stopping service to Totton, Ashurst, Beaulieu Road, Brockenhurst (21.51-22.16), and all stations.

Additional Portsmouth semi-fast services via Haslemere

05.12/21.15 Portsmouth Harbour-Waterloo; 06.40 Havant-Waterloo.

07.00/23.00/23.30 Waterloo-Portsmouth Harbour.

Hedge End line rationalisation

05.00 Portsmouth Harbour-Basingstoke and 06.23 Basingstoke-Waterloo are combined, no longer serving Clapham Junction. 08.05 Portsmouth Harbour-Basingstoke discontinued (ran 10 minutes behind a direct London train).

18.39 Waterloo-Fareham no longer detaches a Poole portion at Eastleigh. 19.39 Waterloo-Southampton Central stopping service diverts to Fareham and no longer calls at Micheldever. 22.21 Basingstoke-Portsmouth Harbour and 21.42 Waterloo-Portsmouth Harbour replaced by 21.09 and 22.08 Waterloo-Portsmouth Harbour, extending standard pattern.

Netley line services towards Bournemouth

Tokens of promised changes:

Westbound, a service from Portsmouth Harbour at 08.05 to Poole, calling at all stations except Bursledon, Hamble, Sholing, Bitterne, Millbrook, Redbridge, Ashurst and Beaulieu Road.

Eastbound, the 17.20 Brockenhurst-Southampton and 17.44 Southampton-Portsmouth & Southsea are merged into a train calling at all stations from Brockenhurst to Portsmouth except Redbridge and Millbrook.

Faster main line services

As a consequence of the new 08.05 Portsmouth Harbour-Poole, the 07.35 Waterloo-Weymouth runs to the standard ‘fast’ stopping pattern west of Southampton.

The 18.05 and 19.05 Waterloo-Weymouth both detach a stopping Poole portion at Southampton, so the Weymouth portions are accelerated.

The 21.30 Southampton-Waterloo starts from Weymouth at 20.03, so the last ‘fast’ Weymouth-Waterloo service is one hour later than previously.

Local improvements

The 06.44 Basingstoke-Southampton, and 16.38 Winchester-Totton both extend to Bournemouth.

There are substitute or new hourly stopping services from Brockenhurst to Poole at 21.16, 22.16 (19.48 from Waterloo, after layover) and 23.16, connecting out of the 19.35, 20.35 and 21.35 Waterloo-Weymouth.

**Saturdays**

The 21.30 Southampton-Waterloo starts from Bournemouth at 20.59, so the last ‘fast’ Bournemouth-Waterloo service is one hour later than previously.

**Rolling stock changes**

(1) The May timetable brought more class 165 (2-coach) and class 166 (3-coach) Thames Turbo trains to the Cardiff-Portsmouth Harbour route. Morning departures from Cardiff are generally formed of these trains.

This stock has 3+2 aside seating, with the seat cushions 17 inches wide, compared with 16.5 inches on SWR’s class 450 (‘blue’) trains. The class 166 also has a very small number of 2+2 seats which were formerly first-class. The 2-coach class 165 units do not have air conditioning.

(By way of comparison, SWR’s class 444 (‘white’) trains have 18” wide cushions but gaps between cushions, and between cushions and carriage sides, mean that each passenger arguably has a 20” wide personal space.)

Some Turbo trains are formed of two units, providing 4 or 5 coaches, but it is not possible to move between the units as they lack corridor ends. This obviously restricts access to the guard, and to the buffet trolley when available. So, while any extra capacity is very welcome, by today’s standards the trains are unsuited to a major regional (and international) route.

From the December 2019 timetable change, Cardiff-Portsmouth Harbour services should virtually all be 5-coach Turbo trains. Weekend engineering work may affect the position on Saturdays, and use of Turbo trains on GWR’s token Brighton services will depend on satisfactory gauging (the trains have a generous profile, which was fine on Brunel’s Great Western, but is potentially problematic elsewhere).

Meanwhile, Transport for Wales supports introduction of an hourly Open Access service between Bristol Temple Meads and Swansea from December 2020. Wouldn’t a quality hourly service between Portsmouth Harbour and Swansea (replacing the current Portsmouth Harbour – Cardiff trains) be better, given that it would directly link 17 towns and cities, 6 of them with universities?

(2) Return of the popular Wessex Electric trains on SWR was delayed beyond the start of the new May timetable by the need to replace a door component. The first passenger services ran on 10th June, with the trains providing the new 06.28 Southampton Airport Parkway–Waterloo and 18.48 Waterloo–Poole, whose introduction had had to be delayed. The full May timetable is now in operation, and the introduction of several more units is reportedly imminent.

**Never to return? End of Stagecoach and Virgin rail operations**

Stagecoach and Virgin (once prominent operators in Hampshire) are set to end all their rail operations, except the former’s tram-train route between Sheffield Cathedral and Rotherham Parkgate.

Stagecoach recently sold its US bus operations to focus on rail opportunities in the UK. The Department for Transport then awarded its existing East Midlands franchise to Abellio for 8 years from 18th August 2019, and disqualified its bids to retain the West Coast franchise (in which Virgin has a 51% share) and to take over the South Eastern franchise.

The East Midlands and West Coast franchises are the only two which have had a charging regime for Wi-Fi.

It has now been announced that the prestigious West Coast franchise, which will include the first stage of HS2 (if it goes ahead) will transfer from 51% Virgin Trains / 49% Stagecoach to 70% First Group / 30% Trenitalia UK. The franchise will start on 8th December 2019, and run until 2031, with HS2 services proposed from 2026.

Particularly notable is that the new franchise will include an additional hourly service between Euston and Liverpool, which will thwart Virgin’s plans to operate a similar service, with compulsory reservations, on an Open Access basis.

Trenitalia already runs C2C services, principally from Fenchurch Street. Virgin has been looking at Open Access opportunities in Spain. The South Eastern franchise competition has been cancelled pending Keith Williams’ review of franchising.

For now, these developments neatly wrap up debate about Stagecoach and Virgin as train operators. First Group’s share values had overtaken those of Stagecoach by the end of August, in a reversal of the position which had persisted for a number of years.

**SWR Watch**

SWR Watch, which has taken over much of what was our work in the days of South West Trains, continues to campaign energetically on behalf of passengers in the SWR area and more widely.

Thanks are due in particular to their Campaign coordinator, Jeremy Varns, who has promoted these issues through the media, including the Southern Daily Echo.

His letter of 2nd August in that paper marks the start of a new political era at DfT and calls for a new approach to transport, which is likely to strike a chord with large numbers of rail users:

“Passengers will have read with interest that Grant Shapps has been appointed Transport Secretary by the new Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

Chris Grayling, his predecessor, was rarely viewed in a positive light by the media or indeed long-suffering rail passengers and his departure had been long anticipated.

More surprisingly, perhaps, was the low-key announcement that Paul Maynard would be returning as Rail Minister, a role that he previously held between 2016-18. One could speculate that his experience was deemed necessary, given the challenges the Department for Transport is currently facing.

Top of the list of concerns for those newly appointed must surely be how best to deal with under-performing South Western Railway, which has been beset by strikes, poor operational performance and financial problems.

It is to be hugely welcomed that the new PM has pledged additional investment in rail. However, the industry also needs significant reform, something which many industry insiders believe the Rail Review, chaired by Keith Williams, will propose later this year.

We already know that its recommendations will include the devolution of power from the Department for Transport to a newly created body set up to monitor the performance of train operators. This is something that many campaigners, including ourselves, have long called for.

I do, however, question the motivation for singling out the North as being most in need of investment.

Such decisions should be made on a cost-benefit analysis for each region and not primarily motivated for political capital.

Many communities in the south also feel left behind, with limited public transport options and high levels of air pollution primarily as a result of road traffic.

The latest National Rail Passenger Survey also shows that four of the five train companies with the lowest satisfaction ratings are located in the south.

Never has the case been stronger to reshape how the industry operates and get more people to make the switch from road to rail.

Track capacity needs to be significantly expanded across the country and new entrants need to be encouraged into the market to operate alongside existing franchisees.

Providing choice, as we have seen to a limited extent elsewhere in the industry, through open-access providers, will drive up standards and boost satisfaction levels amongst passengers.

We urge the new Transport Secretary and Rail Minister to adopt a different approach and give passengers a railway that is fit for the future.”

**Acknowledgements / Contact details / GDPR**

As always, thanks to everyone who has been kind enough to contact us. Without your support and input, this newsletter would be much less comprehensive. It is produced in good faith, based on reports and information from individuals and sources including the press and news websites.

Contributions are always welcome. We aim for accuracy at all times, because our good reputation depends on it. We do not use material which could be offensive or which appears unlikely to be correct.

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Address for correspondence: Denis Fryer, 19 Fontwell Close, Calmore, Southampton SO40 2TN. E’mail: denisfryer44@gmail.com