



Great Western Railway

Customer Panel – Central region

Thursday 7 September 2017 - Bristol

Why did GWR decide to replace existing Sprinter trains (Class 158) with Turbo trains (Class 166)?

Our refreshed Turbo trains provide more seats, and we know they're an improvement on the Sprinter trains. But some things, like the air-conditioning, haven't worked as well as we'd hoped. So, we're working closely with our engineering teams to resolve any outstanding issues.

GWR do not seem to handle customers that need assistance very well, especially during disruption and possessions

In general, feedback from our customers tells us we handle these situations quite well, but sometimes we make mistakes.

We will be reviewing the process with our Customer Service and on-board teams to make sure there are no gaps.

We've already identified where certain stations need more resource, and have hired extra staff at Bristol Temple Meads.

Customers who don't have obvious impairments, or perhaps don't qualify for full disability status, seem to be forgotten by GWR

This issue was followed up after the meeting. Our commitment to passengers who might need help extends to those who have medical conditions, through our Priority Card scheme, but we don't make this clear enough. We are going to make the application form easier to complete, as well as update our website.

Why do GWR charge full fares when replacement buses are used?

This issue was taken away from the meeting. It's something we'll need to investigate, and report back on. Please keep an eye on this page for updates.

Will GWR be introducing payment by smartcards and/or contactless 'pay as you go'?

We recently started a trial of our own smartcard on the Severn Beach line, where customers can buy electronic season tickets. Posters have also been put up at stations to encourage people to take part

It's hoped this will make buying tickets easier, and reduce queues at stations where customers sometimes have to wait at ticket gates.

We'd like to introduce this to other areas of our network by the end of 2018, along with the roll-out of mobile ticketing. This is dependent on the national ticketing scheme, being led by the Department of Transport.

We are also leading a project to examine the possibilities of integrating with First Bus smartcards.

Taking Contactless payments using a debit card or a mobile device, similar to Transport for London, is far more complex. It's not part of our immediate plans, but is being considered long term.

Will GWR ticket machines accept contactless payment as well as Chip & PIN?

Our new onboard ticket machines now accept contactless, as well as chip & PIN payments.

As ticket machines at stations are renewed, these will also accept contactless payments.

Some GWR staff seem to be getting to grips with your new on-board ticket machines quicker than others

We know that even the best classroom training isn't as good as learning on the job. So, we're working with our on-board teams to understand where improvements can be made, and are encouraging teams to share hints and tips with each other.

During possessions and disruption, the quality of knowledge and help from some of the GWR staff can be poor

This is disappointing, as everyone who works for GWR – even temporary staff – are trained to give the best customer experience we can.

And even if someone can't help first time, they should know how to find the right information, or who to ask. We will feed this back to our recruitment and training teams.

The quality of information at GWR unstaffed stations during disruption is often poor.

We're disappointed to learn that station communication can be very hit and miss. Reports of notes stuck to ticket machines are sad to hear, and it's not good enough.

We're working closely with our communication teams to review all the material displayed. Rather than producing their own, we want staff to have access to a range of messages that are easy to understand, on GWR paper, with clear instructions on where they need to be placed.

Why are there so many late notice platform changes? They can cause dangerous situations

We know that this can cause problems for our customers, especially large stations like Bristol Temple Meads. Unfortunately, in most circumstances, this is something that we have no control over. However, we are working closely with Network Rail to make sure as much notice as possible is given in every situation. We will also be making sure we have enough staff available to help wherever we can.

Why do GWR allow bikes in wheelchair spaces?

Bikes shouldn't be stored in wheelchair spaces if they are needed by disabled customers. These situations should be managed by the onboard team. We will make sure our colleagues are aware of the correct procedure.

When is the new GWR bike reservation system launching?

By the end of this year, you'll also be able to reserve bike spaces on GWR services online after you've booked your seats.

For most services, you should be able to do this right up to the time the train leaves the station.

Why aren't Advance Single fares available on all services?

We closely monitor how busy our trains are, and use cheaper fares to encourage customers to travel on services that aren't as busy.

On some routes, the Off-Peak and Super Off-Peak fares we offer are already great value for money, so we might not sell Advance Single fares.

Services to and from South Wales.

Some issues were raised, concerning services that continue to South Wales - especially when their frequency is reduced, or timings are changed, during engineering works. These will be followed up after the meeting.

We'll also be visiting Cardiff in 2018.