



Great Western Railway

Customer Panel Plymouth – 8 November 2017

We met with a range of customers who, as panel members, had been invited to join us for the evening. Throughout the meeting, they had the chance to ask questions, or raise concerns. Where possible we've provided answers below.

Customer Panels

Is GWR obliged to run them?

Customer Panels are a requirement of our Customer and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy; which itself forms part of our Franchise. However, how many we run, who should take part, and how they operate isn't defined.

We looked carefully at how the old customer panels ran, and where they overlapped with other GWR customer advisory groups, and external user bodies, before taking the decision to move to a new format.

We're confident this will offer more customers than ever the chance to share their experience with us; a view shared by Transport Focus.

Will you run webinars again – the last one didn't have enough notice?

We may look at using webinars in the future. If we do, there will be more notice given.

Are Meet the Manager meetings coming back?

We hold regular Meet the Manager sessions throughout the year. Sometimes they're run when we need to let you know about maintenance, improvements, and engineering work. At other times, it's a chance for our local teams to provide general updates and hear what you have to say.

We always try to give plenty of notice, and advertise them on the website too.

For more information, [visit GWR.com/meetus](http://www.gwr.com/meetus)

How many members would you like to see join the customer panel pool – is there a maximum?

Nearly 450 members have joined our community so far; almost 20 times more than the original panel. But, we don't have a maximum figure, and any customer on our network is welcome to join– the more views we have, the better.



Great Western Railway

GWR business updates – new trains

When the new Intercity Express Trains start running between Swansea and Carmarthen, will you be increasing the number of Carmarthen services?

Our new Intercity Trains replace the old High Speed Trains. There are no plans for extra services at the moment, and timetables should remain roughly the same.

You mentioned that some shortened, refurbished, High Speed Trains are going to be brought to Devon & Cornwall; how many are planned.

The first one will be introduced in 2018; with electric doors, new customer information screens, and accessible toilets. We should have more information to share before the end of the year.

Many of our local services can become quite crowded, what are you going to do about it?

We have started to bring extra trains to the west; with turbo trains now operating in Bristol, and on routes to Taunton and Cardiff. And, we plan to move more in January 2018, when our electric fleet starts to run between Didcot and London.

By January 19, when a new timetable comes into operation with more frequent services, we'll have added over 50% more capacity around Bristol and Exeter, and two trains an hour between Plymouth and Penzance.

Will trains with more carriages mean you can carry extra bikes and pushchairs?

Our priority must always be seats for customers.

On our high-speed services, reservations for normal bikes are compulsory. For other trains, there's usually space for two full size bikes.

Bikes and buggies that can be folded can always be carried as luggage.

We also know that bike tourism is promoted heavily in the region. We work closely with many different organisations and companies that run hire schemes and tours; so that, even if you can't bring your own bike, you can still enjoy a cycling holiday.



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GWR business updates – Assisted travel

With your main, and newer, stations accessibility is generally good. However, some older stations are still inaccessible. What is being done to modernise them?

There is a national fund for improvement. As an example, we are looking at lift bridges for Totnes, and Torquay, with National Rail.

We've also been consulted on the next round of funding, but we must make decisions based on how busy stations are – and this isn't always easy.

For customers who have registered mobility issues, we have an obligation to arrange travel to, and from, their nearest accessible station.

Sometimes stations don't provide the assistance that's been booked

Our Assisted Travel team have a good record, with 87% of customers happy with the help we give; and our service is regularly monitored. However, there's always room for improvement, and our team will always look into any problems you may have.

Assisted Travel isn't promoted that well by GWR

We are working on a simplified leaflet that will be available at all stations; as well as improving the information on our website.

We hope to have these improvements finished by the end of the year.



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Buying tickets and onboard services

When the Intercity Express Trains arrive, there won't be a buffet car anymore; this means quality of freshly-brewed coffee and tea will be worse.

The unique 'fill & boil' system we use means our Standard Class trolleys won't run out of fresh hot water. We've introduced In-Cup fresh ground Lavazza coffee, and we'll still be selling our regular great quality hot drinks as well.

Some onboard staff seem unsure how to react if a diabetic customer needs to inject insulin.

Diabetes awareness was included in our last safety briefing, and we will continue to make sure how colleagues can support our customers.

The Department for Transport seem to be asking train companies to review the role of guards?

Some parts of our network already operate with drivers only. The role of guards on our Intercity Express Trains is not significantly different to on our High Speed Trains, and we've not been asked to make any changes.

Why are some tickets being issued on paper that's over a foot long?

Some train companies have replaced their portable ticket machines. So a design needed to be agreed, that considered any limitations in how the format could be displayed.

However, this is only the first step, and there will be more development as part of the work to create a ticket that can printed, as well as stored on your mobile device.

When are there going to be ticket facilities at more stations?

We're introducing barcode readers across our network. Newton Abbot, Exeter, and Bristol already have them, and Plymouth and Truro should be ready by the end of the year.

We're also working with Cornwall Council to install free Wi-Fi at all stations in their region; which means customers will be able to buy digital tickets at the station before boarding.

And, we are working closely with the Department for Transport to expand our smart ticketing trial.



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Regional update

Are there any plans to add a roof to the new footbridge at Camborne?

There are no plans to add a roof to the footbridge.

Are there any new stations planned?

Marsh Barton (between Exeter St Thomas and Starcross) – promoted by Devon County Council

Currently at an advanced stage of design and planning, the key issue is a funding gap. Devon County Council are reviewing the scheme and funding options.

Edginswell (between Newton Abbot and Torre) – promoted by Torbay Council

Currently at preferred option stage, this will need further design work and development. Torbay Council have a funding gap, and are reviewing options.

Collumpton (between Exeter St Davids)

Wellington (between Tiverton Parkway and Taunton)

Both currently at concept stage, outline business cases have been completed, and Network Rail has looked at timetabling solutions.

Tavistock extension project

A proposed 5km extension of the railway from Bere Alston to Tavistock. Although promoted by Devon County Council, it will need funding to move beyond the development of options.