



Great Western Railway

Customer Panel – Guildford – 6 February 2019

We met with a range of customer panel members who had been invited to join us.

Our regional performance and development teams gave presentations on the challenges of running a modern railway and took questions.

We have set out a precis below of the questions raised, capturing the key points.

How will customers benefit from the wider redevelopment Guildford station?

Around £25m of improvements are planned for Guildford station, including a new station building, a new plaza, improved transport connections, and more bike spaces. Find out more at www.guildfordforward.com

Why was there a shortage of drivers in 2018?

We employ more drivers than ever before, having recruited more to operate the extra trains in our new long-distance and local fleets. Every driver, new or existing (over 1300), needed to be trained on the new rolling stock. This included an element of classroom training, as well as on-board training.

Changes in the delivery dates of the new trains, and in the commissioning of electrification (essential for training on electric trains), meant that our planned training programme was condensed into the latter half of the year. This did mean we had less flexibility for cover and trains were cancelled. Training for most of our staff is now complete and we are confident that customers will not see the same problems in 2019.

Why was performance so bad in 2018?

Last summer and autumn were particularly affected, with the very hot conditions resulting in a number of temporary speed restrictions. We worked closely with Network Rail to speed up repair of the infrastructure so that the restrictions could be lifted, and we have now seen steady and sustained improvement.

An industry taskforce has also been set up – with a joint Performance Improvement Centre based in Waterloo. Made up of colleagues from Network Rail, GWR, South West Trains and Govia Thameslink, its focus is on removing remaining speed restrictions as well as looking at how we can speed up the dispatch of trains and further reduce delays.



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There seem to be a lot of speed restrictions on the Reading to Gatwick line; communicating them would help customers to understand some of the reasons behind delays

We don't generally publish speed restrictions set by Network Rail. It is an interesting point and something that we can look at for the future.

Why does GWR's performance measurement figures not include connections?

The Public Performance Measure changes from this April and train companies will report 'right time' arrival in future at each station and not just the final destination. While this doesn't specifically include missed connections, reporting for each station will mean figures are more transparent. Find out more at www.networkrail.co.uk/performance.

Customer information at Guildford station isn't that good; who is responsible?

Although Guildford station is managed by Network Rail, it wouldn't be right to blame anyone in particular. We know how important it is for you to get the right information and in good time, especially when connection times are tight, or platform details change, and we'll be working closely with our colleagues at South West Trains and Network Rail to see where improvements can be made.



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As a result of the May 2018 timetable changes, some key stopping services were lost

This is correct, and it was not something we wanted to happen. We have a franchise commitment to run an extra North Downs service every hour. We have the crews and trains and wanted to start in January 2018, and made a timetable bid for the extra service. Network Rail were not able to approve the change citing concerns about safety at level crossings and the impact on performance.

We therefore asked to revert to our May 2018 timetable. This was also not possible due to conflicts with new timetables approved for South West Railway (SWR) and Govia Thameslink (GTR). We were able to work with Network Rail, SWR and GTR to make some limited changes, but weren't able to get everything we wanted.

We are still committed to more services on the North Downs. While we can't give any firm timings yet, level crossing works have been identified and design work funded, and analysis of how services will perform is due to be completed shortly.

When will we see the new timetable; will there be any significant improvements in 2019?

The timetable process is on pause nationally. We are working with Network Rail to see what improvements can be brought in during 2019. There will be little to no change in May, and we are waiting to see what might be possible for Dec 19.



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Why is there such a large gap between the platform and your new Intercity Express Trains at some stations?

Many stations in the UK are historic buildings and the platforms were built by different companies to different standards. The platform position can therefore vary across the country with some lower and some higher.

We work hard to make sure the new trains we buy, and any existing trains we refurbish, comply with the European 'Technical Specification of Interoperability for Persons with Reduced Mobility' (PRM TSI), and we're committed to following the standards set out in the DfT's 'Accessible design standards for railway stations: a code of practice'. Along with the standards given in the PRM TSI. All our trains are fully compliant with the stepping distance regulatory requirements.

In some cases, it is the platforms that are not compliant to these requirements resulting in a variation of the gap between the train and the platform. As part of the introduction of our brand new Intercity Express Trains, we carried out safety assessments at all stations they will stop at. We specifically reviewed all the platforms that exceeded the stepping distance requirements, and then identified and implemented mitigations to help prevent any safety incidents. Part of our mitigations include audible announcements on board our trains to warn customers of the gap between the train and the platform.

These can be automated or made by the Train Manager or Conductor. Stencilling 'mind the gap' signage along the platform and the provision of tactile paving and a clear white line marking the platform edge also help to draw customers' attention to the gap.

What will you do to help if a customer does encounter problems because of this?

Assistance does not need to be booked in advance, a customer can ask for help on the day from any GWR colleague who will be happy to help. We can provide a ramp to help customers get on and off the train while avoiding the gap between the train and the platform.