



DATE: 09 February 2016

PRESS STATEMENT from TravelWatch SouthWest CIC

In response to the news that GWR will be commissioning and funding the Network Rail Study the Government asked the Peninsula Rail Task Force to prepare for this summer.

TravelWatch SouthWest, the region's passenger watchdog, calls for Network Rail's duties to include "improvement" so studies like the one which GWR is funding, become a standard part of their route studies.

TravelWatch SouthWest welcomes the announcement that GWR will be commissioning and funding a Network Rail study into what can be done to the existing rail infrastructure to improve linespeeds and maximise the benefit of the new trains GWR are introducing between London, Devon and Cornwall. Without the study, a report the Government asked the Peninsula Rail Task Force to prepare for the summer, outlining a realistic aspirational plan for the route, would have been missing a vital component.

The Government acknowledges that rail is an efficient, high capacity, safer and greener way for people and goods to travel than by road for many journeys. TravelWatch South West believes a 21st century modern, railway network should be the backbone of an integrated transport system and modern equivalent replacement of our network should be the ultimate aim. However, we have long supported the principle of getting the best out of existing infrastructure to achieve incremental – but sometimes quite significant - improvements along the way.

TravelWatch South West Chair, Vinita Nawathe says, "Network Rail have a duty to maintain and renew the national rail infrastructure. Work is prioritised according to cost benefit analyses and of course, the less dense the population, the fewer people can either contribute to the fare box or receive the wider economic benefit of rail. Renewal costs more than maintenance, which means that without external impetus, the further South West will always lose out to city areas for renewal and so is likely just to be maintained – albeit in the case of Dawlish and other engineering challenges, to a high standard. TravelWatch SouthWest would like Network Rail's duties to be modified to include 'improvement', so that studies, like the one which GWR is commissioning, are a standard part of their route studies"

TravelWatch South West was an original member of the Peninsula Rail Task Force when it was set up in early 2013. A restructure in 2015 established the task force as the five councils and 2 LEPs

www.travelwatchesouthwest.org

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Administrative Office: South Watch Harcombe, Lyme Regis DT7 3RN



covering Devon, Cornwall and Somerset, and TravelWatch South West began working with its associated stakeholder group. TravelWatch SouthWest remains committed to the principle that transport users needs and aspirations should be at the heart of transport policy making.

Notes:

Travelwatch Southwest CIC

TravelWatch SouthWest was established in 2001 as The South West Public Transport Users' Forum (SWPTUF) to promote the interests of public transport users in the South West of England (comprising the counties of Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Somerset and the unitary authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bournemouth, Bristol, Cornwall, North Somerset, Plymouth, Poole, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Torbay and Wiltshire) - the Forum became a Community Interest Company, limited by guarantee, in August 2005. SWPTUF adopted the trading name of TravelWatch SouthWest in June 2006 and the Community Interest Company changed name to TravelWatch SouthWest CIC in November 2008.

Membership of the TravelWatch SouthWest CIC is open to every 'not-for-profit' organisation in the South West of England whose sole or principal purpose is to represent the users of any public transport service or to promote the development of public transport services - membership is also open to other 'not-for-profit' organisations' in the South West England who represent the interests of particular groups of public transport users e.g. the disabled or the elderly. TWSW currently has over one hundred affiliated organisations.

TWSW, which is a social enterprise company, acts as an advocate for passengers to lobby for the improvement of public transport in the region and works closely with local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, business organisations and other stakeholder groups - with the dissolution of the former Rail Passengers Committee for Western England in July 2005, TWSW is the representative body for public transport users throughout the South West of England.

Bryony Chetwode – Company Secretary
TravelWatch SouthWest CIC

You can contact Bryony Chetwode to arrange interviews on 07730357377 or the via the office email at: secretary@travelwatchsouthwest.org

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