

# Response to CrossCountry - Future Timetable Consultation

The Peninsula Rail Task Force<sup>1</sup> (PRTF) welcomes the opportunity to respond to these proposals in relation to future timetables on CrossCountry.

The Peninsula Rail Task Force was set up in 2013 to campaign for improvements to the strategic rail network in the South West, through the 3 point plan:

- Resilience and reliability
- Faster journey times and better connectivity
- Capacity and comfort.

In 2015 the Government asked the PRTF to prepare a 20 year plan for the needs of the rail network in the South West peninsula. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016 the PRTF presented its 20 year rail blueprint for investment in the railways for the South West peninsula.

The report calls for investment across the short, medium and long term across the full range of the 3 point plan. **One of the key guiding principles is that service improvements should not see a reduction in services at any location within the peninsula.**

This call for investment includes;

- Resilience works like Dawlish and the cliffs at Teignmouth, diversionary routes and also completion of previously promised schemes, therefore improving reliability of services. This should include reliable trains for use along the coastal route regardless of the sea conditions.
- Journey time savings through more services and infrastructure improvements allowing faster journeys to our town and cities.
- Capacity and comfort improvements through improved passenger facilities and overall travel experience, including functioning Wi-Fi and mobile signals, allowing business to be more productive and leisure travel to be more enjoyable. Development and enhancement of connections and services to Bristol and the Midlands including 2 trains an hour from Bristol to the peninsula and vice versa.

The PRTF has worked with Network Rail, train operating companies, Department for Transport and the stakeholder group to inform the production of this report.

A copy of the report and further background support documents are available on the PRTF website; [www.peninsularailtaskforce.co.uk](http://www.peninsularailtaskforce.co.uk).

Our direct response to the consultation questions is shown below;

**Question 1)** *Do you agree with the proposal to enhance the number of seats on the Birmingham to Leicester route?*

<sup>1</sup> Consisting of Cornwall CC, Devon CC, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council, Somerset CC, HoSWLep, C&IosLEP

The Peninsula Rail Task Force has no view on this proposal.

**Question 2)** *Do you agree with the proposal to extend one service per day in each direction from Leicester to Cambridge?*

The Peninsula Rail Task Force has no view on this proposal.

**Question 3)** *Do you agree with the proposal to deliver over 3000 additional seats between Bristol and Exeter and other changes to services in the South West for its delivery?*

The recently published PRTF 20 year plan includes a requirement to increase the number of trains between Bristol and the South West to 2 an hour. This is based on the recognised position that the current capacity on this route is insufficient today and will only become even more of a challenge as growth on the network continues and GWR withdraws some of its services that currently operate via Bristol to the South West peninsula. Recent visitor figures indicate that over 4.6 million tourist trips were made to Torbay during 2015, equating to £448 million in visitor related spending.

**The PRTF cannot support the loss of any of the following services to Newton Abbot, Torquay, Teignmouth, Dawlish and Paignton:**

**06:42 Birmingham to Paignton**  
**08:07 Manchester to Paignton**  
**10:07 Paignton to Manchester**  
**14:04 Paignton to Manchester**  
**14:07 Manchester to Paignton**  
**20:14 Paignton to Manchester**

**The Task Force welcomes the overall intention of increasing the number of seats between the South West and Bristol, the Midlands and the North. It is keen to see how this can still be delivered without the considerable impact on existing services.** One of the key difficulties of assessing the impact of these changes is that fact that the full timetable of all operators is not available to see how the changes affect the overall balance and connectivity of the proposals. In fact, the proposal to remove most services to Paignton in December 2017 would create a service reduction as the Exmouth to Paignton service improvements to 2 trains an hour is not scheduled to happen until December 2018.

The introduction of 2 trains an hour from Penzance to Plymouth in December 2018 is likely to increase patronage towards Exeter from Plymouth/Penzance. However, we would also expect any changes to the timetables to be based on serving the actual travel and connectivity needs of the South West<sup>2</sup> rather than being a poor relation of what is required in the Midlands and the North West of the UK. Results from the business survey undertaken by the PRTF demonstrated that 80% of business in the South west peninsula valued the rail links to the North, Midlands and Bristol.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Based on the ORR regional passenger journey data (2014-15), journeys to and from the South West are up by 6% to the West Midlands and 6.4% to the North West, these are key flows for the region and as such service patterns should reflect this.

<sup>3</sup> HoSWLEP Business survey June 2016

The proposals within the consultation document make mention of the connectional opportunities at Newton Abbot, Exeter, Tiverton and Taunton. Whilst it is noted that Cross Country do not operate these stations it must be recognised that these stations are not the most customer friendly and modern locations for changing trains. We would encourage the serious consideration of the upgrading of customer facilities at these stations to provide an improved passenger experience as part of a package of improvements to go with these proposed service changes. The additional services from Exeter to Bristol and beyond will only provide a wider South West peninsula benefit if they have timely and maintained connections for travel from the Penzance/Paignton direction and vice versa.

**The proposal to change the 09:35 Penzance to Manchester to the 09:35 from Penzance to Dundee means a loss of the only direct train from Plymouth to Wolverhampton, Stafford, Stoke, Crewe and Manchester during the day, meaning an increase in journey time through catching the 11:25 from Plymouth and changing at Exeter, this combined with the proposed losses from Paignton removes all but one direct service to the north west from the south west peninsula.**

**The proposal to start the 11:06 Aberdeen to Penzance service at Edinburgh will mean the loss of the only direct service from stations north of Dundee to Plymouth.**

Given that earlier and later trains figure high on the list of passenger requirements, we are unable to find any proposals to improve connectivity from the South West peninsula to/from Bristol, the midlands and the north earlier or later than their current levels. In actual fact the proposed change in starting 20:14 Paignton to Birmingham service at Exeter raises concerns over the potential loss of a late service from the South West peninsula to Bristol and the midlands. Currently it is possible to leave Plymouth at 19:42 and change at Newton Abbot, Exeter, Taunton or Tiverton and catch the 20:14 service from Paignton to the Midlands. **We are aware that from December 2018 GWR will be revising their services to London and we seek confirmation that the departure at 20:52 from Exeter to Birmingham (currently the last service from the peninsula to the midlands) will be maintained as a connection from Plymouth and locations west of Plymouth, without this confirmation we could not support the change proposed.**

**Question 4)** *Do you agree with the proposal to increase the number of seats per day through Reading on CrossCountry services? Do you agree with the proposal to introduce an earlier first train from Reading to Bournemouth via Southampton?*

The Peninsula Rail Task Force support this proposal.

**Question 5)** *Do you agree with the proposal to operate through services from the Midlands to Aberdeen in the daytime vice early morning / late evening?*

The Peninsula Rail Task Force support this proposal.

**Question 6)** *Do you agree with the proposal to utilise higher capacity rolling stock in the “core” of the network at peak times?*

Within the confines of this proposal the Peninsula Rail Task Force support the utilisation of higher capacity rolling stock in the core of the network.

However, we would also pose the question, is it not time that the 'role' of this franchise is clearly identified;

Is this a long distance service that has quality at seat service, ability to work on the train, streaming media and a world class service offering or is it long distance train service that provides short on route commuter flows. This need to meet the commuter requirements appears to be one of the key drivers for the need to provide high capacity in the core of the network, at the possible detriment of the locations outside of this core.

**Question 7)** *Do you agree with the proposal to enhance the number of seats in the Bristol area?*

The Peninsula Rail Task Force support this proposal.

**Question 8)** *Do you agree with the proposal to increase the peak time service frequency between Leeds and Sheffield, so providing 1,000 extra seats per day?*

The Peninsula Rail Task Force has no view on this proposal.

**Question 9)** *Please provide any further observations you would like to include in your response to this consultation.?*

**Response to summer crowding**

The PRTF notes that there is no mention of how the current additional summer Saturday services will be operated, to places like Newquay and how Friday evening and summer Saturday crowding will be managed. As tourism is worth £8.63bn<sup>4</sup> a year to the South West economy, supporting over 20% of all jobs in Torbay<sup>5</sup>, ensuring that rail services provide both the capacity and the ability to respond to the level of capacity needed is key to the South West economy. In addition, the potential loss of services to Paignton is a serious concern for the summer and tourism traffic that currently exist.

There is a significant level of holiday and leisure travel to the South west throughout the year which increase significantly during the main holiday season. The PRTF believe that the need to change trains onto a local service at Newton Abbot would be a negative passenger experience and increase journey times for many of these seasonal travellers. In addition, the levels of capacity that currently exist between Newton Abbot and stations to Paignton would be a major concern, given that some services are currently operated by single vehicle trains with limited seating and virtually no luggage capacity.

We would ask that Cross Country provide details of how they propose to meet the additional capacity required to meet tourism and high usage periods in the South West, especially given that additional services to Exeter will generate more users that wish to travel west from Exeter. We are concerned that there will be insufficient capacity between Exeter and Plymouth/Penzance to accommodate these passengers having arrived at Exeter.

**General**

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<sup>4</sup> Visit England 2014 data

<sup>5</sup> The Economic impact of Devon's visitor economy 2015 – the South West Research Company Ltd

Meeting the rail needs of the South west needs to be undertaken with a coordinated and combined approach across all operators in the area, and should aim to meet the objectives and outputs of the Peninsula Rail Task Force 20 year plan.

**Question 10)** *Please tell us whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation or as an individual*

Organisation

Peninsula Rail Task Force

**Question 11)** *Please tell us whether you are a regular CrossCountry service user or representing an interested party*

Interested Party

Peninsula Rail Task Force, made up of: Cornwall County Council, Devon County Council, Torbay Council, Somerset Council, HoSWLep, C&losLep.



Councillor Andrew Leadbetter  
Chair,  
Peninsula Rail Task Force