



WEST OF ENGLAND RAIL SUMMIT SUMMARY REPORT

1 March 2007

Keynsham Town Hall



West of England Rail Summit

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Summary

Introduction

With rail dominating the news recently with new franchises and reports of overcrowded and cancelled trains, the four councils in the West of England area called a rail summit. The summit, held at Keynsham Town Hall on 1 March 2007, pulled together a panel of experts to debate some of these issues. It was an opportunity for all of those interested in rail issues to come and hear about what is really going on and have their say too.

Sir Elgar Jenkins, the Executive Member for Transport for Bath and North East Somerset Council, chaired the event. He welcomed the fifty delegates to the summit and emphasised the need to look forward rather than backward. The following speakers made presentations.

Department for Transport

Stephen Clark from the Department for Transport (DfT) gave an informative presentation on the DfT's role and the franchise process. Particularly useful was clarification over who does what. The DfT do not specify timetables. He recognised there had been problems in the First Great Western area but assurances had been given to Ministers by First that problems were being tackled. Changes to the Cross Country franchise were raised. He emphasised the importance of working with local stakeholders to develop services.

Slides from Stephen's presentation can be found at the end of this report.

First Great Western

Andrew Griffiths on behalf of First Great Western accepted responsibility for the events of recent months. First want to restore confidence in their train services. He outlined First's £200m investment over the life of the 10 year franchise and the aim for 90% of trains being on time. Investment in refurbished High Speed Trains and stations were mentioned. Timetable changes will be made in May 2007 with major changes including improvements to cross Bristol services in December 2007.

Slides from Andrew's presentation can be found at the end of this report.

Travelwatch South West

Chris Irwin from Travelwatch South West spoke about the need to make more noise about and to raise the voice of the West of England on rail issues.

Business West

Nigel Hutchings from Business West related how important rail is to business and they do not like surprises. They want fast and reliable services. In importance terms the West of England area is second after London in Grosse Domestic Product per head of population.

Sevenside Rail Partnership

Keith Walton from the Sevenside Rail Partnership put forward 3 areas for change: timetables, rolling stock and local stations. He emphasised the huge passenger growth in the Bristol area over the last 10 years. On rolling stock he highlighted the need for suitable vehicles and on stations the importance of pushing improvements up the agenda. Keith had good news on the setting up of a Project Group between the West of England authorities and Network Rail to progress improvement to the cross Bristol train services from Weston to Yate.

Slides from Keith's presentation can be found at the end of this report.

Question and Answers

All the speakers took part in a question and answer panel session. Questions had previously been submitted. Please note that time did not permit all questions to be answered on the day. Some answers have been provided subsequently. Additional questions were raised on the day and others received subsequently to the summit. All of these and their answers are set out below.

Franchises

1) More Train, Less Strain – question on First Great Western’s plans to increase rolling stock to cater for the increase in passengers in future

Andrew Griffiths from First explained the number of coaches had increased from 108 at the start of the new franchise to 134. First are looking at opportunities for Cardiff to Portsmouth services and will involve all Councils along the route with their proposals.

2) Friends of Bristol Suburban Railways – question on how First Great Western underestimated passenger numbers and whether lessons learned to reduce risk of overcrowding trains in future.

First Great Western took responsibility for the problems of the last few months. Andrew Griffith’s presentation set out what they are doing on rolling stock improvements, May and December 2007 timetable changes (see Andrew’s slides at the end of this report).

3) University of Bristol – question whether First Great Western’s problems were due to unexpected passenger numbers?

See answer to question 2).

4) Friends of Bristol Suburban Railways – question on how First Great Western will improve communication with customers

First Great Western recognise there have been communication problems and are appointing a new customer services head (see slides from Andrew Griffith’s presentation).

5) South and West Transport Action Group – previous franchises had benefits like additional services and new stations. Why is the new franchise not granting similar benefits?

Not aware that previous franchises did include additional services or new stations as part of their specification. DfT priorities are getting performance back on track, addressing the backlog of maintenance and renewals, getting costs under control and maintaining safety improvements (see slides from Stephen Clarke’s presentation).

6) Councillor Mike Thomas – concern about cross country train service franchise proposals to Scotland.

DfT seeking to make best use of resources. Surveys show passenger numbers travelling from Scotland to South West and vice versa are small and have fallen dramatically in recent years. Average length of cross country journey is only 80 miles.

Partnership Working

7) Transport 2000 – questions on West of England Partnership and Greater Bristol authorities working with DfT Rail and train operators.

Executive Members from the West of England will be meeting Alison Forster, Managing Director, First very shortly. Partnership working is very important and West of England authorities working closely with Severnside Rail Partnership, Network Rail and other partners (see slides from Keith Walton's presentation). DfT's involvement in Rail Summit seen as a good sign the West of England area is being taken seriously.

Expanding Services

8) Railfuture Severnside – question on plans to develop Bristol's suburban rail network to relieve congestion. The absence of reopening the line to Portishead was raised.

Stephen Clarke from DfT pointed out the Transport Innovation Fund offers potential to tackle congestion with a package of measures of which rail can be one but not necessarily the best.

9) Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR) – question on support for half hour service to 14 suburban stations in the Bristol travel to work area.

Department for Transport pleased to see local authorities helping to provide services (see slides from Stephen Clark's presentation).

10) Delegate – question about establishing a PTE/PTA and funding services.

There are no plans for a PTE/PTA for the West of England area.

Rail infrastructure and expansion

11) Friends of the Earth – question on how rail expansion could be paid for versus subsidy for aviation?

Stephen Clark's presentation referred to various sources of funding for rail including the DfT subject to spending review, local authorities, developer contributions and the Regional Development Agencies (see slides). The High Level Output Specification will determine priorities.

12) Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR) – question on Regional Funding Allocation and urban (rail) needs.

This question was covered during the discussion on question 7).

13) Transport 2000 - what's happening at platform 4 Bristol Parkway and Worle Parkway?

The Network Rail Board has given approval to investigate a fourth platform at Bristol Parkway. Timescales to be confirmed. Worle Parkway is being progressed as part of the Weston Package major scheme bid. Discussions are taking place between North Somerset Council and Network Rail.

14) Keynsham Station Group – question on are externalities (environmental, social benefits) included in costs?

Stephen Clark from the DfT replied that benefit cost ratios include user and non user benefits. Also Transport Innovation Fund and Local Transport Plan processes are all about joining up transport.

15) South and West Transport Action Group – why is there going to be no westward rail link to the new Terminal 5 at Heathrow?

DfT replied that this would be very expensive to provide. Economics in the future might make it viable. Sir Elgar Jenkins pointed out the role of Bristol International Airport.

16) Wessex Constitutional Convention – which is most important to the economy of the Bath-Bristol region, commuting within the area or services between Bristol and London?

The Joint Local Transport Plan (covering the areas of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils) sets out a Rail Action Plan with short, medium and long term proposals. There is a strong focus on schemes to improve local stations and train services

Communiqué

One of the aims of the summit was to produce a communiqué to be sent to the Department for Transport and First Great Western, setting out the findings of the day and identifying areas of action.

The text of the communiqué is provided below:

Dear Sir

West of England Rail Summit and Communiqué

On 1st March 2007 representatives from various transport groups and organisations, Members and officers from Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils, Business West, the Department for Transport, First Great Western, Severnside Rail Partnership and Travelwatch South West met at a summit to discuss rail issues.

Rail has been of increasing concern in recent months and the summit was an opportunity for an open and transparent discussion. For your information and use we attach a summary of the day.

One of the aims of the summit was to identify areas of action, to learn from previous mistakes and to look forward rather than backwards. To this end we have produced this communiqué.

Arising from the summit we identify four key action areas:

1) Partnership Working

The summit clearly demonstrated the need to work together to promote and provide for rail in the West of England area. The four councils of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire together with the West of England Partnership Office will work actively and closely with the Department for Transport, Network Rail, train operating companies and the Severnside Rail Partnership. Passenger groups and other organisations will be involved to ensure their views and input are taken on board.

We propose to establish a technical West of England Rail Project Group (comprising officers from the four unitary authorities, First Great Western, Network Rail and Severnside Rail Partnership) with the first meeting in April 2007.

2) Timetables

Avoiding the problems of the December 2006 timetable changes is a priority. Through the West of England Rail Project Group we will seek from First Great

Western and the Department for Transport the following for the May and December 2007 timetables:

- Revised patterns of service
- Improved reliability and effective contingency plans
- Good communication to passengers and local authorities

3) Rolling Stock

The experiences of the last few months has emphasised the need for the adequate provision of carriages to meet passenger demand and growth. We seek commitment from First Great Western and the Department for Transport on:

- Number of carriages provided from May 2007 and December 2007
- Plans for future provision
- Resolution of maintenance problems
- Suitable rolling stock for local services

4) Stations

Local stations need to be higher up the agenda. Passenger facilities need to be improved. Much work has already been and is being done but greater commitment to good passenger facilities and more local delivery is needed. The West of England Rail Project Group will seek this from train operating companies, the Department for Transport, local authorities and community support.

Whilst some of these action areas are the direct responsibility of one organisation we believe that only by working together can we start to make a difference.

We look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Sir Elgar Jenkins
Bath and North East Somerset Council

Cllr Dennis Brown
Bristol City Council

Cllr John Crockford-Hawley
North Somerset Council

Cllr Pat Hockey
South Gloucestershire Council



WEST OF ENGLAND RAIL SUMMIT PRESENTATION SLIDES

1 March 2007

Keynsham Town Hall

Photographs and maps have been omitted to save space and to enable the report to be emailed.



Rail in the Bristol Area

Stephen Clark, Head of Regional Policy and Delivery, Department for Transport

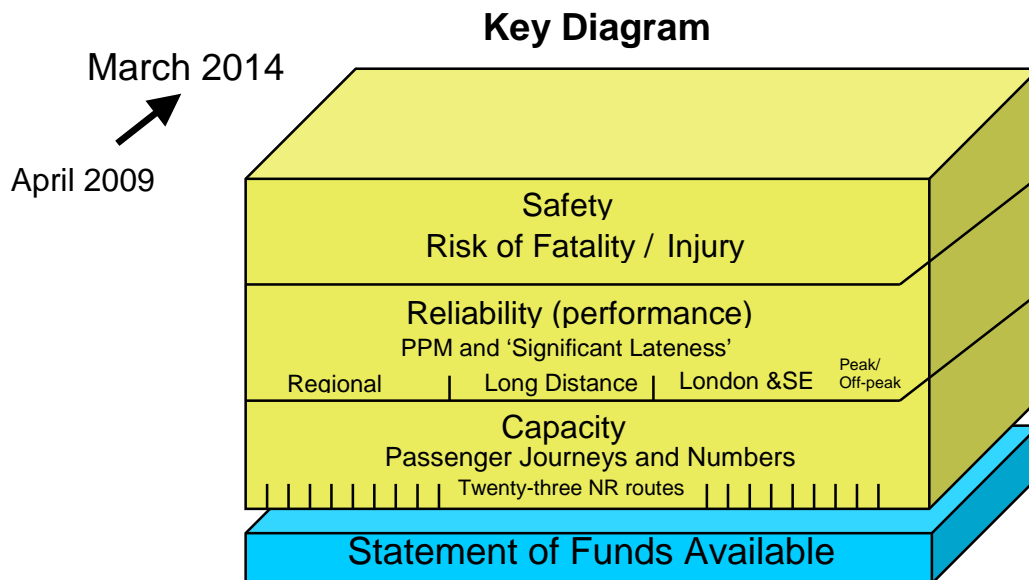
Rail industry structure

- Secretary of State:
 - Sets strategy
 - Determines rail budget
 - Lets franchises
- Passenger Operators
 - Services for passengers according to franchise contract and commercial initiative
- Network Rail
 - Delivering an efficient Network
 - Accountable for reliability
 - Leads industry planning

Priorities over the past 4-5 years:

- Getting performance back on track
- Addressing the backlog of maintenance and renewals
- Getting costs under control
- Maintaining safety improvements

The High Level Output Specification (HLOS)



Why specify franchises?

- We need a balance between
 - specificity to ensure government objectives are met, and
 - enough scope for the rail operators' strengths in market knowledge, customer service and innovation
- DfT sets a base specification for each franchise to:

- ensure the minimum level of train services required where, otherwise, market forces would not normally deliver;
- protect the passenger from monopolistic actions in specific markets;
- protect the benefits of a national rail network;
- provide a “level playing field” for procurement competition; and
- within it, allow scope for things to vary over time.

Franchises: who does what?

- DfT specifies minimum train service pattern, capacity standards and fares regulation
- Franchisee forecasts demand, plans timetable, devises rolling stock and depot plan, decides catering
- Franchisee responsible for achieving franchise commitments, and for service development

FGW: Overview

- Franchise combines three previous franchises in line with policy to achieve improvements in operational performance, co-ordination of services, and Value for Money
- Improving rail performance is a key objective for the Department
- Nationally, there has been significant improvement
 - DfT regards current performance on Great Western route in January 2007 as ‘unacceptable’

FGW Performance: Bristol Area

- Specific problems experienced in the Bristol area – all leading to crowding:
 - Short-forming of trains
 - Cancellation of trains
 - Failure of trains in service and part-cancellation
 - Delays and poor punctuality
- Assurances given to ministers that appropriate steps being taken
- Main performance issues have abated recently
- FGW has taken steps to have more trains

FGW Capacity: Bristol Area

- FGW responsible for delivering capacity to meet requirements of franchise agreement
- Performance issues in early part of year led to some trains being very overcrowded
- FGW has already made many changes to timetables to reflect stakeholder concerns. DfT has facilitated a number of these changes.
- Further discussions with FGW may lead to improved timetable and better allocation of capacity to those services that most need it
- In longer term approach to capacity may be a combination of
 - FGW seizing commercial opportunities
 - Network Rail led improvements to rail infrastructure
 - DfT national approach to capacity through “HLOS”
 - Locally/regionally funded enhancements
- No DfT restriction on amount of rolling stock FGW may lease

South West Trains

Bristol area improvements

- New franchise started 4 February 2007: New timetable in December 2007
- DfT has procured retention of Waterloo Bristol service as a priced option
- Contracted performance improvements (from 89.7 to over 93% by end of franchise)
- Refurbishment of all diesel trains
- Smartcard technology rolled out across area
 - Integrated with London, and potentially other, public transport systems
- Emphasis on personal security: CCTV at all mainland stations and on all trains, guards on all trains;

New Cross Country – Bids due shortly

Bristol area improvements and issues

- Core specification will put new capacity in the Bristol-York-Reading-Manchester sections where trains are busiest
- Bidders asked to price 30% extra capacity – they may seek to enhance capacity South West of Bristol as well
- Improved performance through simpler operations
- Hourly direct service from Bristol to Manchester
 - SW to Scotland journeys will require changing at Birmingham
- Clockface timetable and current frequency maintained on the core
- More predictable and more reliable interchange

Bristol's railways - the way forward

- Three new TOCs (SWT, FGW and Cross Country)
- Imperative is for local stakeholders to work with TOCs and Network Rail to develop service
 - Agreement on local and regional priorities will help rail industry to work with you
 - West of England Partnership well placed to facilitate this
 - Community Rail Partnerships important (e.g. Severnside Partnership)
 - Make use of existing sources of funds to leverage in further improvements
 - Network Rail Discretionary Fund, Access for All, LTP,
- DfT will play its part too, in particular
 - High Level Output Statement may allow for further enhancements

Implementing the franchise: The FGW Perspective

Andrew Griffiths, Regional Manager Severn & Solent, First Great Western

First Great Western:

- 10-year franchise from April 2006.
- Regional in scope:
 - 80m journeys p.a.
 - Great Western + Thames + Wessex.
- Major investment programme:
 - £200m by FGW.
 - £750m by Network Rail.
- Context:
 - £1.1bn premium.
 - SW local services <4% of income.

FGW in Bristol:

- High Speed Services:
 - Temple Meads to Paddington (2 per hour)
 - Parkway to Paddington (2) and Cardiff (2) / Swansea (1)
- West services on 5 routes from Temple Meads:
 - Weston-super-Mare (2) / Taunton (1)
 - Filton (3) / Cardiff (2).
 - Cheltenham (1) / Great Malvern
 - Westbury (2) / Portsmouth (1) / Weymouth
 - Severn Beach (1)

Investing in Performance:

- Aiming for 90% of trains on time:
 - 'Integrated Control Centre' with Network Rail.
 - Infrastructure improvements with Network Rail.
 - Train reliability improvements.
 - Special attention on worst performing services.
- Customer Services:
 - New organisation structure.
 - Investment in staff training.
 - Investment in customer communications.

Investing in Trains:

- High Speed Train refurbishment:
 - £63m programme due to complete December 2007.
 - New first and standard class interior (inc power points).
 - New toilets.
 - New catering offer.
 - £51m on new clean, green engines + reliability mods.
- West fleet refurbishment:
 - £4m programme.
 - Interior refresh and 'local lines' livery.

Investing in Stations:

- General improvements:
 - £14m programme over 3 years.
 - Waiting rooms, toilets, ticket offices, subways, signage.
 - Automatic ticket gates and WiFi at key stations.
- Specific programmes:
 - New Help & Information Points at all stations.
 - New Ticket Vending Machines (Penalty Fares).
 - New CCTV system.
 - 1,700 additional parking spaces.
- Bristol Temple Meads:
 - £2.5m investment package:
 - Redesign of ticket office and travel centre.
 - New customer lounge, waiting facilities, toilets and information points.
 - Additional ticket machines and retail units.
 - External developments:
 - Broadmead, Temple Quay, Bristol Arena, Post Office, Collett House.
- Bristol Parkway:
 - New third platform (April 2007) with waiting lounge, possible fourth platform.
 - Extra parking (probably an extra deck).

Improving timetables:

- December 2006:
 - 9,000 responses to consultation.
 - 200 changes to draft made (half the key issues).
- May 2007.
 - 50 minor changes.
- December 2007:
 - Improve the cross-Bristol pattern, less bunching.
 - HSTs to call Worle, Keynsham and Oldfield Park to help Bristol commuters.

May 2007 detail (unconfirmed):

- Weekdays:
 - Weymouth / Portsmouth / Brighton:
 - New service: 0526 Westbury - Southampton call Warminster
 - 0630 & 0730 Cardiff Central - Portsmouth Harbour call Severn Tunnel Junction
 - 0857 & 1657 Brighton - Cardiff Central call Cosham
 - 0857 Brighton - Cardiff call Keynsham [provisional]
 - 1200 Cardiff Central - Brighton call Cosham
 - New service: 1234 Bristol TM - Westbury call all stations
 - 1422, 1522 & 2022 Portsmouth Harbour - Cardiff Central call Severn Tunnel Junction
 - Swindon via Bath:

- New service: 0835 Bristol TM - Swindon call Keynsham, Oldfield Park, Bath Spa, Chippenham
- Weston-super-Mare & Taunton:
 - 1409 Great Malvern - Taunton call Weston Milton, also retimed off Bristol TM 1621
 - 1602 Cheltenham Spa - Taunton call Weston Milton
 - 1640 & 1740 WSM - Filton AW call Stapleton Road
 - 1700 Paddington - Bristol TM extended to WSM calling Nailsea, Yatton and Weston Milton (in place of 1730 Paddington - WSM).
- Gloucester / Cheltenham / Worcester:
 - New service: 2230 Cheltenham Spa - Bristol call Gloucester and Bristol Parkway (Adelante)
- Cardiff:
 - Extended service: 0535 Weymouth - Filton AW extended to Cardiff Central call Patchway and Newport
 - Extended service: 2330 Paddington - Bristol TM extended to Cardiff Central call Newport [provisional]
- Severn Beach:
 - 2116 Bristol TM - Severn Beach and 2156 Bristol TM - Severn Beach retimed 30 minutes later

Urban Rail: Severn Beach Line:

- Challenges and Opportunities:
 - Hourly / irregular frequency.
 - 10 closely-spaced stations.
 - Single track, 2 passing places.
 - High local catchment.
 - Vandalism and neglect.
 - 375k journeys p.a. (10% growth expected this year).
- Line Working Group:
 - Set up by FGW and Severnside CRP.
 - Bristol City and South Gloucestershire Councils.
 - Community groups (e.g. East Side Traders).
 - Pressure groups (e.g. Friends of Bristol Suburban Rlys).
 - Network Rail.
 - British Transport Police.
 - Passenger Focus.
- Line Development Plan:
 - Service enhancement (Bristol City Council looking to fund an extra unit for more frequent weekday service and new Sunday service)
 - Security at stations (CCTV, Help Points, shelters)
 - Station clean-up (Montpelier 'blitz' with NR and residents)
 - Zonal fares and mini-TVMs (revenue collection)
 - Raising the profile (Stapleton Road adoption, 'Santa' and 'Easter Bunny' trains, leaflet drop to households etc)
 - Clifton Down turnback (contingency benefit).
 - New Park & Ride station (Portway, major expansion planned)

Conclusion:

- Partnerships work!
 - Rail industry.
 - Government and Local Authorities.
 - Communities and users (via Community Rail Partnerships).

Local Rail Services; Priorities for Action

Keith Walton, Severnside Rail Partnership

Passengers using local stations:

- 14% growth last year
- 192% increase since 1995

Growth is not just in the peak:

Over last 5 years at North Somerset stations

- 30% growth in peak
- 60% growth off-peak
- 47% growth towards Bristol
- 67% growth contra-flow towards Weston /Taunton

Capacity constraining growth towards Bristol

Three main action areas:

- ▶ Timetables/pattern of services
- ▶ Rolling stock
- ▶ Stations

Timetables/Pattern of Service

Problems:

- Bunching of trains
- No connections
- Non clock-face
- Irregular stopping pattern
- Loss of traditional linkages
- Lack of late evening services
- Large gaps in service

Solutions

- ? the December 2007 timetable
- Revised pattern of service
- Restore Weston – Cardiff service
- Direct trains from Bath to Bristol Parkway
- Improve robustness and reliability

Rolling Stock

- Adequate number of carriages needed to cater for current peak loads
- And to provide for growth
- Maintenance problems must be solved
- Rolling stock needs to be suitable for local services

Commitment needed from FGW / DfT on:

- Number of carriages from May 2007
- Number of carriages from December 2007
- Plans for future provision

Thought needed on

- Innovative ways of funding e.g. through the RDA as in Leeds

Local Stations

- In need of refurbishment
- Personal security is a real issue - perceived as unsafe, unfriendly places, an unwelcoming environment
- Access problems for the less mobile
- Interchange issues – buses, cycle and car parking
- Lack of signs – where is the station?

Local Station Action

Local stations must be higher up the agenda – this needs commitment and funding from FGW and Local Authorities, and community support

Station audits have been done – now need to be converted to action plans, including:

- Improved access – car park policy, cycles
- Help points
- Simpler timetable information
- Local community station support groups
- Better signing and local information
- Better ambience – maintenance, vegetation, seats
- Shelters – from rain and wind
- CCTV

Local Action - Delivery is the Key

In hand:

- CCTV for Patchway (through Rolls Royce) - done
- Severn Beach Line Development Plan - March
 - Zonal fare system - May
 - Simplified station timetables - May
 - Improved pocket timetable and fares - May
 - Montpellier station clean-up – 13 May
- Station Support Groups - Patchway, Yate, Keynsham, Oldfield Park

Soon – hopefully:

- Severn Beach line improved service - December
- CCTV at Bristol suburban stations
- New shelters at Parson Street
- Keynsham - ramp and community notice boards
- Yate - car park access road and re- marking car park
- More station support groups - Weston Milton, Nailsea, Sea Mills
- Stapleton Road market garden
- Improved timetable and service pattern - December

West of England Rail Summit 1 March 2007

Delegates List

Name	Organisation
Cllr Brian Barrett	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Simon Birch	West of England Partnership Office
Julie Boston	Severn Beach Line Passenger Association
Cllr Bill Bowrey	South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Dennis Brown	Bristol City Council
Cllr Peter Burden	North Somerset Council
Simon Carpenter	More Trains, Less Strain
Adrian Clarke	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Stephen Clarke	Department for Transport
Sarah Collins	Severnside Rail Partnership
Cllr John Crockford-Hawley	North Somerset Council
Cllr Gerry Curran	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Barbara Davies	West of England Partnership Office
Peter Dawson	Government Office for the South West
Dick Drew	Railway Development Society
Gordon Edwards	Travelwatch South West
Mike Greedy	Passenger Focus
Andrew Griffiths	First Great Western
Chris Irwin	Travelwatch South West
Cllr Pat Hockey	South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Helen Holland	Bristol City Council
David Hibbs	Department for Transport
Nigel Hutchings	Business West
John Jackson	South & West Transport Action Group
Cllr Sir Elgar Jenkins	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Cllr D Jolley	North Somerset Council
Cllr Barbara Lewis	Bristol City Council
Carolyn Manuel	Office of Kerry McCarthy, MP
Robert Marshall	CPRE
Cllr Peter Metcalfe	North Somerset Council
Terry Miller	Friends of Bristol Suburban Railways
Ian Monks	
Sarah Morris	CBI
Stephen Payne	West of England Partnership Office
David Phillips	Wiltshire County Council
Alan Pinder	Friends of the Earth
Cllr Charles Price	Bristol City Council
David Redgewell	Transport 2000
Hilary Severn	CPRE
Julia Sherwen	CPRE
Cllr Mike Thomas	South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr Rosemary Todd	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Steve Tyler	South West TUC
Keith Walton	Sevenside Rail Partnership
James White	West of England Partnership Office
Dick Whittington	Community Action
Helen Young	South Gloucestershire Council

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