



Great  
Western  
Railway

# Annual Customer and Stakeholder Report 2021



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## 1.0 Mark Hopwood, Managing Director, GWR

Our roadmap to recovery will help drive customer confidence and kick start the return to modal shift.

I should start this report by thanking Matthew Golton who was Interim Managing Director for GWR, while I worked as Interim Managing Director for South Western Railway. Matthew did a great job, and the following pages show how much he was able to achieve and how well our stakeholder family appreciated how he kept things going throughout the pandemic.

He has now secured a new post as Managing Director for Transpennine Express and I am sure you will want to join me in wishing him the best of luck for that new role.

This has been a further year of restrictions and regulations that none of us could foresee. In the summer, we were delighted to see demand for rail travel quickly begin to rise, particularly for leisure. The subsequent second lockdown meant that we once again returned to key worker and essential travel only.

As I write this, restrictions are starting to ease again and we look forward to welcoming customers back this summer, and on into the future. We have a roadmap to recovery which will help drive customer confidence and kick start the return to modal shift.

Rail is not just an important driver to economic recovery it is also an essential part of the solution for decarbonisation.

We know that creating and sustaining jobs and improving the environment through public transport and active travel are key aspirations for the communities we serve. We recognise the role we have to play in building back better and we are ready to work with industry partners, and with you, our stakeholders and customers to make sure we deliver services that meet changing demands.

We have shown that we can do that during the pandemic. Not only have we kept services going, but we have also kept our improvement programme going, GWR has never been a standstill franchise, and I am determined that we never will be.

Best wishes

**Mark Hopwood CBE**  
Managing Director



### Addendum:

This is the 2020/21 Annual Customer and Stakeholder Report and strictly speaking should not therefore include reference to events in May 2021. I do think however, that I should briefly refer to the recent issue with our long distance Intercity Express Trains (IETs) and to the Williams-Shapps plan for rail and Great British Railways.

We are currently working with Hitachi on a repair plan for the IETs, but thanks to great co-operation in the industry from the Department for Transport, Network Rail and fellow train operators we are providing an almost full timetable, despite the reduction in fleet numbers.

On Williams-Shapps and Great British Railway, we support the need for change. It is important that those changes recognise the role of customers, communities, stakeholders and partners in shaping the railway, something we know the proposals seek to do and we now wait to see what the detail of the plan will bring.





## 2.0 Mike Gallop, Interim Wales and Western Managing Director, Network Rail

In October 2020 I spoke, virtually, to many of you at the GWR stakeholder conference. Back then I discussed how much the pandemic was already changing our industry, and yet there are few words that can do justice to the last year.

It was an unforgettable year and this stakeholder report gives us an opportunity to reflect on this, but crucially to prepare ourselves for what comes next.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for working with us over the last year, it hasn't been easy. We've had to adapt the way we engage; embracing new technology to keep in touch with you, and of course, that's been challenging.

One of the events I attended last year that typified this was the virtual closure of a level crossing at Tackley in Oxfordshire. We had speeches, live video from the site of the temporary footbridge and a ribbon being cut – after the local representative had walked from being on the call at home to the station. It was an important moment nonetheless, as safety is our top priority and far too many people have nearly been injured or killed at this site in the past.

However, we're social animals, so as much as Zoom and Microsoft Teams have been vital, I'm relishing the opportunity to resume face-to-face engagement as we begin to emerge from the shadow of the pandemic. I hope that whether it's at a conference, at a project launch or on a train we can meet soon, and I can hear your priorities for the railway.

Certainly, the railways are firmly at the top of the political agenda, with the recently released Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail into the structure of our industry. And I know that there has been a lot of interest and speculation about what it means. For me, there are two key outputs.

Firstly, it is clear that the path GWR and Network Rail started, with our alliance and close working, has been the right thing for passengers. It is even possible that Keith Williams looked to how we work as a model when pulling together his review. Our ability to support and challenge each other has really delivered, and whatever the exact structure of the industry is, our focus must continue to be the people, communities, and businesses we serve.

That also means making the necessary changes now to respond to stakeholder needs. That's why we've introduced a network of Industry Programme Directors across Wales and Western, who have been so positively received. Acting as the first point of contact for local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and other statutory bodies, they're already making a huge difference. They've attracted new investment to the railway and are supporting the development of common economic, social and transport objectives within communities.

And we're supporting community rail partnerships with a newly created post, held by Vicky Clift, to look after these important bodies. Every month she pulls together every part of Network Rail to help progress community schemes across the region. Projects in Bristol, Wiltshire and Worcestershire have already started thanks to Vicky working closely with the partnerships.

Secondly, the rail review says to me that now is not the time for rest on our laurels. We have a five-year funding settlement until 2024 for operating, maintaining, and renewing the railway. Passengers and stakeholders don't want to wait for rail reform to see more trains operating on time, a better experience at our managed stations and important projects progressed. So, my message to my colleagues and to stakeholders is that we will be focused

on the day job. We must reflect on what we can do better, learning from how quickly we adapted to the pandemic, and delivering for passengers. In the months and years to come, as you all return to travelling by train, I trust you'll see the difference we've made in the last year and with much more to come.

And in this key mission, I hope I have your support. Covid-19 has ushered in fundamental changes to the economy and the way we travel, work and live our lives. As we adapt to the new world and continue with the vital task of building back better, the support of our stakeholders will be more important than ever.

**Mike Gallop**  
Interim Wales and Western Managing Director





### 3.0 Our Strategic Priorities



#### Delighting our customers

Bringing improvements to our business for the long term benefit of our customers and managing the factors that impact customer satisfaction and analysing customer research.



#### Disciplined operations

Finding ways to improve our service delivery and manage the factors that impact customer satisfaction, while maintaining and developing our commitment to safety.



#### Great people

Recognising that our goals will only be delivered with our colleagues' commitment and seeking out new ways to deliver the best customer experience possible.



#### Keeping our communities prospering

Working to engage with the wider communities we serve to deliver a sustainable future in a socially responsible way, so we become integral to their infrastructure and a preferred partner with solutions for their local needs.



#### Driving business growth

Driving the revenue and profitability of our business, meeting our franchise obligations and securing more third party investment for the benefit of our customers.







## Lord Richard Faulkner Chair of our Advisory Board

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This has been an extraordinarily difficult year for the railways, for the country and indeed for the world.

But in the midst of all the gloom and despair caused by the pandemic which has brought suffering and grief to millions, there is one genuine ray of hope for our industry. That is the recognition that our railways will continue to have a central part to play in the life of Britain.

Those of us who lived through the dark days of the post-Beeching era of the 1960s, '70s and '80s, might have doubted that. The question asked back then was have the railways any sort of future at all? Notwithstanding the immense drop in passenger numbers caused by people following government advice not to travel, no-one is saying now let's abandon our railways. The challenge for all of us is to get passengers back on to our trains, whilst intelligently managing changes in travelling habits as patterns of commuting adapt to the new work conditions.

I am confident that thanks to the dedication, commitment and loyalty of all GWR colleagues we shall come through this difficult period successfully, as we have over the last year. We only need to look at some of the year's highlights for proof of that.

Looking first at GWR's response to the pandemic, we saw multiple timetable changes, including focus on school and college travel. Newbury Racecourse became an important vaccination centre, and many trains called additionally at Racecourse station to help with that.

The multi-million pound Exeter depot was completed, new cycle hubs were installed at Newbury and Didcot Parkway stations, specially modified Class 387 trains were introduced on Heathrow airport services, and the first Class 769 units were delivered.

Despite the pandemic GWR still found time to undertake some very special and imaginative commemorative events, including power car namings on a number of high speed trains, a "Poppies to Paddington" celebration (200 wreaths from across the network), and the wonderful Captain Tom Centennial train.

There has been a series of great successes for the company this year. These have included recognition in the National Rail Awards 2020, particularly in the Outstanding Teamwork category for the December 2019 timetable change, and the Customer Service Excellence Award for GWR's celebration of International Women's Day.

Modern Railways' Golden Spanners 2020 awards went to GWR for Best Sprinter – Class 150s at Exeter Depot; the second generation new InterCity (Castle Class) train won Silver and Bronze; and a Silver award was given for the new first generation new DMU.



GWR won HR Team of the Year 2020 award from Personnel Today, the Marketing and Communications Excellence prize in the Rail Business Awards 2021 for That's EnterTrainment, and Repurposing HSTs into Castle Class trains won the Rolling Stock Excellence award.

For much of the year GWR was in the safe hands of Matthew Golton, while Mark Hopwood was seconded to South Western Railway as interim managing director. My advisory board colleagues and I thank Matthew most sincerely for the excellent job he did, particularly in the successful introduction of the new timetable in December 2019. We wish him well in his important new role with First Group.

In January 2021 we welcomed Mark back to his old job, now the proud recipient of a well-deserved CBE, which he dedicated it to "the efforts of thousands of railway colleagues I have worked with throughout my 31-year career."

It is a pleasure and a privilege to serve on the advisory board, and I would like my fellow board members know how much I appreciate their support, patience, dedication and hard work. Each of them brings something special and unique to the table, and I also thank GWR's "home team" most warmly, particularly Jane Jones and Tom Lydon.

We look forward to another year, fulfilling our roles as candid friends and enthusiastic ambassadors for a great railway company.





## 4.0 Delighting Our Customers

### 4.1 Travel with Confidence

Our message to customers for the last year has been about COVID safety and reassurance, giving customers and key workers the confidence to use our services.

Our message to customers for the last year has been about COVID safety and reassurance, giving customers and key workers the confidence to use our services. During the year we've held back from undertaking marketing campaigns that drive customer demand for rail travel, and that means we've paused activity that features the Famous Five, who have become synonymous with the excitement associated with travelling with GWR.

Instead we have prioritised our safety messaging for customers before, during and after ticket purchase helping give them the confidence to travel with GWR.

Our ITV Weather Sponsorship was updated to reflect latest guidance, and we used digital channels to show COVID safety video messages. We've adapted our email marketing activity to look at innovative ways to

communicate COVID messaging to customers using regional virtual content from around our GWR patch. Our Nectar relationship enabled us to express our thanks to our NHS key worker customers, as well as promoting Smart ticketing.

Looking ahead we want to encourage customers back to GWR, and to do so we're bringing back the Famous Five, using existing footage and content to inspire customers by supporting local and regional campaigns to aid economic recovery, especially in the visitor and leisure market promoting our fabulous network destinations.

Travel with confidence

GWR





## 4.2 GWR 'masks' high-speed train to remind customers to wear a face covering

Here's our eye-catching reminder for customers to wear a face covering on its services back in June.

The 'masked' IET re-entered service on the same day it became mandatory to wear a face covering on public transport as part of the easement on lockdown restrictions.

GWR's Head of Communications Dan Panes said:

"We wanted to do something to reinforce the message about wearing a face covering, helping to keep customers safe and our staff safe.

We asked customers to do all they could to follow social distancing guidance. As well as wearing a face covering, planning ahead and avoiding peak travel times, customers were urged to buy tickets online, on a smart card or by using the GWR app.



## 4.3 GWR and SWR trial new 'virucidal' sanitiser in cleanliness battle during the pandemic

In June, GWR and South Western Railway jointly announced the trial of a powerful sanitising treatment which kills 99.99% of viruses and bacteria on surfaces for extended periods of time.

The special treatment is sprayed inside train carriages overnight building to a fog which coats all surfaces and is proven to fight against viruses and bacteria for up to 28 days. The sanitiser was is the latest addition in our already enhanced cleaning regime to make travel as safe as possible for customers and staff.

The treatment is environmentally-friendly, uses no alcohol or dangerous chemicals.





## 4.4 That’s EnterTrainment

When the UK went into lockdown, we were determined not to appear silent and inactive.

With large pockets of the population being asked to self-isolate, we had an opportunity to use our social media channels to deliver pro-active content that would be engaging, educational and entertaining, all on top of providing our regular customer service, such as refund enquiries and travel advice, which had become more crucial than ever in light of government restrictions to keep the country safe.

Our wider Comms team, from Internal Comms and Public Affairs, right through to Social Media, collaborated in a way that we had never done before, bouncing ideas off one another, bringing diverse and inclusive perspectives that would appeal to everyone.

And with these ideas, EnterTrainment was born.

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do, so we created a suite of content that would appeal to people of all ages, developing new material and repurposing existing content. As restrictions on travel eased, we used these same channels to provide reassurance to the communities we serve. We got the opinions of our internal colleagues, ensuring they felt informed and valued as we helped to keep key workers on the move and then welcomed more customers back on to our services, while adhering to the latest travel guidance. By creating this simple strategy and building a strong foundation of activities and resources, we could adapt quickly as circumstances changed.

Our activity fell into two categories: The Foundations and the Key Campaigns.

### The Foundations

The foundations formed the bedrock of all our social activity and were a mix of campaigns and resources, created with the intention of keeping our customers, stakeholders and colleagues engaged, and provide an invaluable learning resource. Everything we put out was created in-house by the talented team giving many colleagues the chance to spread their creative wings.

### #GWREnterTrainment

A suite of online resources aimed at children stuck at home and at parents home-schooling. This included a range of materials from downloadable colouring books, to brain teasers, to a variety of competitions including Trackanory, a children’s short-story contest.



### Social Media

The first port of call for our customers, this is where they came to receive key Covid updates, guidance, and information. We experienced a level of enquiries never seen before and Social Media team managed to simultaneously support our customers in the face of uncertainty and create engaging and educational activities.

Competitions such as Guess the Station, Cinema Club and Spot the Difference influenced many other train operating companies to follow suit.

As well as the fun foundations, we had the informative ones, with regular videos featuring our Interim Managing Director, Matthew Golton, with a focus on engaging with colleagues and customers to keep everyone up to date in an ever-changing world. Alongside these updates, we had a dedicated Covid section of the employee portal created to provide colleagues with support, guidance, and information during the pandemic.

### The Key Campaigns

We created a mix of reactive and proactive campaigns aimed at capturing the mood of the nation. These focussed on maintaining our strong relationship with customers, stakeholders and colleagues by honouring individuals who have made significant contributions to their communities. These have proved to be some of our most successful campaigns to date:

### Captain Sir Tom Moore

Nobody captured the hearts of the nation more during the pandemic than Captain Sir Tom Moore. Our decision to name a high-speed Intercity Express Train in his honour was quickly taken and came in response to requests from GWR colleagues and the public. As well as the train naming, we compiled a Happy Birthday video tribute to the sound of train horns which featured on the BBC News home page. The response to these tributes was overwhelming, reaching a social media audience of 1.96m, and a staggering national and regional media audience of 43m.

### Key workers

We wanted to say thank you to all the key workers helping to keep the country on the move. Our competition invited customers to design a livery for one of our IETs. The final design, carried by IET number 802020, incorporated the ideas of three teenagers, Ned Thompson, Sam Moorey and Sam Smith. With a theme of ‘The nation says thank you’, it features words of gratitude in the 116 languages used by those living across the GWR network and is one of our most striking trains on the network.



4.5 What Our Customers Said

Against the turmoil of the past year GWR’s customer satisfaction remained strong, reaching 93% in period 9.

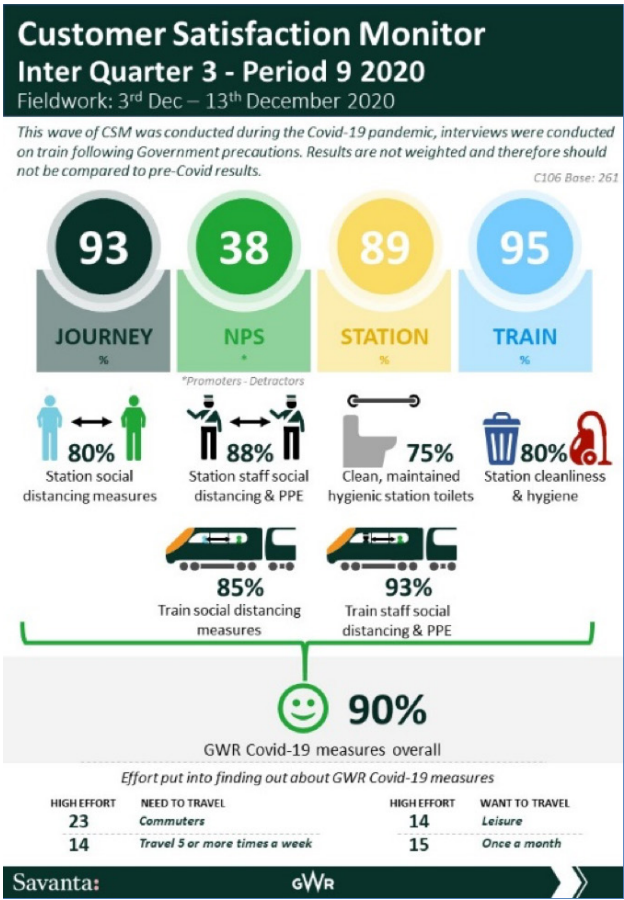
Customer needs and priorities, understandably, became focused on Covid cleanliness and safety measures where our action has resulted in 90% of those travelling feeling satisfied.

The start of 2020 saw the December 2019 timetable changes start to deliver customer benefits of improved frequency and service satisfaction. We were also proactive in responding to customer expectations around Covid safety with considerably improved cleaning methods and signage at stations and on trains.

Our focus on this critical aspect for customers has resulted in our overall satisfaction score remaining around 90%, with some periods exceeding this and a Net promoter score that has exceeded +20. As the country adopts the new travel patterns, we foresee customer priority will remain on Covid measures in the short term, giving way to the usual priorities of performance and frequency.

Phil Delaney, Sales and Marketing Director said:

“We have worked hard to implement measures to keep customers safe while using our services during the past year. As the country picks up where we left off in March 2020 we must work hard to continue the improvement and deliver our promise of more seats, more services, and quicker journeys as we welcome customers back, recognising the new ways they want to use our services.”

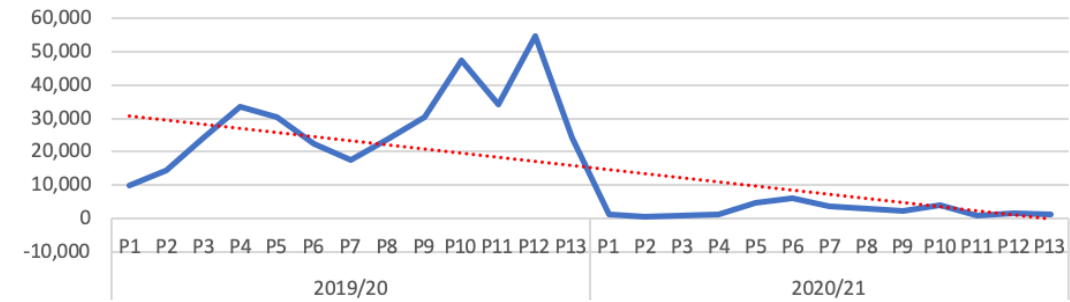




4.6 Customer Correspondence

2020/21 saw a huge reduction in customer contact. We had to close our contact centre and enabled the team to work from home, before successfully transitioning to a new supplier of contact centre services in September 2020.

Delay Repay claims per four weekly period - 2 year trend



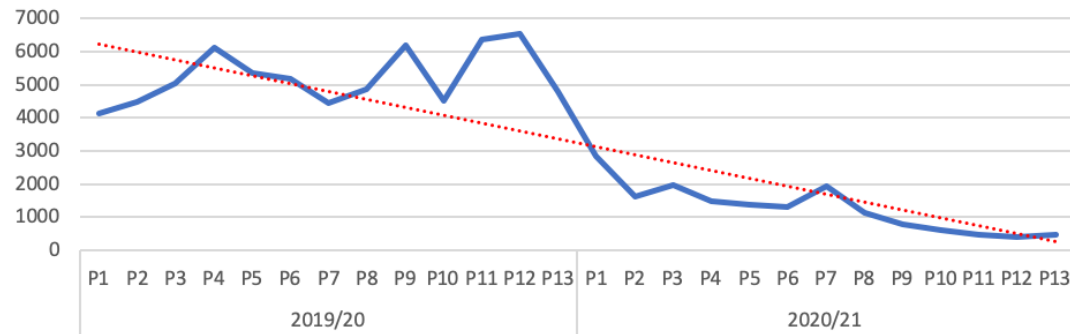
Delay Repay

- Low passenger numbers combined with excellent performance led to a dramatic drop in received claims
- 2019/20 period average 28,200, dropped to 2,393 in 2020/21
- Season Ticket holders moved over to Delay Repay successfully on 1 April 2021 successfully on 1 April 2021

Complaints

- Huge Reduction in complaint volume throughout 2020/21
- 2019/20 four week period average 5320 complaints, for 2020/21 to 1259
- Late refund payments generated most complaints in 2020/21, peaking over Periods 2 and 3

Complaints per four week period - 2 year trend



The future

- Enlarge and improve the customer information on GWR.com so customers can self-serve for the help they need
- Continue to support our new suppliers to 'bed in' an inexperienced team
- Support the business with the anticipated return of passengers to the railway





## 4.7 Fares and Products

### Contactless Payment to Reading

In conjunction with our industry partners at TfL, Contactless Payment was successfully extended from West Drayton to Reading in early 2020. This builds on the success of contactless payment in the London area and allows customers to travel along the line of route to Reading with a simple tap in and tap out of a contactless bank card or compatible mobile device at their origin and destination stations. Work is currently underway to extend this successful scheme to Henley on Thames, Marlow and Windsor & Eton Central branch lines during the 2021/22 financial year.

### Simpler Fares

GWR is trialling simpler fares structures in order to make ticket purchasing an easier process for our customers. We will be undertaking detailed analysis to test the effect of these in the marketplace. From May 2021 the structures on the Barnstaple branch and locally in the Bristol area have been revised to remove less popular fares and re-price others to ensure that where some fares have been removed, customers continue to pay the same, or less. On the Barnstaple branch we are trialling single fares at half the price of the return as part of the simplified structure, which is a feature that we have received many requests for, and supports growth in the route, which has recently had a substantial increase in capacity.

### Cheaper fares for Veterans

In November 2020 GWR was part of the cross-industry initiative to introduce a Veterans Railcard, recognising the sacrifices of those who have served in the UK Armed Forces. The Railcard saves Veterans 1/3 off most rail fares and will help an extra 830,000 people to benefit from discounted rail travel.

### Family Fares

From Summer 2021 we will be encouraging Families to travel to and from London with our new pre-booked Family product. Available for journeys of around 60 miles and above it will allow Family groups of up to 2 Adults and 4 Children to travel for one flat price. As an example, a one-way Family fare from Bristol will be £39 in Standard and £74 in First Class.



## 4.8 New compensation scheme launched for season ticket holders

GWR Rail season ticket holders delayed by 15 minutes or more can now claim for compensation, irrespective of the cause of their delay.

From 1 April 2021 GWR extend our Delay Repay, previously only available for daily and weekly tickets, enabling season ticket holders to immediately claim for a refund on the delayed part of their journey.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris, said:

“It’s an important step forwards for passengers that GWR are extending their Delay Repay scheme to all rail season ticket holders.

“As people return to the rail network, it is important that they get the compensation they deserve for any delays they face.”

GWR Managing Director Mark Hopwood said:

“We want those who travel with us to be able to do so in confidence, and that means ensuring that when people are delayed, they are adequately compensated for their loss.

“We do all we can to get people to their destination on time, but when things do go wrong customers need to trust in a fair system. As we start to welcome more people back to the railway the extension of this scheme will do just that, easily compensating people if they are delayed.”

Those making a claim will be able to choose how they receive any compensation due: from BACs direct to a bank account; a payment to a card; Rail Travel Vouchers; and now as a donation to a First Group’s chosen charity Action for Children.

How much is paid will depend on the length of the delay on arrival at your destination as shown on the table:

- **15 and 29 mins:** 25% of the single journey cost
- **30 and 59 mins:** 50% of the single journey cost
- **60 and 119 mins:** 100% of the single journey cost
- **Over 120 mins:** 100% of the return journey cost

The scheme replaces existing compensation arrangements for Season Ticket holders, who have previously received a discount on renewal, if we failed to achieve pre-determined targets for punctuality and reliability.

GWR launched their daily and weekly delay repay scheme on 1 April 2019 and so far almost 400,000 claims have been made, totalling £7.3 million in compensation. Those looking to make a claim can do so by completing the online claim form at [www.GWR.com/delayrepay](http://www.GWR.com/delayrepay). Once registered, Season Ticket, journey details and preferred compensation details will be saved, speeding up the process for any future claims.



### 4.9 Travelling on GWR train is just the ticket for QPR

Queens Park Rangers linked up with GWR when they chose the train to travel to their first away game of the season from the West Country for their EFL Cup match at Plymouth Argyle.

Phil Delaney, GWR Sales and Marketing Director, said:

“We know the Covid-19 pandemic has changed our customer landscape, and this link-up with QPR is a great example of what we’re doing to adapt to this change. It’s something we’d be very happy to repeat with other clubs on our network.”

QPR Manager Mark Warburton said:

“During these unprecedented times, travelling logistics are more challenging and important than ever before.  
“GWR went to great lengths to ensure the safety of all its passengers and we are grateful to them for their help and assistance with our own requests.”



Boarding: QPR players Joe Lumley, Todd Kane and Rob Dickie at London Paddington



Alison Webster  
Chief Executive at Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

At Thames Valley Berkshire LEP we recognise the importance of rail and associated infrastructure in economic growth.

As we start implementing the Berkshire Recovery and Renewal Plan we will continue to work collaboratively with our rail partners. In this regard, Berkshire is well-placed to come up with innovative technological interventions and green initiatives to complement the investment of hard infrastructure that our area is enjoying. We’re therefore delighted to have funded a number of rail schemes in Newbury, Theale, Reading West and Green Park.

One that I’m very excited to announce is the opening of one of the two new cycle hubs at Newbury station. In total the two hubs will be capable of housing over 300 bikes, following an injection of £1.2million with the support of the Department for Transport and the LEP. The new facilities will increase bike parking at the station by over 300%, significantly improving access and encouraging more people to leave their cars at home and choose an active travel option. The cycle hub is fitted with CCTV for added security; environmentally friendly motion-sensor LED lighting and a bike repair stand. In addition, the LEP is funding the development of a number of business start-up units at the station – allowing local businesses to benefit directly from the great locational opportunities of being based so close to the town centre and within the station hub.

The LEP has also invested in Green Park station where construction of the building is due to commence and the station due to be finalised this year. The station will add a fantastic facility for the business community on Green Park, as well as residents of Green Park Village and supporters of Reading Football Club.

A Connected Berkshire is essential to the recovery and renewal of Berkshire and our work with Great Western Railway has been critical to unlocking central government investment in order to transform connectivity and support our communities.





## 4.10 Passenger Assist

We take great pride in delivering our Passenger Assist service to enable people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

As part of this, our Passenger Assist service has remained available during the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic and GWR continues to deliver more booked assistance than any other train operating company, delivering 17,014 assists across our network.

To improve our provision and understanding of customers with disabilities we created and rolled out new enhanced Disability and Equality Awareness training to all frontline colleagues. This training was in line with the Office of Rail and Road's (ORR) latest training requirements. We were highly commended by the ORR for being the first train company to train all required colleagues.

We have continued to support passengers with non-visible disabilities through the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme. Introduced early last year, the scheme aims to help those in need to discreetly indicate that they need extra support or a little more time. With face coverings introduced at stations and onboard, the scheme has become all the more important as they often make communication impossible for deaf people.

Following on from the launch of our mobile Customer Assistance Team last year we have sought to improve the service further by employing three accessibility mentors.

The role of an Accessibility Mentor is to build confidence and familiarity of rail travel for users of the Passenger Assist services and to recruit and support a team of "GWR accessibility volunteers," who are given time away from their substantive role at GWR to travel with disabled customers, in order to build their confidence in rail travel.

GWR has also established an Accessibility Panel consisting of disabled and elderly customers from across our network. This panel helps us ensure the opinions of various people are taken into account on key decisions that affect our disabled customers. The meetings also provide an opportunity for those who use our services to tell us what they think and for us to share information about current issues and what is happening across the network. Our Accessibility Panel is consulted on works undertaken by GWR, Network Rail, other Train Operating, engineering work that affects accessibility, and how to help us deliver an inclusive and accessible railway for everyone.

We encourage disabled people to join our panel and add their input into decisions. Customers that would like to be involved in this should e-mail [MobilityAndInclusion@GWR.com](mailto:MobilityAndInclusion@GWR.com) or speak with our Passenger Assist team on **0800 197 1329**.

## 4.11 GWR joins forces with The Veterans Charity for special 'Poppies to Paddington' operation

More than 200 poppy wreaths were placed on Great Western Railway trains and carried to London Paddington station on Remembrance Day.

The special Poppies to Paddington operation involved nine train services and more than 60 stations covering the length and breadth of our network.

With many Remembrance events in the capital and around the region suspended because of the pandemic, GWR and The Veterans Charity coordinated with organisations including the Royal British Legion and The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) to place wreaths on board early-morning services heading to the capital.

Local authorities and military bases also took part in the operation and 226 wreaths were taken to London.

On arrival at Paddington they were placed at the station's iconic war memorial, on Platform 1, for the Remembrance Day service.

Poppies to Paddington was GWR's way of helping our communities to ensure our fallen heroes were remembered despite the restrictions in place around Covid-19. The arrival of the Poppies and the Remembrance service was broadcast live on GWR's Facebook page to help people to #RememberFromHome.

The first of the Poppies to Paddington services started from Penzance at 0458, calling at 10 stations before arriving into London Paddington. One of those stations was St Austell, where D-Day veteran and #GreatWesterner Harry Billinge MBE had his wreath placed on board the train that was recently named in his honour.

Other services involved included the 0643 from Hereford, the 0713 from Paignton, 0720 from Swansea, 0722 from Taunton, 0813 from Worcester Shrub Hill, 0858 from Cheltenham Spa, 0900 from Bristol Temple Meads, and 0959 from Oxford.

**Poignant: Wreaths by the statue of the Unknown Soldier on Platform 1 at London Paddington**







## 5.0 Disciplined Operations

### 5.1 Timetabling to keep customers moving

As COVID restrictions were introduced, we reshaped and amended our timetable to make sure we kept services running for key workers.

We worked with NHS Trusts, Local Authorities and businesses to identify key trains and protect them from impact.

This was particularly true for schools.

#### **GWR ramps up service as schools set to return**

Rail services were reduced when a third nationwide lockdown was introduced in January. With schools preparing to return to the classroom in March, we increased the number of trains as part of our phased return to our previous, full timetable.

We reviewed our database of 'school trains', services that students and pupils use in high numbers, and ensured that those services where they have been removed were reinstated as schools returned. Extra staff were on hand at key stations to help provide advice and guidance to returning students.

GWR Managing Director Mark Hopwood said:

"Following confirmation that all schools and colleges would return we made sure all our key school and college services were operating.

"Over the last year, we have worked closely with colleges and schools as well as our colleagues on mapping these services, and a lot of hard work has been done to make sure people feel that they can travel safely and with confidence.

We also listened to suggestions from customers and communities to make sure that we adapted and flexed services to best meet their needs. This included helping support the vaccination programme.





### Extra trains to help vaccine roll-out

An additional 17 services a day to Newbury Racecourse were added to the timetable in February to help with the roll-out of the coronavirus vaccine.

The additional station stops on trains between Paddington and Bedwyn were intended to help those travelling to the new vaccination centre established at the Racecourse were in addition to the hourly timetabled services between Newbury and Reading.

Geordie Taylor who runs Hungerford Self-Isolation Group and had been helping to arrange transport for those who could not get to the vaccination centre, first contacted GWR in the hope that more trains could be stopped.

He said:

“When I contacted Mark, the MD of GWR, with the suggestion that more trains should stop at Newbury Racecourse I was prepared for a polite rejection. To my surprise and to GWR’s immense credit, they not only agreed with me they also fast-tracked the initiative with Network Rail to make it happen in double-quick time.

“This minor change to a complex timetable will be a huge benefit to all residents of Hungerford and many others along the line during the vaccination programme and I tip my hat in thanks to all concerned.”

GWR also donated 40 bags of gritting salt to the vaccination centre to help prevent any unnecessary slips and trips after learning that they were struggling to get hold of some.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter, West Berkshire’s Executive Member for Environment welcomed the move and said:

“West Berkshire Council is delighted that GWR has been able to increase the number of trains stopping at Newbury Racecourse station, enabling local residents to take the train to the Covid-19 Vaccination Centre at the Racecourse. More than 1000 local residents will attend the Centre to be vaccinated each day that it is in operation - so it’s good news that they will be able to choose to travel in a more environmentally friendly way – with space for social distancing.”

We have now been able to restore 90% of our weekday timetable and we will continue to work with customers and stakeholders to make sure services remain relevant and the timetable robust.



### Christopher Irwin Chair of TravelWatch SouthWest CIC

This year of the pandemic is not one anybody is likely to wish to see repeated and, on first take, it seems difficult to pin-point positives for the passengers.

But then one recalls things that have helped mitigate its terrible impact on families and the community.

Above all, is the selflessness of those front-line railway people who ensured the provision of a safe and reliable basic passenger service. Although mindful of the increased risk of infection to themselves, their presence reassured passengers, many of whom were initially apprehensive about travelling, that they were safe. (At the peak of lock-down, in early January 2021, Transport Focus research reported that almost nine in ten of those making train journeys felt safe doing so.)

We owe a debt to the behind-the-scenes teams too: those involved in ensuring clean trains running to a clearly communicated timetable. And they ran on time! Further evidence, if it was needed, that in the days of the ‘old normal’ infrastructure capacity at crucial pinch-points in the network was insufficient to meet passenger demand reliably.

For 2035, the UK aims to cut carbon emissions by more than three-quarters of the way to the net zero planned for 2050. This has major implications for the transport sector – one of the biggest polluters. Improving the attractiveness of rail services – already the most sustainable transport mode – and closing the gaps in the newly electrified GWR network should provide an opportunity to make reliability a permanent feature of rail travel. The Government must continue with the programme of railway renewal and modernisation inherited from its predecessors.

GWR, working with Network Rail, has shown the way for the railway industry in partnering with local authorities, those representing its passengers, and other stakeholders to bring about improvements for the communities it serves. There is evidence for this throughout the South

West – most recently with the announcement of the revival of the Dartmoor Line service to Okehampton. TravelWatch SouthWest welcomes the energy and skill with which GWR’s regional managers pursue such initiatives. We are continuing to work together on plans for Gloucester station to make it more convenient and attractive for passengers.

Much of TravelWatch SouthWest’s work is inspired by the input and advice of its many member organisations. Although the pandemic prevented us from running our traditional programme of general meetings, we held two series of on-line open workshops. Their focus was to work out what passengers might want from the ‘new normal’. Transport operators, GWR amongst them, were ready participants – both in contributing their expertise and, as with timetable planning consultations, in being ready to listen.

We also took forward some of the issues directly with the company; for example, we tried to map the impact of the likely shift from 5-day commuting and the potential growth of longer-distance and leisure travel. Despite recognising that present circumstances make such decisions a matter for the Treasury, we have repeatedly pressed both the company and our politicians for more flexible, carnet-style, season ticketing.

When the pandemic first hit in March 2020, we expected to find much of our office time to helping people secure refunds on unused tickets. It should be recorded that, generally, we were delighted and impressed by the efficiency with which GWR tackled the massive task. Thank you GWR for helping to make the year slightly less grim for passengers.



## 5.2 Performance Overview

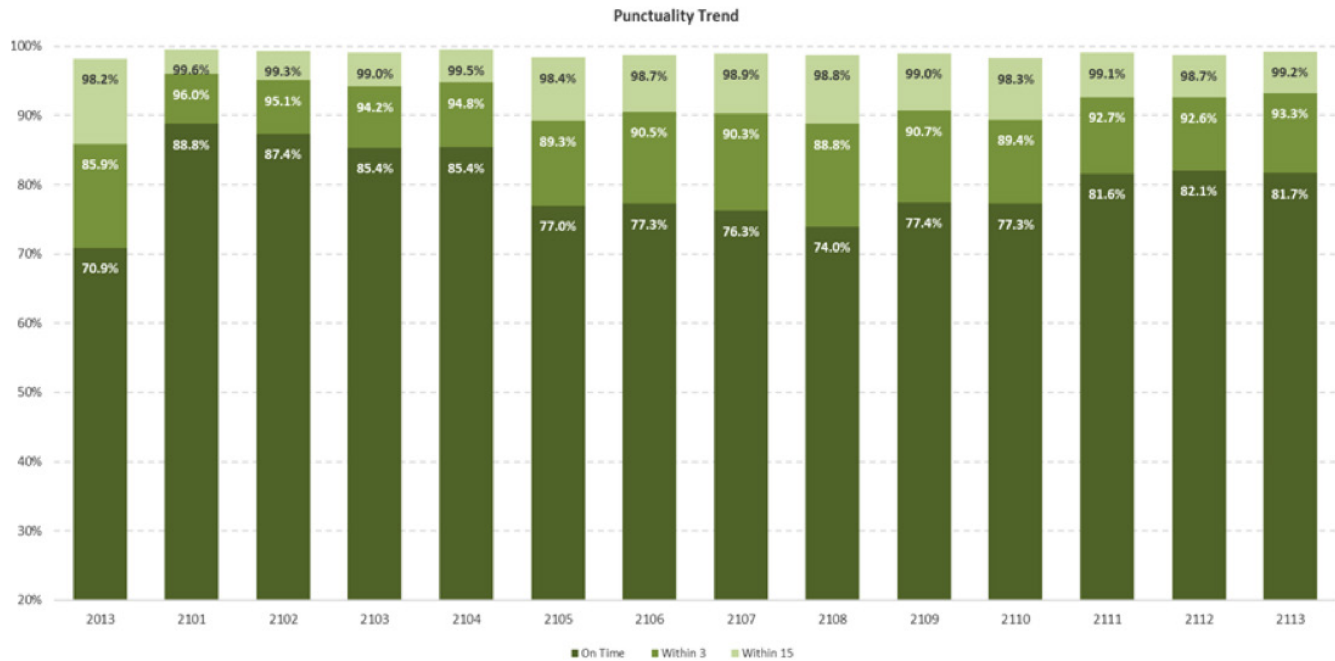
In common with all operators the last twelve months presented an unprecedented challenge to Great Western Railway. We've used this time productively to understand underlying performance challenges and implement steps to maintain performance as services step back up.

Our focus is on delivering the level of service our customers rightfully expect, enjoying the benefits of faster and more frequent trains delivered in December 2019.

In March 2020, GWR entered an Emergency Measures Agreement with the Department for Transport and a temporary reduced timetable was introduced to ensure the safe passage of key workers during the challenging time. We continue to focus on delivering performance improvements, as well as rebuilding our service proposition to meet the changing needs of our customers as they return to our network travelling to work, school or to visit some of the many attractions and beautiful spots on our network.

We have taken much confidence from how our teams have managed the rapid changes in timetables as well as making our trains and stations COVID safe for the travelling public. Our performance has been record breaking over the last 12 months. We will continue to be unrelenting in achieving service excellence as services increase and the pressure to respond quickly and safely to unplanned events increases. Delivering high performance is critical as we work to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is always more to do, and we continue to work closely with Network Rail to keep driving down delays and service cancellations, delivering the service our customers quite rightly expect.





### 5.3 Every second counts

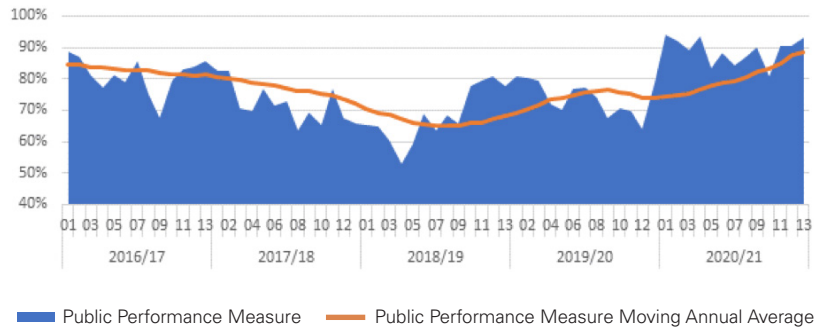
Our Every Second Counts campaign helps ensure we maintain great performance. As part of this we have set up “mini companies” internally to focus on key services and routes. This includes Severn & Solent Railway (S&SR) and Bristol Suburban Railway (BSR).

**The Severn and Solent Railway “mini company” Railway (S&SR)**

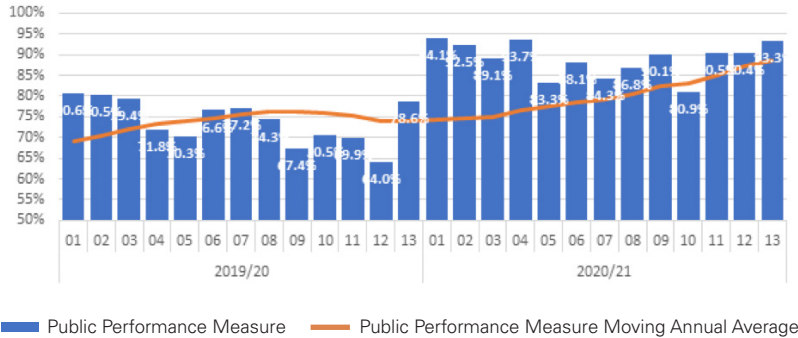
The S&SR group saw a significant improvement in performance throughout the year 2020-2021.

An Alliance initiative bringing together professionals from GWR functions plus Network Rail Wales and Western, and Network Rail Wessex working collaboratively and bringing relevant expertise and focus to implement tactical and strategic improvements. The core team comprises of 25 professionals with other specialists.

Five year performance trend showing % of trains on time



Four weekly performance over the last 12 months



The enthusiasm, engagement, commitment and dedication of the S&SR team has seen exceeded expectations and targets and team are finalists at the GWR Excellence Awards in the Alliance Team category, reflecting the efforts of the team to deliver sustainable improvements.

Adding Train Service Support Controllers to Network Rail Wessex Basingstoke operations, gave GWR services across the whole Wessex route a dedicated role to manage day to day operations. The South Wales Train Service Delivery Manager continues to work with Wales route colleagues to manage day to day operations West of Pilning.

While the Covid-19 pandemic saw changes (and reductions) to the train plan through the year and a significant drop in passenger loadings, most S&SR services operated from the late summer, albeit in reduced formations. There were constant efforts to ensure S&SR services negotiated the re-timings of other services and the resurgence of freight traffic, especially Mendip aggregate services.

Notable achievements over the last year have included;

- Consistent weekly performance with significant improvement
- Re-timing a Westbury to Southampton morning service to improve performance of the first two Bristol to Portsmouth services
- Revised signalling regulation in the Ebbw Junction (Newport) area to improve performance of services arriving into Cardiff

**The Bristol Suburban “mini company” Railway (BSR)**

Established in February 2020, when the GWR Performance Improvement Team initiated a project to tackle a declining performance trend in the area. The BSR fosters collaborative working and cohesion across core functions and organisations, providing tactical and strategic focus to performance improvement. In May 2020, a virtual workshop was held with frontline and senior colleagues from GWR and Network Rail to identify short and long term performance improvement opportunities. Outputs from the workshop fed into the development of a performance improvement strategy, including key strategic workstreams providing continuous focus on train service performance improvement.

The BSR Dynamic Team, comprised of GWR and Network Rail functional representatives, undertake a weekly performance review, monitor daily train service performance, identify emerging risks / issues, and monitor delivery against performance improvement activities. An ‘Every Second Count moment’ remains an important part of the standing agenda, where the team reflect and recognise colleagues across the BSR demonstrating our core Every Second Counts principles.

Notable achievements over the last year have included;

1. identifying and correcting instances where through services had been changed from platform 4 to platform 3 at Bristol Temple Meads keeping these services in the optimum position for customers boarding
2. taking action through daily interventions at Bristol Temple Meads; helping to avoid delays, making changes easier for our customers, and taking precautions to protect later or the next day’s services
3. reviewing good and poor performing trains with colleagues working the Severn Beach Line providing feedback and valuable insight into understanding some of the systemic challenges along this line to help ensure consistent high performance across the day
4. sharing good practice with the Stations team to help provide indicators of expected passenger loadings at Bristol Temple Meads, supporting the Stations team readiness for busy services.



## 5.4 GWR receives the UK's first tri-mode train

GWR has received the first train in the UK able to run on overhead and third-rail electric lines, as well as under its own diesel power, which is expected to be introduced on services between Reading and Gatwick later this year.

Provided by Porterbrook Leasing, the first of 19 Class 769 Flex trains has arrived at GWR's Reading Depot for an extensive programme of staff training and testing.

The Class 769 fleet was specially commissioned by GWR to be able to run under overhead wires in London and the Thames Valley, and to take advantage of third rail provision where it exists on the North Downs line. The trains will support GWR to realise long-held plans to expand services over the North Downs line between Reading and Redhill and then through to Gatwick.

The trains will enable the release of some of GWR's diesel-powered Turbo trains to add capacity in the Bristol area and support the ability to launch new routes through the city.

The innovative fleet of tri-mode trains will operate in four-carriage sets which have been refurbished inside and out, with free WiFi and power at each seat, air cooling, bigger luggage racks, and new seat covers. Equipped with new diesel engines and combined with their electric capability, each Class 769 will offer a quieter and cleaner experience for customers than the trains they are replacing.

Present plans will see the trains deployed between Reading and Basingstoke, Reading, Redhill and Gatwick, and on the Henley and Bourne End lines. The tri-mode nature of the train will give GWR additional flexibility to use them in other areas of the network should they be required in the future.

### **GWR Head of Fleet Production John Murphy said:**

"A lot of hard work has been done to make sure people feel that they can travel safely at the present time, and that includes running more trains and carriages to make extra room."

On the GWR North Downs line, the trains will facilitate a return to usual Sunday frequencies of two trains an hour, and the ability to run three trains per hour from Reading to Redhill on Saturdays. GWR is working with industry partners to extend this to further off-peak weekday services as well as extending these through to Gatwick Airport, once works at the station are completed.







## Anthony Smith Chief Executive at Transport Focus

Last year's report focused on the benefits for passengers of the successful delivery of the transformative December 19 timetable.

Sadly, it was the transformation forced by Covid-19 that became the reality. The old normal of the daily commute, popping on the train to see friends and family or to do a day's shopping now feels quite alien to many passengers who used trains at the beginning of 2020.

Full credit should be given to the team at Great Western Railway for keeping the trains running and working hard to help passengers feel safe in such challenging circumstances and keeping a focus on future improvements.

We have worked closely with GWR over the year, sharing our research on travel during Covid-19, identifying issues and discussing the information passengers needed to travel safely or not at all. GWR has engaged positively with a number of information reviews we've undertaken on refunds, social distancing, seat reservations and how busy passengers can expect trains to be.

With the unprecedented number of timetable changes over the past year it has been particularly good to see the level of engagement with stakeholders, including local authorities, NHS trusts, community groups, schools and importantly other train and bus operators. This ensured planning reflected, as best it could, the needs of key workers and school/college passengers.

I made the point in last years' report that reassurance and doing the basics right will be critical to encouraging passengers back at the right time still very much stands. We sense checked our pre-Covid Rail Passenger Priorities

for Improvement research with our rail community. While cleanliness and hygiene have grown in importance (they always were important to passengers), the reliability, frequency and the ability to get a seat on the train remain very important.

Ensuring that people's first journey back is a good one is vitally important, made all the more challenging while repairs to the Class 800 Intercity Express Trains (IET) are undertaken following recent safety concerns. We are also working with GWR, Network Rail and Cross Country to monitor passenger awareness and satisfaction in the Bristol area as the eight-week Bristol East Junction renewal work is delivered.

Travel habits may not settle into the new normal for many months, even years. Focusing on the things that matter most to passengers and being agile enough to respond to changing needs is vital if industry is to attract and retain customers. Its response to the pandemic and indeed the Hitachi IET crack issue has shown how GWR and its partners in the West can work together and adapt. Continuing this focus and collaboration should stand it in good stead for the future.

Transport Focus and London TravelWatch will continue to work closely with GWR over the coming year, focusing and challenging on the issues that matter most to passengers.

## 5.5 Preventing Accidents and Ill Health at the Workplace

This year we have built on our colleague engagement and worked closely with key partners to deliver safety roadshows and contributed to many community improvement schemes.

Over the last year we have been heavily involved in ensuring we have the appropriate Covid-19 mitigations in place to ensure the safety of both our customers and colleagues. Communication, engagement and working together have been key to our success, which have meant we have had a detailed suite of risk assessments which both the Office of Rail and Road and the Railway Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) have been complimentary of. Alongside Covid-19 we have continued to support the business with the delivery of business critical projects such as the introduction of class 387s into Heathrow Airport, the new maintenance depot at Exeter as well as a number of other initiatives.

We continue to work with industry partners such as the Rail Delivery Group, RSSB and other Train Operators to provide a consistent approach to rail safety and to learn from each other and share best practice.

Education and training are key functions in the Safety Team, as well as continuing to provide the IOSH Managing Safely qualification, we have led a number of in-house workshops for both line managers and Health & Safety Reps, these workshops help to embed safety as a key foundational block within the business, provide colleagues with the skills and experience to undertake their roles as well as the essential engagement from safety with colleagues. Feedback from colleagues has been positive and over the next year we are looking to build on this to provide a wider offering to colleagues.

The team provide safety advice and guidance for the community schemes and projects that take place on our stations to ensure that as well as being practical in a station environment, the schemes are safe for our customers to use and enjoy.

We are pleased to see a continuation in the long-term reducing trend for both customer and colleague accidents.







## 5.6 GWR Annual Stakeholder Audit

We are grateful to all our stakeholders who completed this year's annual independent audit by Savanta. We have included a number of their findings in this report.

### Excerpt Executive Summary:

Overall feedback from stakeholders is positive this year, with GWR's advocacy score increasing since 2019. Nearly all metrics relating to GWR's performance have seen an uptick, including communications, engagement and the performance of the Network Rail Alliance.

Stakeholders' overall satisfaction with GWR's performance appears to be driven by an increase in satisfaction with the capacity of services, information provision during periods of disruption and with the timetable of services, as well as continued satisfaction with safety and comfort.

Stakeholders are generally very positive about GWR's reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. Stakeholders are particularly impressed with GWR's ability to maintain safety and security on stations and services, and to keep people moving during the pandemic. Stakeholders reference GWR working collaboratively with other industry bodies during the pandemic, a sentiment shared by both parliamentarians and other groups. GWR's strong performance and reassurance on COVID-19 appears to have contributed heavily to the strong overall satisfaction levels in 2020.

**The majority of stakeholders have positive views of their engagement with GWR. They appear to have performed well over the past year in demonstrating to stakeholders that they listen to the needs of local communities.**



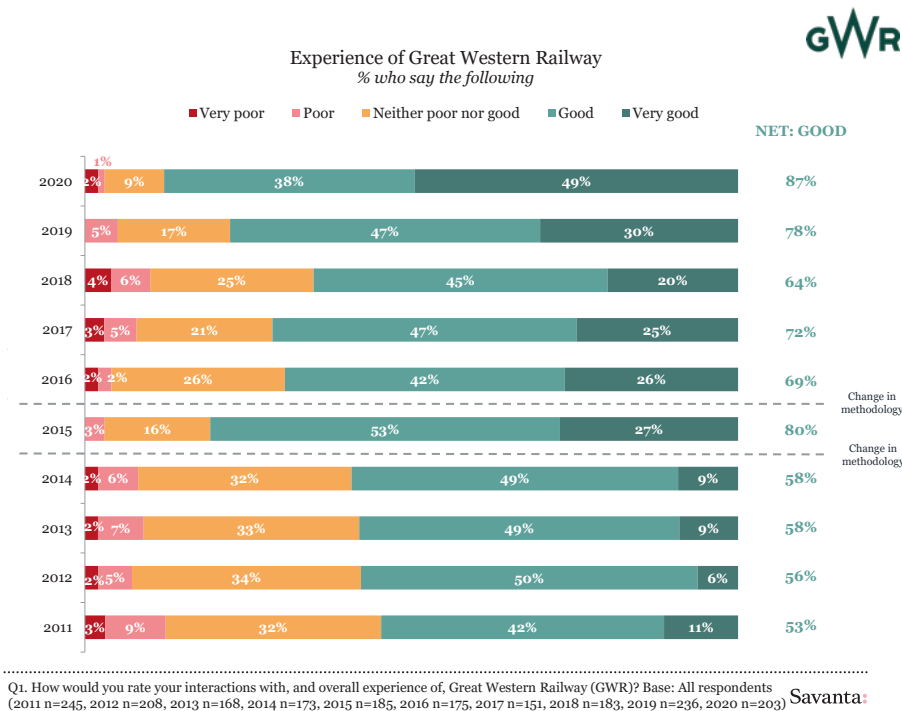
The proportion of stakeholders rating their experience of GWR as good or very good has increased since 2019

The proportion of stakeholders who rate their overall experience of GWR as good or very good has increased 9 percentage points from 2019 – from 78% to 87%. This is largely driven by a reduction in the proportion of stakeholders who have neutral views of GWR, from 17% to 9% in 2020.

There was a sharp increase in the proportion of stakeholders who rate their interactions with GWR as very good over the last year, with half (49%) rating them a 5, compared to three in ten (30%) in 2019.

The proportion saying their experience with GWR is poor has also decreased this year.

This year's results represent the highest overall score since the start of the research, continuing the positive trend since 2018.

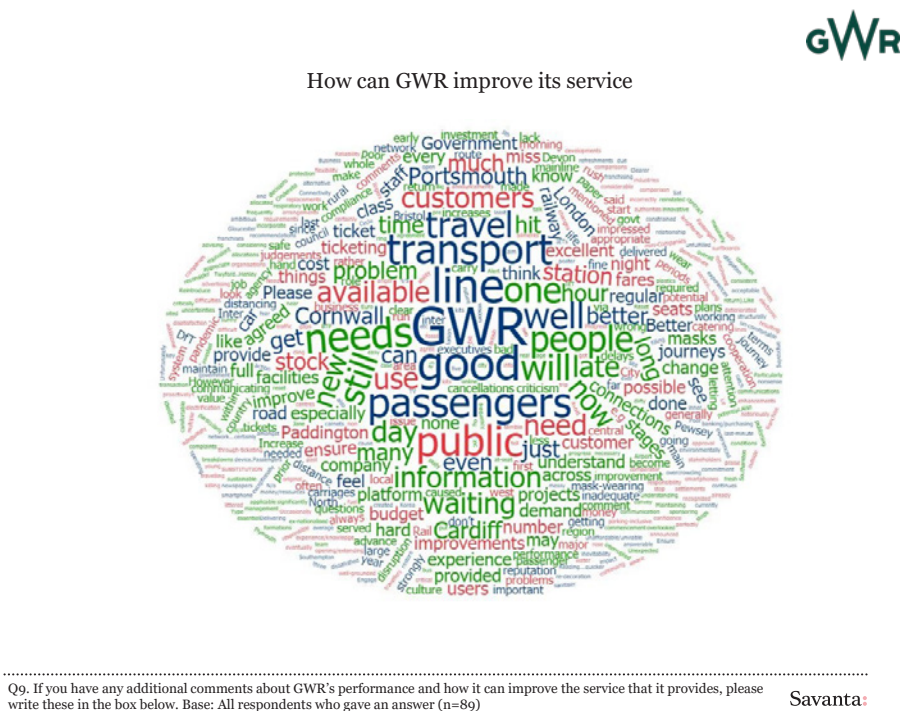


A significant proportion of stakeholders are positive about GWR's performance.

Among the positive sentiments offered, stakeholders praise the operator's cooperation with both passengers and stakeholders, and their ability to do what is expected of them.

Suggestions of ways that GWR can improve the service it provides include increasing information provision, improving facilities, dealing with cancellation and servicing specific routes and regions – although these issues were raised in the last wave, the number of mentions has reduced.

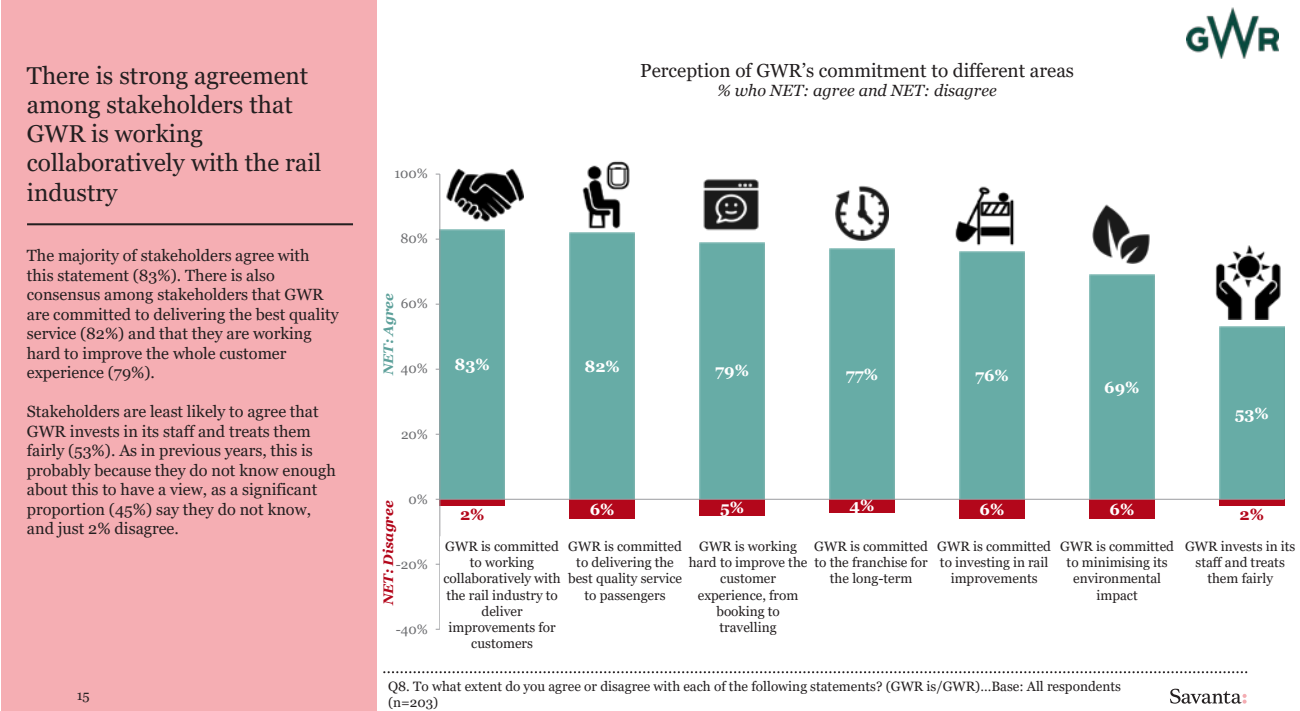
Ticketing, staffing and social distancing are also prominent suggestions.



There is strong agreement among stakeholders that GWR is working collaboratively with the rail industry

The majority of stakeholders agree with this statement (83%). There is also consensus among stakeholders that GWR are committed to delivering the best quality service (82%) and that they are working hard to improve the whole customer experience (79%).

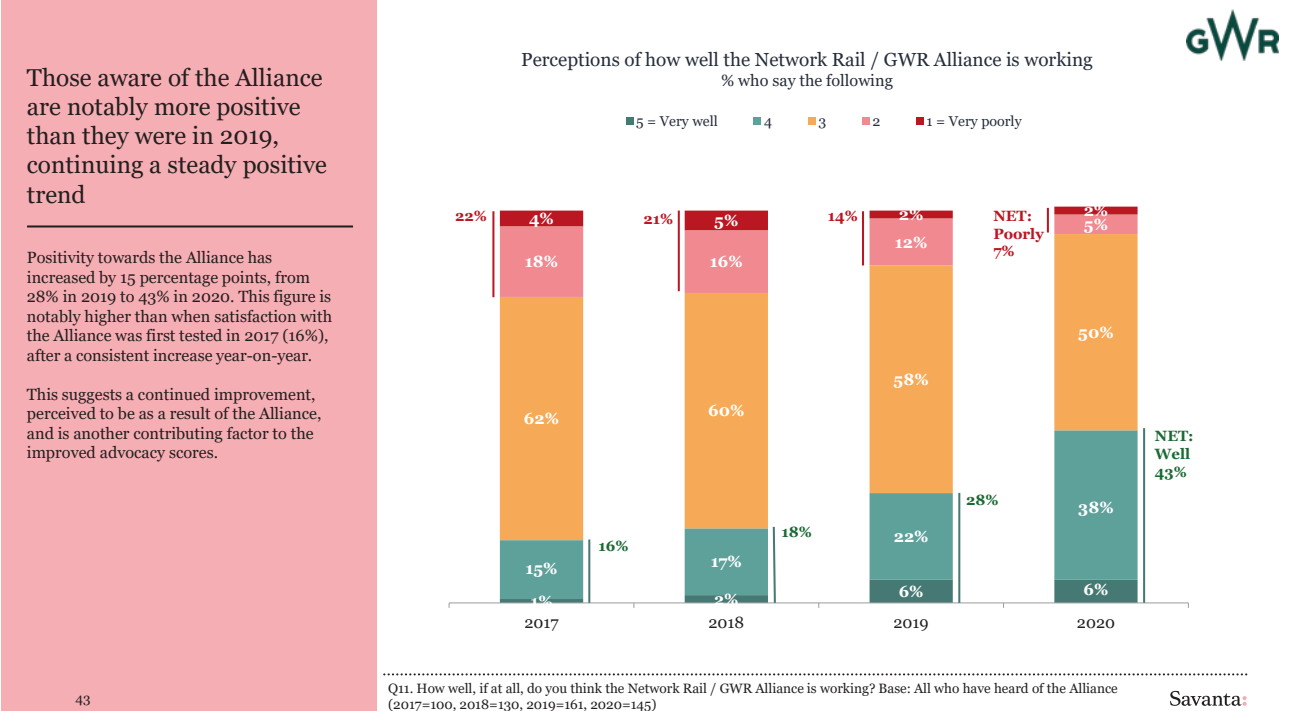
Stakeholders are least likely to agree that GWR invests in its staff and treats them fairly (53%). As in previous years, this is probably because they do not know enough about this to have a view, as a significant proportion (45%) say they do not know, and just 2% disagree.



Those aware of the Alliance are notably more positive than they were in 2019, continuing a steady positive trend

Positivity towards the Alliance has increased by 15 percentage points, from 28% in 2019 to 43% in 2020. This figure is notably higher than when satisfaction with the Alliance was first tested in 2017 (16%), after a consistent increase year-on-year.

This suggests a continued improvement, perceived to be as a result of the Alliance, and is another contributing factor to the improved advocacy scores.





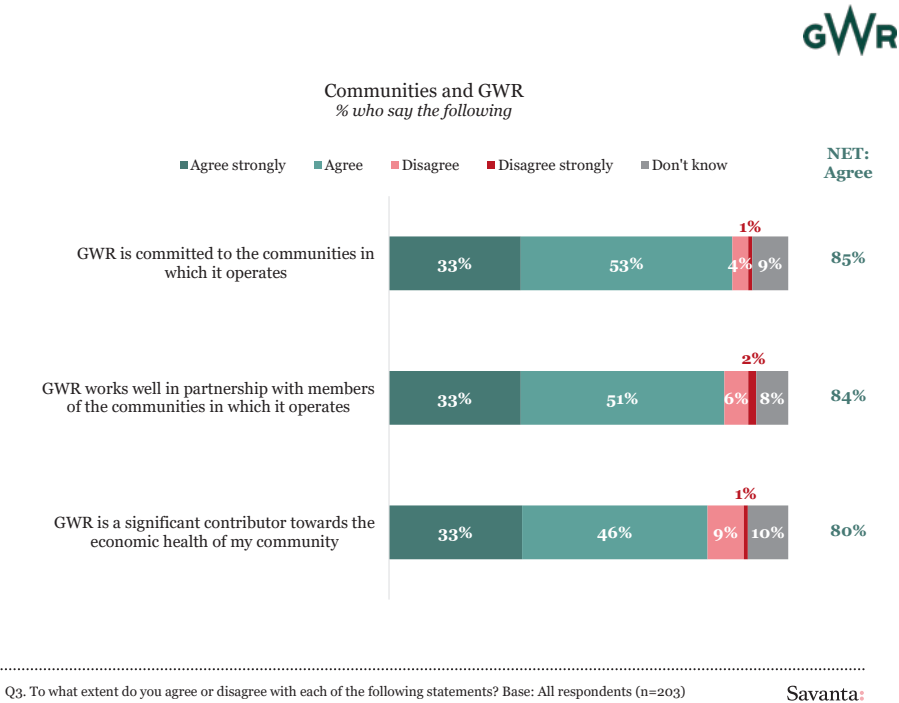
Most stakeholders agree that GWR works well with, and is committed to local communities

At least four in five stakeholders agree on each of the metrics of GWR's relationship with communities. The proportions of which have increased in all three cases compared to 2019. One third of stakeholders (33%) agree strongly with each statement, up from around a quarter last year.

Out of the metrics tested, stakeholders are most likely to agree that GWR is committed to the communities in which it operates, with 85% doing so, up from 76% in 2019.

A similar proportion (84%) agree that GWR works well in partnership with members of the communities in which it operates.

As in previous years, very few stakeholders disagree strongly with any of these statements.

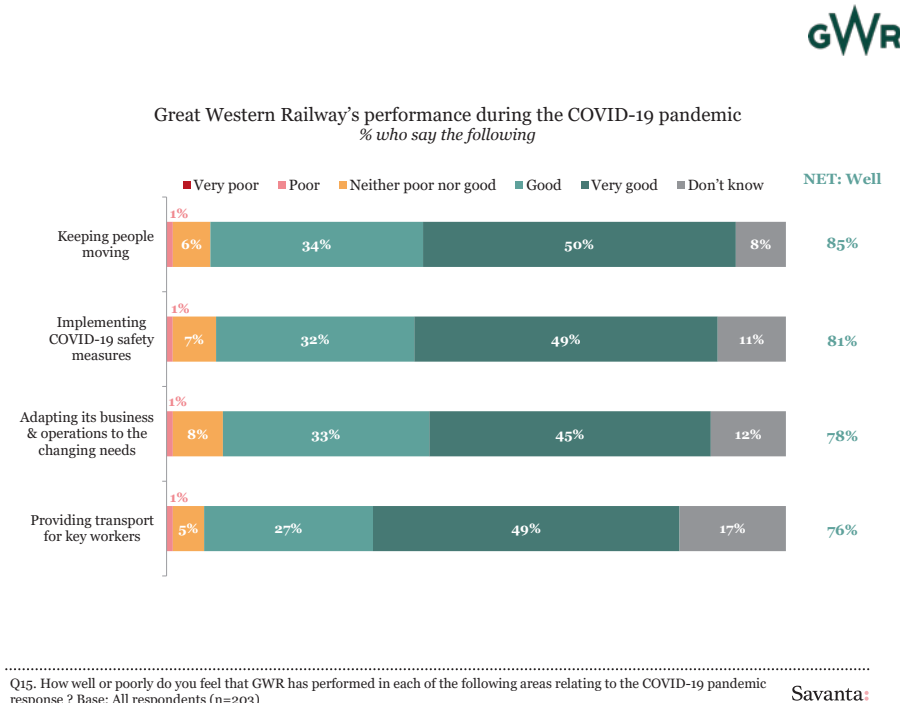


GWR are generally viewed as being strong on COVID-19 related metrics

Stakeholders are particularly impressed with GWR's ability to keep people moving during the pandemic, with 85% saying that they have been doing this well. This sentiment is particularly evident in the West with 94% of stakeholders from this region saying GWR do this well.

Four in five stakeholder also believe that GWR have been performing well at implementing COVID-19 safety measures (81%), with just 1% saying they have done this poorly. This is likely to have been a strong contributor to GWR's strong overall performance.

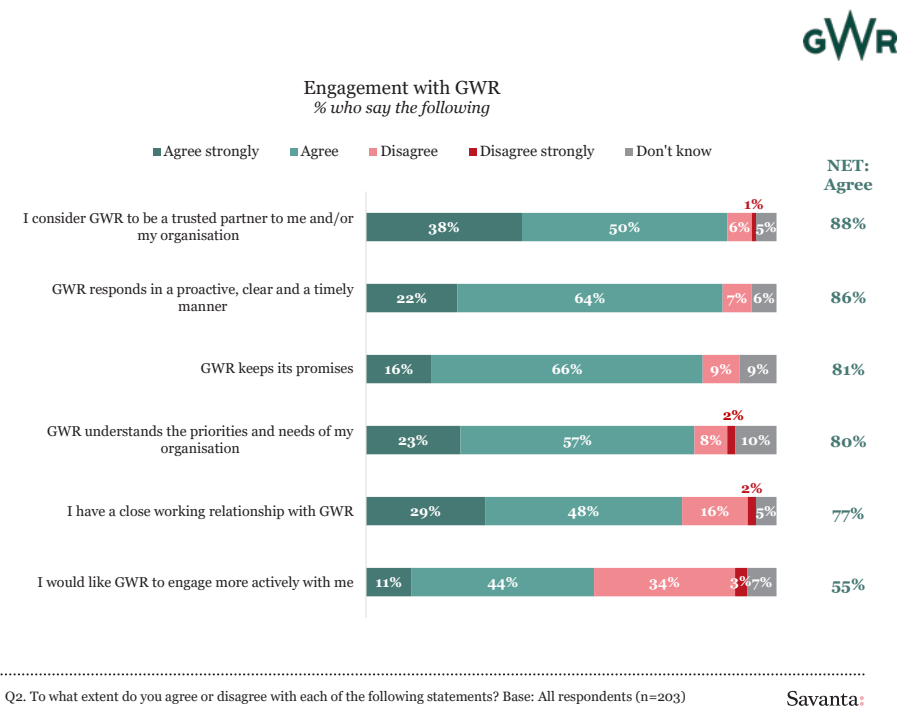
Parliamentary stakeholder are significantly less likely than other groups to say that GWR has done well at implementing COVID-19 safety measures (68% vs 84%), and at adapting its business & operations to the changing needs (65% vs 81%).



The majority of stakeholders have positive views of their engagement with GWR

On all measures, stakeholders are more likely to have positive than negative views of GWR's engagement. Nine in ten agree that they consider GWR to be a trusted partner (88%) and a similar proportion agree that GWR responds in a proactive, clear and timely manner (86%).

Stakeholders are 12 percentage points more likely to say GWR keeps its promises than they were in 2019.





## 5.7 One Railway, One Team

We believe that for GWR to run the best possible railway for our customers, working collaboratively with other train operators and organisations is essential.

We therefore work closely with colleagues in other parts of the rail industry and have worked to establish new forums and to take an active role in existing forums. Working together to share best practice and to make sure that we jointly provide the best possible services for our customers, and for the communities we serve.

### Barnstaple line speed increases

Working together, GWR and Network Rail identified an opportunity to maximise the benefits of a wider package of rail improvement works on the Tarka Line. The original works, including bridge renewals, were complimented by platform extensions and other minor works identified through a collaborative approach to planning rail improvements between Network Rail and GWR. These additional works enabled the line speed to be increased along the route – providing greater resilience for our services.

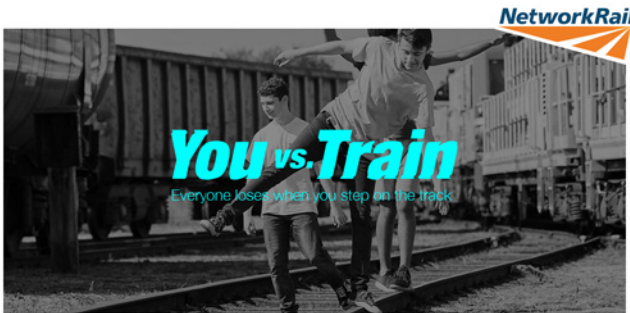
### GSMR reduction of speed

Following the tragic accident at Carmont in August 2020, we’ve supported Network Rail in trialling the use of in-cab communications technology to provide precautionary messages requiring drivers to slow down where extreme rainfall may impact on the safe running of trains.

Four trials were undertaken on the GWR network, involving close collaboration between the operations and infrastructure teams. Our drivers contributed with extensive feedback through the trials, which could see performance benefits as well as safety – as this approach is real-time and more targeted to risk points and doesn’t require trains to stop first.

### Community safety

As pandemic restrictions took hold in the Spring of 2020, we teamed up with Network Rail to share important safety messages with school students as part of the national You vs Train campaign. Victoria Franks, Weston-super-Mare station manager was filmed alongside Network Rail colleagues sharing tips for staying safe when travelling by train and sharing the dangers associated with trespassing on the railway, all of which were shared online to aid home learning.



### Transport for Wales & GWR collaboration

We’re working with colleagues from Transport for Wales to establish a series of forums and working groups to deliver improvements for customers who use the railway in south Wales. Colleagues will focus on delivering improvements at stations and ensuring our services remain reliable and punctual. We will explore ways to improve connectivity of our services in South Wales and ensure the railway is linked up with other public transport and active travel options.

### Wales & Western Industry Efficiency Board

We’re supporting Network Rail to establish an industry efficiency board, recognising the part we play in delivering a sustainable railway for the future. We will work alongside colleagues from Crosscountry, Transport for Wales and Transport for London, to support a range of initiatives that support the growth of a financially sustainable railway.

### Western Route Supervisory Board

Recognising a punctual and safe railway relies on many organisations works together as a system, GWR is a long-standing member of the Western Route Supervisory Board. Independently chaired, the Board brings together Network Rail, Transport Focus and operators across the route including Crosscountry, MTR Crossrail and Heathrow Express, alongside freight operators. The board enables a coordinated approach to operations across the network and supports the readiness for significant events such as timetable changes and significant railway improvement works.

Having these boards and forums in place means we are in a great place for collaboratively working.

### Bristol Rail Regeneration

This summer will see one of the eight weeks of alterations take place whilst work is undertaken to renew track and signalling equipment outside of Bristol Temple Meads station. It’s part of a wider project to renovate the station with roof repairs and a new entrance at the centre of the plan.

The project has required a joint approach from Great Western Railway alongside it’s industry partners at Network Rail, Crosscountry and South Western Railway to ensure consistent communication to customers, staff and stakeholders.

Meeting in working groups, a joint communications plan was developed, covering each phase of customer involvement. The working group enabled a coordinated approach to the plan and increased the spread of messaging to customers.

The group has also sought peer review with Transport Focus and Bristol City Council to identify areas needing review and improve the way we talk to our customers.

### GWR working with Chiltern Railways and Crosscountry at Banbury

During the pandemic our revenue protection team reached out to neighbouring train operating companies and the British Transport Police to target ticketless travel and fare evasion with joint events on the line between Oxford and Banbury. As well as co-ordinated ticket checks the joint activity also included work with Thames Valley and West Midlands police to help combat County-Line operations and a general trend in anti-social behaviour. Similar operations have taken place with South Western Railway at Basingstoke.





## 5.8 Infrastructure improvements by Network Rail Wales and Western

At the beginning of the pandemic we quickly reassessed all our projects to make sure they could be completed with additional safety precautions and potential delays in our supply chain. Thankfully, most work continued as planned or was re-worked throughout the year.

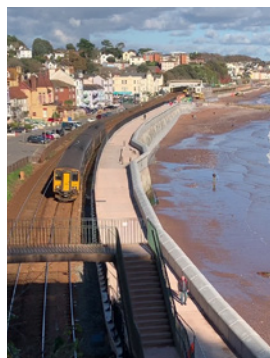
As we rebuild from the pandemic, our focus is on providing a reliable train service, providing much-needed additional capacity for passenger and freight services, and opening up new opportunities.

Here are the highlights of our major engineering works in the year ahead.

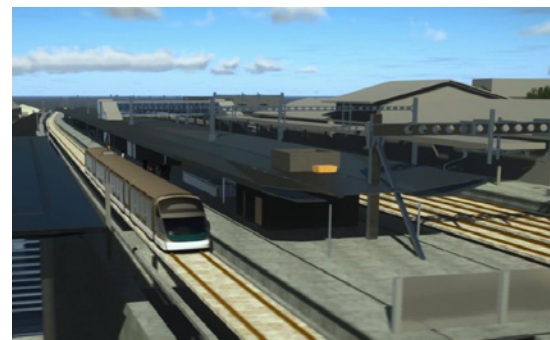
- **Bristol Rail Regeneration** – the centrepiece of our work is the multi-million pound, 56-day rail upgrade in Bristol taking place between July and September 2021. We'll be upgrading the rail junction that feeds into Bristol Temple Meads enabling more services to run to, from and through the station in years to come, including the full MetroWest suburban rail scheme. This scheme has been several years in the planning, and combined with the redoubling of the tracks between Temple Meads and Filton is significantly increasing capacity in the West of England.



- **Bristol Temple Meads** – our roof renewal and rewire of the station started in December 2020, with scaffolding towers being erected inside. This two-year project will transform the passenger experience within the station. Additionally, using the time within the Bristol Rail Regeneration programme this summer we will start work on a new eastern entrance for the station; connecting the south of Bristol and the new University of Bristol campus with the station and rest of the city for the first time.
- **South West Rail Resilience Programme** – the Rail Minister officially opened the first phase of the new Dawlish sea wall last year. Since then we have secured planning approval for the second phase, from Dawlish station down to Coastguards colonnade. Once complete, this £80m new sea wall will protect the vital railway line from Devon and Cornwall, and the town of Dawlish, for generations to come. On top of which we will also be looking at solutions for increasing accessibility at Dawlish station and starting work on phase three of our programme, which involves extending rockfall shelters between Dawlish and Holcombe to protect the railway.



- **Swansea** – we have now completed the complete rebuild and extension of platform four at Swansea station. This will enable full-length Intercity Express Trains to operate from this platform and give the station more flexibility and capacity for services in the future.
- **Oxford phase II** – between 2016 and 2018 we introduced two new platforms at Oxford station to enable new services via Oxford Parkway to London to begin; extensively remodeled the track north and south of the station which has unlocked additional rail capacity and improved operational flexibility. The Department for Transport has now provided £69m in funding to draw up our plans for increasing capacity through the station. If fully funded, work will begin next year on a new platform, new western entrance, new bridge over Botley Road and additional tracks through the station. The benefits to passengers would be the potential for new services, improved facilities at the station and better links for residents on foot and bike.



- **Restoring Your Railway** – earlier this year the Government funded the reopening of the Dartmoor line, between Exeter and Okehampton. Good progress has already been made in relaying track and upgrading infrastructure on the line ahead of a two-hourly service starting by the end of the year. Other Restoring Your Railway schemes are also being progressed, with support from Network Rail and GWR, including new stations and reopened lines.



- **Cardiff** – with Transport for Wales and other partners we're supporting the delivery of the South Wales Metro. This will provide GWR passengers with better interconnectivity and destination options as this scheme is developed.
- **Severn Estuary Resilience Programme** – we've delivered reactive work to reduce the risk of landslips in the Severn Estuary, between Newport and Gloucester, and we are now developing plans for a multi-million pound scheme to secure the future of the scheme in response to climate change and extreme weather. This is a vital railway line for diverted GWR services when work is taking place in the Severn tunnel.





## 5.9 Heathrow Express bids farewell to the Class 332, and says Hello Class 387

Since 2018 GWR have run the operational aspects of the Heathrow Express (HEX) service under a management contract with Heathrow Airport.

The Airport continue to own the HEX service retaining responsibility for marketing, ticket pricing and revenue.

The trains are maintained at our Reading Train Care Depot and replace Class 332 that had run on the route since 1997.

This year we were delighted to introduce twelve refurbished Class 387 electric trains onto the route with new seats, at-seat USB power, fast Wi-Fi, ample luggage space and the choice of "Express Class" and "Business First".







## 6.0 Great People

### 6.1 Inclusion and Diversity

In 2019 we updated our action plan after making progress in 2017 and 2018 on our inclusion and diversity agenda.

Our 2019 action plan was created with input from:

- Over 650 colleague survey responses
- A Trades Union facilitated session
- Stonewall Workplace Assessment (2019 Index)
- An inclusion and diversity online focus group

Our strategy for inclusion and diversity seeks to broaden our appeal to all communities who travel and work with us. Embracing our customers and our colleagues, we aim to revalue rail in the hearts and minds of all of the travelling public. Our vision for our inclusion and diversity strategy is:

**We are progressive. We are one family. We are inclusive. First time, every time.**

When we achieve this vision individuals will be comfortable to be themselves, confident to talk, engage, and share insights that create richer business results. They will also feel safe and valued, whether they are our customers or our colleagues.

The following report details our progress against our actions, presents the data on our current position, and shares some of the great work we have been doing (despite the pandemic) to increase diversity and promote an inclusive culture for our colleagues and customers.

Our annual staff survey (November 2020) found that we have made improvements to the working experience for all of our diverse colleagues, seeing increases in our satisfaction scores across all areas in comparison to 2019.

Most colleagues feel that GWR supports the health and wellbeing of its employees (80%).

Women remain more engaged and empowered than men. They are also more positive on a range of questions, including having the freedom to make decisions and feeling their views are listened to, although the gap on making decisions has narrowed slightly since 2019.

The gap between heterosexual and LGBTQ+ colleagues has narrowed further, standing at just 1 point for engagement and 2 points for empowerment.

Engagement has increased across almost all ethnicity groups since 2019, with notable rises among those from Asian backgrounds.

Engagement levels have improved among colleagues with caring responsibilities.

#### Delivering on our action plan

Our ambitious action plan detailed our plans to increase diversity in GWR, promote a positive and inclusive culture for our colleagues and customers, and how we will support our communities, suppliers, and partners. Our action plan spans 2 years through to March 2022.

One year in, we have delivered on 49% of our commitments and are now working hard on the other 51%.



## 6.2 Outreach Programmes

Our work experience and development activity was hindered by COVID during the past year.

We have some exciting plans for the year ahead, working with Devon BAME in the West, Whizz Kids in our Central Region, and The Princes' Trust in the East. In summary we plan to:

- Deliver bespoke training & learning support – providing individuals with employability and life skills
- Work Experience Programmes – the opportunity for individuals to spend time on our network working alongside our colleagues
- Guaranteed Interview Promise - job applications to join GWR from those that have successfully participated in the outreach programme endorsed and given the opportunity to attend an interview
- Mentoring & Coaching – access to designated GWR experts to support their development during and post attendance on the outreach programme.



## 6.3 GWR helps more than 200 victims of domestic abuse get to a place of safety

Our 'Rail to Refuge' scheme has helped more than 150 adults and 70 children flee domestic abuse by providing free rail travel.

'Rail to Refuge' provides free train travel across the GWR network and nationally for women or men and their families who need to get to a place of safety.

GWR joined forces with the domestic abuse charity Women's Aid to launch the scheme in March 2020. It was adopted nationally through the Rail Delivery Group in April 2020 and has since helped more than 1,300 adults and children across the UK.

Referrals to domestic abuse charities and support services have soared during the pandemic and risks to those trapped in an abusive relationship have increased during lockdown.

Free travel can be a lifeline for people fleeing abuse who may not have access to cash. Almost two-thirds (62%) of people who used 'Rail to Refuge' said they would not have been able to travel if their journey had not been paid for.





## 6.4 Bristol civil rights activist has GWR train named in his honour

GWR hosted a naming ceremony at Bristol Temple Meads to pay tribute to Dr Paul Stephenson and a lifetime spent campaigning for civil rights for the British African-Caribbean community.

Dr Stephenson, was awarded an OBE in 2009 'for his services to equal opportunities and to community relations in Bristol' and in 2017 received a Pride of Britain Award for Lifetime Achievement.

He was nominated for the train naming by customers and GWR colleagues as part of GWR's Great Westerners campaign, recognising past and present heroes from across the network.

Others to be celebrated on GWR's Intercity Express Trains include Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Bristol paramedic Kathryn Osmond, who fought tirelessly to raise awareness of the skin cancer melanoma, Fleur Lombard, the first female firefighter to die on duty in peacetime Britain, and George 'Johnny' Johnson, the last surviving British member of the Dambusters raid.

Dr Stephenson, whose name features on train 800036, said:

"This is such a wonderful gesture and one I'm delighted to accept. I feel very proud to be considered by GWR as one of its Great Westerners.

"History is very important for understanding who we are, what's happening to us today and where our vision is for tomorrow. It is vital to take ownership of our history and to revisit it from time to time to ensure we have a clearer picture of our time and understanding of our humanity."

Co-Chairs of GWR's REACH Network (Recognising Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage), Jean Cook and Anthony Chitomera, said:

"It is with great pride that we have honoured Paul Stephenson OBE. As a BAME staff network within GWR, REACH was keen to recognise his lifelong tenacity in knocking down obstacles to equality, inclusion and representation in the workplace.

"His courage and determination changed the way we all live for the better. It is our duty to continue his efforts, recognising his work through our deeds. Reaching for a better future for all."

Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees, who alongside Dr Stephenson was this month named in a book honouring 100 Great Black Britons, said:

"Dr Paul Stephenson has been dedicated to fighting for equality and civil rights for more than 60 years and I'm delighted that Great Western Railway should choose to honour one of our greatest Bristolians in this way.

"Black History Month gives us an opportunity to celebrate Black contributions to British society and it is fitting that GWR will be adding Dr Stephenson to the list of those Great Westerners whose names adorn its trains."

Born in Essex to a West African father and a British mother, Dr Stephenson served in the RAF before moving to Bristol in 1960 and becoming the city's first black social worker.

In 1963 he led a boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company, protesting its refusal to employ Black or Asian drivers or conductors. After a 60-day boycott supported by thousands of Bristolians, the company revoked its colour bar.



**Train tribute: Dr Paul Stephenson alongside IET 800036.**

First West of England Managing Director, James Freeman, said:

"I am delighted to see Dr Stephenson being recognised in this way for his supremely important achievements. Today I am proud that within our own team, we have a relative of one of the successful protestors who campaigned with Paul to eradicate the systemic discrimination against black and minority ethnic people that took place by the operators who owned and managed the bus companies during that dreadful period of history."

In 1964 Dr Stephenson achieved national fame when he refused to leave a public house until he was served, resulting in a magistrates' court trial which was dismissed.

Dr Stephenson's campaigns were instrumental in paving the way for the first Race Relations Act in 1965. He later worked for the Commission for Racial Equality in London and in 1975 was appointed to the Sports Council, campaigning prominently against sporting contacts with apartheid South Africa.

On his return to Bristol in 1992 he helped set up the Bristol Black Archives Partnership (BBAP), which protects and promotes the history of African-Caribbean people in Bristol.

In 2007 he was granted Freedom of the City of Bristol. The citation stated:

"Paul Stephenson has devoted his life to improving race relations and encouraging community involvement and is a founder member of the Bristol Black Archives Project which has contributed greatly to an understanding of the history of the city and has helped to build closer relations between all the communities of Bristol."



## 6.5 Colleague Network Groups

Our staff network groups have had a busy year working to support colleagues.

### Inclusion Action Board (IAB)

The Inclusion Action Board is comprised of the chair/s of each staff network group as well as key stakeholders that provide insight from underrepresented groups within the business.

The co-chairs for ASPECT share their knowledge, perspective and advice on all topics related to the LGBTQ+ community.

The co-chairs of REACH speak on behalf of the diverse cultures within GWR and raise awareness and in part review the current step program with the other First Group train companies.

The co-chairs of the DWG disability working group focus on areas such as reviewing capability reporting and our ability to support those with neurodiverse learning styles.

The co-chairs of the Women in Rail network address the subjects of gender equality, promote open discussion through internal and external comms on subjects such as menopause and domestic abuse.

The co-chairs of the Christian Rail Association provide support for those off all faiths to share their experiences and come together to strengthen our sense of community.

The YRP chair promotes those areas of the business that don't often get attention for people looking to join the railway regardless of age the Young Rail Professionals network also support those new to the business.

Collectively the IAB helps ensure that the reality of intersectionality in the context of inclusion and diversity is acknowledged promoted within GWR.

The board are also there to provide insight and guidance to departments such as the learning and development team to ensure content is inclusive in its language and the tools provided to complete training are accessible to all users.

The Inclusion and Diversity Manager chairs the IAB and ensures their voices are heard across functions and departments. They present topics and challenges for the board to review and discuss. They offer support and guidance to the chairs of the networks and their committees.

### ASPECT

In summary, our LGBTQ+ staff network group in the last year have:

- Hosted Virtual Pride on June 28- July 4 due to cancellation of in-person events
- Liaised with Internal Communication to improve communication within the company, as well as to improve our goals, structure, and focus
- Presented our goals and plans to the Executives in order to gain support and feedback
- Worked within the Inclusion Action Board to deliver wider Inclusion and Diversity agenda
- Connected with other First Group LGBTQ+ networks with a goal of creating a “network of networks” to spread awareness, increase our audiences for activities and events, and share best practice

### WiR

Our Women in Rail network group have had a busy year. This has included:

- For International Women's Day in 2020 we worked in partnership with Network Rail to showcase women in rail by crewing, supporting, and delivering an all women train. This included Network Rail roles such as signalling and operations through to GWR positions such as driving and on board services.
- In December organised domestic violence webinar
- Organised collections for woman's shelters (London, Plymouth and Swindon)
- Signed up to the WiR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion charter





DWG

Formed in August 2019 the Disability Working Group has a common theme of passion and determination to make the workplace at GWR better for all.

Key work streams to date:

- Created a vision and mission statement to outline the purpose of DWG with GWR.
- Formed a structured group consisting of two co-chairs supported by regional leads across the west, central and east functions of GWR. Group is varied in terms of grades and comes together on a four-weekly basis, topics discussed include GWR Inclusion Action Board (IAB) outputs and new work streams for group involvement to support and raise awareness of disabilities within the workplace.
- Shared real life stories of GWR colleagues who have a disability and how they have fulfilled a career within the rail industry.
- Presented to the GWR Executive to outline the aims and objectives of DWG.
- Formed a constructive and valuable relationship with Network Rail Cando disability working network, regular meetings take place to share ideas and discuss how we can work collaboratively on future events and ideas.
- Undertaking of initial work to prepare for the application process to becoming a Disability Confident employer.
- Working with Employee Relations (ER) work to review the GWR Capability Policy has commenced, it is envisaged the group will provide insight and feedback to any future amendments.
- Supported awareness days and weeks for various disabilities, this includes supplying material and links through internal communication channels for colleagues with the aim to raise awareness and promote inclusiveness.

- Supported International Day of Disabilities 2020 through encouraging colleagues to wear an item of purple clothing.
- Approached external business such as Sainsburys to discuss how they have made their workplaces more disability inclusive.
- Working with Whizz kidz charity to provide two channels of support. Travel training, to provide young wheelchair users on information and guidance on accessibility and safety whilst using railway transport. Employability Scheme which aims to provide a mentorship program to assist with preparing young adults into a workplace environment.
- Work with Mencap charity has commenced, this will include Mencap providing awareness sessions for colleagues and how GWR can provide skills and training to individuals.



JAMES HANSON (LEFT) INTERVIEWED EWAN MCDERMOTT (BELOW WEARING GLASSES) ON BBC BRISTOL RADIO ABOUT HIS LIVED EXPERIENCE WITH AUTISM AND TO PROMOTE AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

REACH  
Recognising Ethnic and Cultural Heritage

**Our Vision** – Create a working environment at GWR where you feel confident to bring your whole self to work, valued by your ability.

**Our Mission** – Empower and install confidence in colleagues to thrive and progress within GWR through development, networking, and education.



GWR BAME The network was relaunched and rebranded February 2020. A new name and logo was endorsed by polling votes of colleagues on Yammer. The name **REACH** stands for **Recognising Ethnic and Cultural Heritage**. This is to recognise we stand for ALL colleagues, not

just Black or Brown ones. No matter your background or those of your family we ALL want to bring our whole self, which includes our culture, to work.

**Black History Month** – At the beginning of the month we were given the opportunity to present to GWR Executive Board. This enabled us to explain in more detail what our focus as a group were and how they could help us. After canvassing for names for Black Great Westerners, the vote for Paul Stephenson OBE was unanimous. It was quite an occasion which had quite a bit of local media attention. A proud moment for the network, Dr Stephenson, and his family as he was the first black person to have a train named after them.

<https://www.facebook.com/gwruk/videos/731282631077497/?t=1>

During the year we were able to meet up on several occasions with Network Rails’ BAME Network, Cultural Fusion. Attending their National Inclusion Week seminars and understanding how they have grown their networks. We are hoping to build on this alliance throughout the coming year.

Our chair has represented REACH as a member of the Bristol Equality Forum comprising of key stakeholders from the multicultural community within Bristol including education, social mobility the deputy mayor and Bristol council. In addition, they have also represented REACH at the cross-industry ethnicity round table that includes representatives from Swindon NHS, BBC wales, Nationwide Building society, Spire Healthcare, Swindon Borough Council and University of Northampton to name a few.





Christian Rail Association

In the 2020/21 year, the Christian Rail Association (CRA) has grown in stature as a member of GWR’s Inclusion & Action Board as well as in the eyes of its colleagues and travelling public.

In October 2020, we appointed our first Committee members, made up of staff from across the GWR network in a variety of roles. Meeting on a monthly basis, the Committee oversees the activities of the Association and works together to manage and promote events.

Supporting colleagues

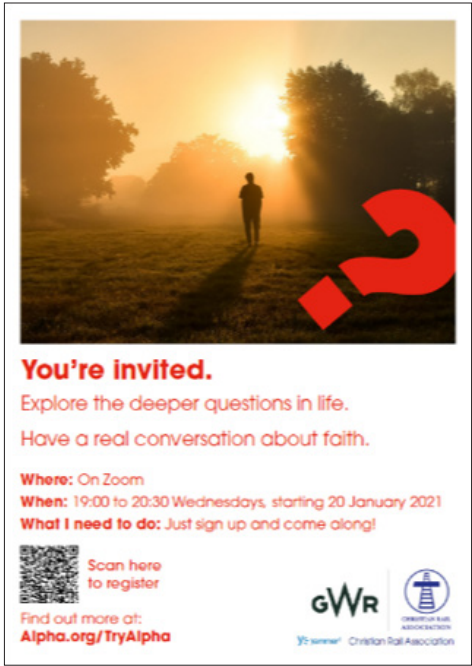
We have been instrumental in the creation of a multi-faith room at the new Exeter Depot, the first such room across the network to be originally purposed for the practicing of faiths. The room will give colleagues the space they need to pray, reflect, and read.

Interfaith Week also saw the opportunity for us to support colleagues by means of virtual sessions held on Zoom with opportunities to pray, chat and join together in worship.

Celebrating Christmas

With the help of colleagues in External Communications, we produced a video of our virtual choir signing the popular carol ‘Silent Night’, gaining nearly 23,000 impressions on GWR’s social media platform. (follow this link to see the video: <https://twitter.com/GWRHelp/status/1342145210231508995> )

We also ran a self-funded ‘Christmas Care Package’ drive to help struggling colleagues. Packages containing food and other essentials were able to be given and offer colleagues some much-needed support in the run-up to Christmas.



Young Rail Professionals

With some help from some experienced Young Rail Professionals we held our first event of the year in September. A webinar all about the Great Western Electrification Programme and how some of the challenges were overcome, namely Severn Tunnel and Cardiff Intersection Bridge.

Since September we have held a further three webinar type events.

- The first was back in December when we hosted Tom Cairns, founder of Realtime Trains. He took us through how what was once a small personal project has become a keystone of information within the rail industry and how that it now being used to help people during the Covid Pandemic.
- January saw Martin Spinks from Network Rail’s Infrastructure Monitoring Team talk to us all about their work and what exactly test trains are for.

- Most recently in February we had Garry Keenor from Atkins who not only delved into how the railway underneath Steventon Bridge was electrified, but how that and other innovations by Atkins are helping to make Overhead Line Electrification schemes cheaper.

Despite its name, Young Rail Professionals is open to anyone either working or has an interesting in working in the rail industry, promoting it as a fantastic place to work and helping those within it learn more about it and to help progress their career.

**STEP UP** is designed for women seeking their first supervisory position and since its launch in November 2018 the programme has been positively received with over a third of GWR participants progressing to new roles after completing the programme.

“... I have gained knowledge about networking and professionalism... Before the step-up programme I wouldn’t have even thought about applying for a team leader role but now I have attended this course I have seen things in a different perspective. I want to succeed and aim high and the only way I’m going to do that is by having self-confidence and belief in myself, building my network around the business, putting myself and my development first and taking every opportunity that comes my way.”

**STEP FORWARD** is designed for women aspiring to a ‘Head of’ role and equally valued by participants. The delivery of the first programme completed in October 2020 with almost 40% of participants having secured promotion since the programme commenced.

“This is the most valuable course I have attended”  
“Discussions around agile leadership in times of change was great timing!” “I have found it really helpful and beneficial, and it has certainly played a part in my recent promotion”

GWR is determined to reflect the communities we serve and the customers using our services. Ethnically diverse colleagues are particularly under-represented in leadership roles across FirstRail and we have implemented a suite of actions, emanating from our Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, to support their attraction, retention and career progression

**REACH UP** launched in April 2021 is designed to build the capabilities and confidence of ethnically diverse colleagues who have the potential to take on a Team Leader or Supervisory role within 12-18 months.

**REACH FORWARD** launched in March 2021 is designed for ethnically diverse colleagues with line manager experience, to equip them with the requisite confidence, skills and capabilities to move to a ‘Head of’ or equivalent role within the next 1-2 years



## 6.6 GWR Chooses to Challenge for International Women's Day

In celebration of International Women's Day, GWR made a short film featuring colleagues challenging themselves and others to forge a more equal world.

The film, using the official International Women's Day theme of #ChooseToChallenge, features GWR staff from across all areas of the business declaring what they are doing to celebrate their colleagues' achievements and empower themselves and others.

GWR HR Director Ruth Busby, who features in the film, said:

"The rail industry has come a long way in becoming more gender-equal, and we have a vast pool of talented people who make GWR a welcoming environment for women to join and develop their careers, whether it's driving a train, working in social media, or any of the other exciting roles that we have to offer. There is something for everyone with us."





## 6.7 Your Voice Annual Staff Survey

We matched our 2019 response rate of 79%, with 8 out of 10 colleagues sharing their views.

Engagement remains in the top quartile for a company engagement score, our empowerment is near the upper quartile our engagement score of 83% in 2019 was seen by Karian & Box as being an excellent achievement that provided only marginal room for further improvement in 2020 (their expectation/prediction was a 1-2% increase at best – this being made without Covid as a factor). To increase by 4% (taking our Engagement to 87%) has been commented on by Karian & Box as a truly incredible outcome, given that this has been achieved against the context of Covid.

Here are some key headlines:

- Big increases in our Engagement score (up 4% on 2019 to 87%), and our Empowerment score (up 4% to 66%)
- We are in the top UK quartile in all 3 Engagement measurements
- Our Empowerment score is outperforming the Transport sector in all 3 points of measurement and higher than the UK average in 2
- Nearly 9 out of 10 colleagues told us that they enjoy working at GWR and would recommend GWR as a great place to work – two key drivers of engagement
- 86% gave their manager top scores for treating them fairly and with respect which helps support our inclusion and diversity aim where 'we are progressive. We are one family. We are inclusive. First time, every time

- 86% are comfortable to raise safety concerns, helping promote our positive safety culture

We have seen the biggest increases in the following areas:

- Senior leaders doing a good job of explaining the reasons behind important decisions increasing by 11%, focusing on quality communication and access to the Exec and Senior Leaders has been one of our key priorities during the pandemic, recognising the need to keep colleagues informed, engaged, and supported
- More of our colleagues feel proud to work for GWR, we will be exploring the reasons why through pulse surveys and internal focus groups
- An increased number of colleagues have told us that they feel listened to and that people here are open to new and different ways of improving the way we work. Engaging with colleagues has also been a key area of focus for us all during the pandemic to find different ways of working that ensure our colleagues feel safe and that we continue to offer a key service to communities through the pandemic

The following infographic shows our top scores, areas that have had the biggest improvement and areas for us to focus on during the year ahead:





## 6.8 Customer Experience Focused

Customer experience training is still a fundamental element of the training we have provided for our new colleagues.

In the last 12 months the Learning & Development team at GWR has worked hard to improve existing courses in relation to customer experience, as well as create new courses in response to business needs and bespoke requests, such as:

- We have been working with our colleagues in our control centre to highlight the bigger picture in terms of the customer experience and help them to make better decisions that take this into account as well as performance and safety. This course has been created especially for our control colleagues and has been well received.

- This course has been piloted for our Network Rail colleagues. It aims to build further cement our alliance. It will encourage good communication amongst GWR and NR so we can learn from each other and achieve an excellent and harmonious working relationships in Stations.

Our department has also created content for CATs training and refreshers for our Customer Action Team.



Dr Patricia Greer  
Chief Executive of The West of England  
Combined Authority

The West of England Combined Authority was formed in 2017 to champion the region and drive clean and inclusive economic growth.

As we begin to look at a post-pandemic world, we are focussing on improving transport across the region in collaboration with partners like Great Western Railway. We want to provide sustainable, long-term solutions to help people move around more easily, reducing congestion and improving the environment we live in. We have a number of projects which will help us achieve this aim - one of these is our flagship rail programme called MetroWest.

### MetroWest

We are working with councils, Government, Network Rail and Great Western Railway, on ambitious plans to significantly increase travel by rail, through a combination of improvements to existing rail stations and routes, as well opening new lines and stations where the region needs them most.

MetroWest could generate over a million new rail journeys and give 80,000 more people access to train services. It will see half hourly services across most of the local rail network with two lines reopened to passengers and up to seven new stations between 2021 and 2024. Beyond 2024 there are plans to increase the frequency of services on key routes and open more new stations.

Phase one of MetroWest is proposing to re-open the Portishead rail line to passenger train services and to enhance local passenger train services on the Severn Beach and Bath to Bristol lines. The plans include a new rail station at Portishead and the reopening of the former station at Pill.

Phase two of the MetroWest project is proposing to re-open the Henbury Line to an hourly passenger service and increase train services to Yate and Gloucester to a half-hourly service. The plans also include new rail stations at Henbury, North Filton and Ashley Down.

### Remodelling the Bristol East Junction

The modernisation and remodelling of Bristol East Junction, which lies just outside Bristol Temple Meads, is key to MetroWest. This complex junction serves the flow of trains into and out of the station, making it a crucial piece of infrastructure for services to and from south Wales, the Midlands and the north, and from London Paddington. The junction is made up of more than 50 crossovers, or points, which allow trains to change tracks. The existing junction needed updating to meet the demands of a modern railway.

Changing the track layout at Bristol East Junction will improve capacity, flexibility and reliability, allowing increased rail services across the West of England and beyond. An extra line is being introduced which will support the additional suburban services that are planned through MetroWest. The new track and layout will make maintenance easier and support a reduction in delays for passengers in the future.

### New Eastern Entrance at Bristol Temple Meads

A new station entrance is planned for the platform 13 and 15 end of the passenger subway, exiting onto the new University of Bristol campus. Plans for the entrance are in development and involve extending the passenger subway underneath the track, opening the perimeter wall of the station and constructing a new entry building on the university campus side.

We are looking forward to seeing these projects progress during 2021 and continuing our work with Great Western Railway, and other partners, to drive improved rail services for people across our wonderful region.



## 6.9 Apprenticeship Scheme

Our apprenticeship provision has significantly grown in the past year. Approximately 165 new apprenticeships each year for colleagues and people looking to join GWR.

Our award-winning Apprenticeship programmes commenced again early September 2020 with our largest single intake since its inception in 2011. We inducted 30 full time apprentices to add to the 24 currently in the business. 18 Customer Service, 6 Engineering and 6 Aspire. The Customer Service Apprenticeship is an 18-month entry level programme for 16+ and covers all areas of non-safety critical operations. During the programme apprentices study hard for three qualifications. The Engineering scheme is a 4-year programme for 16+ involving part time college attendance for years 1-3 studying for the level 3 engineering technician certificate. The Aspire is GWR's management apprentice scheme, the qualification Apprentices work towards a Chartered Management institute level 3 in Leadership and Management. We also offered 15 Driver level 3 apprenticeships. Each fulltime vocational apprentice is fully supported through regular interventions with the apprentice team, mentors, and buddies.

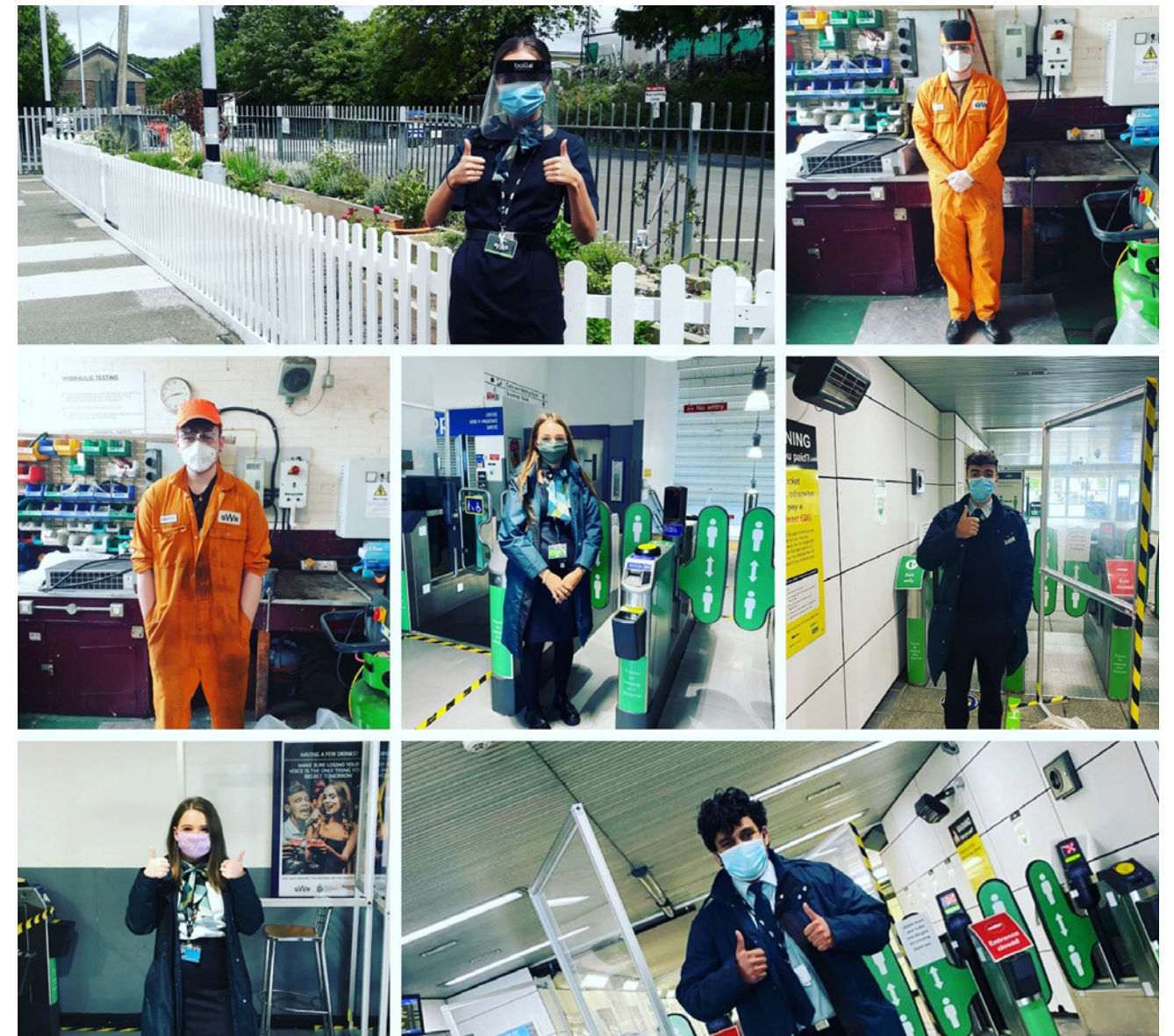
We launched the Quest Apprenticeship programme for our existing colleagues offering apprenticeships in preparing to lead, assessment and coaching, customer service practitioner, chartered leadership, IT and mentoring. We are developing apprenticeships in data analyst, HR, project management and payroll. All internal apprentices are supported by the apprentice team and partners throughout their academic studies. Quest apprenticeships are undertaken alongside current roles and responsibilities and are a great way for colleagues to develop additional skills and behaviours to support their career development.

As with all businesses the majority of GWR Apprentices started working from home as the pandemic struck, and the apprenticeship team instantly saw the need for increased frequency of contact to ensure Apprentice welfare. These calls were kept light and included weekly video conference calls, quizzes, and innovative interactive learning sessions. Our partners at Exeter College were also keeping in touch with all learners outside of scheduled lessons.

Our apprentices had access to virtual delivery platforms in a variety of formats to enable them to work from home on the theory elements of their programmes. Study completed during this period counts towards the 20% off the job training. Apprentices had their tutorials via webinars for the Institute of Railway Operators to aid their learning experience. All Apprentices returned to the workplace after 12 weeks of home study. Additional risk assessments were put in place to aid their safe return, and the team increased the number of visits to the workplace to ease the apprentices back into the work routine.

We worked extremely closely with the Duke of Edinburgh scheme leaders to facilitate our 2019 cohort to continue their programme with innovative approaches for community volunteering and physical elements of the programme.

Working with the DofE, and other partners, we managed to agree safety protocols to facilitate our cohort 19 apprentices being able to complete their practice and qualifying expedition on Dartmoor and Exmoor. While the experience was slightly different, the apprentices and team took to it fantastically well with all those who started the expedition, succeeding.



The apprentice team also overcame some considerable challenges and following safe protocols we managed to take 20 apprentices away on our DofE residential week at Skern Lodge in North Devon. All 30 apprentices attended along with our Employee Director Sally Bennett. A fantastic learning experience for all.

Our Apprenticeship completion stats improved again this year and now stands 30% above the national average for the apprenticeship levels we offer.

The apprentice programmes and team were recognised by the National Apprenticeship Service & being awarded Regionally Highly Commended for Macro Employer of the Year 2020. A fantastic achievement and recognition for another incredible year with our apprentices.





## 6.10 GWR win top rail accolades

Great Western Railway scooped two top prizes at this year's Rail Business Awards, the industry's most recognised awards scheme.

Shortlisted in three categories, GWR won the top awards in Marketing and Communications Excellence for its That's EnterTrainment campaign, and in Rolling Stock Excellence for Repurposing HSTs into Castles. Great Western Railway's Bex Hartley was also shortlisted in the Young Professional of the Year category.

In a year where marketing and communication budgets were largely curtailed, GWR's That's EnterTrainment fought off competition from LNER and ScotRail, impressing judges with a project designed to restore

confidence among customers during the pandemic. The campaign reached the equivalent of more than 250 million people over six months.

Recognising the innovative way to address a capacity shortage and benefit customers GWR won in the Rolling Stock Excellence category for repurposing former High Speed Trains to Castle Class. The trains were brought up to modern standards including automatic sliding doors.



Photo taken on 06/03/2020 at Bristol Temple Meads station shows the women of GWR and Network Rail who worked on the International Women's Day campaign.

## 6.11 GWR and Network Rail dream teams celebrate multiple wins at National Rail Awards

GWR and Network Rail's Wales and Western Route jointly scooped a double prize for their work together at this year's National Rail Awards.

Shortlisted for two entries in the Outstanding Teamwork category for introducing the region's December 2019 Timetable Change— one of the biggest timetable changes in a generation, and their celebration of International Women's Day, which saw the launch of the #railtorefuge scheme, which helps people escape domestic abuse, and delivering a train service operated entirely by female staff in March.

Judges were not able to separate the two entries and decided to award both entries the top spot. It's the second time in two years the companies have been recognised for their work together after grabbing the gong for the Western Alliance Partnership at the Rail Business Awards last year.

We also jointly won Customer Service Excellence Award with RoomMate®, which provides an audio description of station facilities for those with visual and other

impairments. Its Platform Zoning project, which helped customers board train more safely and quickly across the network, was highly commended by judges.

Steve and Helen Holyer of Adi Access Ltd, the company which developed the RoomMate® technology said:

"We are thrilled to have supported GWR with their submission for Customer Service Excellence in the National Rail Awards. GWR have recognised the difficulties for those with sight loss, dementia and learning disabilities which hitherto have not been addressed in accessible toilets. RoomMate® a world first concept is installed in a diverse range of locations nationally.

Reading Station, which is staffed by Network Rail and GWR was named Major Station of the Year.



## 6.12 GWR marks Holocaust Memorial Day by illuminating statue of the 'British Schindler'

Sir Nicholas Winton's statue at Maidenhead Station was illuminated by 669 candles to represent each of the children he helped rescue from Prague on the eve of World War Two.

Sir Nicholas, a Maidenhead resident, found homes and arranged the safe passage of the children, most of them Jewish, to the UK. The operation later became known as the Czech Kindertransport.

Lord Alf Dubs was just six years old when he boarded the Kindertransport and went on to have a successful career as an MP, continuing to this day to campaign for the rights of refugee children.

He became a close friend of Sir Nicholas' and to mark Holocaust Memorial Day provided a moving reading of the poem 'First They Came' by Pastor Martin Niemöller.

Lord Dubs said:

"What better way to mark Holocaust Memorial Day than to celebrate Nicky Winton, the man who saved my life and the lives of 668 other children who were brought to safety in the UK on the Kindertransport from Prague in the summer of 1939.

"Thank you GWR – I think it's a really important thing to be doing and it will be much appreciated by many people."

Sir Nicholas's work went unnoticed for nearly 50 years until he was invited to appear on the TV programme *That's Life* in 1988. He was reunited with several of the children he had rescued and became known as the 'British Schindler'.

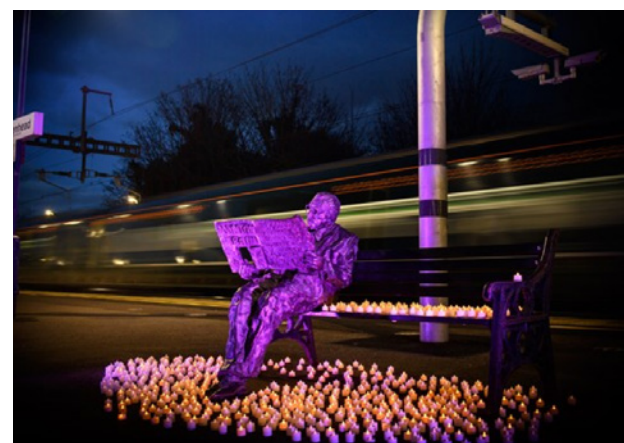
In 2003 he was knighted by the Queen for 'services to humanity, in saving Jewish children from Nazi Germany occupied Czechoslovakia'.

He was later awarded the highest honour of the Czech Republic, the Order of the White Lion (1st class). He passed away in 2015, aged 106.

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust's Head of Communications Asel Guillot said:

"As we mark Holocaust Memorial Day from the safety of our homes this year, we reflect on the depths humanity can sink to, but also the ways individuals and communities resisted that darkness to 'be the light' before, during and after genocide – just like Sir Nicholas did in his time.

"HMD is for everyone. By learning from genocide, we can all build a better future, we can all be the light in the darkness."





### 6.13 D-Day veteran has train named in his honour by Great Western Railway

One of Britain's last surviving D-Day veterans, Harry Billinge MBE, had a train named in front of family and friends, onlookers, and military representatives.

"I've been deeply moved today. Having a train named after me is a great honour. It will remind people of the fine men who fought that day, lots of whom never went back home again.

"It's important that their memory is remembered, and I hope this train will carry that message to thousands of people every day."

St Austell's Harry Billinge MBE was one of the first soldiers to land on 'Gold' beach at 0630 on 6 June 1944 as part of the D-Day landings. He was a sapper attached to the 44 Royal Engineer Commandos and was one of only four to survive from his unit. He went on to fight in Caen and the Falaise Pocket in Normandy.

He was awarded an MBE in the 2020 New Year Honours List for his fundraising efforts in St Austell for the Normandy Memorial Trust.

His name now features on Intercity Express Train number 802006, which went on to form the 1015 service from Penzance to London Paddington after the ceremony.

Johnny Mercer MP, then Minister for Defence People and Veterans, said:

"Harry's an inspiration and a daily reminder of that incredible generation. We can never say thank you enough for the privileges and freedom we enjoy today because of your sacrifices 75 years ago."



## 7.0 Keeping Our Communities Prospering





## 7.1 Reimagining Stations

Based on several waves of interviews and focus groups conducted during the Covid pandemic, GWR envisages significant changes to how people travel in the recovery from the pandemic.

Pre-pandemic trends such as reduced commuting and increased working locally or from home are expected to continue, and leisure travel is expected to increase, especially domestic leisure.

We've had significant investment in our stations across the network, working with a number of partners. We have a slew of improvement work planned for the next few years, and our Reimagining Stations programme seeks to use customer, colleague and stakeholder input to ensure our stations are fit for the change in customer patterns.

### The Vision - Reimagined Stations

Our stations won't just be transitional points to catch a train, but modern, multi-functional, inclusive, welcoming spaces for our customers, as well as our key link to the communities we serve.

We aim to:

- improve our stations to provide a consistent customer experience across the network;
- better enable Active Travel and integration with other transport modes, with a focus on the door to door journey.
- define what the station of the future will look and feel like and ensure ongoing and future investment is aligned with this.

As part of this, we've identified some key customer priorities, from research and input from Transport Focus.

There are three workstreams within Reimagining Station:

1. Station uplift – develop the new Station Design Guide based on research, best practice and stated customer needs, identify where interventions are necessary and develop a prioritised programme of works to ensure a consistent offer across the network. As part of this, we've conducted Customer Experience reviews at over 60 stations, and will continue to do this. We've also collated all available data, such as complaints, social media comments, information from our colleagues and stakeholder priorities. This information will feed into the programme of work planned.
2. Active Travel – Focusing on integrating other transport modes and providing high quality facilities at our stations to encourage Active Travel. As part of this workstream, we're proactively engaging with cycling organisations, customers, stakeholders and experts and will be setting up an Active Travel panel in the summer.
3. Station of the future – define what an exemplar station will look like in different scenarios based on research and best practice from other industries; progress pilot projects and develop a prioritised programme of work, building on existing investment programmes and influencing future proposals.

## 7.2 GWR's £800,000 grant boost for community-enhancing projects

A raft of projects designed to enhance communities across the Great Western Railway network have received a funding boost from the train operator.

As part of its franchise agreement with the Department for Transport, GWR awarded nearly £800,000 through its Community Cohesion Fund, Communities & Education Fund and Community Rail Partnerships.

More than 40 projects ranging from the installation of a special playground train, travel support for refugees and non-EU residents, a pioneering podcast project and plans to safeguard the nation's railway archives were those to benefit.

### GWR Community Manager Emma Morris said:

"We have a specific pot of money designed to support community and not-for-profit organisations. These projects help to enhance thousands of lives across our network and we know the funding is put to good use."

### Click below to learn more about the projects being supported in the GWR network.

- London and the Thames Valley
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- South Wales
- South West
- West of England
- Wiltshire

### Active and In Touch is a project being supported in Frome





### 7.3 GWR charities

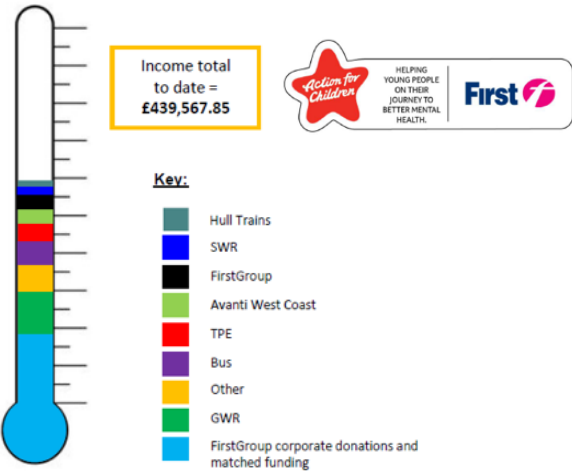
We are proud of the community support our teams have provided during the coronavirus pandemic, going above and beyond to help our communities in the most difficult of times. Below are charitable efforts colleagues have achieved over the past year.

**Action for Children and FirstGroup**

Breakdown of income by Operating Company from April 2018 - March 2021

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| Avanti West Coast                                  | £26,727.09         |
| FirstGroup plc                                     | £24,101.10         |
| First Bus  | £38,454.15         |
| GWR  | £55,172.93         |
| Hull Trains  | £6,471.15          |
| SWR  | £7,226.43          |
| TPE  | £30,605.97         |
| FirstGroup corporate donations and matched funding | £201,726.10        |
| Other <sup>1</sup>                                 | £49,082.93         |
| <b>Total:</b>                                      | <b>£439,567.85</b> |

<sup>1</sup> Other includes Graduate Challenge income, Payroll Giving income and Gift Aid.



**Payroll Giving**

2020/21 figures for GWR Colleague Payroll Giving are **£62,418.93** with 542 colleague sign ups supporting 189 different charities.

| Payroll Giving GWR |            |            |           |
|--------------------|------------|------------|-----------|
|                    | £          | supporting | charities |
| <b>20-21</b>       | £62,418.93 | 542        | 189       |
| <b>19-20</b>       | £63,402.14 |            | 196       |
| <b>18-19</b>       | £64,882.07 |            |           |

**FirstGroup Matched Funding**

In 2020/21 **21** GWR colleagues applied for FG Matched Funding supporting 17 different charities, resulting in **£6,449** being donated.

### 7.4 Community Rail Partnerships

**Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership**

We bring together local authorities, GWR and others to support the counties’ branch lines. In this most challenging of years we innovated to support the local community and developed new resources ready to help re-build rail patronage.

From the very start of the pandemic, the Partnership focused on three things:

- Supporting our communities
- Helping keep the railway front of mind
- Sharpening our communications resources ready to help the branch lines bounce back

Our strong presence on social media, in particular Facebook where we now have more than 20,000 followers provided an excellent platform. During lockdowns, we shared rail trivia and our extremely popular ‘Pic of the Week’ feature, which regularly attracted thousands of likes and helped keep the railway firmly in passengers’ minds even when they were not able to travel.

We also shared positive rail stories such as the improved Newquay service introduced in December 2020 which fulfilled a long-standing ambition of earlier trains to and from Newquay. Our social media campaign, which included a Facebook ad targeted at Newquay residents, was backed up with print advertisements in both the Cornish Guardian and the Newquay Voice.

To support local businesses during the pandemic we ran a series of campaigns to highlight independent retailers in rail-served destinations. With our message of “Shop online now, then visit by train when you can” we created a book trail of more than 60 local bookshops on our **GreatScenicRailways.com** website. We followed this up with a vinyl trail of record shops, as well as promotions of local pasty shops and independent places on the branch lines to buy Christmas gifts.

When travel was permitted during Summer 2020, we highlighted the excellent station cafes along the Tarka Line, with Eggesford Crossing Café reporting a slew of extra bookings, as a direct result of our promotion.



Our Tarka Line Foodie Guide

Our other key goal during the year was to enhance our marketing materials ready to help re-build rail patronage when circumstances allowed. Our Great Scenic Railways website plays a major role in our digital marketing and attracts 180,000 visitors a year in normal times. We invested in the site in 2020 to improve both the design and content of our pages for each line and for featured stations. In early 2021 we revamped the site’s navigation on mobile phones, which make up 60% of our traffic, to make it even easier to explore the site and to discover new day trips by train.

We also homed in on our ‘Walks from the Railway’ as a key offering for when passengers could travel again. With people having been cooped up for long periods and with many indoor activities either cancelled or restricted, getting out into the countryside has a huge appeal.

To this end we embarked on a project to refresh our existing walks with updated instructions and new photography, as well as adding brand new walks in both counties. We developed a new, more attractive and informative template for the walks for our website and for printable downloads.



Our new-look webpages for the branch lines



We also collaborated with local YouTube stars 'Cornish Walking Trails'. When travel was permitted in early autumn 2020 they created a 25-minute film of a journey on the Tamar Valley Line and the walk from Gunnislake station through the Danescombe Valley to Calstock. The film has already been watched by more than 5,000 people, gaining dozens of positive comments.

Looking ahead, we are relishing the chance to make the re-opening of the Dartmoor Line to Okehampton a huge success. We have led on the development and design of the DartmoorLine.com project website, working closely with GWR and Network Rail, and are involved in proposals for disused rooms in Okehampton's main station building and advising on heritage aspects of the station, including signage. Once the line re-opens we will of course be throwing our full weight behind marketing the new services.



A 2019 Summer Sunday service on the Dartmoor Line.



Our Pic of the Week feature on social media showcased great shots like this one of Calstock Viaduct by Howard Pratt.



One of the winning entries in the St Ives Bay Line art competition, by Darcy Flint.

Meanwhile in Cornwall we look forward to the installation of two fantastic new pieces of artwork at Carbis Bay and Lelant stations. In early 2021 we ran a competition to design Direction of Travel signs and were thrilled when it attracted more than 75 entries. The standard was extremely high, and the judging panel – including representatives from the Rail Partnership, GWR and Network Rail as well as the Mayor of St Ives and local artist Jo Mayes – were so impressed that they decided we should create a poster of all the shortlisted entries to be displayed at stations on the line.

We are also creating new interpretation boards at Plymouth and Gunnislake stations to promote the range of day trips and walks that the Tamar Valley Line has to offer. And at Bere Alston station we have secured grants from the Railway Heritage Fund and the Community Rail Development Fund to renovate the old signalbox, which will be used as a base and potting shed for the local Scout group to help their work looking after the station planters.

### Southeast Communities Rail Partnership – North Downs Line

Southeast Communities Rail Partnership CIC (SCRCP) covers eight lines, working to connect communities to their railway across Berkshire, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey, and Sussex.

We work in partnership with Southern, Thameslink, GWR, SWR, Southeastern and CrossCountry on those lines, joining up with community groups, local authorities, and local businesses to help them achieve their objectives through the railway.

GWR's North Downs Line runs between Reading and Gatwick, from the Sussex border through Surrey and Hampshire into Berkshire, traversing some beautiful countryside in the Surrey Hills and taking in many of the old army towns between Guildford and Reading.

2020 was a year when most things were postponed – we had great plans for Rail to Ramble in the Blackwater Valley and GWR's Community Rail Conference was due to be held at Gatwick.

Visitors to the conference would have been offered the chance to call in at Reg's Garden at Farnborough North but it was not to be.

Just prior to the first lockdown we had a great day out...

#### Jessie's Seat

Jessie's Seat is a living memorial to a railwayman, Henry Wicks, who was killed in an accident on Leap Day 1892 near Chilworth on the North Downs Line.

Some railway people and members of the local community knew about the topiarised box tree that is Jessie's Seat, but not many. It is so close to the line that no-one can visit it or see it. Travellers to and from Gatwick have seen it, always fleetingly, and this was a chance to stop and stare, and for people to hear the history.

It brought the railway 'family' together to commemorate and celebrate one of their own, to describe the rich history of the line to the community and to demonstrate what a strong working partnership of North Downs Line CRP, GWR and Network Rail can achieve. Two new volunteers subsequently joined the Community Rail Partnership.



(Left - Right) Sir Peter Hendy with David Daniels and Matthew Golton.



Jessie's Seat from the cab



**Reg’s garden at Farnborough North – a transformation**

Reg was the Station Master at Farnborough North for many years, living in the old station house on the Guildford side of the track and tending to a very large plot of land, some 250 x 50 yards. After his death, the land was left to his family but as they lived away it no longer played much part in their lives – until Farnborough Street Residents Association (FSRA) made an approach to rent it from them. Much negotiation followed and eventually an agreement was reached which enabled FSRA to rent the land and thence look forward to a community food farm, bee hives, planters, vegetable plots and much more.

The garden had been due to play its part in the GWR Community Rail Conference of 2020, delegates were to be offered the chance to visit on the way or return but sadly that wasn’t to be.

Garden Group leader Mike Knott said ‘it’s testament to the work of local people, supported by GWR, Network Rail (NR) and SCRIP, that we’ve been able to deliver so much under the difficult circumstances this year.

We look forward to the time in 2021 when the garden can be formally opened to visitors. A ‘formal’ opening in Summer 2021 is being planned, if lockdown restrictions permit.

The garden is thriving, but the station house remains empty – SCRIP and the local community would like to change that situation and turn it into a Community Hub with permission from Network Rail.

Coming soon to the North Downs Line are more opportunities for ‘Rail to Ramble’ in the Surrey Hills and Blackwater Valley, some new picket fencing at Chilworth and artwork at Guildford (courtesy of NR, South Western Rail [SWR] and CrossCountry [XC]). In the meantime, we’ll be promoting a return to rail starting with the schools and hopefully an increase in leisure travellers.



Early 2020



October 2020

**Sevenside Community Rail Partnership**

Like all other organisations, during 2020 the Sevenside Community Rail Partnership has had to rapidly adjust to change, in what we do, and how we develop and deliver our activities.

Nevertheless, much has been achieved and we have focused on supporting local communities to build back.

We are grateful to the volunteers who care for their adopted stations and involve themselves in wider community events and initiatives. Despite restrictions, the number of volunteers has increased this year and we are delighted to welcome an influx of students who will be creating marketing content to encourage travel. We also welcomed a new station adoption group for St Andrew’s Road, providing overlap with the SevernNet social enterprise.



Volunteers have been connected via welfare calls, monthly newsletters, virtual workshops and social meets.



During the past two years, Incredible Edible Bristol, has carefully developed the Secret Garden Food Growing project on Platform 1 into a unique outdoor learning space with an ethos of caring, sharing and empowerment. When lockdown began, scheduled ‘Wellbeing Wednesday’ sessions were immediately adapted to concentrate on growing produce; this continues to be harvested and distributed to members of the community most in need of a supply of fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs. Boxes were initially delivered directly by Avonmouth Community Centre and local volunteers, to the doorsteps of appreciative residents. Once the Community Centre was able to re-open, produce grown at the station became ingredients of the exceptionally tasty soup which Chef Mike makes available during certain weekday lunch times.

To help reduce the spread of Covid-19, students returning to school in September were required to carry a few new essential items in addition to the usual pencil case and calculator. We were able to ensure those travelling by train were equipped with the resources to do so safely by providing special packs containing two washable face masks, a bottle of hand sanitizer, a copy of the GWR Safe Travel Pledge and safety advice from British Transport Police, Network Rail and Crimestoppers Fearless Campaign. 500 packs were distributed to students travelling in the Partnership area.





To encourage passengers to comply with the compulsory wearing of facemasks, we launched a set of specially designed facemasks featuring extracts from four of the iconic murals seen at stations along the Severn Beach line – Stapleton Road by Bill Guilding, Montpelier by Silent Hobo, Redland by Dave Bain and Zoe Power and Avonmouth by Rob Wheeler. These masks are available via the Partnership's website, with voluntary donations welcomed towards future projects.



September saw three vibrant new art works unveiled at the gateway to Stapleton Road station. Each are the creation of ladies living in the local neighbourhood, spotlighting established and emerging talent in the Easton District of the City.

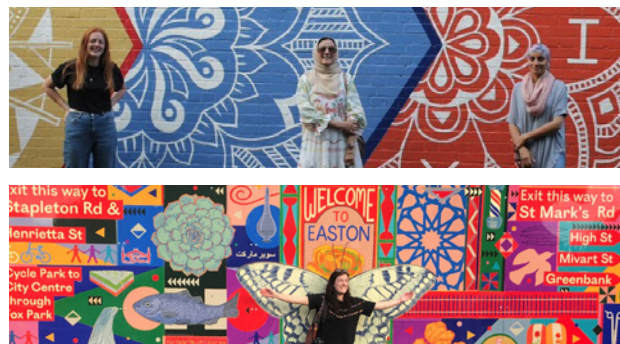
This has kickstarted further planned improvements to an area of land between the St Mark's Road and Stapleton Road station entrances. The project is funded by a Bristol City Council Community Instructure Levy.

Imposing gates at the Stapleton Road entrance have been replaced with a bespoke design by blacksmith Mary Reynolds, making an attractive, welcoming arrival. Creating delicate mandala patterns to complement the adjacent Peace of Art mural, Mary has also incorporated an element of train tracks into her fun design.



**Stapleton Gates**

The wall to the left of the gates has been transformed by 'Peace of Art' who are a collective of artists based at Baggator, a project dedicated to citizen empowerment in Easton. In line with the ethos of Baggator, their hand painted mural carries mandalas expressing unity, equality, and diversity. The group has been developing their creative skills for some time, but this is their first large scale public commission. On the basis of the superb quality of the mural it is likely to be the first of many.



Further into the station, a shipping container once covered in graffiti has received a complete make over by Anna Higgle. The eye-catching design provides sign-posting for passengers arriving by train to the plethora of independent shops, cafes and places of interest along St Marks Road and Stapleton Road. Anna has incorporated imagery and shapes found in the landscape around the station and local area into her design, and as the centrepiece a beautiful butterfly provides the perfect photo opportunity for those who like to record their outings on social media platforms.

Avonmouth and Severn Beach stations now have the added security benefit of comprehensive CCTV camera coverage. A further stage of enhancements to these stations is progressing, with the SevernNet and Sustrans Ride and Stride project undertaking a feasibility study looking at options for new cycle parking facilities.

Our successful partnership with the Community Payback unpaid work scheme meant we were able to facilitate a small Payback project at Nailsea and Backwell station during the autumn. Over four weeks, overgrown vegetation was tended to, prior to a local gardening group planting shrubs and bushes in Spring 2021.

We look forward to welcoming passengers back to the railway. New promotional resources have been developed including more 'Days Out from your Local Station' guides and walking maps designed to discover routes radiating from Bradford-on-Avon, Severn Beach and Yatton stations.



**New 'Days Out' guides**

Several projects from across the Severnside region featured among the shortlisted entries in the 2020 Community Rail Awards. We are delighted that during the impressive online event, 'Track Record – The Soundtrack to the Severn Beach line' was announced winner of the Community Art Smaller Schemes category, while The Secret Garden at Avonmouth Station was a runner up in the Influencing Positive Change category. The Friends of Parson Street and Yatton stations also deservedly featured in the shortlists.



**The Friends of Parson Street**



**South Wessex Community Rail Partnership**

Early last year the decision was made to wind up the Heart of Wessex CRP. All stakeholders agreed it was logical for Severnside CRP and TransWilts CRP to be responsible for all the lines within their respective areas, including the relevant sections of the Heart of Wessex Line.

Thus was created a need to set up a new CRP to cover that part of the Heart of Wessex Line running south of Westbury to Weymouth. There is of course no activity to report from this very young CRP.

It was agreed the new CRP was to be called South Wessex CRP. Bob Owen agreed to serve as Chairman. Almost simultaneously the Covid pandemic struck. Its consequences were of course initially a massive reduction in services, followed by a much more normal service, which in our largely rural area has meant quite a few “phantom” trains with very few, if any passengers. At the same time the activities of the station groups which will form the core support of the new CRP were at first truncated, then largely discontinued entirely. All of this, together with priorities of stakeholder representatives being elsewhere during the pandemic, has delayed the setting up of the South Wessex CRP.

However, at the time of publication, the activity is now well under way and picking up pace. The stakeholding body representatives are largely in place, and contact has been made with nearly all of the station groups in the area who previously supported the Heart of Wessex CRP and other groups who may have an interest in participating.

The work to set up the Community Interest Company which will manage the CRP under the guidance of the Community Rail Network and the stakeholders is now under way. The aim will of course be to serve, and be integrated into, the local communities through which the Heart of Wessex Line runs in Somerset and Dorset. Once the Company is up and running we will appoint an officer to handle daily management and set out to establish ourselves and become recognised in these communities.

A major part of our tasks will be to maintain and support the existing and increasingly recognised single “Heart of Wessex” identity. We look forward to close co-operation with Severnside and TransWilts CRPs in this endeavour.

We look forward to being able to report on our first year of operation and how we have developed in the next edition of this Handbook.



**Thornford Station**

**Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership**

We work in partnership with Great Western Railway, South Western Railway and CrossCountry Trains to promote rail use to and from the 20 rail stations across the Salisbury-Romsey-Southampton area.

Since 2018 we have been part of the Hampshire Community Rail Partnership CIC, which is the umbrella organisation for community rail in the county.

Our main focus with GWR concerned the staffed station at Romsey and the unstaffed stations at Mottisfont and Dunbridge and Dean, all of which are situated on the Romsey-Salisbury main line. These stations were transferred to the South Western Railway franchise on 1 April 2020, which makes geographic and operational sense, but this has not meant the end of our excellent working relationship with GWR.

In the run up to this transfer date we are indebted to GWR for the repainting and refurbishment work they undertook at these stations. Of special note are two projects at Romsey, where a long awaited upgrade to the lower station car park was completed and the volunteers’ room on Platform 1 was redecorated.

For many years Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership volunteers had been tidying and keeping the Romsey lower station car park area clear and tidy to improve the area’s attractiveness and security for passengers using the informal car park and the track to the canal path. They had long desired the area to be fully refurbished to complete our work and in March 2020 GWR completed a jointly funded project with Test Valley Borough Council Developer Contributions Funds and other railway investments monies. The project included: cutting back the overgrown vegetation, rebuilding the borders of the area, providing a new footpath and steps to the station forecourt, marking out defined parking bays and providing lighting and ticket machines. The difference has been amazing in improving visibility and security and we are delighted that this new car park has provided additional facilities for rail users, while discouraging informal parking by non-station users.

The works to the Volunteers’ Room were funded through the ongoing GWR CCIF programme, and saw our facilities upgraded and redecorated. We use this room as a base for the weekly litter pick rota, which we operate, and also as an occasional meeting room. It is now a much more comfortable room in which to work and rest!

Thank you GWR for these upgrades and all you have done to improve our stations over the years!



**Volunteers at work clearing the old lower station car park, Romsey to keep it tidy before GWR investment.**



**The finished revamp.**



As with other CRPs, volunteer work has been practically non-existent at stations during the COVID crisis and although we have not been able to operate our popular rail bus link service up the beautiful Test Valley, we have managed to move forward on a number of supporting projects at Romsey. For example, having piloted the leasing of redundant railway space elsewhere in our Partnership at Woolston, Netley and Swaythling, we decided to have another go at utilising the wonderful Station Master’s House at Romsey. This has been vacant for over 20 years, if not longer, and numerous attempts to revive and reuse it by local developers have not materialised for a myriad of reasons.

Using our experience from elsewhere we have entered into Heads of Terms leasing arrangements with SWR’s property agent Amey TPT for both the Stationmaster’s House and the stand alone Porter’s Lodge, which used to operate as an independent café. These are ambitious ideas, but ones which we believe will work, where others have floundered.

Our proposals for the Station Master’s House involve the creation of a community meeting room or two, hot desking facilities for other community groups and a base for the Romsey Men’s Sheds Group.

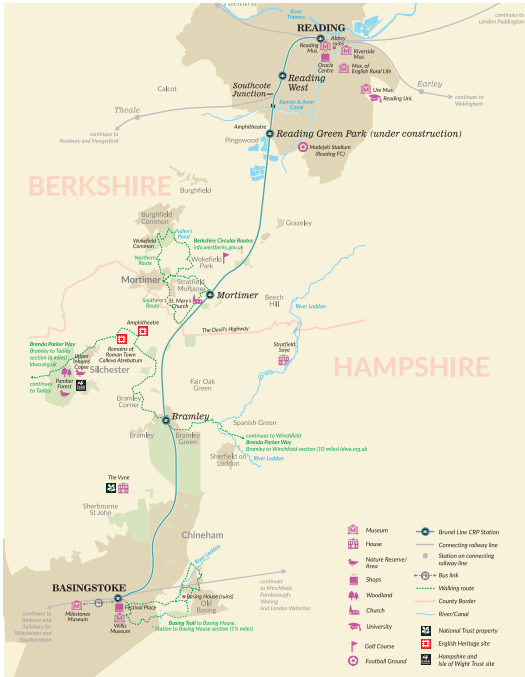
By leasing the property on a peppercorn rent for the duration of the current franchise and direct award, thanks to SWR, we will be avoiding the issues of commercial gain and development which have always held back long term plans.

Over 10 years ago the Three Rivers CRP helped set up a café in the old Porters Lodge on Platform 2 and while the original owner eventually passed on the business to another proprietor, the latter gave up the tenancy for various reasons two years ago. Ever since we have been seeking ways to reopen the facility. Having completed a Heads of Terms agreement we are working with a Southampton based café owner who is seeking to help us set up a community café, using ex-offenders as apprentices to become trained Baristas.

We have engaged a local architect for help with the projects, started working with the local authority politicians and officers on planning consents and liaised with the Romsey Buildings Preservation Trust and other stakeholders to garner widespread support.

The house in particular is an immense project and a detailed funding plan seeking CCIF, developer contributions, Community Investment Funds, Railway Heritage Trust inputs, Heritage Grants and other funding streams is being developed to help meet the costs. With a fair wind we may be able to open a renovated house in the next few years. The café should be opened more quickly.

GWR remains a valued Steering Group member of both the Three Rivers and Hampshire Community Rail Partnerships, and while we continue to promote their services across the area in general, we have recently concluded discussions to develop a further CRP between Reading and Basingstoke. This will be GWR’s 10th CRP and we are delighted to be able to help promote this line in partnership from mid March 2021 onwards, covering the stations of Reading, Reading West, Reading Green Park, Mortimer, Bramley and Basingstoke. While we are progressing with the working title of The Brunel Line as a nod to this particular railway’s builder, we will be working with Partners to see if there is a more fitting local name that can be used. Watch this space for news about our exciting plans and projects for this line in 2022.



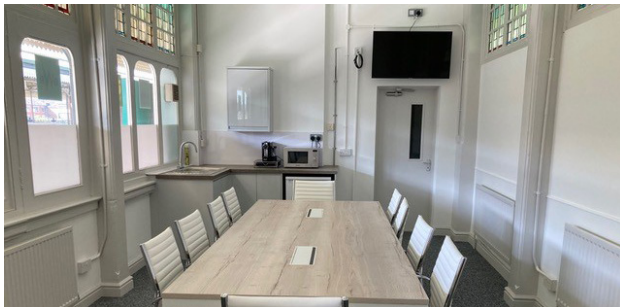
The Brunel Line

TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

Despite the challenges of 2020, the TransWilts CIC has been busy progressing two large projects which are already providing benefits and will reap more in the coming year.

At Westbury Station a disused office on Platform 1 has been turned into a meeting room for use by the TW’s Community Rail Officer (CRO) and other community groups. Grants from the Community Rail Network and GWR enabled the refurbishment to be done to a high standard. The stained glass windows were expertly restored and the internal layout reconfigured. On starting the work it was discovered the floor – dating from Victorian times – was not level and gallons of concrete had to be brought in to rectify it. This involved night working to enable the concrete to be brought in via the lifts at a time when the station was not busy with passengers.

Now named the White Horse Room, a small kitchen area and coffee machine have been installed at one end. The remainder can be configured as a large meeting space or, by utilising a sliding screen, section off the CRO’s area and allow a smaller gathering to take place in the other half.



The White Horse Room at Westbury Station

Meanwhile at Melksham, TransWilts has negotiated a lease to take over land around the station to provide a much enlarged car park and allowed the converting of a disused building into a community café. The car park was laid out throughout the summer and autumn and includes charging points for electronic vehicles. A competitively priced parking tariff has been introduced with any profits being ploughed back into the facilities.

Towards the end of 2020 the café kitchen was fitted out. The building will also provide toilet facilities and a waiting area for passengers. Volunteers and staff are being recruited and it is hoped the first customers will be served by early summer. As well as providing hot food and drinks for passengers, it will also provide a welcome lunchtime venue for workers at the local businesses around the station.

Work will continue in 2021 to provide an outside seating area, more vehicle charging points and a cycle hire facility. The station has also benefitted from sponsorship from local employer Knorr-Bremse.

As the country entered lockdown TransWilts stepped up to provide online activities for children who could no longer go to school, which were well received.

On the tracks, in common with all other areas, passenger numbers dived on the TransWilts as the pandemic took hold but not as far as many other local lines. Service reliability was hit by virus related staff shortages at times. Overrunning engineering work also hit the service in the late summer but enabled the TransWilts, GWR and Network Rail to draw up improved lines of communication. This has already proved its worth when staff shortages were flagged up to 24 hours ahead of time and enabled alternative transport to be laid on and attention drawn to it on the TransWilts website and social media.



Melksham Hub Cafe



Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership

We work closely with the County’s three Train Operating Companies, the County Council, the three Rail User Groups, and the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE).

To assist the Steering Group, we take advice from the Community Rail Network and liaise closely with staff from the two Network Rail regions which cover the County. We remain keen to reach out to other stakeholders within the County.

We cover 18 stations in the County, 14 of which are operated by West Midlands Trains and four operated by Great Western Railway. In addition, there are three heritage railway stations – we have cordial relations with the two heritage lines which operate them.

2020 has been a strange year in which to start a partnership given that for over nine months various lockdown restrictions were in place and rail travel was actively discouraged by the Government. Nevertheless, major steps forward were taken including:

- The creation of our web site (wcrp.org.uk) and the establishment of a presence on various social media channels. Contact was maintained with broadcasting and print media too.
- The StitchTrain Worcestershire was a successful community activity which involved cross-stitch kits being sent out across the County. You can view the tapestries of WMR’s Class 196 and GWR IET trains on our website along with support for the Backtrack anti-trespass competition.
- Working with Community Rail Network to highlight the train lines in our area and nearby attractions on Scenic Rail Britain.
- Filming a promotional video for the Barnt Green to Redditch branch line. This was a trial to see what will be involved in creating a set of videos for the County’s rail lines.
- Producing an Annual Report and holding a ‘virtual’ First Anniversary celebration event.

To cap this successful year, the Partnership was awarded Accredited Status by the Department for Transport.

We are thankful to GWR’s Community Rail Team who have been so supportive of our ambitions and we’re looking forward to working closely with the Team in 2021.



The StitchTrain Worcestershire

Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership

Launched in April 2020 Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership’s (GCRP) key aim is to develop an accredited, sustainable community rail partnership for Gloucestershire.

GCRP are putting the region on the map through community engagement, public transport integration, station development activities, visitor experiences and travel promotion.

Initially launched with a small team of two directors the board has grown to a dynamic team of five over the past year. We are delighted to be working with a cross-cutting team to support and influence our work.

We have an active and committed steering group covering 22 organisations with over 45 professionals pledging support. These organisations covering the public, private and community sectors ensure a rich spread in ideas, input and involvement. Our cross-cutting activities cover the nine stations in Gloucestershire and the communities they serve but takes a strategic and geographical approach to project development.

Our Active Projects for 2020/21 include:

- **Let’s Talk Travel** - a programme designed to help build travel confidence and access to jobs and opportunities. We worked with an access to employment and inclusion expert who researched the impact barriers to transport has on job seekers in Gloucestershire. They engaged employment professionals and job seekers through interviews and surveys to identify the key barriers and to develop tools and resources to be used by employment professionals to empower job seekers.
- **Taste for Travel** - three food and drink maps communicating a series of circular trails starting from Stroud, Stonehouse, Cheltenham and Lydney Stations were developed this year. Each map has been carefully designed to encourage locals and visitors to explore local places and discover local farm produce. These maps are the first in a series of maps depicting visitor experiences that support active travel and local economic development through food and

drink experiences. We worked with the University of Gloucestershire’s Event Management Students who conducted market research, customer behaviours and a mystery shopper project to test the impact of these trails with a particular focus on youth engagement.



Food and Farm Trails map

- **Walking and Cycling Maps**– since the success of our 2019 Canal Rail Trail pilot which attracted 700 people to explore rail travel and the Stroudwater canal corridor over a bank holiday weekend we developed the trail in response to restriction scenarios to include walking and mapping routes along the canal corridor. This new map supports the opportunity to get healthy and active and to explore the broader canal corridor on rail, foot and bike.
- **Cotswold Canals Connected** – National Lottery Heritage Fund’s decision in October 2020 to grant £8.9 million to the Cotswold Canals Connected project means that the Stroudwater canal will be connected to the national inland waterway network at Saul Junction in the Stroud District. The project’s activity plan harnesses opportunities to connect canal and rail heritage through education, community events and visitor experiences with Community Rail integrated into the approach. We are currently developing trials, station exhibitions, festivals and community engagement activities between Stroud, Stonehouse and Gloucester that support recovery, local economic development and sustainable tourism.



- **Access Maps** – These maps have been developed for Stroud, Stonehouse, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Lydney, providing key information to help customers identify and use easy access routes from the station to their end destination. These contain key walking and cycling information, accessibility guidance, public transport information, and a whole host of other useful info.
- **Station Exhibitions** – The Station Galleries at Stroud and Stonehouse Stations run by the Stroud station’s adoption group Creative Sustainability CIC featured two exhibitions this year. “A Common Revolution” led by youth climate action groups was launched in March exploring two quite different communities’ sense of place and their understanding of local resources in the face of a climate emergency. In December 2020 local artist Dan Guthrie launched “UJ Remix” a montage of Ankara Fabrics explored whether traditional British iconography can be used to represent a modern multicultural nation.



Stonehouse Station Gallery

- **Station Travel Plans** – These are integrated transport plans designed to set out a masterplan vision for each station in Gloucestershire. Working with local authorities, train operators and other partners we are developing prospectuses for each station – starting with Gloucester and Lydney.

- **Developer’s Guide** – This is an easy guide to explain how the CRP wants to engage with developers, consultants and local authorities on influencing planning policy and shaping future development proposals. The guide sets out the way in which GCRP will be liaising with public and private sector partners, and is supported by a number of technical tools and maps to make sure we notice the major development proposals that may affect use of rail and other public transport services.



The Developer’s Guide

- **Youth Transport Panel** – We have an active core group of 15 young people who regularly engage on the sustainable transport agenda through interactive online sessions. The group developed our youth transport survey due to be launched in March 2021 designed to identify the barriers to transport for young people in Gloucestershire.
- **Travel Surveys** – The CRP has developed and delivered a series of travel surveys for completion by local community organisations, young people, and the general public right across Gloucestershire. Our comprehensive travel survey looks into the future and ask a series of detailed questions about inclusion, accessibility and integrated transport.

We would like to thank the team at the Community Rail Network and Great Western Railway for their commitment, time and funding support and we look forward to working together with you all in supporting our communities and environment to #buildbackbetter.

**South West Wales Connected Rail Partnership**

4theRegion CIC became the hosts of the new Community Rail Partnership in March 2020, when it was agreed with Transport for Wales to establish a CRP covering the four counties of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.

Between April and June 2020, a series of meetings were held with a preliminary Steering Group, to devise a name and a new brand identity for the partnership, and agree it’s core purpose and strategic focus.

South West Wales Connected (SWWCo) brings travellers to some of the most picturesque parts of Wales, with stunning rural and coastal destinations as well as distinctive small towns and the regional capital of Swansea. South West Wales Connected covers all the stations in the four counties of Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire - some of which are also included in the Heart of Wales Line CRP which stretches from Swansea to Shrewsbury.



SWWCo Steering Group



Jennifer Barfoot was appointed as Community Rail Officer in June 2020 and immediately started working on a marketing plan to target audiences through social media and regional press, to officially launch South West Wales Connected Community Rail Partnership and subsequently raise our profile.

It has been challenging at times but SWWCo has managed to establish many connections within our communities and form some great working partnerships throughout the region. We have established a strong and visible presence online and via social media, and through our busy programme of events we have been able to connect with many diverse businesses, community groups and regional organisations. Our ethos is very much around community engagement, and we want our CRP to be as welcoming and engaging as possible to new members and participants.

Particular achievements to date have been our partnership work with Ramblers Cymru, The Heart of Wales Line and Pembrokeshire County Council. We have been especially keen to get to know communities around railway stations across our network, and one of the ways we have sought to do this is by hosting a new kind of “Shared Vision Meeting” in several station communities.

We are proud to have grown our social media following organically over the last few months, and the continued growth of our social audience is a key priority for the year ahead. Twitter is the platform that receives the most post reach, with over 7000 tweet impressions (the number of users who see SWWCo posts) in February, January and December. October was our most active month, with 14.1k tweet impressions. Partnership work, such as with Ramblers Cymru and the Shared Vision events, have played a key part in reaching positive figures on a monthly basis across all of our platforms.

Very early on Jennifer established a connection with Ramblers Cymru to curate a collection of walks that start and finish at each of our stations, to promote the idea of “walking by rail” and where possible existing routes have been used but some have been adapted and created for our purpose and criteria (no longer than 6 miles in duration).





The Ramble and Scramble characters were originally commissioned by Ramblers Cymru to engage with a different target market - families with children. Ramblers Cymru and SWWCo had a shared vision to encourage families to combine a train journey with a short walk, as a way of exploring the region and getting out and about with children. ‘Ramble and Scramble on the train’ is an exciting new addition to the Ramble and Scramble portfolio.

The pilot will see Ramble and Scramble featured at Llanelli, as the key station, with a map and guide to an interesting short walk taking in key features of the town. The initiative will help Ramblers Cymru engage with a new walking market and enable SWWCo to promote the train as a great way to enjoy a sustainable day out within our picturesque and diverse region. The walks will take families from the station on an ‘i spy’ type route around the town or village. Each walk will be very short, up to a maximum of 2 miles, and will be fully accessible, helping us to reach as many families as possible including those with young children or grandparents who may be wheelchair users.

Once lockdown is over, we intend to organise “Family Days” to take groups from Swansea and Neath Port Talbot on these guided walks in Carmarthenshire, as a way of meeting more community members, encouraging people to explore the region as a family, and hopefully creating confident young rail ambassadors.

**Welcome Banners Project**

The aspiration to have ‘Welcome’ Banners at all (or as many as possible) of the stations throughout the South West Wales Connected Region arose through discussions with our Wider Steering Group members. These 6ftx2ft (1.8x0.61 metres) mesh banners will be co-created with local people around each train station and will feature images and words that celebrate the distinctiveness of local places, to welcome visitors and encourage a greater ‘pride of place’ within local communities.



**Minecraft Education sessions with Milford Comprehensive and Technocamps, Swansea University**

As part of a wider conversation regarding Milford Haven railway station Milford Haven Comprehensive School were excited to be involved in several Minecraft Education sessions to design Milford Haven railway station. This will be an excellent way of harnessing youth enthusiasm and engaging with future generations.

**After an exceptionally busy first year, we feel that we have created a firm foundation for a successful Community Rail Partnership.**

We believe that our focus on involving a broad range of organisations - as partners and collaborators - and our commitment to being actively engaged within local communities - means that we are able to achieve far more than we could on our own, and we have generated a huge amount of good will and positive word of mouth already.

**New community rail partnership set for Reading to Basingstoke line**

In March, The Hampshire Community Rail Partnership and GWR were delighted to announce the launch of a new community rail partnership, encompassing GWR rail services and key stations between Reading and Basingstoke. This is the third rail partnership within the Hampshire CRP remit, joining East Hampshire and Three Rivers CRPs.

Aspirations for the new group include promoting the line, improving stations, developing integrated transport solutions at each station, enhancing local tourism, building communities around each station hub and attracting volunteers to take part in our activities.

Alongside GWR, the new CRP looks forward to working with its wider rail colleagues including the Community Rail Network; Cross Country Trains and South Western Railway; Network Rail; local business groups; councils at all levels; and local voluntary groups to bring the community and the rail industry together.

HCRP chair and director, Nick Farthing said: “We are delighted with this new project and grateful to GWR for working with us and providing the initial funding. We look forward to working with other partners whom we are now

approaching, to share our joint plans to promote the line to bring back and further increase passenger numbers along the line. Fellow director, Mark Miller and I look forward to hearing from other potential partners, stakeholders and volunteers who wish to help us raise the profile of this important railway link.”

GWR community manager, Emma Morris said: “Community rail plays a vital role ensuring people get the most from their railways. Working alongside local, regional, and national partners; community rail partnerships; station adoption groups; and individual volunteers, community rail encourages social inclusion, community wellbeing and empowers economic development.”

A full name for the CRP reflecting the route it serves has not yet been chosen, but ideas from stakeholders will be sought. Further details will be published soon. A formal launch will be held in the future when Government advice allows.





7.5 Sustainability

ISO 14001 and ISO 50001

Great Western Railway continues to build on the prestigious international standards for environmental and energy management by maintaining certification to ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 50001:2011. ISO 14001 and 50001 the world’s most recognised environment and energy standards. The standards require organisations to demonstrate that environmental issues are closely integrated in their strategic direction. GWR are driving improvements in waste, water, and energy consumption to improve environmental performance. A successful external audit carried out by Lloyds in early 2021 stated GWR’s management system is well-embedded and the approach to Energy and Environmental Management compliments the overarching GWR Sustainability approach.

Energy Consumption

Through the installation of the Shield Building Management System, GWR has been able to drive down electricity consumption at its stations. The Shield BMS system has been installed at all GWR operated stations and allows remote control and analysis of all energy systems. By taking control of the energy system away from the stations, the building’s optimum energy performance can be realised. Safety or security critical issues can immediately be flagged up and relevant maintenance teams dispatched to resolve the issue. This will enable GWR to continue to put the safety and wellbeing of colleagues and passengers at the forefront of our operations.

Water Consumption

Through the installation of automated water meters, GWR has been able to significantly reduce water consumption across its portfolio. The meters provide daily feeds which enables changes in consumption to be easily detected. As a result, GWR has been able to identify leaks quickly and minimise any water wasted as a result. Because of improved data accuracy, GWR is now able to set a target for water consumption. The target will help drive continued environmental improvement across the business.

GWR has trialled a new tap control which reduces the flow of water in washroom basins. Early trials show the controls are successful, achieving a 15-20% reduction in daily water consumption. The new tap controls will now be installed as part of all washroom refurbishments and repairs.

Recycling

GWR continues to strive to achieve a 75% recycling rate across the business. Waste volumes have dropped considerably during Covid-19 with the temporary closure of station retail and reduced passenger numbers, GWR has managed to maintain a 67% recycling rate despite the challenges of the pandemic. Depots have continued to segregate waste in to separate streams which are collected for reprocessing and recycling achieving a high quality clean product.

Alongside the recycling facilities available at stations, GWR segregates waste at each Engineering Depot in to

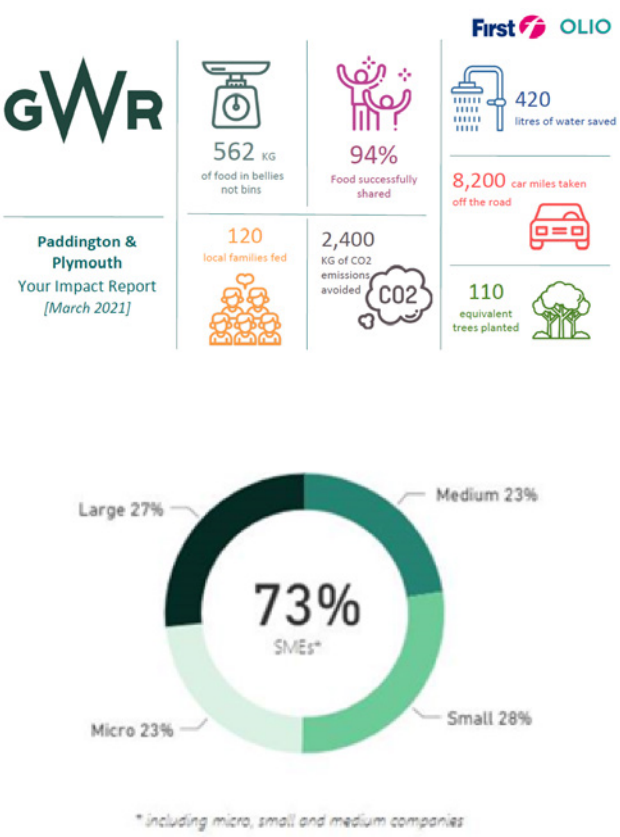
separate streams. Cardboard, plastics, aluminium and newsprint is separated and collected for reprocessing. GWR has introduced coffee cup recycling across all depots, meaning the huge number of single use cups used by passengers are diverted from landfill. The coffee cups are recycled into other products such as low-grade plastics and stationery.

Colleague Engagement

GWR has many colleagues committed to improving the environmental performance of the business and addressing sustainability issues. Colleagues across the business continue to come together to tackle wastage, sharing best practice and documenting savings through a War On Waste focus group. The group is an outlet for colleagues to challenge our ways of working, seek clarity and suggest improvements. The WoW group has made huge progress to reduce printing, phase out single use cups in colleague areas, introduce office recycling schemes and share redundant and obsolete equipment and stationery.

Suppliers

This year, GWR worked with approximately 1100 suppliers. Of those, approximately 73% are classed as SME’s (less than 250 employees) which are split further again in the image below into Micro, Small and Medium.





### 7.6 GWR partners with Olio to help combat food waste

GWR launched an exciting new scheme to help tackle food waste in the rail industry, while supporting families in need.

Teaming up with food sharing organisation Olio, GWR is working to redistribute in-date food leftover from its on-board catering service to local communities and charities across the Great Western Network.

With passenger numbers dropping in the last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, GWR found itself with a surplus of the food provided as part of its on-board catering services.

To ensure none of this food went to waste, it decided to partner with Olio at the end of 2020, with a trial taking place in Paddington and Plymouth, using trains to transport

surplus stock from across the network to both locations. Now the scheme is being rolled out across the entire Great Western network, allowing more families to benefit.

Olio Business Development Manager Georgie Cella said:

“We’ve been delighted to partner with GWR to ensure food from their onboard catering service hasn’t gone to waste. To date, we’ve managed to rescue the equivalent of over 800 meals across the 2 sites, which has helped reduce co2 emissions, as well as bringing benefit to local families.”



### 7.7 Chetnole Station gets a summer makeover

As well as keeping rail services moving throughout the pandemic, GWR’s Property Services Team have been keeping our station painting and maintenance programme on the move, repainting stations like Chetnole on our of Heart of Wessex line.

Chetnole Station



Before



After





## 8.0 Driving Business Growth

### 8.1 East



#### Newbury station development

The first of two new cycle hubs at Newbury station opened in March 2021 providing 180 spaces (pictured). A second hub on the north side, providing 176 spaces, is currently under construction, due to open by the end of the year. The hubs are fitted with CCTV for added security, environmentally friendly motion sensor LED lighting and a bike repair stand.

Alongside the second cycle hub, the multi-storey car park being delivered by the developer Grainger on our behalf is due to open in summer 2021, providing 164 additional spaces for rail users. Building the MSCP freed up land for the development – which also improves walking routes between station and town centre.

The station refurbishment plan includes extra ticket gates, which will reduce queueing and improve the ticket sales and waiting areas, as well as moving the main entrance to the west end of the building closer to the footbridge installed in 2017 and the MSCP. This work will be completed in early 2022.

On the south side we will introduce three new business growth units (pictured) subject to planning permission, developed to replace a former maintenance depot. These units will be prioritised for local SMEs and should be occupied by summer 2022.

The £19m scheme is promoted jointly by West Berkshire Council and Great Western Railway and supported by Thames Valley Berkshire LEP through the Local Growth Fund.

#### Didcot Parkway cycle hub

A £1m facility at Didcot Parkway opened in March 2021, increasing secure cycle parking spaces from 182 to 600. Funded by GWR, NR and DfT, it's also fitted with CCTV, LED lighting and a bike repair stand.



#### Reading West

We are delivering a significant upgrade to Reading West including a new station building (pictured) with a ticket office, toilets and retail unit as part of a £4.1m scheme. The scheme received planning permission in January 2021 and enabling works began in March; following utility diversion work we expect to start construction on site in the Autumn with scheme completion Summer 2022. The scheme is jointly funded by the Local Growth Fund via Thames Valley Berkshire LEP, GWR and Reading Borough Council.

#### Theale Park and Rail

This £9m scheme includes a series of enhancements to improve bus and taxi interchange, increase car and cycle parking capacity and enhance customer facilities including a new fully accessible footbridge being delivered by NR through the "Access for All" programme. The project is jointly funded through the Local Growth Fund via Thames Valley Berkshire LEP, GWR, Network Rail and West Berkshire Council. The works are due to be complete in Autumn 2022.





## 8.2 Land purchased for new transport hub at Moreton-in-Marsh

Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council and Great Western Railway announced in March the joint purchase of the brownfield site neighbouring Moreton-in-Marsh Railway Station.

In a deal that is the first of its kind for GWR, we have provided 50% of the funding needed to secure the previous Royal British Legion site for the benefit of the town and the railway.

Councillor Eileen Viviani MBE, Chair of Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council said:

“We are delighted to see this investment in Moreton. It is an important step forward in our long term plan to reduce congestion and improve our High Street for residents and visitors alike.

“This follows on from our consultation with residents in the summer and is great news for the local economy, for the environment and for residents.”

Plans are in place to bring the site into use in phases to create an integrated transport hub on the site, delivering low carbon, high quality transport options, helping to alleviate congestion in the Town making it easier to visit and use the High Street.

Partnering with GWR helps to bring forward Phase one of the scheme to create 50 car park spaces along with 50 cycle parking spaces.

Cotswolds District Council Leader Cllr Joe Harris said:

“This is great news for Moreton-in-Marsh. The District Council is keen to see investment into communities such as Moreton that haven’t had the infrastructure they deserve despite lots of housing being built. The purchase

will not only help improve the town but will also mean better transport options for the North Cotswolds. It is a bold move and one we are happy to support; we now look forward to working in partnership with the Town Council and GWR to develop ideas for the integrated transport hub.”

Cllr. Nigel Moor, Cabinet Member Environment and Planning at Gloucestershire County Council said:

“Gloucestershire County Council are keen supporters of the North Cotswolds Line Task Force who have ambitious plans to improve rail services for Moreton and the whole of the North Cotswolds line. This investment supports those plans and it is great to see Moreton at the forefront of improvements particularly those that support reductions in carbon. We are delighted to be part of the group now working to take forward plans for the site and I congratulate the Town Council and GWR on making this important first step.”

Local MP Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown has welcomed the announcement that Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council has purchased the Royal British Legion site adjacent to the railway station. He has been a long term supporter of more investment in rail and improving services for residents and visitors and said “This fits perfectly with the Government’s agenda to build back better and to promote active, sustainable travel. It will be good for the local and regional economy and I am delighted to see the Town Council and Great Western Railway working collaboratively to deliver lasting improvements for the town.”

## 8.3 Central

### Metro West gathers pace

Metro West is soon to become a reality, with extra train services on the Severn Beach line planned to commence from December. The two clockface trains an hour will provide an improved level of service between Avonmouth and Bristol Temple Meads (with one train an hour extended to Severn Beach). This will represent the first phase of the cross Bristol improvement in train services promoted and funded by the West of England Combined Authority in partnership with Network Rail and GWR. The enhanced Severn Beach Line service will also support the new station at Portway (promoted and funded by Bristol City Council), which is expected by the end of the year. Portway will be the first new station in the Bristol area for over twenty years.

Further phases of Metro West include enhanced services to Gloucester and Westbury, the opening of Ashley Down station, introduction of passenger services to Henbury and Portishead. Planning for new stations is well advanced for Ashley Down, North Filton, Henbury, Pill and Portishead.

Existing stations will also see investment. Following the West of England Combined Authority’s successful bid to the Access for All fund, eight local stations will benefit from improved wayfinding, shelters and seating. In addition, GWR is planning for the delivery of a smart card based ‘Pay As You Go’ ticket across the West of England area from Spring 2022. With these service and station enhancements on the way, the future is looking bright for rail users in the region!



Turbo on the Severn Beach Line



Vision for Portishead station



Cheltenham Spa

Improvements to the forecourt and car park at Cheltenham Spa have delivered an improved interchange, a 300 space cycle hub and 70 extra car parking spaces. Significant funding for the scheme came from the GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership, with contributions from the DfT Cycle Rail Fund and the GWR franchise.

But the work doesn't stop there! Network Rail plans to install lifts at the station later this year. Meanwhile, GWR is working with Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucestershire County Council, GFirst LEP and Network Rail to bring forward a new segregated cycle route from the station to Lansdown Road. The scheme has secured Approval in Principle from Network Rail and detailed designs have been submitted for final sign off. Once built, the scheme will provide a dedicated off road link between the Station and the important A40 corridor, which in turn provides access to key employment and housing areas in Cheltenham. Funding for the project has been sourced from Gloucestershire County Council, GWR and the DfT Cycle Rail fund.



New cycle hub



View of the forecourt towards the station entrance



View of the new car park looking towards the station

Gloucester station improvement work to start soon

Work to improve highway access to the station is expected to commence this summer. These works will be the first step in bringing forward much needed improvements to the travel experience for rail users, who will benefit from the planned enhancements to the forecourt, underpass and station building.

Project partners include Gloucester City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, GWR, Network Rail and GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership. Last year Gloucester City Council and GWR successfully secured £6m for the scheme, with contributions committed from the GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (£4.3m) and Department for Transport (£1.7m). Following a submission to the Local Planning Authority in the summer, Prior Approval consent was achieved for the package of works. Implementation of the main works is expected to commence later this year, with full scheme delivery in 2022.



Images of the improvements to the forecourt, underpass and building at Gloucester

Improvements to access and public realm at Chippenham

GWR is working closely with Wiltshire Council and Network Rail to bring forward a package of improvements at Chippenham station, funded by Swindon & Wiltshire LEP and the Department for Transport. A third lift is under construction on the north side of the station which, when finished later this year, will provide step-free access to all parts of the station and between the north and south sides of the town. In addition, we are upgrading the pedestrian access to the north of the station to improve accessibility and safety. Station square at the front of the station is also being upgraded to improve access, provide increased secure cycle parking and reduce congestion. The works are planned to be complete by Spring 2022.



Works begin to install lifts on the northern lift tower



Artists impression of remodelled Station Square



**Improving bus / rail integration at Bristol Parkway**

GWR and South Gloucestershire Council have been working to upgrade the station forecourt at Bristol Parkway to improve bus / rail integration. Four new high quality shelters have been provided on a remodelled forecourt, doubling bus capacity. The Metrobus is Bristol's new high quality bus service and the shelters include specific provision for this service to operate in future, including a dedicated Metrobus branded shelter and associated i-point for information and ticket purchase. The scheme is funded jointly by South Gloucestershire Council and the Department for Transport.



The new Metrobus bus stop



Remodelled 'bus friendly' access road

**Integrated Transport**

In recognition that the rail journey is just one part of a customers' journey, GWR is committed to working with partners and other transport providers to improve the whole 'door to door' experience. Our recent successes include:

- New cycle hubs at Cheltenham Spa, Stroud, Didcot and Newbury to provide customers with enhanced cycle parking.
- Station forecourt improvements completed at St Erth, Taunton, Bridgwater, Cheltenham Spa and Bristol Parkway.
- A wayfinding scheme that aims to 'connect up' Bridgwater station with the local town, setting the precedent for further schemes in 2021/22.



**Bridgwater wayfinding scheme**

- Securing Network Rail Approval in Principle for a new dedicated off road cycle route between Cheltenham Spa station and the A40 Lansdown Road, providing access to GCHQ and the Cyber Park mixed use development. We are now actively bringing forward detailed proposals in the expectation of proceeding with the scheme later this year.
- Establishment of regular Bus Forums with local authorities and bus operators. These forums are currently being used to inform GWR's response to Bus Back Better and identify further opportunities for closer bus / rail integration.
- Digital trials of 'Plus Bus' which are ongoing in the greater Bristol area, where there are opportunities to combine with a smart 'Pay as you Go' offer currently being developed.
- Planning for 'Bus Branch Lines', such as a new service between Totnes, Kingsbridge and Salcombe that has been agreed with local operator Tally Ho! Coaches.





## 8.4 Wales

Between January and May this year, platform 4 at Swansea station has been under reconstruction to repair and extend the platform length by Network Rail Wales and Western.

### GWR calls for electrification to Swansea and faster train speeds in Wales

Speaking at the Welsh Affairs Select Committee in February, our Managing Director, Mark Hopwood CBE, called for the electrification of the South Wales mainline to reach Swansea, alongside investment to allow trains to travel at a much higher speeds once through the Severn Tunnel.

He said: “We support the direction of travel the Burns Commission are seeking to develop with local services, which is something for Transport for Wales to develop, alongside our services.”

Mr Hopwood also told the committee that an upgrade of Cardiff Central Train Station was needed for it cope with projected increases in passenger numbers over the next decade - based on an expected return following the pandemic.

Some £100m of funding has been promised by the UK Government with match funding also in principle from the £1.3bn City Deal for the Cardiff Capital Region to upgrade the station. A first tranche of £5.8m has been released for detailed design work.

He added: “Cardiff is a really important destination and starting point for many journeys on our business in Wales and particularly the relationship with the stadium (Principality).

“It is very unusual, compared to many cities in the UK and in fact around the world, to have a stadium of that size right in the city centre. So, trying to manage those big events, which hopefully we will see again soon, alongside serving a capital city, is quite challenging.

“There is a masterplan for Cardiff Central which is being developed and we very much support that. We have put quite a bit of extra capacity on our train fleet, but one of the constraints on those big event days in Cardiff, is capacity of the station and ability of people to flow through.

“I think having more capacity to support local services, and to some extent segregating those from faster trains would be a good thing. We have delivered faster journey times between South Wales and London, but I would like to do more in that respect. So, if we can find a way to use the capabilities of the trains more effectively in South Wales, with infrastructure improvements, we would support that.”

### Swansea Platform Extension

Between January and May this year, platform 4 at Swansea station has been under reconstruction to repair and extend the platform length by Network Rail Wales and Western.

Due to subsidence, the platform had been restricted to only a two carriage train, which was insufficient for any GWR services that currently use the station. The reconstruction work has extended this, to allow a ten car Intercity Express Trains to once again use the platform once full works are complete. This will restore the station to full capacity helping to improve reliability and performance.

Careful coordination between Network Rail, Transport for Wales and GWR meant that impact on customers and colleagues was minimised throughout the construction and repair.



### GWR Annual Stakeholder Conference

In October 2020 we held our very first virtual Annual Stakeholder Conference. This was well attended with delegates from across the network drawn from MPs, Members of the Senedd, Councillors, Council Officers, Business, Rail User Groups and Community Rail Partnerships, Community, Charity and Voluntary Groups.

As well as hearing updates and reports from GWR's senior team, the conference included guest speakers Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Rail Minister in the UK

Government and have Simon Jones, Director, Economic Infrastructure at the Welsh Government. Both speakers focused on the importance of rail with Simon updating the Conference on the future ambitions of Wales Transport Strategy. The conference also included a breakout session looking specifically at services in Wales and how rail could support economic growth and help improve sustainability.



## 8.5 GWR's £85,000 grant boost for community-enhancing projects across South Wales

A raft of projects designed to enhance communities across South Wales have received a funding boost from Great Western Railway.

Schemes including a project to raise awareness about the dangers of 'County Lines' and a special 'Community Changemakers Fund' will be among those to benefit.

As part of GWR's franchise agreement with the Department for Transport, the train operator is committed to supporting community and not-for-profit organisations.

Projects in South Wales will benefit to the tune of more than £85,000 as part of GWR's commitment to communities across its network.

They include Fearless, Community Foundation Wales, the Community Changemakers Fund, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and On Track to Achieve.

GWR Advisory Board member and President of the Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association, Professor Stuart Cole CBE, said:

"We are delighted that GWR is making these awards. In particular because the communities along the railway network in south, west and central Wales welcome the active traveller, arriving by train and walking and cycling while in Wales.

"Such travel is sustainable in both environmental and economic senses. It avoids car travel and experiences such as the Heart Of Wales Line Trail provide opportunities to link walking and cycling with rail travel. Tourism is a mainstay of the local Carmarthenshire economy and in particular the hospitality sector, whose meals and accommodation are local businesses which need particular support post Covid. Travel to the countryside also contributes to mental health and well-being."

## 8.6 West

### Exeter Developments

Throughout the challenges of the last 12 months our dedicated project team have been working on the finishing touches to our new train maintenance and train crew depot facilities at Exeter. The first train was able to enter the new main maintenance shed (see photo below) by the end of 2020 and our teams transfer into the new facilities this May. The depot, the largest infrastructure project ever delivered by GWR or FirstGroup, will transform the small and outdated maintenance facilities at Exeter to enable maintenance of the new larger fleet of local trains at Exeter including for the Dartmoor Line reopening. In addition, the new depot incorporates new train crew accommodation, to accommodate the increasing numbers of train crew, replacing temporary facilities on the opposite side of the station that have been in use for many years. The redundant old facilities will be demolished by Network Rail to allow the extension of Exeter St Davids Platform 2, with funding secured from Network Rail's Small Operational Enhancements Fund, helping to reduce congestion at the station. GWR is working closely with Network Rail and other stakeholders on a wider Masterplan for the Exeter St Davids area that will continue a programme of improvements over the next decade.

### Dartmoor Line

GWR has worked with stakeholders over many years to make the case for reopening of the railway to Okehampton, now known as the Dartmoor Line, and over the past 12 months has formed a close partnership with Network Rail, working to seize the moment and secure reopening of the line as the first Restoring your Railway reopening. On 19 March 2021 reopening of the line was finally announced, after many months of surveys and business case development. The railway has now been transferred back into Network Rail ownership and a major programme of upgrades launched ahead of daily services starting by the end of the year. As well as being the first Restoring your Railway reopening, the Dartmoor Line is a key pilot of Network Rails Project SPEED initiative, demonstrating how to deliver projects in less time and at less cost. We are continuing to work closely with local stakeholders to ensure the success of the line including our partners Devon County Council, Dartmoor National Park and the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership as well as key community groups OkeRail and the Dartmoor Railway Supporters Association. Regular updates and information about the reopening can be found at our dedicated website ([dartmoorline.com](http://dartmoorline.com)) which is run by Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership on behalf of all the partners.





## Taunton

After many years of planning, and funding from many partners including Heart of the South West LEP, Somerset County Council, Somerset West & Taunton Council, GWR and the Department for Transport, the redevelopment of Taunton station is almost complete, having risen out of the ground over the past 12 months. Our new station entrance and ticket office opened in April 2021 along with new pedestrianised forecourt facilities, which transform the customer experience on the south side of the station complementing the Great Western Hotel, restored to its former glory by the YMCA. Our new Multi-Storey Car Park, to be followed by our new bus interchange once work on a new highway junction by Somerset County Council is complete.

## Brunel Plaza

At Plymouth station works have rapidly expanded on the Brunel Plaza Masterplan over the past 12 months. The Masterplan, led by Plymouth City Council in partnership with Network Rail, GWR and the University of Plymouth, will result in the redevelopment of land around the station creating a new gateway to Plymouth. The University of Plymouth has commenced works on its Intercity Place project, which will refurbish the old Intercity House office tower into a 21st century academic facility. To enable this GWR and Network Rail relocated key facilities including our driver simulators, which were moved into a new building with funding from Plymouth City Council in Autumn 2020. GWR has now started work on the first phase of concourse improvements with funding from the Plymouth City Council's Transforming Cities Fund, which will see the widening of the small ticket gateline this summer. Development work is underway on the remainder of the phased programme of concourse improvements and Plymouth City Council's plans for upgraded public realm and a new MSCP, which will be delivered over the coming years.



Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

"Our stations serve as gateways to our towns and cities, ensuring communities are connected, enabling access to education and employment and facilitating tourism.

"The Brunel Plaza Scheme will mark an exciting new chapter for Plymouth and I was delighted to visit the station to see first-hand how it will help transform the area into a vibrant catalyst for regeneration.

"This government will continue to invest in vital projects such as this to ensure we boost regional economies and build back better from Covid-19."

## 8.7 In the driver's seat

In March, Plymouth City Council leader Tudor Evans got a taste of life in the hot seat testing the new train driver simulator at Plymouth's station, following the relocation of the facility.

The driver simulator building has been part of the creation of Brunel Plaza. The simulators teach drivers how to control the different types of train before they start in cab training. They also allow qualified drivers the chance to practice driving scenarios or analyse incidents.

**Council leader Tudor Evans OBE said:**

"We are changing the entire look and feel of the station. Bit by bit, we are relocating buildings, knocking parts down or redeveloping others to utterly transform Plymouth station.

"Instead of walking out of the concourse to face a concrete 1970s car park, people will be walking out to a buzzing open plaza with shops and offices. It's an epic project. We have been talking about these plans now for a few years but now, now we are seeing work on the ground and I couldn't be happier."







GWR Interim Managing Director Matthew Golton, and Network Rail's Christian Irwin, greet Cllr Geoff Brown and grandson Jago.

## 8.8 An early start welcomes new services on the Newquay branch line

Representatives from GWR, Cornwall Council and Network Rail braved a cold morning to give a warm welcome to the new December timetable which saw four new early morning Newquay-Par services.

Geoff Brown, of Cornwall Council was joined by GWR Interim Managing Director Matthew Golton and Network Rail's Industry Programme Director for the South West, Christian Irwin on board the new 0712 service which brought them into Par for 0801, where Steve Double, MP for St Austell and Newquay, was there to greet them.

With the new timetable increasing the number of services on the line from 12 to 16 per day, passengers from Newquay now have more choice on when they can travel and will be able to reach key destinations such as Plymouth and London up to three hours earlier than before. The new services also improve travel times for people living along the branch line, making travel to work, school and college in locations such as Newquay and Victoria Business Park much easier.

These changes mark the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the Newquay line. Ambitious proposals are being developed by GWR, Cornwall Council and Network Rail to transform the route including investment in track and signalling. If funded, these proposals will enable more frequent services and pave the way for the longer term Mid-Cornwall Metro vision, which recently secured funding for business case development from the Restoring your Railway Ideas Fund, and aims to link Newquay with St Austell, Truro and Falmouth.



Mel Stride MP  
MP for Central Devon

I am absolutely delighted that my Central Devon constituency will be the first in the country to have a rail service lost to the Beeching cuts of the 1960s and 1970s restored.

I am grateful to Great Western Railway for their help in making this happen and of course to the community in and around Okehampton which has campaigned tirelessly to make the progress we have seen in recent years.

To briefly recap on why the return of the railway is so important:

1. It will provide a valuable service to more than 10,000 residents in and around Okehampton who don't have access to a rail service,
2. It will take commuters off the road, reducing congestion into Exeter at rush hour and reducing air pollution for villages along the A30,
3. It will give a major boost to the local economy of both Okehampton and Crediton,
4. It will, if the Dartmoor Line is then linked to Plymouth at some point in the future, provide a second rail route into South Devon and Cornwall, improving resilience in the event of a problem on the only existing line.

I have been very proud to play my part, holding approximately 50 meetings with Government ministers, local councillors, campaigners, and representatives from Great Western Railway and Network Rail to help progress the project and to help overcome the obstacles we have faced along the way, not least the issue of funding.

The first of these I can remember was in February 2011 when I met with key local figures in Okehampton, including Dartmoor Railway's Operations Manager, to put

a campaign plan in place. In 2014 I secured a commitment from the Secretary of State for Transport Patrick McLoughlin to commission Network Rail to undertake a study to identify options for providing a resilient rail route west of Exeter. I followed this up by organising two ministerial visits to Okehampton – one from Rail Minister Claire Perry and one from Mr McLoughlin to meet with local campaigners and to see the rail infrastructure already in place along the proposed route.

In 2016 I met with Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, asking him to ensure there were sufficient funds for a key Peninsula Rail Task Force Report that will shape the future of rail development in the South West. In 2018 we had a major milestone when I secured the first official commitment from the Government to introduce the service from then Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling, who instructed GWR to prepare plans to introduce regular train services between Exeter and Okehampton delivering “an all-week, all-year train service as soon as reasonably practicable”.

In November 2020 after the completion of feasibility studies the Government gave the official go ahead for the service by releasing a National Infrastructure Strategy document alongside the Chancellor's Autumn Spending Review that included investment in an Okehampton to Exeter service. This was a huge moment for Okehampton and a good example of the Government's commitment to level up infrastructure funding across the country.



