

Wessex Trains

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Background

Wessex trains were set up in 2001 by the strategic rail authority. Currently Wessex trains has the franchise to operate in Devon until 2006, after this point SRA will open to tenders from competing companies.

Over the next two years Wessex trains remit is to continue to run current services but without substantial financial investments. There will not be no major upgrades /changes over the next two years.

Key Issues Highlighted:-

1. Performance

Wessex Trains have performed well in the last few years, exceeding a number of standards set by the passenger Charter Target (PCT) e.g. cancellations -Wessex trains achieved 99.9% exceeding PCT target of 99.5%. During 2003 – achieved all reliability and punctuality targets.

All Devon lines apart from the Taymour Valley line (7% reduction due to decline of the dockyards) have had a positive increase in passenger journeys in the last few years (9% growth).

2. Improvements

Clock face time tabling is currently being established for mainline and branch lines removing many accessibility barriers.

3. Greater Direct Local Journeys on branch journeys

Greater number of direct trains encompassing Exmouth, Barnstable and Painton are currently being established in a self-contained network. Providing greater local opportunities and increased access to local users.

4. Greater Frequency

A number of extra services (E.g. Exeter line) have been established.

5. No. Of Coaches

On a number of services the number of coaches provided has been increased, increasing capacity of the more popular routes.

6. Stations

- Wessex trains are currently working in partnership with Devon County Council to improve local branches e.g. Barnstable branch.
- Network rail is currently investigating inserting a ramp to raise platform levels.

Recommendations for the Next DLTP (2006-2011)

1. Performance

Possible improvements can be achieved through de-coupling some local and long distance operations (delays are incurred when train sets have to arrive from areas such as Cardiff in the morning and get delayed on there journey thus having a knock on effect).

2. Met Office / Sowton Industrial Estate

Network Rail would investigate the feasibility of an extra stop. Wessex trains, as an operator is not in a position to do this. An extra stop would be operationally difficult, as it would compromise the half hourly Exmouth line service.

3. Raising Platform Level

The option of putting in a ramp is not ideal (short-term solution).

Panel Discussion: -

- Current partnership working between the Local Authority and Wessex trains is very good. However there is still greater scope for enhanced partnership/communication between the SRA and Network rail.

DEVON LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN – 2006-2011

- Major schemes are not happening as quickly as they should – this is a barrier to further investment and urgently needs to be resolved.
- Integration of bus and rail services is currently not a priority for individual operators – There is no commercial imperative, therefore an outside stimulus is needed. Further research on the potential of this area is required.
- Through ticketing – Further research is required investigating the demand for this service. Limited resources available for the implementation of these schemes.
- Ticket Collection- It's important to record the number of rail users, but difficult on short journeys and where open stations rely on ticket collectors. This being said it is not perceived as being a major problem. A possible solution includes closing off St David's and Central – (but smaller stations cannot be closed off), or increasing the number of ticket collectors.
- Installation of automatic ticket machines /internet for supplying tickets
- When the facilities of a number of operators are used during a journey -All Cats computer program allocates profits to the multiple train operators.
- The backlog of maintenance is still a major issue. A possible future issue that may arise includes the impact of limited investment on the Grand Western mainline. There would be a great impact on Devon services if there were problems on this line.
- There is a current lack of availability of new rolling stock for the rural routes. This will be an emerging issue, as elderly trains have increased environmental emissions and limited facilities.
- There is a great potential for rail serving the Exeter hub in conjunction with other public transport facilities e.g. park and ride.