

Management Committee

12 December 2017

South Western Railways Timetable Consultation

For Decision

Brief Holders

Cllr Huckle – Transport and Infrastructure
Cllr Nowak – Environment and Sustainability

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

S Hill, Strategic Director

Report Author:

T Sneller – Local Plans Team Leader

Statutory Authority

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Purpose of Report

1. To brief members on South Western Railways' proposed timetables changes and seek agreement for a response to the consultation on these changes.

Recommendations

2.
 - a) That members agree the response to the consultation included in Appendix 1
 - b) That members agree for the relevant portfolio holders to consider and subject to its content, endorse the response made by Dorset County Council when it becomes available.

Reason for Decision

3. To enable a formal response to be made to the consultation on changes to train timetables

Background and Reason Decision Needed

4. On 29th September 2017, South Western Railway opened a consultation on changes to train timetables across their rail network. The closing date for responses to this consultation is 22nd December 2017. The network operated by South Western Railways includes the lines from London Waterloo to Weymouth. Changes are proposed to services on this line.

Weymouth to London Waterloo

5. The Weymouth to London Waterloo line runs from Weymouth through Dorchester South, Bournemouth, Southampton and on to London Waterloo.
6. Currently weekday train services on this line provide a twice hourly direct service to London Waterloo with journey times from Weymouth being between approximately 2hrs 45 minutes and 3hrs. Table 1 shows the local stations at which this service typically stops.

Table 1: Current weekday train service Weymouth to Bournemouth

Station	Departure (mins past the hour)	Departure (mins past the hour)	Typical journey time to London Waterloo
Weymouth	03	20	2:46 to 3:00
Upwey	–	24	2:56
Dorchester South	13	33	2:36 to 2:47
Moreton	–	39	2:41
Wool	–	45	
Wareham	28	53	
Holton Heath	–	56	
Hamworthy	35	01	
Poole	40	07	
Parkstone	44	–	
Branksome	48	–	
Bournemouth	54	17	1:56 to 2:03
Terminates	London	London	

7. The full current timetable (table 28) can be viewed here: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/plan-my-journey/timetables>
8. The proposal from South Western Railways is to amend this timetable. Detail of local stations is shown in Table 2 with the overall headlines being:
 - *one train per hour calling at Woking, Winchester, Southampton Airport, Southampton Central, Brockenhurst, Bournemouth, Poole, Wareham, Wool, Dorchester South and Weymouth;*
 - *Upwey, Moreton, Holton Heath, Hamworthy (and other stations) lose their regular through service to Waterloo instead being served by the Portsmouth – Weymouth service;*
 - *two trains per hour from Wool all day.*
9. Journey times from Weymouth to London Waterloo are reduced from the present service to between approximately 2hrs 35 minutes and 2hrs 45 minutes.

Table 2: Proposed weekday train service Weymouth to Bournemouth

Station	Departure (mins past the hour)	Departure (mins past the hour)	Typical journey time to London Waterloo
Weymouth	00	37	2:34
Upwey	04	–	3:07
Dorchester South	12	47	2:24
Moreton	18	–	2:53
Wool	24	57	
Wareham	31	04	
Holton Heath	35	–	
Hamworthy	40	–	
Poole	45	14	
Parkstone	49	–	
Branksome	52	–	
Bournemouth	59	28	1:48
Terminates	Portsmouth (change at Southampton for London)	London	

10. The full proposed timetables (tables 158 and 165) can be viewed here:
<https://www.southwesternrailway.com/contact-and-help/timetable-consultation>

Implications

11. Although the proposals reduce the frequency of direct services to London Waterloo from two per hour to only one per hour, overall journey times from Weymouth are reduced by 12 minutes.
12. In addition to the hourly direct service to London, a direct service from Weymouth to Portsmouth is proposed to run at a frequency of one per hour. This Portsmouth service offers the opportunity of changing trains at Southampton Central for services to London. This would involve a wait of between 10 and 20 minutes for the London service and enable a connection from Upwey/Moreton to London with around a 3hrs 07 minutes journey time. This is the next direct service from Weymouth to London.
13. To enable the reduced journey times, South Western Railways propose to remove the direct London service from Upwey and Moreton stations from all but peak times necessitating a change of trains to access services to London at off-peak times. However, the local daytime service within Dorset from these stations is maintained at the current hourly frequency.

14. The potential impact of the proposed changes could be felt in two ways. Firstly by users within Dorset who rely on local train services within the county (local users) primarily for commuting and leisure trips and secondly by users who travel further afield into and out of Dorset for example to and from Southampton, Southampton Airport and London (distance users).
15. It is unlikely that many businesses or individuals rely on the current twice hourly direct train services to London. However a frequent direct service to London would be seen as an advantage. The 12 minute reduction in journey time is not considered to compensate for the reduction in frequency of direct services to London.
16. It should be noted however that the travel times similar to the current situation would be achievable by changing trains at Southampton Central.
17. An important factor for attracting business investment is access and journey time to London. Although an hourly direct service will meet this need to some extent, supplemented by the hourly non-direct service, the greater frequency is considered to be important.
18. The speed of the connection is important and therefore the reduced journey time to London is likely to have a slight positive impact for businesses. However, with a total journey time of over two hours, companies requiring reasonable connectivity to London would most likely consider the Weymouth area to be outside of their search parameters.
19. Users who travel from/to beyond Southampton are small in number (only 12% of all journeys from Dorchester South) but the impact on these users could potentially be significant. Improved connectivity within the travel to work area has the potential to bring about benefits to the local economy through access to a greater pool of employees/employment opportunities.
20. Connectivity to key destinations such as Southampton Airport is considered to be important for local people, businesses and tourists. Reduced direct services to these key destinations and the need to change trains, has the potential to have a negative impact on users especially those traveling with heavy baggage.
21. In the longer term, through the joint West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan an additional 600 homes are proposed at Crossways (adjacent to Moreton Station) and around 900 new homes in the vicinity of Upwey Station through the allocation at Littlemoor and the permission at Wey Valley.
22. In addition, the review of the local plan which is moving towards preferred options consultation, is seeking to identify sites sufficient to accommodate around 4,500 new homes on top of that already proposed. Opportunities for further growth in the Crossways (Moreton Station) and Upwey areas are being considered.
23. The proposals do not result in a reduction in local services from Moreton and Upwey as there will continue to be one train per hour as now. The reduction is to off-peak direct services to London which would cease.

However by changing trains at Southampton Central, comparable train times to the current situation (12 minutes slower) would be possible.

24. Currently there are three trains per hour travelling from Bournemouth direct to London however the third service (starting in Poole) is a very slow service with the later departure arriving in London before this slow service. The proposed timetable includes two direct trains per hour between Bournemouth and London offering journey times of between 1hr 57 minutes (starting in Weymouth) and 2hrs 06 minutes (starting in Poole).
25. The service on the London Waterloo to Exeter line is broadly similar to the existing service with slight improvements in journey times to London Waterloo. It is therefore proposed to support the changes to services on the Exeter to London Waterloo line through the consultation response.
26. The current franchise will run for a period of seven years before going out to tender. The timetable will also be reviewed in December 2020.

Proposed response to consultation

27. The consultation documentation from South Western Railway included a number of questions with one relating to the London to Weymouth line. The proposed response to these questions is included in Appendix 1.
28. A question was also asked about the retention of seasonal services running between London Waterloo, Yeovil Pen Mill and Weymouth however no contextual information was included in the consultation material. Retention of this service is supported and this is reflected in the consultation response in Appendix 1.
29. In addition to the above points it is proposed that, the relevant portfolio holders review and subject to its content, endorse the response made by Dorset County Council as the Highways Authority when it becomes available. The County Councils response is expected to be available a few days after this committee meeting.

Corporate Plan

30. Empowering thriving and inclusive communities; Building a stronger local economy.

Financial

31. There are no financial implications from this report

Equalities

32. There are no equalities issues raised from this report

Environmental

33. The environmental impact associated with the proposed alterations to train times should encourage greater use of the railway line from the main stations. The reduction in direct services to London from Moreton and Upwey may deter users from these stations.

Economic Development

34. The proposed changes to train services are considered to have no or a minimal positive impact on economic development.

Consultation and Engagement

35. This report proposes a response to the South Western Railways consultation on changes to the train timetables serving stations within the plan area. Only internal consultation has been undertaken in formulating this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Proposed response to the consultation from Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

Appendix 2: Response made by Dorset County Council for Brief Holder consideration and endorsement (to follow)

Background Papers

<https://www.southwesternrailway.com/contact-and-help/timetable-consultation>

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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Date: 15 November 2017

Appendix 1: Proposed response to the consultation

CONSULTATION QUESTION: South Dorset and Hampshire Local Services
Stakeholders have asked for faster journeys and improved service intervals. We plan that journeys from Weymouth to London will be up to 12 minutes faster and for the two trains per hour between Weymouth and Bournemouth to be spaced much nearer to a half-hourly frequency, Wool will see both Weymouth trains calling there. This however requires the link from some less busy stations to London to be broken at off-peak times with the trains instead providing cross Southampton connectivity to Fareham and Portsmouth. Same platform connections will be provided at Brockenhurst for passengers using the local service to connect to/from London.

Do you support the speeding up of services from Weymouth with improved service intervals between Weymouth and Bournemouth and the change in connectivity for smaller stations?

Proposed response:

Weymouth and Portland Borough Council objects to the reduction in direct services to London from stations within its area. Although the improved journey time to London is supported, the suggested increase of 12 minutes over a 2hrs 45 minutes journey is not considered to compensate for the loss of service.

Faster trains connecting to London have the potential to encourage increased investment by businesses into the local area. However the frequency of services is also considered important to help facilitate future investment.

Currently trains from London can be significantly overcrowded. The proposals suggest replacing the three trains that run currently from London to Bournemouth with two direct trains. Reducing the number of services to the area can only result in increased overcrowding especially at peak times.

There is potential for a significant impact on tourist visitors to the South Dorset area. The current service of two direct trains per hour enables users to travel from London and Southampton Airport to Dorchester and Weymouth. This is a significant, convenient and sustainable route into the area for visitors. Similarly, for residents of the area, direct trains to London and Southampton Airport are considered important. A reduction in direct services and the need for a change of trains at Southampton makes the journey significantly less convenient especially for those travelling with heavy luggage.

Reduction in direct trains from Upwey and Moreton will necessitate a change of trains at Southampton Central. This may deter some users. The longer journey time (the change of trains increases current journey times by up to 20 minutes) from these locations is also likely to discourage users of the service.

Of particular concern is the impact of the reduced service from Upwey and Moreton given the levels of residential growth committed at these locations. There are around 600 new dwellings to be built in the vicinity of Moreton Station and around 900 additional dwellings in the vicinity of Upwey Station.

In addition to the above committed growth, further residential expansion at the two locations is being considered as part of the review of the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland joint Local Plan. It is therefore considered to be short-sighted to remove direct London services from this location given the increase in population that will occur in the area. The impact of implementing any amended timetable needs to be carefully monitored and subject to review should a detrimental impact be noticed.

The service connecting Weymouth to Portsmouth is welcomed as it offers greater connectivity to the local area. This potentially opens new employment opportunities for residents and for businesses. However, as the Southampton to Portsmouth conurbation is already well served by frequent trains, the introduction of this service should not be at the detriment of the more frequent direct service to London. It is possible to change trains at Southampton Central for services to Portsmouth. A local shuttle service could run between Weymouth and Bournemouth/Poole to supplement a twice hourly London service and provide additional services for local commuters.

It is understood that the existing rail infrastructure restricts rail capacity. There should be a commitment to improving this rail infrastructure (dualling of the line to Dorchester and an upgrade of the power supply) to increase the frequency and speed of services on the railway. In addition the previously supported upgrade of Dorchester South Station and improvements to Weymouth Station would further encourage use of the line.

The alterations to the Exeter to London (via Sherborne) service is considered unlikely to have a significant effect as train times are similar to the current situation. The proposed changes are therefore supported.

QUESTION: Saturday seasonal service Waterloo – Yeovil - Weymouth

Do you feel that the seasonal through service that operates between Waterloo, Yeovil Pen Mill and Weymouth, via Maiden Newton, should continue?

Seasonal Weymouth, Yeovil and London connecting services should be maintained and expanded to a year round service as it helps to deliver alternative options for services to the southern Dorset area. Although there is a need for some infrastructure works, the connection to Yeovil from Weymouth and on to London and Bristol is a significant opportunity to enhance the connectivity of southern Dorset that should be explored further.