

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/great-western-rail-franchise>

HATHERLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL RESPONSE Feb 2018 (with thanks to Okehampton TC and OkeRail)

Q5. Which station(s) on the Great Western network do you use most frequently?

The community would use the most local station – Exeter St Davids.
Though in summer there's a Sunday train service running from Okehampton.

Q6. Which service group (listed in paragraph 1.1 of the consultation document) do you use most frequently?

Western

Q7. What is the most common purpose of your journey on Great Western?

Commuting

Page 5: Objectives for the franchises

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these priorities for the Great Western franchise in the 2020s?

Agree with the majority

Q9. Why?

There needs to be greater emphasis and recognition that rail growth (particularly the reintroduction of the rail service from Okehampton to Exeter) can bring economic growth in a largely rural area such as West Devon and North Cornwall. The benefits are improved connectivity, employment opportunities, reduced journey times and environmental benefits by reducing reliance on road vehicles, thus reducing CO2 emissions.

Q10. Are there any priorities which you would add or change, and why?

A fast and efficient service for commuters and in bound tourists to the north and west of the Devon and Cornwall. The eventual aim should be to reinstate rural rail routes closed under the Beeching plan. For example the Rail Vision statement from the Government which announced the reinstatement of a regular service to Okehampton.

Page 6: Splitting the franchise

Q11. Do you agree or disagree with the proposals for splitting the Great Western franchise into smaller franchises?

Disagree

Q12. Why?

The SW corridor would not benefit from splitting the franchise. Splitting the franchise in this way will leave a heavy financial burden on the franchise serving long distance to Devon and Cornwall. The case needs to be made for keeping the franchise together, with the focus on the travelling public. It does not follow that this will encourage more bidders. It is likely that this franchise will not return as much to the treasury as a combined franchise would.

Page 7: Geographic boundaries of the franchise

Q13. Do you agree or disagree with the option outlined above for transferring Greenford branch services between West Ealing and Greenford to the Chiltern franchise?

No opinion

Why?

This change would not affect the service to the locality served by Hatherleigh Town Council.

Q14. Do you agree or disagree with the option outlined above for transferring the existing Brighton-Southampton portion of the current Great Western Bristol – Salisbury – Southampton - Brighton service to the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise (or a successor franchise)?

No opinion

Why?

This change would not affect the service to the locality served by Hatherleigh Town Council.

Q15. What other locations or routes do you think should be considered for adding to the franchise?

Okehampton Town to Exeter Central and St David's stations via Okehampton Parkway.

Give your reasons.

A service to Okehampton, as a first step in reinstatement of the 'Northern Route' between Exeter and Plymouth. The service to Okehampton and Tavistock are already asked for in the Governments 'Connecting People: a strategic vision for rail'. This would reduce journey times into Exeter from Okehampton especially as car parking spaces at Exeter St Davids are being reduced. Linking the central section would produce an additional route between Exeter and Plymouth adding resilience.

Page 8: Collaboration

Q16. What do you think are the main challenges that might be addressed through coordination and integration between the train operator and Network Rail?

Improved communication between train operating companies and Network Rail. For example avoiding unnecessary disruption to passengers in the event of breakdowns or delays by ensuring the availability of other modes of transport in these situations. Creating resilience by a planned programme of maintenance, upgrades and track reinstatement. For example, the complementary route via Exeter, Okehampton, Tavistock through to Plymouth, which would minimise any disruption caused at, or on, the Dawlish route.

Q17. What do you think should be the future priorities for strengthened partnership working between the franchise operator and Network Rail?

Regular meetings between Network Rail and other franchise operators to ensure continuity and the sharing of information. The need to increase punctuality and passenger satisfaction through less speed restrictions and improved reliability.

Page 9: Infrastructure enhancement schemes

Q18. Are you promoting a scheme for a new station or line which has a realistic prospect of being funded? Please provide brief details here.

Hatherleigh Town Council very much supports Okehampton Town Council, OkeRail and the Peninsula Rail Group in its campaign for the reinstatement of the Northern Line link (Okehampton to Exeter), and an Okehampton Parkway station.

Q19. What actions would you like the franchise to undertake in order to support the development of this scheme?

The franchise holder should ensure that when reopening the line to Okehampton any leaseholder of the aggregate industries section of the track from Coleford junction to Okehampton can satisfy the requirement of safety and maintenance of the track. At a recent meeting of the OkeRail Forum it was noted that the current leaseholder only operates a limited service for five weeks of the year at Christmas. This operation should not jeopardise tourism, business and commuter traffic throughout the rest of the year, to the towns and villages in West Devon and North Cornwall.

Page 10: Train service improvements

Q20. Which routes do you believe could benefit from improvements to train frequencies?

When the Okehampton to Exeter line is reinstated, the introduction of an hourly service.

Q21. What times of the day or week are these improvements needed?

We would like to see an hourly service, 7 days a week. From Okehampton to Exeter thus linking with the National Rail network.

Q22. Why?

Improving the connectivity for the population (commuters, businesses, students, tourists, etc) of North and West Devon and North Cornwall via the Okehampton rail hub to the rest of the rail network would have huge benefits in terms of economic growth, employment opportunities, reduced journey times and environmental benefits by reducing reliance on road vehicles, reducing congestion, thus reducing CO2 emissions and relieving parking in the cities of Exeter and Plymouth. Not to mention how all this brings improvements to our mental well-being from reduced stress levels!

Q23. If the only way of achieving earlier first trains or later last trains was to curtail services at other times of the week or year so Network Rail can carry out essential maintenance, what times would you suggest?

Weekend evenings can be very popular with passengers. Some very late services are not heavily used on Monday's to Thursdays. These would be the best times during the week to curtail later trains. Selective engineering work means those travelling locally for social reasons can still have a local service maintained over much of the Network. The period between the second week in January and Easter also tends to be quieter generally. Excluding the half term holiday and this presents opportunities for reducing late and very early trains during this period.

Page 11: Reducing journey times

Q24. Do you agree or disagree with reducing journey times to destinations in the South West by reducing stops at intermediate stations? **Disagree**

Q25. Which services or stations would benefit from this approach? **disagree**

Q26. Why? **n/a**

Q27. Which services or stations would be disadvantaged by this approach?

Any potential service from Okehampton to Exeter should continue to stop at Sampford Courtney and Crediton.

Q28. Why?

Not stopping at these intermediate stations on the proposed Okehampton line defeats the object of providing a suitable service for a rural area and would disadvantage those wishing to travel to work, education etc and, inbound and outbound tourists.

Q29. Are there any locations or routes on the Great Western network where it could be appropriate to reduce station stops in order to speed up longer-distance journeys? **Don't know**

Page 12: Direct journeys

Q31. Which direct services such as those described above should be preserved in the next franchise?

don't know

Q33. Are there any other stations between which you feel direct services should be provided?

Okehampton to London Paddington via Exeter St Davids.

Q34. Why?

Currently the journey times to Exeter from locations in West Devon are protracted and create reliance on car usage and congestion in Exeter city. A connecting coach service from specific locations in west Devon to the proposed Okehampton Parkway with an onwards service to London Paddington would considerably reduce journey times for business travellers and tourists, thus providing economic benefit to the region.

The demand for this service has been shown by the running of a special train from Okehampton to London Paddington (18/03/17) using a HST where all seats were sold within one week.

Q35. At which locations should connections between different services be improved? **don't know**

Page 13: Demand for seasonal services

Q37. What additional seasonal train services do you consider to be particularly important to retain or improve in the next franchise?

The retention of the summer Sunday service to Okehampton and to increase the frequency of this service to six trains per day.

Q38. Why?

It's very popular and should be expanded. Inbound tourists and the opportunity for local residents for onward travel to national and international destinations.

Page 14: Other train service issues

Q39. What other train service enhancements do you believe should be considered for inclusion in the next franchise?

To undertake a feasibility study and provide a timetable for the reconstruction and reintroduction of the railway between Okehampton (Meldon Junction) and Bere Alston.

Q40. Why?

This would provide a complementary route offering resilience in poor weather conditions on the South Coast.

Q41. If you are a freight operator or represent the freight industry, please set out your expectations of likely future demand for freight capacity across the routes served by the franchise. **n/a**

Page 15: Rolling stock

Q42. What do you think are the main priorities that we should seek to address in relation to rolling stock?

It needs to be fit for purpose and able to handle enough luggage. In the far South West there are many people who cycle for pleasure and consideration needs to be given to these users. Suitable spaces with folding chairs need to be identified as many passengers will not fold their pushchairs and this can be a challenge for wheelchair users. Replacement of the old diesel multiple units on the rural branch line with Class 158 units. Train-to-internet connectivity on all passenger coaches, the retention of a quiet coach which restricts the use of mobile phones.

Q43. Are there any routes which do not currently have First Class accommodation where you think it should be provided? **don't know**

Q44. Should the franchisee provide specific services and facilities for: Yes No
business travellers? **X**
families travelling with children? **X**
other passengers? **X**

Please provide more information on what you think should be provided?

Business travellers need a space to work and do business. Train to internet connectivity. Electric charging points and tables for laptops are needed for the business traveller to be able to work efficiently as well as reliable and free Wi-Fi. Families with pushchairs need an area designated for them. Fold up seats that can double up as normal seating need to be installed. If pushchairs are not on board then seats can be used for other passengers. Disabled travellers need a means of being able to call for assistance from on board staff from where they are on board. Cycling is very popular in the far South West so there needs to be adequate spaces for Bicycles on board. Greater leg room for the benefit of all passengers and a reduction of airline seating.

Page 16: Rolling stock

Q45. What benefits or disadvantages do you think do you think innovative technologies for rolling stock, e.g. hydrogen or battery power, could bring?

Investments should be made to utilise as much as possible in renewable energy systems.

Q46. Are there any routes which would be particularly suitable for these types of innovative technology e.g. hydrogen or battery power? **don't know**

Page 17: Accessibility

Q47. Which stations do you think should be a priority for improving accessibility?

Okehampton Town station should be upgraded to improve facilities and access for those with disabilities.

Q48. Give your reasons.

To comply with legislation and to allow access by all members of the community.

Q49. What other improvements could help to make rail services easier to access and use for all passengers?

Integrated rail/coach services with adequate coach parking. It is important that there is always a member of staff on board the train to assist disabled passengers at any time of day, deter violence and disagreements between passengers and assist in getting Police attention for Serious crimes. They can also ensure toilets work and answer any concerns the passengers have. At stations assistance is often needed with luggage or getting a ramp for wheelchairs. To not do so would surely be an infringement of the Equality Act 2010 so stations need staffing as well.

Page 18: Stations

Q50. Do you think these are the right priorities for stations in the new franchise? **Yes**

Page 20: Focus

Q52. At which stations do you think co-ordination between transport modes could be improved?

The proposed Okehampton Parkway station will act as a rail head for a very large area extending out towards Hatherleigh, Bude in North Cornwall and Launceston. There will need to be useful bus connections, taxi and cycle interchange.

Q53. How do you believe these areas could be improved such as through timetabling connections or through physical works at the location?

A combined coach and rail timetable so there is enough time for passengers to make their connection. With particular reference to the proposed Okehampton Parkway station, provision should be made for a pedestrian bridge to link the expanding housing development in the East of Okehampton with the station and its carpark.

Q54. What do you believe are examples of best practice elsewhere which could be relevant for stations on the Great Western franchise network? **don't know**

Page 21: Fares

Q55. Do you agree or disagree with the priorities for: Agree Disagree **fares? X ticketing? X**

Which priorities would you change or add, and why?

Ticket vending machines at the proposed Okehampton Parkway and existing Town stations, and a realtime information system at both sites for bus and train arrival and departure times. Ticket machines need to be able to issue the cheapest fare. In Devon, for instance, a 'Devon Evening Ranger' is often cheaper than a straightforward ticket. Ticket machines do not currently issue these.

Page 22: Fares

Q56. What changes to the fares structure could be of benefit to you?

Fares need to be affordable for the local community the railway serves, taking into account the low waged economies of the south west. There is a critical balance that needs to be achieved between affordability and customer demand. Greater flexibility so that rail and bus tickets are interchangeable.

Page 23: Community rail

Q57. What more do you feel that the franchisee could be doing to help the Community

Rail sector increase its contribution to society and the railway, for example in harnessing local community relations and outreach into the community?

It would be good if the Community Rail Partnership for Devon and Cornwall provided an information leaflet with timetable and a section about things to do in the Okehampton area to correspond with the summer trains. The franchise needs to recognise that not all people are able to use the railway unaided.

Page 24: Investing in the workforce and industry skills

Q58. What more should the franchisee do to invest in the workforce and wider industry skills? **Does it offer apprenticeships?**

Page 25: Further priorities for the franchise

Q59. Are there any other priorities you would wish to see addressed?

The reconstruction and reintroduction of the service between Bere Alston and Okehampton thus completing the Northern route.

Q60. Which of the priorities identified in Chapter 4 do you think should be pursued most urgently in the period between 2020 and 2022?

The Okehampton scheme, with a service reintroduced by 2019.

Q61. What initiatives, not currently offered, could be provided through improved technology to meet the changing requirements of passengers?

Investigate what works well in other countries

Q62. In what ways do you think that the franchise could promote equality of opportunity for people with:

disabilities? **Improving accessibility**

other protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equalities Act 2010?

Page 26: Final comments

Q63. Do you wish to add any other comments?

Our road networks are clogged, public transport desperately needs investment to make it more attractive by improving reliability and fairer pricing.