Department for Transport

Stakeholder Briefing Document, Great Western Franchise Replacement

June 2012

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1. Foreword

The Department is grateful to all the organisations and individuals who took the time and effort to respond to this consultation. Their valuable comments and suggestions have been considered as the specification for the new Great Western franchise has been developed. The Department has endeavoured, in good faith, to produce a summary of the responses received, which is in Section 5 of this document, and an analysis of Key Issues, in Section 4. Any significant omission or incorrect emphasis is entirely unintentional. Bidders for the franchise will have access to all consultation responses submitted.

2. Background

The consultation document for the proposed Great Western franchise was issued by the Department on the 22 December 2011, and closed on the 31st of March 2012. The new Great Western franchise is expected to commence on in July 2013.

This report summarises the responses made to the Great Western Franchise Replacement consultation document published by the Department for Transport in December 2011. The consultation sought views on the specification that will be provided to shortlisted franchise bidders. The consultation period ran until 31 March 2012 and 1,144 responses were received. Over two thirds of the responses were from members of the public. A large number of businesses, trade bodies and interest groups also made contributions.

Most respondents were in broad agreement with the stated franchise objectives. Amendments proposed included making reference to the wider economic role of the railways and adding more detail on the meaning of 'value for money'.

Following the launch of the consultation, Consultation Events were held during March 2012, in Bristol, Cardiff, Exeter and Reading.

Having considered the responses to the consultation, and having considered the views of the short listed bidders for the franchise, the Department has now finalised the Train Service Requirement (TSR) to be included within the Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the Great Western Franchise.

The Government considers that operators are better placed to react to the changing demands of their customers in the creation of timetables than central Government. That is why we are giving more flexibility to bidders with regard to the configuration of services, within a framework set by the franchise which protects key outcomes for passengers, taxpayers and the wider economy.

The Department believes that a more flexible TSR contained in the Great Western ITT should give bidders the opportunity to deliver a better service for passengers by enabling them to react more effectively to changing passenger demand and to commercial opportunities. It should also strengthen the value for money the franchise delivers for the taxpayer and thus aid our overall efforts to put the railways on a more sustainable financial position.

The proposed TSR specification for the Great Western Franchise is based on the weekday and weekend flows of summer 2012 First Great Western timetable. The number of calls at each station has been specified to be within 5% of the same total for each as at May 2012 (except for a small number of stations which, for historic reasons, currently receive very high numbers of calls and where a somewhat larger reduction would still leave passengers with frequent services). This approach is designed to provide greater flexibility for operators to match their service proposition to passenger demand, and the evolving needs of their customers over the 15 year franchise terms. It will deliver an equivalent level of service as today but through a more flexible service pattern.

Under this approach, the Department does not yet know how bidders will choose to use the flexibility offered. Department will therefore consider the affordability, benefits and costs of the proposed franchise before contract award, once the proposals from bidders are more clearly defined.

The Department for Transport announced the names of the four short-listed bidders for the new franchise on 29 [check] March 2012. These organisations will receive an Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the new franchise and are:

- First Great Western Trains Limited (FirstGroup plc)
- GW Trains Limited (Arriva UK Trains Limited – DB (UK) Investments Limited)
- NXGW Trains Limited (National Express Group PLC)
- Stagecoach Great Western Trains Limited (Stagecoach Group plc)

The ITT has been produced following consideration of stakeholder responses to this consultation. The bidders for the new franchise have also been extensively consulted on their views to inform the final specification.

The ITT sets out the bidding process and the specification for the franchise along with the scope of the issues bidders will need to consider when formulating their responses. Bidders are required to submit their final bids to the Department on xx October 2012 and it is expected that the Department will make an announcement of the preferred bidder to operate the franchise in February/March 2013.

The purpose of this SBD is to provide stakeholders with a summary of the recent consultation process and responses. This document should be considered alongside the consultation document, the response to the consultation on Reforming Rail Franchising, and the final specification outlined in the Invitation to Tender.

3. Shortlisted bidder contact details

Contact details for shortlisted bidders are as follows:

NXGW Trains Limited (National Express Group PLC)
Lucy Hayward
Tel: 01793 334943
Mobile: 07906 411830
Email: Lucy.Hayward@nationalexpress.com

Stagecoach Great Western Trains Limited (Stagecoach Group plc)
Phil Dominey
Mobile: 07771 826 930
Email: pdominey@stagecoachrail.com

First Great Western Trains Limited (FirstGroup plc)
Russell Evans
Deputy Director GW Bid
First Rail Holdings
50 Eastbourne Terrace
London W2 6LG
Mobile: 07788178883
Email: russell.evans@firstgroup.com

GW Trains Limited (Arriva UK Trains Limited – DB (UK) Investments Limited
Denise Lennox
Bid Director
Arriva UK Trains Ltd
2nd Floor, The Podium
1 Eversholt Street
London NW1 2DN
Email: lennoxd@arrivatrains.co.uk

4. Franchise objectives and key related issues

The Great Western franchise represents a unique set of complex, interdependent challenges set against growing demand for rail services, to which the Department, and the rail industry must respond over the next 15 years. Accordingly, the objectives set for the franchise competition and set out in the Consultation Document are:

- To effectively manage franchise changes, ensuring successful implementation of major projects of investment
- To provide appropriate capacity for passenger services
- To ensure the overall passenger experience improves
- To deliver the highest practical standards of reliability and punctuality
- To deliver services in the most cost effective and efficient manner, and to consider the possible devolution of accountability for local services

Integration with existing planned workstreams

Achieving coordination with other planned workstreams will be essential for the new franchise. Network Rail has plans for a complete upgrade of the GWML route between London and Cardiff by 2025 and the franchise is expected to transfer services to Crossrail from 2018. Intercity Express Programme (IEP) – most respondents were supportive of IEP. There were several suggestions for the IEP proposed services, including more trains, later trains, network extensions and comments regarding the use of bi-mode rolling stock.

Electrification - the majority of those commenting on the plans for electrification would like to see the programme extended beyond Cardiff and to branch lines, particularly those in the Thames Valley area.

Heathrow access - there was a great deal of support for the Western rail link to Heathrow, particularly from businesses.

Crossrail - Crossrail was generally supported. A number of respondents emphasised that existing through trains from Reading and Slough to London should be maintained.

High Level Output Specification (HLOS) - respondents supported the capacity improvement commitments. Several respondents also proposed that the Western access to Heathrow and Bristol service improvements should be included in HLOS.

Capacity and service changes

Increasing capacity on the franchise was a key concern for respondents, a large number of whom emphasised that demand had increased in recent years.

Respondents were encouraged to suggest viable changes to services. The most common suggestion was for more services in the Bristol commuter area. There were also calls to increase the frequency of fast intercity services.

Respondents were asked whether they would wish to see the overnight service from Penzance to London retained. The vast majority of respondents to this question said they would like the service continue not least for the wider economic benefits it is thought to bring to the south west. Other service proposals frequently mentioned included several lines in the West of England including the Tarka line from Exeter to Barnstaple and local and intercity services using the Cornish mainline.

Respondents also made general comments about service improvements in their area, such as improved journey times and better connections. Suggestions were made for later and earlier services to and from London and other large cities. There was however considerable contradiction among responses regarding service provision at intermediate station stops on local mainline services and on branch lines. Some respondents wanted to see faster services with fewer intermediate stops and some were keen for current stopping patterns to be maintained with the possible inclusion of additional stops.

Rolling stock

Respondents were asked for their views on existing rolling stock and its deployment. While some respondents commented that the oldest existing sets could continue operating for several years to come given recent refurbishments, the majority were opposed to the idea of continued refurbishment and utilisation of the oldest stock. Respondents said that new stock ought to be procured rather than cascaded from other parts of the network.

Passenger experience

Ten per cent of respondents made suggestions for station improvements including improved accessibility, lighting and waiting areas. Respondents also highlighted that some of the older trains are not wheelchair accessible.

Passenger communication suggestions focused on providing real time information and the use of social media, particularly during disruption. In general, existing communication during disruption was poorly perceived.

Eight per cent made suggestions as to how security and safety could be improved. All responses referred to personal security rather than the risk of accidents on the network. The most common proposals were for more CCTV and more staff on trains and at stations. There was concern that staffing levels might fall as a result of cost-saving measures.

A large number of respondents suggested that multi-modal connections with local bus services could be improved as well as parking provision for those accessing stations by car or bicycle.

The potential for smart ticketing was welcomed with many respondents citing Transport for London's Oyster card,as the kind of system that should be an aspiration for the franchise. Other suggestions included more ticket machines, print-at-home tickets and the continuation of existing local carnet schemes.

Five per cent of responses stated that an aspect of onboard comfort should be improved. Comfort in this context included references to the cleanliness of the trains as well as the comfort of the seating.

Respondents said that in times of service disruption, where possible, re-routed trains should be used instead of rail replacement buses. Concerns were expressed that at present where buses are unavoidable the buses used are often cramped with insufficient luggage space.

Monitoring performance

In addition to the National Passenger Survey several respondents suggested monitoring performance through mystery shopping surveys and involving local interest groups.

Environmental concerns, punctuality and reliability

Nine per cent mentioned environmental issues. Common suggestions for targets included patronage, as a proxy for modal shift from cars, carbon dioxide emissions and recycling.

A large number of respondents commented on poor reliability and punctuality and emphasised the need for improvement.

Cost-effectiveness

Many respondents agreed with the proposal for closer alignment between Network Rail and also suggested there should be better cooperation between train operating companies. Respondents recognised the need to improve value for money for customers and taxpayers.

Respondents were concerned about revenue protection. Branch lines, and the Severn Beach line in particular were noted as having particular problems. It was also noted that failing to monitor ticket purchase also results in under-estimation of patronage levels.

Devolution

The consultation sought comments from interested local transport authorities (LTAs) and potential partners in the context of the Great Western route, ahead of the government's wider consultation on rail decentralisation. Most of the responses in support of devolution referred to the south west, covering rail services in the Bristol area, Devon and Cornwall. Those supporting devolution thought that responsibilities should be cascaded to LTAs, local government, or rail partnerships.

Those who raised concerns about devolution tended to focus on safety and financial risk issues. There was some concern that although local level management may be a good thing, there may be inconsistencies in the approach to safety management and that responsibility for safety should not be devolved.

Other respondents maintained a neutral stance on devolution and requested that they be consulted in future as part of the wider rail decentralisation consultation.

Base case – franchise specification

Respondents were asked to consider which aspects of the specification should be mandated and which could be left to the new operators' discretion. Responses varied, the overall theme emerging that that there is no firm consensus among respondents on whether these aspects should be specified by the Government or left to the industry as operational matters (notably ticketing and pricing).

Mandatory: suggestions included first and last train times, current service level, peak hour seating, current capacity, service frequencies, journey times and ticket prices.

Discretionary: suggestions included the type of rolling stock utilised, rolling stock procurement and ticket pricing and structures.

Franchise remapping and reopening lines and stations

Respondents were encouraged to consider changes to the Great Western franchise that they would like to see included as part of a remapping exercise. A recurring proposal was that the North Downs line (Reading to Redhill) be incorporated within the Southern franchise to better enable the operation of through services to Gatwick airport. There were also suggestions for reintroducing direct services between Bristol and Oxford via Swindon;

transferring current South Western Exeter-Axminster service to the Great Western franchise; and transferring of the Oxford-Banbury line to the Chiltern franchise.

Many respondents made suggestions as to lines and stations that should be opened or re-opened under the new franchise. The most frequently suggested lines for reopening were:

- Portishead Railway from Avonmouth to Bristol
- Henbury Loop Line (North of Bristol)
- Tamar Valley Line between Bere Alston and Tavistock
- Year round services on the Dartmoor Railway.

Station suggestions included:

- ‘Parkway’ station for Worcester at Norton
- The reopening of closed stations including Corsham, Wantage Road, Saltford, Royal Wootton Bassett and Devizes.

Increments and decrements

All responses on this subject were in relation to increments rather than decrements and very few proposed any funding sources to support increments. The most detailed proposals related to the enhancement of branch line services in Cornwall and Devon. Other increments included extending services from Bristol Temple Meads to Swansea, the TransWilts proposal for services from Swindon to Salisbury and Bristol Metro proposals.

5. Summary of method and analysis of responses

1. Introduction

This section summarises the consultation responses on the refranchising of the Great Western Franchise and is structured as follows:

Chapter two sets out the method used for processing and analysing responses.

Chapter three describes the types of organisations who responded and the geographical spread of responses.

Chapter four provides a summary of the number of responses to each question.

Chapter five covers the key issues and themes that arose in responses.

Appendix A lists the consultation questions.

Appendix B shows how the franchise area has been divided up for analysis of consultation responses.

2. Method

The consultation document for the refranchising of the Great Western franchise was issued by the Department for Transport on 22nd December 2011 and closed on 31st March 2012.

1,144 responses were received in hard copy or by email and all responses have been read, summarised and analysed in a database. This report summarises the key issues raised in these responses.

Responses received up until 6th April were included in the analysis to account for delays in post.

After 100 responses had been read and summarised they were reviewed for key words and themes. A series of tags was set up in the database covering common themes relating to services, performance and quality. The franchise area was also divided into seven sectors and tags set up for each sector. The relevant tags were then attached to each response summarising the key issues raised and the area(s) they referred to.

The following details were recorded for each response:

- Name
- Organisation name (if relevant)
- Postcode
- Summary of response
- List of questions answered specifically
- Key issues
- Areas of the franchise referred to

3. Participation

Organisation type

Responses have been classified into organisation types (see Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1). Over two thirds of the 1,144 responses were from members of the public. The next largest groups were businesses and trade bodies (7%), followed by passenger interest groups (6%). Significant numbers of responses were also received from councils (6% parish, town or district and 3% county or unitary) and from MPs and Welsh AMs (3%).

Figure 3.1 Breakdown of organisations responding to consultation

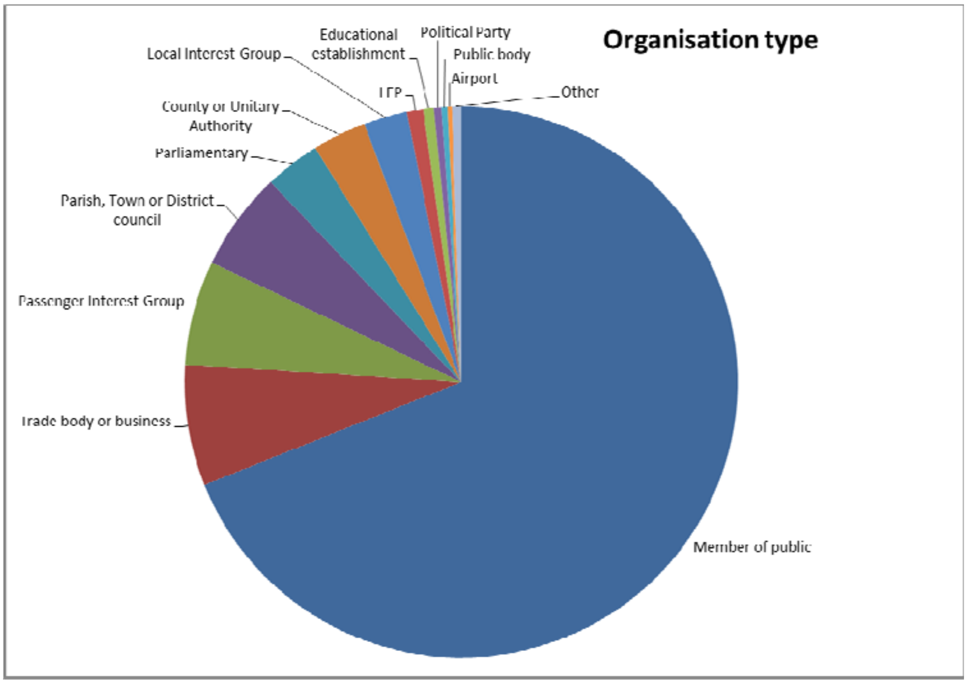


Table 3.1 Breakdown of organisations responding

Organisation type	Frequency	Percentage
Member of public	787	69
Trade body or business	81	7
Passenger Interest Group	70	6
Parish, Town or District council	66	6
Parliamentary	37	3
County or Unitary Authority	36	3
Local Interest Group	29	3
Local Economic Partnership	11	1
Educational establishment	7	1
Political Party	5	<1
Public body	4	<1
Airport	3	<1
Charity	2	<1
Freight	2	<1
Passenger Transport Executive	1	<1
Rail Infrastructure Provider	1	<1
Union	1	<1
Welsh Government	1	<1
Other	6	<1
Total	1,144	100

Geographical spread of responses

The map in Figure 3.2 shows the spread of these responses based on the 678 (59%) of responses with a valid postcode. The greatest concentration of responses came from Bristol and the surrounding areas of North Somerset, Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire. There was also a relatively high number of responses from Devon, Cornwall and other parts of the South West as well as from Worcestershire and Herefordshire.

Figure 3.2 Geographical distribution of responses to the consultation

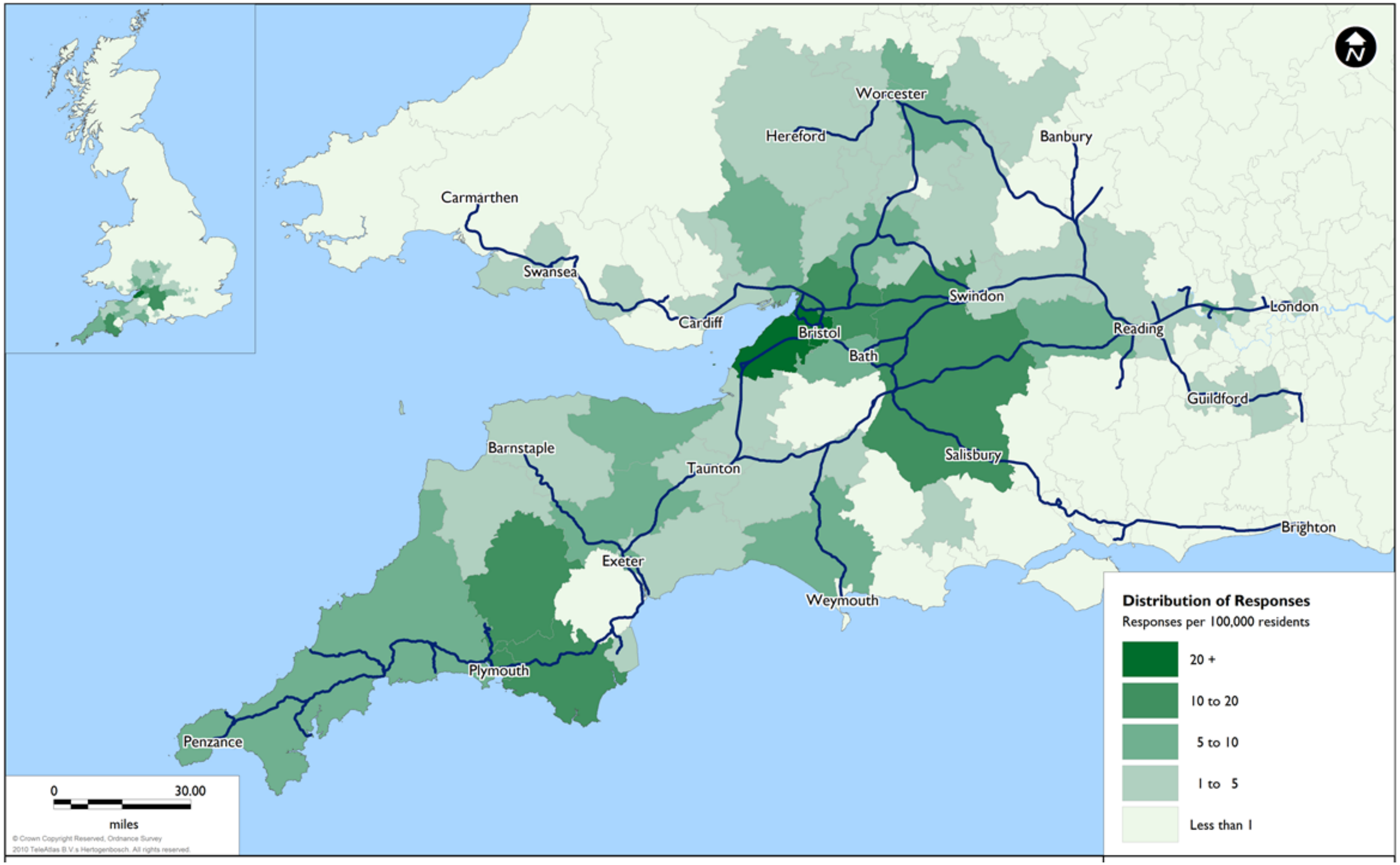


Table 3.2 Origin of responses with valid postcodes

Local authority areas	Responses
City of Bristol	186
North Somerset	86
Wiltshire	61
Devon	47
Cornwall	35
South Gloucestershire	34
City of Plymouth	27
Greater London Authority	22
Somerset	19
Worcestershire	16
Gloucestershire	15
Bath and North East Somerset	14
West Berkshire	13
Oxfordshire	10
Herefordshire	9
Swindon	9
Sir Fynwy – Monmouthshire	8
Dorset	8
Abertawe-Swansea	7
Slough	7
Hampshire	5
Surrey	4
Torbay	4
Reading	4
Wokingham	4
Caerdydd-Cardiff	4
Pen-y-bontar Ogwr-Bridgend	3
Casnewydd-Newport	3
Warwickshire	2
Windsor and Maidenhead	2
Northamptonshire	1
West Sussex	1
BlaenauGwent-BlaenauGwent	1
Tor-Faen-Torfaen	1
SirBenfro-Pembrokeshire	1
City of Portsmouth	1
Other (outside Franchise area)	4
Total	678

4. Questions

The franchise consultation document included 34 questions. The questions are listed in appendix A. Many responses were written without reference to specific questions but in most of these cases it has been possible to identify which questions were answered from analysing the response. Table 4.1shows how frequently each question was answered. The most commonly answered questions were question 2, relating to local factors that may influence demand, and question 21, relating to train service changes that respondents would like to see.

There were, however, a number of commonly raised issues that were relevant to the franchise but which did not fit directly into any of the questions. These are covered with the key issues in the next section.

Table 4.1 Responses by question

	Total responses		Most common organisation types							
	Total	Percentage of total	Member of public	Trade body or business	Passenger Interest Group	Parish, Town or District council	Parliamentary	County and Unitary Authority	Local Interest Group	Local Economic Partnership
Q1	190	17%	48	15	45	21	13	21	13	3
Q2	505	44%	361	16	34	27	17	23	12	5
Q3	126	11%	27	10	25	13	13	17	8	5
Q4	168	15%	36	12	36	21	18	26	7	4
Q5	129	11%	15	13	30	15	11	22	11	2
Q6	123	11%	38	6	28	13	4	19	6	4
Q7	65	6%	5	6	18	8	1	15	4	2
Q8A	94	8%	11	5	28	12	3	15	6	6
Q8B	70	6%	8	5	20	10	2	11	4	4
Q9	86	8%	9	6	31	9	5	13	6	
Q10	126	11%	26	8	28	18	8	19	8	3
Q11	110	10%	26	11	28	13	4	15	7	
Q12	64	6%	10	3	18	7	1	13	5	2
Q13	84	7%	20	4	21	10	3	14	6	1
Q14	69	6%	17	3	17	7	3	11	5	1
Q15	76	7%	20	4	21	8	3	9	4	2
Q16	94	8%	24	31	16	5	3	6	3	0
Q17	45	4%	5	0	12	5	3	9	6	1
Q18	60	5%	14	1	18	5	0	11	5	2
Q19	115	10%	35	6	27	16	6	10	10	1
Q20	90	8%	22	6	19	12	4	15	5	1
Q21	270	24%	101	22	36	34	18	26	18	5
Q22	89	8%	12	9	25	11	4	15	4	3
Q23A	120	10%	25	6	30	19	6	16	6	5
Q23B	75	7%	9	4	23	8	5	14	5	2
Q24	144	13%	55	10	30	12	6	18	4	3
Q25	76	7%	10	6	21	9	3	16	4	1
Q26	108	9%	18	6	30	15	2	17	10	3
Q27	71	6%	7	2	24	10	1	15	7	1
Q28	93	8%	22	2	26	11	3	17	3	2
Q29	269	24%	156	12	39	17	7	19	10	3
Q30	98	9%	15	5	30	9	5	17	6	3
Q31	76	7%	12	3	28	6	3	16	3	1
Q32	90	8%	18	4	26	11	5	14	5	2
Q33	97	8%	17	4	27	12	4	14	10	2
Q34	79	7%	10	1	26	9	2	16	6	2
Total respondents	1144	-	787	81	70	66	37	36	29	11

5. Responses broken down into key themes

Introduction

This section summarises the key issues and themes that arose in the responses. The section is organised under the following headings, the first seven of which broadly relate to the franchise objectives.

- Agreement with objectives
- Inter-dependent projects
- Capacity (including services and rolling stock)
- Passenger experience
- Environmental performance, reliability and punctuality
- Cost-effectiveness
- Devolution
- Campaigns
- Base case
- Remapping
- Recommended line and station openings
- Increments and decrements

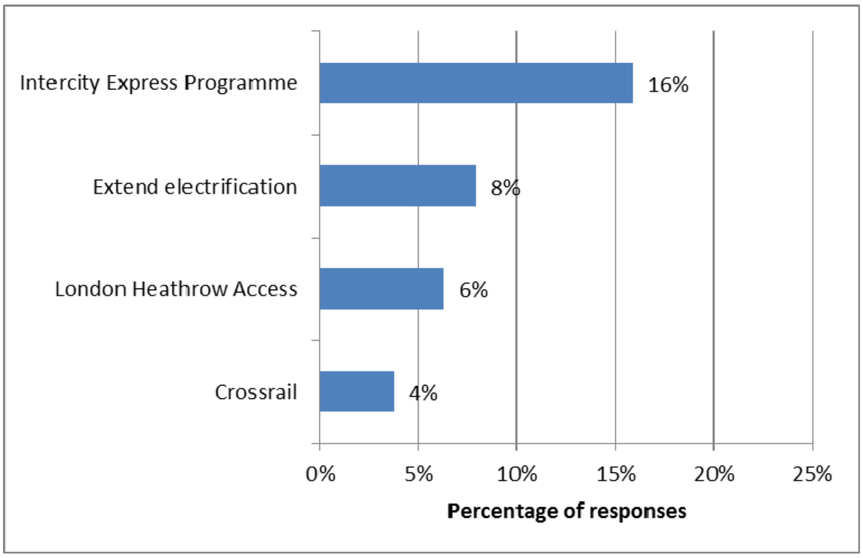
Agreement with objectives

Respondents were initially asked whether they agreed with the franchise objectives. 17% of respondents (119) answered this question and most were in broad agreement. Amendments proposed included making reference to the wider economic role of rail in the franchise area and adding more detail on the meaning of ‘value for money’. There was also some concern raised over the mention of defined infrastructure and rolling stock constraints in objective 2.

Inter-dependent projects

Network Rail has plans for a complete upgrade of the GWML route between London and Cardiff by 2025. Achieving coordination with a range of workstreams will be critical for the new franchise. Here we summarise respondents’ views on these workstreams.

Figure 5.1 Interdependent projects



Intercity Express Programme

Sixteen per cent (182) of respondents mentioned the IEP programme. The majority were supportive of the programme but many emphasised that this would not solve the franchise's capacity problems. There was also concern expressed about the value of bi-mode trains as these are perceived to be more expensive, less efficient and potentially unnecessary depending on plans for electrification.

There were several suggestions for alterations to the IEP proposed services, including more trains, later trains, extensions (to Taunton in particular) and more calls at specific stations including Bristol Parkway.

A few respondents expressed concern that branch lines and Bristol commuter area services could suffer as a result of the focus on IEP.

Electrification

Electrification is planned from Paddington to Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford and Newbury. The majority of those commenting on the plans for electrification would like to see the programme extended beyond Cardiff and to branch lines, particularly those in the Thames Valley area. There are also clear aspirations for eventual electrification of the Berks and Hants line, via Wesbury, and to destinations further west such as Exeter and Plymouth. Respondents highlighted that this could combine with proposals to electrify the CrossCountry route from the Midlands to the West Country as set out in Network Rail's electrification RUS.

Heathrow access

There was a great deal of support for the Western rail link to Heathrow, particularly from businesses.

Crossrail

Crossrail was generally supported but with a significant number of respondents concerned about the potential loss of fast services from Reading and Slough to London. Several respondents stated that this would not be a price worth paying.

There was also a consensus among those supporting Crossrail that it should extend westward to Maidenhead as planned.

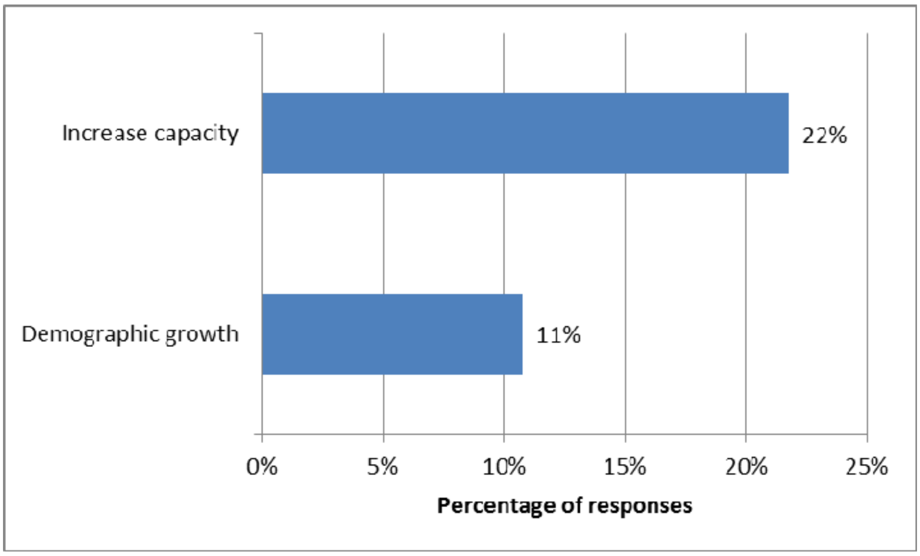
HLOS

Those respondents commenting on HLOS schemes tended to support the capacity improvement commitments. Several respondents also proposed that the Western access to Heathrow and Bristol service improvements should be included in HLOS.

Capacity

Increasing capacity on the franchise was a key concern for over a fifth of respondents (see Figure 5.2). These responses are analysed below along with more specific service and rolling stock suggestions.

Figure 5.2 Capacity responses



Capacity and demographic growth

A large number of respondents (249) emphasised that demand had increased over the period of the current franchise and many were concerned that this had not been recognised, due to fare evasion and inadequate monitoring. Many respondents suggested that there should be a limit to the length of time passengers should be expected to stand – 20 minutes was proposed by several respondents.

Demographic growth was highlighted by 123 respondents who described plans for additional housing and other local redevelopment schemes. Respondents wanted to ensure that the franchise would provide adequate capacity for future growth in patronage.

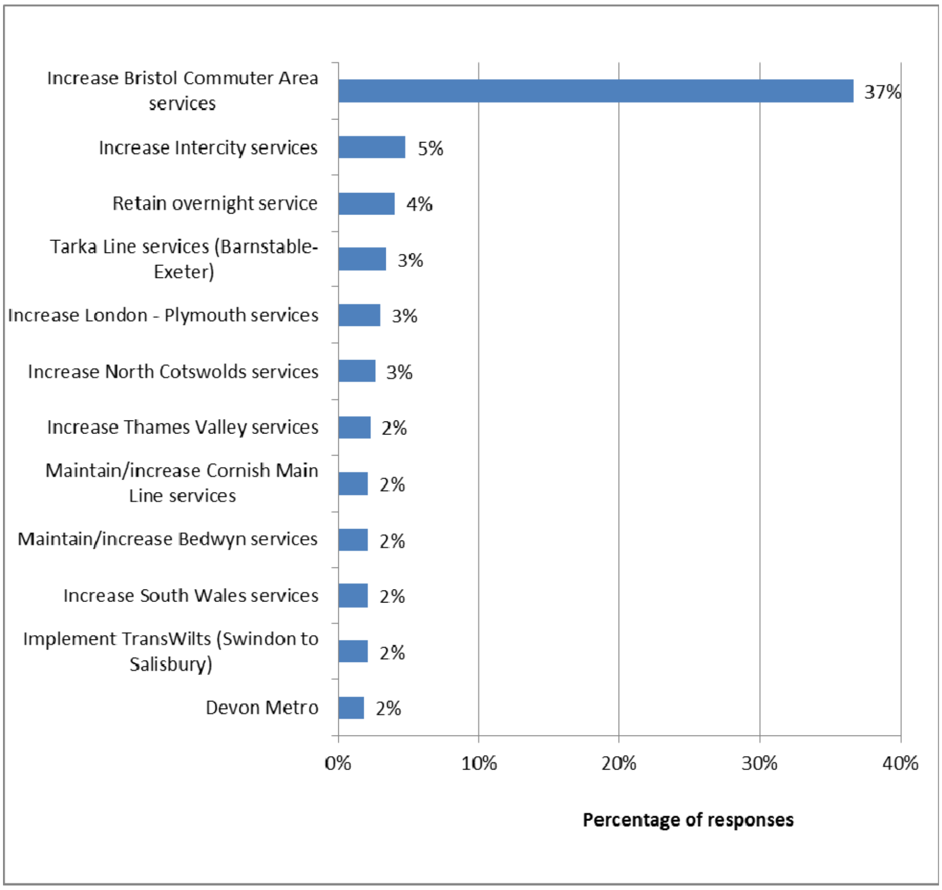
Services

Where respondents referred to specific geographical areas this was recorded along with whether they were requesting more services or that existing services be maintained. The results are shown in Figure 5.3. The areas described are indicated on the franchise map in Appendix B. By far the most common service request was for more services in the Bristol commuter area (419). This was followed by calls to increase the frequency of fast intercity services. A range of services were suggested, right across the network, depending on where each respondent was based.

Respondents were asked specifically whether they would wish to see the overnight service from Penzance to London retained (Q15) and the overwhelming number of people who responded to this question said yes they would like to see the service continue. The service was perceived as bringing wider economic benefits to the South West, beyond the revenue it generates.

Other well-supported service areas include several lines in the West of England including the Tarka line from Exeter to Barnstaple and local and intercity services using the Cornish mainline.

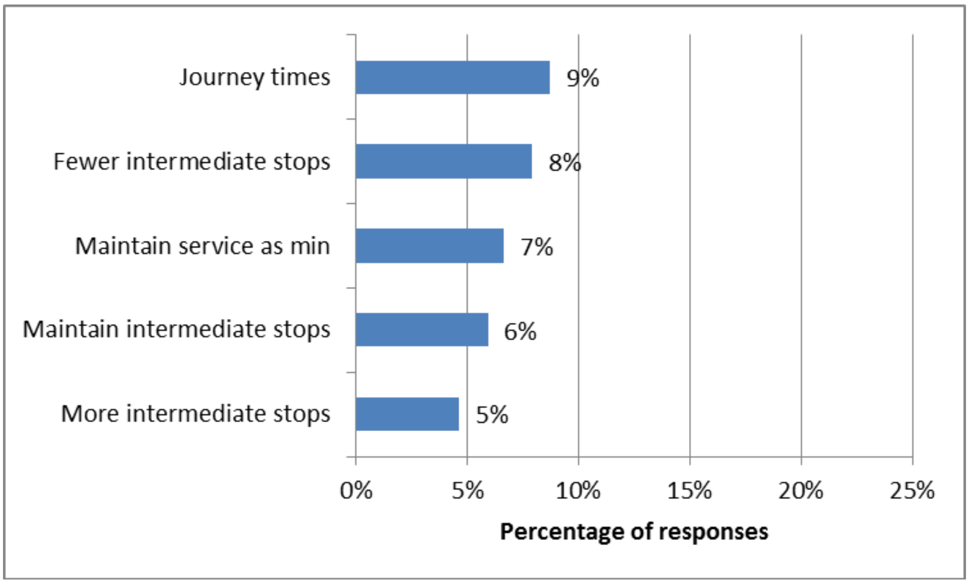
Figure 5.3 Specific service aspirations



Many respondents also made more general comments about service improvements in their areas. The most common of these was to improve journey times, particularly connections with services operated by other train operators. There were also numerous calls for later return services from London and other large cities (to enable passengers to use rail travel to attend evening entertainment), and for earlier journeys into London (to enable daily commuting from further afield).

There were sharply conflicting views regarding intermediate station stops on local mainline services and on branch lines. Ninety-one respondents wanted to see faster services with fewer intermediate stops. However, 68 were keen that current stopping patterns are maintained and 53 wanted additions stops added to services. Views on this issue were closely aligned with respondents' location: those near large stations wanting more fast and semi-fast services; and those in small towns or rural areas wanting additional stops.

Figure 5.4 General service improvements



Rolling stock

Five to 10 per cent of respondents provided a response on questions relating to rolling stock. Respondents were asked for their views on whether HSTs should be subject to refurbishment (Q13), whether additional stock should be procured for some or all non-IEP services (Q14) and whether the utilisation of diesel stock on Portsmouth-Brighton services should be continued, given the electric services operated on the route as part of other franchises (Q18).

Although some respondents commented that the HST sets could continue operating for at least another 10 years given recent internal refurbishment and engine rebuilds, the majority of respondents were opposed to the idea of continued refurbishment and utilisation of this stock. There was a recommendation to cascade Class 222 rolling stock from the Midland Mainline to replace HSTs in use of the Great Western Mainline. Others commented that the traction characteristics of the HST stock make them unsuitable for use on all but the mainline services given the time taken to accelerate out of stations.

Other respondents highlighted the relatively poor environmental credentials of the HST sets and, anecdotally, increasing reliability issues. Respondents thought that 'modern' stock could potentially offer better on-board facilities and more luggage space, irrespective of refurbishment work.

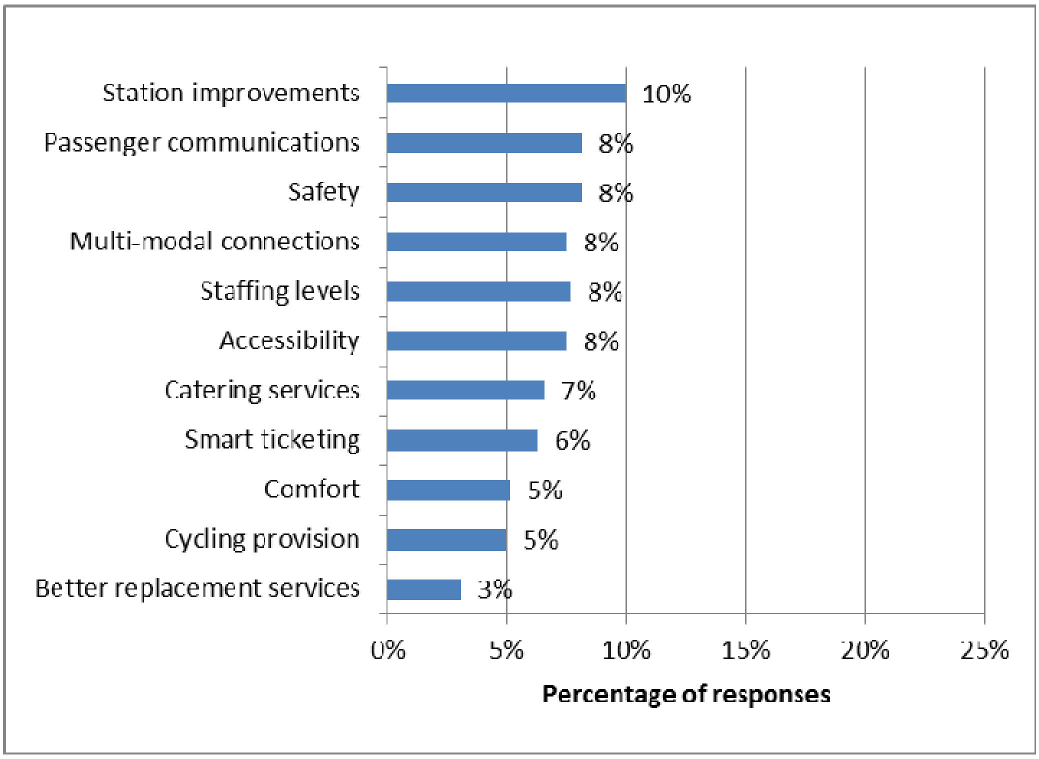
Of those respondents answering Q14 specifically, twice as many (23) thought that new stock ought to be procured rather than cascading existing stock (11) from other parts of the network. Responses implied that old stock, perhaps in light of the connotation with life-expired or poor quality stock, should not be handed-down to 'their part of the network'.

In response to Q18, respondents were generally in favour of retaining the Portsmouth to Brighton service but only 8 respondents thought it was a good use of diesel rolling stock, compared to three times as many (24) who thought it was not a good use of diesel stock.

Passenger experience

A great number of responses related to aspects of the passenger experience. These responses came from the full range of organisation types as well as members of the public.

Figure 5.5 Passenger experience responses



Station improvements and accessibility

Ten per cent of respondents (114) made comments regarding station improvement. The vast majority of these related to the respondent's local station(s). Suggested improvements included improving accessibility, lighting and waiting areas. Respondents also highlighted that some of the older trains are not wheelchair accessible.

Communications

Respondents commenting on communications focused on real time information and the use of social media, particularly during disruption. Several respondents pointed out that many users do not have access to social media and so more traditional communication methods must not be neglected. In general, communication during disruption was perceived to be poor, with suggestions including ensuring that station and on-board staff are better informed. There were also calls for information to be better coordinated across different franchises.

Respondents also called for more and better provision of wifi and broadband services across the network, on trains and stations.

Safety

Ninety-three respondents made suggestions as to how security and safety could be improved. All responses referred to security rather than the risk of accidents on the network. The most common proposals were for more CCTV and more staff, both on trains and at stations.

Multimodal connections and cycling provision

A large number of respondents suggested that connections with local bus services could be improved as well as parking provision for those accessing stations by car or bicycle and links to promote walking. Cycling provision was mentioned by 57 respondents. While the majority of these comments related to parking, a significant proportion argued for more space for carriage of bicycles on trains.

Staffing levels

There was considerable concern among 8% of respondents (88) that staffing levels might fall due to cost-saving measures. Respondents emphasised that staff presence was key to safety as well as revenue protection. Concern was expressed about the impact on older travellers if ticket office staff were reduced because of the difficulties some older travellers have with using ticket machines.

Smart ticketing

The potential for smart ticketing was highlighted by those responding to question 29, asking how ticket purchase could be made simpler. Many respondents referred specifically to the TfL Oyster card as the kind of system that should be an aspiration for the franchise. Other suggestions included more ticket machines, print-at-home tickets and continuation of existing local carnet schemes.

Catering

Seventy-five respondents have made suggestions about the catering provision, particularly on long distance routes. Suggestions included extending on-board opening hours and improving the catering offer.

Comfort

Five per cent of responses (59) wrote that some aspect of comfort should be improved. Comfort in this context included references to the cleanliness of the trains as well as the comfort of the seating.

Replacement services

There was a clear consensus among respondents who answered the question about replacement services that, where possible re-routed replacement trains should be used rather than buses. There was concern when replacement buses are used, they are often cramped, have insufficient luggage space, and often cannot be used by wheelchair-users or those with pushchairs.

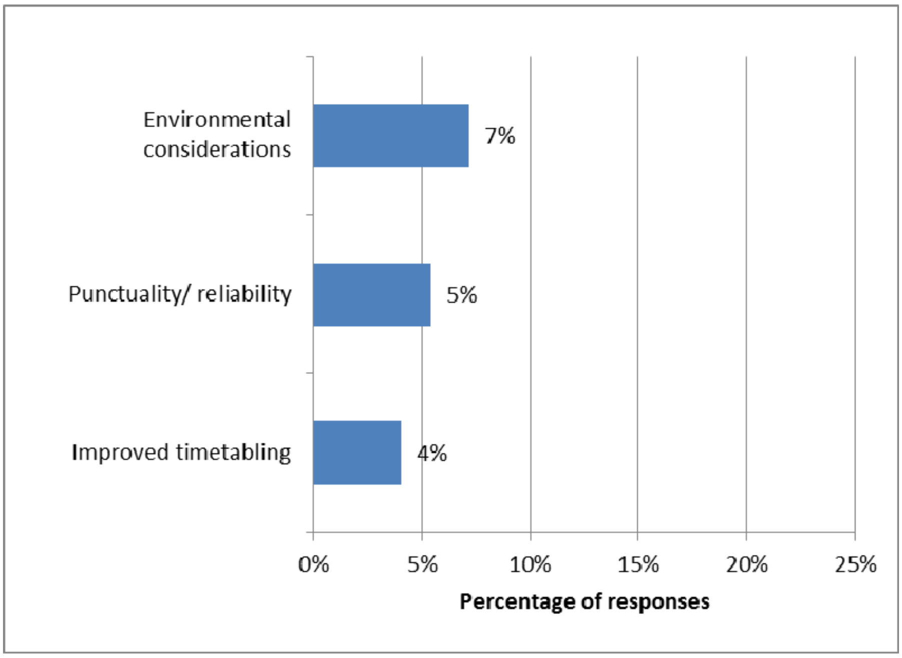
Monitoring

Seventy-six respondents (7%) answered question 31 relating to monitoring performance. Many agreed that the National Passenger Survey was a good source but several respondents suggested supplementary monitoring sources including mystery shopping surveys and involving local interest groups. Many respondents were concerned that surveys should be transparent and independent of the operators.

Environmental performance, reliability and punctuality

The consultation document included a question on environmental targets (Q34), which was answered by 79 respondents. There were no specific questions about reliability or punctuality but many respondents raised these issues in response to question 24, about performance areas of concern.

Figure 5.6 Key themes – Punctuality, reliability and environmental performance



Environmental considerations

A wide range of respondents mentioned environmental issues both in response to Q34 and in a more general context. Responses were received from local authorities, local interest organisations, charities and members of the public. In total 100 (9%) mentioned environmental issues. Common suggestions for targets included:

- Patronage, as a proxy for modal shift from cars
- Carbon dioxide emissions from the railway
- Recycling and appropriate waste disposal

Reliability, punctuality and timetabling

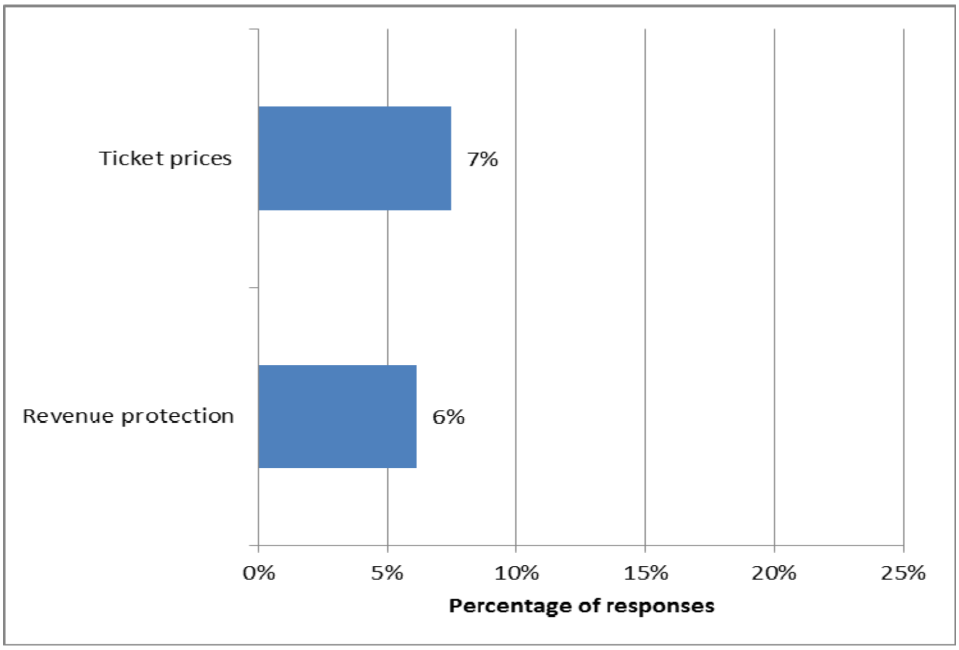
A significant number of respondents commented on poor reliability and punctuality and emphasised the need for improvement. Slightly fewer referred to timetable improvements, in particular connections with services from other operators.

Cost-effectiveness

Following the McNulty review the government is committed to improving the efficiency, sustainability and value for money of the railway.

Respondents were asked to consider how to improve efficiency and to reduce costs. Seventy-six respondents answered this question (Q25). Many agreed with the proposal for closer alignment between Network Rail and others suggested that there should be better cooperation between different train operating companies. Several respondents also suggested that standardising rolling stock and infrastructure across the country could lead to efficiency savings in terms of leasing and maintenance etc.

Figure 5.7 Key themes – cost effectiveness



However, the main concern voiced was improving value for money for customers and taxpayers. Eighty-five respondents complained about ticket prices, referring to the expense, the lack of transparency on ticket restrictions and very complex fare structures.

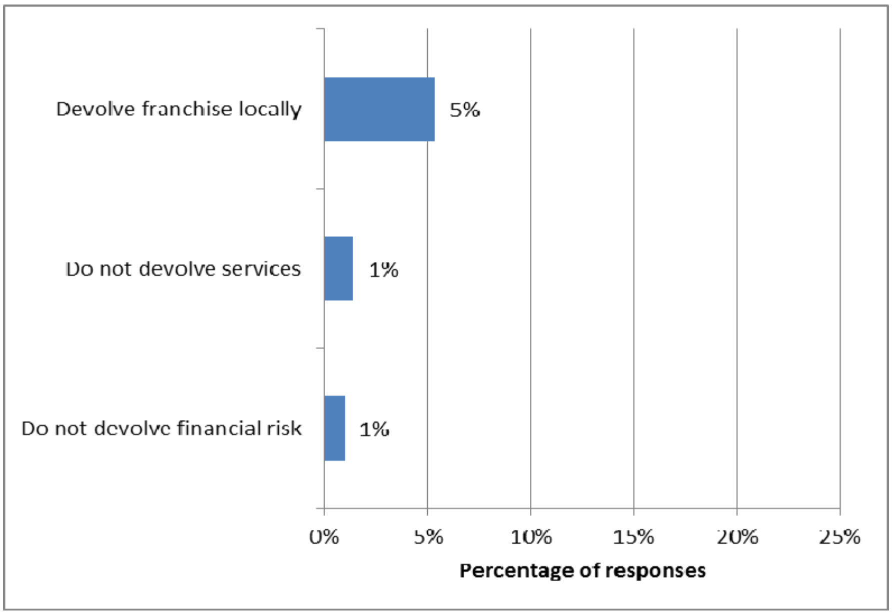
Revenue protection was also highlighted as a key issue, with respondents concerned about fares not being collected or checked. Branch lines, and the Severn Beach line in particular were noted as having particular problems. It was also noted that failing to monitor ticket purchase also results in under-estimation of patronage levels.

Devolution

The consultation document sought views on the types of responsibilities that could be devolved and to which organisations responsibilities may best be devolved. The consultation document noted that the Government is expected to consult soon on the feasibility of decentralising some rail responsibilities. The franchise consultation therefore sought to receive comments from interested local transport authorities and potential partners in the specific context of the Great Western route, ahead of the wider consultation on decentralisation.

A relatively small proportion of the consultation respondents gave views on devolution and decentralisation. Across all respondents and responses, 61 (5%) were in favour of devolving elements of the franchise specification, compared to 16 (1%) not in favour of devolution. Eleven (1%) said that financial risk should be not be devolved.

Figure 5.8 Summary of devolution responses



Of those respondents who did comment on devolution and decentralisation, their views can be categorised into three general groups:

- In favour of devolution;
- Opposed to devolution; and
- A neutral stance on devolution at present but a request that they be included in the future consultation on this issue.

In favour of devolution

The prospect of allocating money for spending by regionally and locally elected powers was welcomed. Most of the responses in support of devolution referred to the south west, covering rail services in the Bristol area, Devon and Cornwall. There were repeated comments in the responses for the establishment of an Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) covering Bristol and the other West of England LTAs (South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset). Respondents expressed the view that the West of England proposal for the Bristol Metro (see below) was viable and should be included in the franchise base rather than being a priced option.

Those supporting devolution, including LTAs, thought that responsibilities should be cascaded to LTAs, local government or rail partnerships. In the case of LTAs, respondents thought it would be most appropriate to devolve to the larger LTAs in terms of gross land area and that consortia of LTAs should be formed in the case of smaller LTAs.

While beyond the scope of the consultation, in Wales it was suggested that track responsibility be devolved to the Welsh government.

Respondents in favour of devolution thought it should improve value for money and allow greater flexibility for the provision of locally useful services.

Opposed to devolution

Those who raised concerns about devolution tended to focus on safety and financial risk issues. There was some concern that although local level management may be a good thing, there may be inconsistencies in the approach to safety management and that responsibility for safety should not be devolved.

With respect to financial risk, respondents stated that DfT needs to safeguard risk for tax payers. Similarly, although LTA respondents welcomed greater decision making powers some questioned whether the devolution of financial risk was appropriate.

Members of the public tended to be concerned about devolution, believing it could lead to fragmentation of the rail network. An integrated and coherent network was seen as important.

Neutral stance on devolution

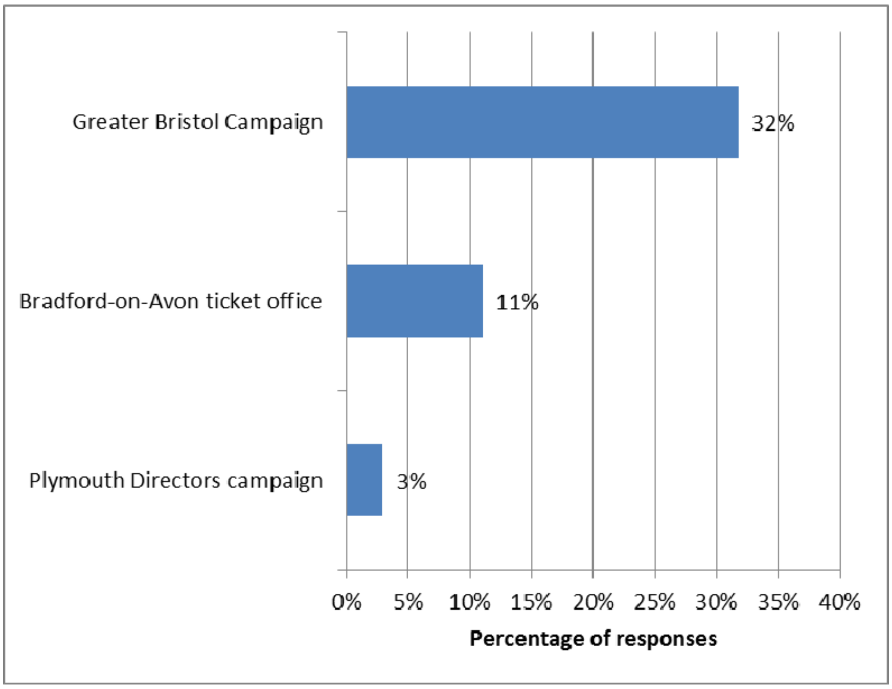
Those respondents who maintained a neutral stance on devolution remained open minded on the subject and requested that they be consulted on in future as part of the wider rail decentralisation consultation. The types of organisations that respondents recommended be consulted in the future on the issue of devolution included:

- Parish and town councils (as distinct from LTAs and district councils);
- The Welsh unitary authorities;
- Freight operators and groups; and
- Local Economic Partnerships.

Campaigns

There were three campaigns which encouraged large numbers of responses on key issues. The responses received on these issues are shown in Figure 5.9.

Figure 5.9 Campaign issues responses



Bristol metro

Greater Bristol Metro was the issue mentioned by more responses than any other, with almost a third (363) of all respondents raising this issue. The campaign was launched online and in local newspapers. A large number of responses were cut out from newspaper campaigns. All these responses were in support of the following four proposals:

- More trains, more often
- Reopening disused stations
- Reopening the Portishead rail line
- Four tracking at Filton Bank

Many respondents also specified that services in the Bristol commuter areas should run at least half hourly, and that in future years further increases in frequency for some core services would become necessary.

Bradford-on-Avon ticket office

Bradford on Avon is located in the west of Wiltshire with a population of almost 10,000 people. Bradford on Avon station is classified as a Category E station. The McNulty report recommended the closure of ticket offices at such stations. The Bradford campaign, which generated 126 responses, calls for the Bradford on Avon ticket office to be kept open.

Plymouth directors

Thirty-three businesses in the Plymouth sent a letter asking for the following:

- An additional fast train arriving in Plymouth from London by 10.00am and a return 3-hour journey departing Plymouth for London before 5.00 pm.
- An increase in the number of 3-hour journeys in both directions between Plymouth and London.
- Sufficient capacity on trains between the South West and London and within Devon and Cornwall.
- A refurbishment programme to existing rolling stock and station environments.

Base case

It is intended that the franchise specification should allow greater flexibility for operators to respond to market and commercial changes and opportunities. Respondents were asked to consider which aspects of the specification should be mandated and which should be left to discretion. 10% of respondents (111) stated that the proposed base specification in the consultation document should be amended. Responses varied significantly and were often conflicting. Themes have emerged but for several of these there is no firm consensus on whether these aspects should be mandatory or discretionary (notably ticketing and pricing).

Mandatory

There were calls for the following aspects to be mandated in the specification:

- First and last train times;
- Maintaining current services as a minimum;
- Peak hour seating and capacity;
- Requirement to consult on proposed services changes;
- Journey times (duration) especially for intercity services;
- Respondents suggested that incremental branch line services, particularly those in Devon and Cornwall are self-supporting and could be included in the franchise base.
- Service frequencies;
- Catering on intercity and inter-regional services; and
- Ticket pricing (there were concerns that fare rises could be used to suppress demand rather than increasing service levels to meet increased demand).

Discretionary

In general, respondents thought the following aspects should be discretionary:

- The type of rolling stock utilised across the network including traction type;

- The freedom to procure new and sufficient rolling stock;
- Timetabling (including first and last train times); and
- Ticket pricing and structures.

Re-mapping

Respondents were encouraged to consider changes to the Great Western franchise that they would like to see included as part of a remapping exercise. Seventy-three respondents made remapping suggestions. A recurring proposal related to the North Downs line, currently part of the Great Western franchise, running between Reading and Redhill. Respondents suggested that this line be incorporated within the Southern franchise to better enable the operation of through services to Gatwick airport.

There were also suggestions for: the re-introduction of direct services between Bristol and Oxford via Swindon; Transfer current South Western Exeter-Axminster service to the Great Western franchise; and transfer of the Oxford-Banbury line to the Chiltern franchise.

Recommended line and station openings

A large number of respondents (270) made suggestions as to lines and stations that should be opened or reopened under the new franchise. The most frequently suggested lines for reopening were:

- Portishead Railway (Portishead-Bristol Temple Meads)(67)
- Henbury Loop Line (Filton-Avonmouth) (26)
- Tamar Valley Line (Bere Alston-Tavistock extension) (15)
- Dartmoor Railway (year round Okehampton-Exeter) (9)

Station suggestions included a ‘parkway’ station for Worcester at Norton (19). The reopening of closed stations included Corsham in Wiltshire (16), Wantage Road in Oxfordshire(10), Saltford in Somerset (10), Royal Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire (7) and Devizes in Wiltshire (6).

Increments and decrements

Sixty-five respondents (6%) answered question 7 where they were asked to propose increments of decrements. Of these responses 18 were passenger interest groups and 15 were county or unitary authorities.

All responses were in relation to increments rather than decrements and very few proposed any funding sources to support increments. The most detailed proposals related to the enhancement of branch line services in Cornwall and Devon. Other increments included extending services from Bristol Temple Meads to Swansea, the TransWilts proposal for services from Swindon to Salisbury and Bristol Metro proposals.

6. Next steps

The Train Service Specification contained within the Statement of Requirements in the Great Western Invitation to Tender (ITT) has been developed with consideration of the responses to the Consultation summarised in this report.

This consultation has been conducted in line with the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation, a full version of which is available on the Better Regulation Executive Website at: www.bis.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf

Following issue of the ITT to the Market, a 90 day process will follow during which the four shortlisted bidders will develop the detail of their bid proposals; including their responses to the Priced Options requested in Section 3.x of the ITT. Bidders are encouraged to engage with stakeholders during this period to understand their requirements and aspirations and are also expected to take the findings of this report into account during the development of their proposals.

Once submitted to the Department, in October 2013, a process of bid evaluation will commence using published procedure and industry best practice including the EFQM RADAR scoring model. It is expected that the winning bidder will be announced in February/March 2013 and that the new franchise will commence operations in July 2013.

Appendix A: Consultation questions

1. Respondents are encouraged to consider whether the proposed franchise objectives are an appropriate expression of the priorities that should apply to the new franchise.
2. Respondents are encouraged to consider any specific local factors that they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand and to comment on any specific HLOS recommendations that they believe the franchisee should be required to implement.
3. Respondents are encouraged to consider issues arising from the planned schemes and identify any local factors that should be considered.
4. Respondents are encouraged to consider any specific local factors that they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand and to comment on any specific RUS recommendations that they believe the franchisee should be required to implement.
5. Respondents are encouraged to consider investment priorities for the franchise and are asked to highlight interfaces with any other schemes that are likely to be delivered during the life of the next franchise. We also welcome proposals for alternative approaches to enable the proposed investment programme to be achieved at a reduced cost.
6. Respondents are encouraged to consider any changes to the services included in the Great Western franchise that they would like to propose as part of a remapping exercise.
7. Respondents who wish to pursue increments or decrements should make these clear in their response to this consultation. Further information on the Department's requirements for increments/decrements can be made available on request.
8. Respondents are encouraged to consider:(a) Which responsibilities and types of services on the Great Western franchise might be suitable for more local decision-making?
(b) Which options for devolving decision-making should be considered further and which should be rejected?

(c) To which bodies might decision-making be devolved and how would governance, accountability and transparency be demonstrated, especially if consortia of sub-national bodies are formed?
(d) How might risk be dealt with if responsibilities are devolved?
9. Respondents are encouraged to bring to our attention research, evidence or publications which the Department should consider as part of this refranchising process.
10. The final specification will seek to avoid a prescriptive approach and to balance passenger, taxpayer and stakeholder interests. Respondents are encouraged to consider which aspects of the specification they believe should be mandated and which could be left to greater commercial discretion.
11. What balance should be struck between end-to-end journey times and intermediate stops on long distance services?
12. Can the indicative modelled intercity service pattern be improved (noting the IEP availability in Table 3.5 and the availability of other fleets)?
13. Whether and, if so, how many of the current HSTs should be subject to life-enhancement refurbishment and what would be their revised life-expectancy be?
14. Should other InterCity rolling stock, either new or cascaded, be procured for these services?
15. What should be the future of the overnight service between Paddington and Penzance, given that the sleeping cars and, especially, the locomotives, are ageing?
16. What is the best balance between fast outer commuter services and intermediate stops? How could the residual suburban services best be optimised once Crossrail services start?
17. Under current plans for electrification, direct services from the Henley and Bourne End branches to Paddington would still have to be diesel-operated. Respondents are encouraged to consider if these services would represent a good use of scarce timetable slots on the main line, given that these slots could be used by higher-capacity electric trains.
18. Are the services that extend eastwards from Portsmouth to Brighton the best use of Great Western diesel rolling stock, in view of the fact that there are frequent electric services provided by Southern on this route, or could this rolling stock could usefully be redeployed elsewhere?
19. Should branch line services continue to call at all branch line stations, or could the needs of most passengers be better met by omission of some of the intermediate stops on some or all of the trains, so that the final destination is reached more quickly?

20. Do the medium-distance regional services (e.g. Cardiff to Portsmouth and Worcester/Gloucester to Weymouth) adequately serve the needs of all passengers along their lines of route, or would shorter-distance services, targeted on local travel requirements, be more beneficial?
21. Taking in to account the current service pattern and the future changes, respondents are encouraged to suggest train service changes that they believe will be affordable, deliver value for money and provide a strong commercial, social or economic case.
21. Taking in to account the current service pattern and the future changes, respondents are encouraged to suggest train service changes that they believe will be affordable, deliver value for money and provide a strong commercial, social or economic case.
22. Respondents are encouraged to consider appropriate train times and service frequencies during planned disruption for the life of the new franchise. Respondents are also encouraged to consider alternative service propositions.
23. Respondents are encouraged to consider:(a) the steps which bidders should be expected to take to meet passenger demand and the most appropriate mechanisms for ensuring additional capacity is provided when it becomes necessary; and
(b) how capacity should be measured and appropriate targets set.
24. Respondents are encouraged to highlight any performance areas of particular concern.
26. Respondents are encouraged to consider the best method for funding major station enhancements and are encouraged to consider any local accessibility issues that they believe need addressing.
27. Respondents are encouraged to consider which merit consideration for future improvement under these schemes and how such schemes could be funded.
28. Respondents are encouraged to consider how security and safety might be improved, together with any local safety issues that they believe need addressing.
29. Respondents are encouraged to consider how ticket purchase could be made easier and how to minimise revenue loss across the franchise.
30. Respondents are encouraged to consider how best to communicate information with passengers across the franchise and how best to keep passengers informed during times of disruption.

31. The Department is considering the appropriate approach for monitoring and improving service quality in the new franchise, and respondents are encouraged to consider the proposals suggested, to highlight any alternative proposals and to make recommendations on any issues that may be identified.
32. Respondents are encouraged to consider what level of catering provision should be provided.
33. Respondents are encouraged to consider local accessibility and mobility issues and suggest how improvements could be made.
34. Respondents are encouraged to consider what environmental targets could be set within the franchise specification.

Appendix B: Franchise areas map