

Dear All,

Bill Wells and I met with members of the senior management team at GWR, Swindon on Tuesday March 22nd. We can summarise the meeting as follows:

- 1) There are too many issues with adding batteries to the 387 fleet to enable them to serve Bedwyn. Therefore we should forget this option.
- 2) Our three IETs have been reassigned to replace 'Castle' (reformed HST) trains on the Cardiff to Penzance route. GWR stated they want to see them back on the Bedwyn route ASAP. Therefore, we should campaign to get these back. This will require additional funding from the DfT, to lease additional diesel trains to run the Cardiff to Penzance service.
- 3) We should also consider pressing for electrification to be extended to at least Bedwyn to allow the 387 fleet to serve Bedwyn. However, the 387s which currently serve Newbury are eight car sets and the siding at Bedwyn can only accommodate a four car set. Thus this solution will mean a four car set running to Paddington c.f. the desired eight car set. So it's not a perfect solution. Additionally electrification would take a number of years to fund / implement so the solution in point 2 is the better, and likely cheaper, one.
- 4) GWR have promised to make a serious effort to get the connections at Newbury to work (i.e. be held if there are delays to the inbound service). These include (i) amalgamating two roles at the control centre so the person monitoring the delayed inbound connections and the person deciding whether to hold a service are one and the same (ii) GWR will pay the delay minutes (i.e. the charges imposed for the Bedwyn shuttle being late, due to it being held at Newbury) so control staff won't be letting the shuttle go because of costs (iii) Newbury station staff and the drivers will be briefed to request shuttles to be held (iv) special stop orders will be brought in such that if the shuttle is unavailable then other through services will stop at Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn. However, GWR have said they still can't hold trains in all circumstances. Therefore any improvement here is still not a suitable substitute for our direct Paddington services. We informed GWR that we will ask our users to report to us all occasions where the shuttle fails to connect and that we intend to take these up with them on a case by case basis. They welcomed this and said they want to work with us. **So please do report all missed Newbury connections to us.**
- 5) Having looked at the proposed timetable for May we realise that a reasonable off-peak service cannot be achieved with just one diesel shuttle between Newbury and Bedwyn. To have any sensible service we need at least one turbo and one dedicated IET. We asked GWR if one IET can be found in order to provide a three-hourly through service between Bedwyn and Paddington, to work alongside the turbo shuttle. We also identified what we felt would be the most beneficial use of such a set to local users by way of providing GWR with a proposed timetable. We also suggested how GWR could free up an IET without additional costs. GWR have not indicated that they plan to implement this suggestion.
- 6) In the very short term, the May timetable has a serious flaw in the evening service and we have asked GWR to try to fix this. The 1907 Paddington departure will become a '387' and require a change at Newbury. The connecting turbo for this will be out of position having served as an earlier connection. It then having to serve the 1907 causes it to be out of step with the 2007 and 2104 Paddington departures. This gives the following poor mid to late evening service:

Paddington	Bedwyn	Time	Changes
1907	2048	1:41	1
2007	2142	1:35	1
2104	2302	1:58	1
2128	2302	1:34	2

2222	2351	1:29	0
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If GWR could make the 1907 an IET (perhaps by swapping a 387 with an IET on the Bristol line), which would run direct to Bedwyn, the above then becomes the much improved:

Paddington	Bedwyn	Time	Changes
1907	2012	1:05	0
2007	2119	1:03	1
2104	2210	1:06	1
2128	2302	1:34	2
2222	2351	1:29	0

- 7) The May timetable also has a flaw with the first off-peak morning service. Currently this is the 0831 IET which is direct to Paddington (journey time 1:03). With the proposed May timetable the 0831 is to be withdrawn, so the first off-peak would be the 0849 to Newbury, requiring two changes and a journey time to Paddington of 1:35. The current 0924 turbo is moved to 0948, also with two changes and a much extended journey time. We have asked GWR if they can operate the 0831 as an IET. If implemented, this would also enable the 0924 to be retained. At the time of writing, we have not had any indication as to whether points 6) and 7) will be implemented.
- 8) We also highlighted a ridiculous situation which has been created twice during the day, westbound from Newbury, again due to the removal of the IETs. Unless a solution is found, Kintbury users will be faced with two gaps of two hours, as will those wishing to travel from Hungerford to Bedwyn.

What we presented to GWR illustrates the folly of the entire concept, turning a very good service into a mish-mash of connecting (or non-connecting) trains, with the notable exception of the morning peak. We acknowledged the efforts of the GWR timetable section, but it just doesn't work. We, at BTPG have campaigned since 2009 to try to prevent this happening. We are concerned that passenger numbers could decline which may, in turn, be used as a reason not to restore the IETs. Therefore, we would urge everyone to continue to use the trains whenever they can, but to also push for the restoration of through trains as soon as possible.

We have written to Danny Kruger MP and Laura Farris MP requesting that they press the DfT to address points 6 and 7 for the May 2022 timetable change and point 5 for the December 2022 timetable change with a request for additional funding, to lease three further diesel trains for the Cardiff to Penzance route, so we can have our three IETs back for the May 2023 timetable change.