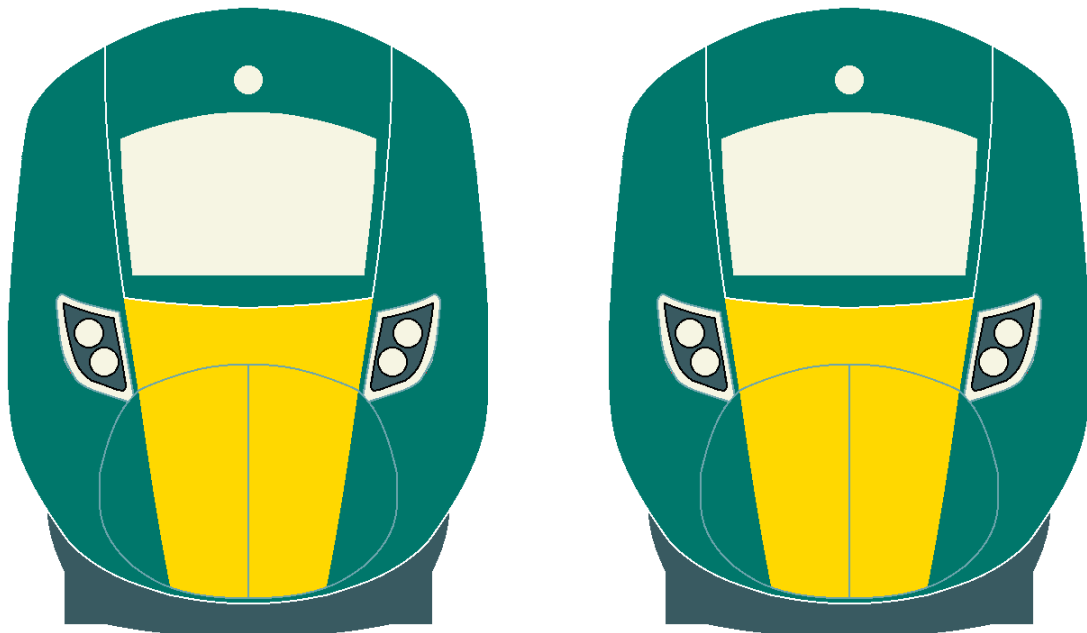


Reinstating Two Class 800 bi-modes on the off-peak Paddington to Bedwyn Service



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Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group
March 2024

Foreword

Less than five years ago, Great Western Railway introduced a new timetable which provided through services every hour almost hourly between London and Bedwyn and to Hungerford and Kintbury. These provided a vital and convenient link for thousands of people living in east Wiltshire and West Berkshire, particularly those whose mobility is impaired. The new service offered journey times throughout the day that were much faster than those possible using the increasingly congested strategic road network. This was achieved in no small part due to diligent campaigning by the Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group. They won with the support of residents, local authorities and the area's MPs who, in turn, had mounted effective pressure on the Department for Transport.

Democracy worked and the Government was persuaded by the argument. Procurement of three additional bi-mode train sets was authorised to enable the improved Bedwyn service, on top of an order for the Intercity Express Passenger fleet required for the wider Great West route upgrade following electrification. However, within weeks, the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, and the attractive new service pattern introduced at the end of 2019 was curtailed; it was replaced in the main by a shuttle service between Bedwyn and Newbury and an inconvenient – and a frequently unreliable or often time-consuming – connection with the Great Western's outer suburban electric service linking Newbury and London Paddington.

Passengers were infuriated, many opting for a car journey on congested roads. Once again, the Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group went into action with their informed, evidence-based approach. GWR subsequently conceded some limited amendments to its timetable in the peak hours and some limited operational concessions in the event of late-running at Newbury. But the company, possibly at the insistence of the Department for Transport, stubbornly resisted pressure to return the three 'Bedwyn' train sets that had been procured specially for the service.

This document sets out the key issues and proposes a compromise position. It involves redeployment for part of the day of two of the three original 'Bedwyn' train sets. It deserves serious consideration – and a similarly rational and seriously-reasoned response. The people of east Wiltshire and West Berkshire are due better. And, unusually, taxpayers more widely should benefit.

Christopher Irwin

Director, TravelWatch SouthWest CIC

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Executive Summary

In May 2022 timetable the three off-peak Class 800 bi-modes, connecting Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury to Paddington, were reassigned to the Cardiff to Penzance route. In their place, GWR now run Class 387 EMU (all electric) between Paddington and Newbury with Class 165 DMU Turbos shuttling over the non-electrified line between Newbury and Bedwyn. With longer journey times and frequent missed connections, this has caused misery for the 95% of passengers who travel beyond Newbury.

Since May 2022 The Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group has, by suggesting switching the all electric Class 387 EMUs serving Paddington to Newbury with Class 800 bi-modes (diesel and electric) serving Paddington to Cardiff, put forward a series of proposals to reinstate the three Class 800 bi-modes. As the Class 800 bi-modes can run to Bedwyn this would end the need for the shuttle and restore direct services to Paddington.

On each occasion, despite requiring no additional trains or staff, the ideas have been rejected. This report shows how a modified proposal can be implemented by replacing just the following Cardiff / Paddington services with Class 387 EMUs:

- The 0818 and 1315 Paddington to Cardiff departures
- The 1041 and 1554 Cardiff to Paddington departures

This represents only 6.25% of the Paddington to Cardiff service and will free up two 5-car Class 800 bi-mode trains which can run, off-peak, between Paddington and Bedwyn on a two out of every three hour cycle. The third hour will be catered for by a mixture of (i) the current Bedwyn to Newbury Class 165 DMU Turbo shuttle and (ii) extending the shuttle service to Reading. In total this will return ten direct services between Paddington and Bedwyn.

A detailed timetable has been included in this report along with rationales and counter-arguments to the reasons given for previously not adopting this proposal.

Introduction

In early March, 2022, GWR informed the Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group that there would not be a full restoration of the pre-pandemic timetable in May, as we had previously been led to believe. Instead, there would be a further downgrade with the core off-peak service of through trains to and from Paddington (serviced by three 5-car Class 800 bi-mode sets), replaced by a Class 165 DMU Turbo shuttle between Bedwyn and Newbury. This was exactly what we had campaigned against since the announcement of electrification to Newbury in 2009.

Since the timetable began in May 2022, we have passed on a large number of complaints to GWR, particularly regarding connections not being held at Newbury or the inbound train so delayed that the connection is missed. This causes passengers to suffer 'connection anxiety' and, when the connection is tight, causes them to run. We should acknowledge that GWR have put in place measures to try to alleviate these problems. In addition, station staff have tried their best to make the system work. The timetable team have also tried to implement the thankless task of putting together a workable off-peak timetable using one Class 165 DMU Turbo.

However, shuttles between Newbury and Bedwyn are not a sustainable alternative to the return of our three Class 800 bi-modes. The reasons for this are given in Appendix A and Appendix B.

We have suggested on numerous occasions that the electric only Class 387 EMU trains, running between Paddington and Newbury, could instead run Paddington to Cardiff, freeing up Class 800 bi-mode trains to run Paddington to Newbury then seamlessly over the non-electrified Newbury to Bedwyn section. We have met with resistance to this, but as yet have not been given a convincing answer to why this cannot be done. In short, we are not prepared to take 'no' for an answer until somebody can prove to us that this option is technically not feasible. All the arguments and counterarguments are covered in this report.

To try and meet GWR and the Department for Transport somewhere in the middle, Bill Wells (co-author of this report) has come up with a solution requiring two Class 800 bi-modes to be returned to the Paddington to Bedwyn service with the existing Bedwyn / Newbury shuttle running to Reading to fill the void of the missing third Class 800 bi-mode. This would require the substitution of only one Paddington / Cardiff Class 800 bi-mode diagram for a Class 387 EMU. In short the 0818 and 1315 Paddington departures for Cardiff (and the corresponding 1041 and 1554 return Cardiff departures) will need to be serviced by an 8-car Class 387 EMU instead of its normal 9-car Class 800 bi-mode. This equates to a change to just 6.25% of the direct daily Paddington to Cardiff services and will return ten direct services between Paddington and Bedwyn. Bill's work is covered in Section 1 with his carefully worked out timetable presented in Appendix C. Sourcing the two Class 800 bi-modes is covered in Section 2. Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 discuss technical, economic, political and moral considerations.

Appendix D gives a brief history of the line, including a timeline of how we have reached this point.

1. Interim Service Improvement - Return of Two Class 800 bi-modes

Previously, we have requested the return just one 5-car Class 800 bi-mode to operate in the off-peak window. This could have allowed a limited number of through trains to operate along with the current shuttle service. Although this was not implemented, the timetabling of this option has proven to be problematic, giving a disjointed service.

Ideally, the return of all three units to enable a service level compatible with the excellent December 2019 timetable is the ultimate goal – the history and timeline leading to the December 2019 timetable is documented in Appendix D. However, taking in to consideration the issues facing GWR, as an interim measure a more modest solution is possible using two part-time 5-car Class 800 bi-modes (one between 0906 and 1854 and the other between 1007 and 1652). These two Class 800 bi-modes can be sourced by replacing one 10-car Class 800 bi-mode diagram with an 8-car Class 387 EMU. This is described in Section 2.

The timetable we have projected is closely based on the December 2021 version, which was in place until the May 2022 downgrade. This offered a mix of Paddington – Bedwyn Class 800 bi-modes, Paddington – Newbury Class 387 EMUs and Newbury – Bedwyn Class 165 DMU Turbo shuttles. As far as we are aware, this timetable performed successfully.

This interim measure would, without question, offer a better off-peak service for Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn. Crucially, it would be a start towards re-establishing the hourly Paddington – Bedwyn service pattern, which is needed for the reasons previously mentioned. If necessary, this could gradually be achieved via subsequent timetable changes. We have produced a detailed timetable suggestion and this can be found in Appendix C. In short there would be direct departures from Bedwyn at 0533, 0600, 0626, 0651, 0729, 0823, 1041, 1141, 1341, 1541, 1741, 2042, 2132 and 2317. And direct departures from Paddington at 0838, 0906, 1007, 1207, 1407, 1607, 1808, 1836, 1906 and 2230.

There are some specific issues which would be dealt with in the event of our proposal being implemented:

1. All four of the gaps of around 90 minutes in departures from Paddington (and Reading) to our stations would be eliminated.
2. The majority of trains before the evening peak in both directions would run to and from Paddington (or Reading). With fewer connections at Newbury required, the number of missed connections would be reduced and customer confidence should be improved. This should also result in fewer delay/repay claims and increased footfall.
3. There would be far fewer stock moves between the platforms and sidings at Newbury.
4. A number of shorter journey times and reduced requirement to cross the tracks via the steps or lift at Newbury.

5. Elimination of the Newbury to Bedwyn non-stop train at 1321. This would fill the two-hour gap for Kintbury and the similar gap between Hungerford and Bedwyn, which cannot be achieved by any other means.
6. Reintroduction of a 1041 Bedwyn to Paddington service would relieve pressure on the 1124 Newbury to Paddington (ex-Plymouth) train, which is a busy service and, being only a 5-car Class 800 bi-mode, is often full and standing from, and sometimes before, Newbury.

2. Sourcing the Two Class 800 bi-modes for this Proposal

GWR have previously said that there are not the Class 800 bi-modes available to implement switching Class 800 bi-modes operating to Cardiff with Class 387 EMUs. We address this concern here by showing how it can be achieved.

To free up two Class 800 bi-modes, to be used in the timetable presented in Appendix C, and ensuring that there is an 8-car Class 387 EMU to form the 0818 departure for Cardiff, can be achieved by:

- 1) Switching the 9-car Class 800 bi-mode 0818 Paddington to Cardiff service for an 8-car Class 387 EMU. This 8-car Class 387 EMU can be formed from the 12-car 0649 from Didcot Parkway (arriving Paddington at 0752). These 8 cars are not needed before the two Class 387 EMUs from Newbury (freed up replacing them with the two 5-car Class 800 bi-modes) subsequently become available.
- 2) Using this 9-car Class 800 bi-mode to form the 0904 Paddington to Plymouth. This service is normally diagrammed as a 10-car Class 800 bi-mode (i.e. two 5-car sets). A check has been made and it does not split during the day. Therefore it can be substituted for a 9-car set. NB given that this 10-car Class 800 bi-mode finishes its diagram at 2224 in Penzance then, the following day, forms the 0454 Plymouth to Paddington it is likely this proposal will require a permanent switch to this service being a 9-car set. The 10-car set will then perform the work of the 9-car Class 800 bi-mode prior to 0818.
- 3) Splitting the 10-car Class 800 bi-mode normally diagrammed for the 0904 Paddington to Plymouth (which is the 0835 Paddington arrival from Plymouth) in to 2 x 5-Car Class 800 bi-modes to operate the timetable in Appendix C. The first 5-car Class 800 bi-mode would depart Paddington at 0906 and the second at 1007.

Note the analysis for the above was taken from the units which operated on January 29th 2024. This appeared to be a normal day where trains, during the time period in question, ran to their standard diagrams.

It should also be noted that the two 5-car Class 800 bi-modes, used in this proposal, free up two 4-car Class 387 EMU (which otherwise would have run between Paddington and Newbury). Thus we have shown that no new stock is required.

Additionally a saving is made by replacing the 10-car Class 800 bi-mode with a 9-car Class 800 bi-mode on the Paddington to Plymouth/Penzance service. This is because a 10-car Class 800 bi-mode is made up of two 5-car Class 800 bi-modes where a train manager plus a

member of catering staff will occupy one set and a 'lead customer host' the other. With a 9-car set the 'lead customer host' is not required. This saving is from around 0800 until the 1818 Paddington to Swansea service i.e. around ten hours.

The diagram for the current 0818 9-car Class 800 bi-mode is as follows:

Departs Paddington	Arrives Cardiff	Departs Cardiff	Arrives Paddington
0818	1010	1041	1244
1315	1516	1554	1744
1818 (To Swansea)			

As the 1818 travels to Swansea, and the track between Cardiff and Swansea is not electrified, this departure must be a Class 800 bi-mode. The two 5-car Class 800 bi-modes (used in this proposal to serve Bedwyn during the off-peak daytime) get back to Paddington at 1652 and 1854. To overcome this the 1652 5-car Class 800 bi-mode arrival at Paddington from Bedwyn can be coupled to the 1759 Paddington arrival from Cheltenham to form a 10-car Class 800 bi-mode to run as the 1818 to Swansea. The 1759 Paddington arrival from Cheltenham forms the 1906 departure for Bedwyn which can now be served by the 1854 Paddington arrival from Bedwyn.

3. Technical Considerations

3.1 Class 387 EMU Timings versus Class 800 bi-mode Timings

GWR have previously said that the timings required, to switch Class 800 bi-modes operating to Cardiff with Class 387 EMU, do not work, citing platforming issues at Paddington. We haven't been supplied with any specifics, but address the concerns here.

Although the Class 387 EMUs have a maximum line speed of 110mph (c.f. the Class 800 bi-modes at 125mph) it has been shown that this (from recent substitutions) doesn't affect the running between Paddington and Cardiff.

During a shortage of Class 800 bi-modes in November 2023, GWR substituted a number of Class 800 bi-modes for 387s on the Paddington to Cardiff run. An example is the 0918 on 20/11/2023:

0918 LONDON PADDINGTON TO CARDIFF CENTRAL

DEPARTING ON 20TH NOVEMBER 2023

OPERATED BY

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

8 coaches

Coach 1

Coach 2

Coach 3

Coach 4

Coach 5

Coach 6

Coach 7

Coach 8

Location	PI	Planned		Realtime		
		Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Dly
PAD London Paddington	12		0918		0919	+1
RDG Reading	9	0941	0943	0943	0945	+2
SWI Swindon	4	1009	1011	1010	1012	+1
BPW Bristol Parkway	2	1032	1035	1033	1035	
NWP Newport (South Wales)	2	1053	1055	1054	1055	
CDF Cardiff Central	3	1110		1107		-3

This can be summarised as:

Station	Class 800 bi-mode Standard Timings	Actual 387 Timing
Paddington	0918	0919
Reading	0943	0945
Swindon	1011	1012
Bristol Parkway	1035	1035
Newport	1055	1055
Cardiff	1110	1107
Journey Time:	1:52	1:48

From the above it can be seen that the difference between the Class 387 EMU and the Class 800 bi-mode on the Paddington to Cardiff run is negligible, if anything at all. Probably the most significant issue, regarding the timings, is the Paddington to Reading leg of the journey where one minute is lost. However, there are other instances where 8-car Class 387 EMUs are scheduled to run between Reading and Paddington quicker than the 26 minutes shown here (e.g. the 1120 Reading departure takes 24 minutes).

Given the only concern with the timings is between Paddington and Reading we'll now look at these in greater detail:

1. The 0818 Paddington to Cardiff passes Kennet Bridge Junction at 0839.5 – less than a mile east of Reading. The following 0822 Paddington to Oxford passes at 0843.5. This gives a four minute window should the Class 387 EMU have to be retimed by a minute or two.
2. The 1315 Paddington to Cardiff passes Kennet Bridge Junction at 1336.5 – less than a mile east of Reading. The following 1323 Paddington to Oxford passes at 1344.5. This gives an eight minute window should the Class 387 EMU have to be retimed by a minute or two.
3. The 1041 Cardiff to Paddington passes Ladbroke Grove at 1241.5 – less than two miles west of Paddington. The following 1133 Didcot Parkway to Paddington passes at 1246.5. This gives a five minute window should the Class 387 EMU have to be retimed by a minute or two.
4. The 1554 Cardiff to Paddington passes Ladbroke Grove at 1740.5 – less than two miles west of Paddington. The following 1641 Didcot Parkway to Paddington passes at 1746. This gives a five and a half minute window should the Class 387 EMU have to be retimed by a minute or two.

3.2 Maintenance Considerations

GWR have previously said the Class 387 EMUs require more maintenance and are not suited to the longer journey to Cardiff.

Firstly, it should be noted that GWR use a Class 387 EMU on the 0712 to Cardiff and are set to introduce Class 387s to run on the new 1612 and 1912 Paddington to Bristol Parkway services.

To satisfy this proposal the 8-car Class 387 EMU would travel from Paddington to Cardiff, and back, twice each day. This would be a total of 8 carriages travelling 1096km.

The switch for this proposal would remove 5x4-car Class 387 EMUs runs to Newbury (and back). In total this is 4 carriages travelling 854km.

So, this proposal does increase the distance the Class 387 EMUs travel on a daily basis. However, without the full details of the additional maintenance required, we are not in a position to state what the issues are. It should, however, be noted that (i) Class 387 EMUs are more reliable than Class 800 bi-modes and (ii) this proposal marginally reduces the number of kilometres travelled per day by Class 800 bi-modes.

3.3 Capacity Considerations

The 9-car Class 800 bi-mode, currently used for the 0818 and 1315 Paddington to Cardiff departures, has a capacity of 650 seats. An 8-car Class 387 EMU has a capacity of 448.

GWR have not suggested that there is a capacity issue regarding switching Class 800 bi-modes operating to Cardiff with Class 387 EMUs.

3.4 Flexibility Considerations

Given the current overall situation with Class 800 bi-mode availability, the timetable that we have produced in Appendix C offers more resilience at Paddington (and Newbury) in the event of short notice stock problems or other disruption.

4. Economic Considerations

To switch Class 800 bi-modes operating to Cardiff with Class 387 EMUs, has to have an economic grounding.

First and foremost the economic saving in axing the Bedwyn to Paddington off-peak Class 800 bi-modes was compelling – it was to enable three of the expensive Castle Class trains, operating Cardiff to Penzance, to be retired. This proposal does not require those trains to be reinstated or any other replacements to be bought in. Instead it requires some swapping of existing trains around to give Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn more direct services. No other services will be axed, or have their stopping patterns changed, by this proposal. Thus the economics of this proposal are minor when compared with the original decision.

Additionally, we are told that money saved from the cancelled section of HS2 will be used to boost transport in the regions, with much of this likely to be used on additional infrastructure. Our proposals however, will not require any infrastructure expenditure whatsoever. Furthermore, a 'unit swap', as suggested, should not entail much, if any additional cost. Comparatively, what we are proposing wouldn't even register on the scale of the HS2 reallocated expenditure.

GWR have previously cited the following economic reasons against switching Class 800 bi-modes operating to Cardiff with Class 387 EMUs:

1. Loss of buffet revenue.
2. Loss of first class revenue.

We counter these in the following two sections.

4.1 Countering the Buffet Revenue Argument

GWR could operate a static buffet trolley on the 387s to Cardiff. As a member of catering staff would be required on the Class 800 bi-mode it replaces, this will incur no additional staffing costs.

4.2 Countering the First Class Revenue Argument

There will be a gain in first class revenue on the reinstated Paddington to Bedwyn run. This would include additional first class for Theale, Thatcham and Newbury as well as Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn.

This proposal will only affect the 0818 and 1315 Paddington to Cardiff departures (and the corresponding 1041 and 1554 return Cardiff departures). Given Paddington to Cardiff is a half-hourly service this equates to 6.25% of the services between Paddington and Cardiff for any given day. These proposed changes will still leave Cardiff passengers within a half hour of a train with first class seats. Thus, given passengers can switch to these alternate services, it cannot be argued that the entire first class supplement will be lost for the services in question. Any loss has to be countered by the significant benefits (of returning ten direct services to and from Paddington and Bedwyn) it'll give Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn.

4.3 Additional Revenue Gains

The following are additional gains in revenue caused by this proposal:

1. Gain in fewer delay/repay claims due to missed connections at Newbury.
2. Gain in footfall at Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn due to an improved service.
It must also be remembered that with lack of ticket checks, and no exits barriers at Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn, the revenue from these stations is undercounted. If proper revenue protection were employed these stations might

show as higher earning than they currently do. We are also told that leisure travel is now a main priority. The downgrade to our off-peak and Saturday services has, if anything, been detrimental to those travelling for leisure purposes. An improvement to our off-peak and, in time, Saturday service will provide a boost to leisure travel and therefore should be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

3. Gain in GWR management time in dealing with fewer issues affecting Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn.
4. Gain in not requiring one 'lead customer host' for approximately ten hours per day.
5. Gain in buffet revenue on the Paddington to Bedwyn run (should GWR wish to operate a buffet trolley).
6. Gain in UK productivity by giving Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn commuters a better service. The stress of longer journey times, and missed connections, must be hitting the UK economy.

4.4 Staffing

4.4.1 Drivers

This proposal does not require any additional drivers.

4.4.2 Train Managers

Given the Class 800 bi-modes, proposed in this solution, do not go west of Bedwyn, the trains can run DOO (Driver Only Operation). Therefore there is potentially no increase here. However, prior to the removal of our off-peak Class 800 bi-modes, GWR did operate these with train managers.

4.4.3 Customer Hosts

It has been mentioned above that this proposal will free up a 'lead customer host' from around 0800 until the 1818 Paddington to Swansea service. Other than this there is no changes required in customer hosts.

5. Political Considerations

It is possible that the Welsh Assembly would view this proposal as taking away bi-modes from Wales to placate the English. It cannot be over emphasised that our 3 Class 800 bi-mode trains have been reallocated to the Cardiff to Penzance service. Therefore, the people of Cardiff have benefited massively from our severe downgrade and all we are asking, to

redress some balance, is that one diagram (starting 0818) be substituted from a Class 800 bi-mode to a Class 387 EMU. It requires no delays for these passengers and no changes to stations called at.

Any argument in favour of Wales has to be countered by passengers of Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury, following the removal of out 3 Class 800 bi-modes, having endured two years of misery (as detailed in Appendix A and B).

It should also be noted that the Class 387 EMUs are more reliable than the Class 800 bi-modes. Thus this proposal would reduce cancellations and failures between Paddington and Cardiff. By taking the Class 800 bi-modes, Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury passengers will also get a more reliable service because of the reduced missed connections at Newbury. So in terms of reliability (and paying out Delay / Repay) it's a win-win.

6. Moral Considerations

6.1 Recap of Moral Considerations

The following is a recap on the moral considerations already aired in this report:

1. Shuttles between Newbury and Bedwyn are not a sustainable alternative to the return of our three Class 800 bi-modes. The reasons for this are given in Appendix A and Appendix B.
2. Over the last two years, having to change trains at Newbury, with extended journey times and frequent missed connections, has created misery for the 95% of passengers who travel beyond Newbury.
3. The economic saving in axing the Bedwyn to Paddington off-peak Class 800 bi-modes was compelling – it was to enable three of the expensive Castle Class trains, operating Cardiff to Penzance, to be retired. This proposal does not require those trains to be reinstated or any other replacements to be bought in. Instead it requires some swapping of existing trains around to reinstate ten Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn direct services with Paddington. No other services will be axed, or have their stopping patterns changed, by this proposal. Thus what we are asking to be changed is minor (affecting the rolling stock used on just 6.25% of the Paddington Cardiff trains), but bringing massive benefits for Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn. It's not a big ask.

6.2 Additional Moral Considerations

Additionally, there are the following moral points consider:

1. Of all the stations in the GWR region, Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn have been hardest hit by the post-pandemic cuts. This report is asking to redress some, but not all, of these cuts.
2. The cuts were made without consultation. They were presented as a *fait accompli*.
3. When the bi-modes were introduced, all off-peak fares between 1600 and 1900 were removed. This was based on the significant improvements in the service the bi-modes brought. Although the fares have been retained, we no longer have the service to match them.
4. People have moved into the area, bought houses and settled their families based on the previous service levels. These service levels were swept away without consultation.
5. During a Q&A session with GWR at the Local Transport Forum, held on March 7th 2024, GWR revealed that the additional 9-car Class 800 bi-mode, required to run the new 1204 Paddington to Plymouth Service, is available because there are spare sets available off-peak. GWR also revealed that there are spare Class 800 bi-modes on Saturdays. Given we have been repeatedly told there are no Class 800 bi-modes available to return our off-peak services, including Saturdays, we find this revelation bewildering.

6.3 Weaknesses in the DfT's Arguments for Cutting our Service

On the point of service levels, raised in the last point of the previous section, the DfT had, for many years, published a document at regular intervals entitled the Service Level Commitment (SLC). This document specified certain requirements of each rail franchisee, particularly concerning service patterns, minimum service frequency and maximum journey times. They could be downloaded from the DfT website and provided useful information for train users.

It would appear that, at some point during the pandemic, the SLC was discontinued. Having perused the DfT website, the SLC now seems to have been replaced by a document called the Train Service Requirement (TSR). Whilst it does retain some elements of the SLC, it can best be described as a pale imitation. In particular, the maximum journey time requirement has been dropped, which is certainly a retrograde step.

Unlike the SLC, the TSR does not specify minimum frequencies (such as hourly or half-hourly) for either service groups or individual stations. Instead, it shows a minimum number of calls for each station during various sections of the day. This has allowed anomalies such

as an early afternoon two hour gap westbound at Kintbury and between Hungerford and Bedwyn.

Given the adverse effect that these changes and the general downgrade have caused to users of Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury stations, we must ask the following questions: 1) Why has the methodology changed? 2) Why is there no consultation when such decisions are taken? 3) Why have maximum journey times been removed?

A fair conclusion is that, without consultation, the DfT has altered the methodology to suit their own agenda.

For users of Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury stations, this change is most significant. The last published SLC (no longer viewable on the DfT website) stated the following:

1. Route Definition: Services shall be provided between: London Paddington and Bedwyn calling at Reading, Theale, Thatcham, Newbury, Kintbury and Hungerford. Newbury and Bedwyn calling at Kintbury and Hungerford.
2. Frequency, London Paddington and Bedwyn, Mondays to Fridays: Between and including the Early and Late services, twelve services from Paddington shall be provided at hourly intervals. Together with services specified in Route B this shall provide a half-hourly service from Paddington between 1600 and 1930 calling Newbury. Between and including the Early and Late services, thirteen services from Bedwyn shall be provided. Between 0900 and 1900 at Bedwyn services shall be at hourly intervals with one extension to one hour fifteen minutes permitted.
3. London Paddington and Bedwyn, Saturdays: Between and including the Early and Late services, twelve services from Paddington shall be provided at hourly intervals. Between and including the Early and Late services, fourteen services from Bedwyn shall be provided at hourly intervals.
4. Maximum Journey Times: Paddington – Bedwyn, Mondays to Fridays and Saturdays. 1 hour 7 minutes, with four exceptions to 1 hour 16 minutes permitted. Bedwyn – Paddington, Mondays to Fridays and Saturdays. 1 hour 16 minutes with two exceptions to 1 hour 19 minutes.

These commitments were met in the December 2019 timetable, indeed the Bedwyn – Paddington journey times were exceeded in most cases. Post pandemic, almost all of the Monday to Friday off-peak Paddington – Bedwyn and all of the Saturday through services were scrapped. The May 2022 Saturday change was particularly stark, as the previous Paddington to Bedwyn service included hourly through trains from 0708 to 1915 and Bedwyn to Paddington from 0635 to 2038 inclusive. It is clear that the Monday to Friday and Saturday timetables failed this SLC on almost every count. As stated above, it should be noted that regular passengers have moved to Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn and built their lives around the SLC.

However, the newly constituted TSR makes no mention of a regular Paddington – Bedwyn through service, instead referring to it as being Newbury to Bedwyn. Furthermore, the concept of maximum journey times does not appear on the document. The 'Early' and 'Late' services have now been renamed as 'First' and 'Last' – a subtle change in wording to not draw negative attention to statements such as, 'the First service must leave Paddington for

Bedwyn no later than 1815'. On Saturdays, there are no services from Paddington to Bedwyn. From Bedwyn to Paddington, on a Saturday, the First service must arrive no later than 1015, the Last arrive no earlier than 1000! On Sundays, there are no direct services specified.

As a result of a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the DfT regarding Bedwyn services, we received the following response:

Following experience gained during the bi-mode crack timetable, the Paddington to Bedwyn bi-mode through service could be restructured by being split at Newbury. A Paddington to Newbury service, operated with 8-car Class 387s, would provide a virtually identical service east of Newbury. The stations of Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn would be served by a Turbo shuttle on existing frequencies instead of an bi-mode.

It should be pointed out that the three stations only have existing (hourly) frequencies from Newbury to Bedwyn, although Kintbury has one two-hour gap, as does Hungerford to Bedwyn. In the current Monday to Friday timetable there are four gaps of around ninety minutes from Paddington. Therefore, the last sentence of the above paragraph is disguising the impact of the changes.

This scheme will increase capacity on the trunk route between Newbury and London compared to a 5-car bi-mode. The change also makes good and efficient use of the Class 387 fleet, some of which will not be required post the Elizabeth line changes.

This is true, assuming that all Newbury – Paddington diagrams are 8-car formations. In the current (December) timetable, two out of every three trains on this route are now operating as 4-car sets. These services, therefore, offer a significant drop in capacity when compared to a 5-car Class 800 bi-mode.

Savings would come in the form of up to three bi-mode sets not being required. Variable costs against mileage once the timetable has been adapted to accommodate the service split.

We cannot understand how running a Class 387 EMU from Paddington to Newbury, then a Class 165 DMU from Newbury to Bedwyn (requiring two separate drivers, one with an extended waiting time in Newbury) is a saving over running a Class 800 bi-mode from Paddington to Bedwyn. We would suggest that, if anything, the latter would actually offer a saving.

The proposal also has the benefit of reducing the need to train as many GWR/LTV drivers on bi-modes for Thames Valley services and solves the bi-mode DOO(P) issue at unstaffed stations with no dispatch staff.

This is a somewhat surprising statement. The Wiltshire Rail Strategic Study, led by Network Rail, is currently looking at future service patterns, (we are taking part as stakeholders). One of the core parts of this study concerns a semi-fast service between Paddington and Westbury. This could possibly include a new station, Devizes Gateway. A key assumption for this potential service, is that the Paddington – Bedwyn service has been reinstated. Therefore, we would assume that the aforementioned drivers would be required to operate these trains, so numbers would need to be at least maintained, not reduced.

With regards to the Driver Only Operation issue, since the bi-modes have been in operation on Bedwyn services, they have used Train Managers, so there doesn't appear to be an issue to solve.

In addition, this change would mitigate the ongoing issue of enforcement action taken against GWR by Wiltshire Council at Bedwyn Turnback siding due to alleged noise nuisance from bi-mode rolling stock.

We were aware that there were problems concerning the noise generated on occasions by bi-modes entering and leaving the siding. This is clearly a matter which Network Rail and Hitachi would be expected to sort out. We attended a site meeting at least four years ago, where we were told that solutions had been found which should solve this problem. It should be noted that, since the May 2022 timetable, there are still two occasions on Mondays to Fridays where bi-modes enter and leave the siding (one in early morning and one mid evening).

One might conclude that the DfT's changes to the SLC and the reasoning given in answer to our FOI requests, has an element of 'clutching at straws' to convince us that the cuts we have been forced to endure have sound reasoning. As stated, a number of times above, the cuts were made without consultation. If there had been consultation, the DfT's arguments wouldn't have stood up.

Appendix A – The Problem with the Newbury-Bedwyn Shuttle Service

In order to move forward, we feel it is necessary that we explain the reasons why a shuttle service for much of the day between Bedwyn and Newbury is unsustainable. To put it simply, we would contend that it is all but impossible to operate an hourly shuttle using one Class 165 DMU Turbo within the current timetable. Such a service cannot be robust enough to survive the sort of problems that occur every day on any railway system. For example, freight and West of England services take priority over the shuttle service. This is to the extent that even when the shuttle and the Paddington connecting service are on time, delayed freight and West of England services will be allowed through Newbury and Bedwyn stations which in turn forces a missed connection on the shuttle.

The distance between Newbury and Bedwyn is 13.25 miles. Timings for a Class 165 DMU Turbo between the two stations usually take twenty minutes. At Bedwyn station, trains run forward and cross into a turn-back siding on the up side west of the station. They then reverse direction and emerge from the siding before entering platform 2 (the up platform). Timings for this procedure are usually at least eight to ten minutes and this can be affected by passing trains running late or other reasons. Therefore, this leaves just ten minutes or so at the Newbury end.

This might just be sustainable in the event of connecting services leaving from or arriving at Newbury at the same time each hour. Unfortunately this is not the case with the current timetable. Also, Newbury station would need to be compatible with shuttle services to and from the west operating on a regular basis. It was in the past but, unfortunately now it does not appear to be viable.

At one point, Newbury had two west-facing bay platforms. One, on the up side served the former Lambourn Valley line. The other, on the down side, mainly served local trains to Bedwyn. By 1978, both of these platforms were taken out of use. Furthermore, the up side bay is now covered by a multi-storey car park, while the down side bay is covered by more car parking spaces.

Back in 2013, the Arup report into further electrification concluded that regular Newbury – Bedwyn shuttles were not viable without a west-facing bay, which was costed at the time at 2.5 million pounds. It should be noted that, at that time, the up side developments had not taken place. There is also a further impediment, namely that there is no direct access into platform 1 (the down platform) from the west. It would appear to be unlikely that creating such an access would be feasible.

Some of the Bedwyn – Newbury shuttle trains, having arrived at platform 2, are able to reverse and then form a return service to Bedwyn within a few minutes. Others, however, are forced to move to another part of the station in order for a connecting service from the west to access the platform. This can cause logistical problems, particularly in the event of late running.

Additionally, the shuttle requires a driver shift change during the day. The relief driver has to come in on a service from Reading. If this is delayed or cancelled it causes the shuttles to be cancelled.

Therefore, we would suggest that the only logical conclusion would be the resumption of an off-peak service largely consisting of through trains between Paddington and Bedwyn. It would be necessary for a number of Class 165 DMU Turbo shuttles to supplement this service as before, mainly during the peak periods. This arrangement had worked perfectly well for many years, prior to the pandemic.

Appendix B – Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury Survey Results

In November 2023 Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group consulted its members for experience of how the Bedwyn to Newbury shuttles are operating. It is clear from the responses that, despite GWRs best efforts, the shuttles are not a sustainable option. Below are some examples of the feedback received:

The railway station is an easy short five minute downhill walk for me. However the shuttles to Newbury are so terrible that I have elected to make more car journeys rather than use the railway. In the past month family members have tried to travel to and from London twice. On the first occasion the return leg involved two changes - at Reading and Newbury - inevitably the connection at Newbury was missed and I drove to Newbury to pick up my stranded family member rather than have them wait for a full hour in the cold and rain at Newbury. On the second occasion we didn't attempt to travel from Bedwyn, it's just too hard, so I drove my family to and from Newbury to use a direct service. Rail service reduced, car dependency increased. **Name Supplied.**

GWR are not offering a consistent service to passengers. Morning direct trains to Paddington from Kintbury (~ 1 hour when not delayed) represent a good service offering. Same with the limited direct trains (e.g. 18.08 from Paddington). Even when trains are unfortunately delayed, as a passenger I know the train will stop at my scheduled stop.

Evening non direct trains with a changeover at Newbury offer a poor service in comparison. The issue is less the travel time, it is the knock on effect to my evening should the service out of Paddington be delayed. It is a fairly regular occurrence that where the train from Paddington is delayed, the train is not held at Newbury. What was a 10 min stopover in Newbury can be extended anywhere from 30 mins to 1 hour + dependent on the time of night. With the shuttle service, it is impossible to make any evening plans during the week as it is near impossible to determine when I might get home. **Gary Ellis.**

At age 78 I am finding it increasingly inconvenient to use the shuttle between Bedwyn and Newbury with the need to change platforms for onward travel and having to use the footbridge. **Janet Bensley.**

While connectivity between the through services and shuttles seems to have improved slightly in recent months, there remain significant occurrences when they miss which then exacerbates preceding delays from Paddington. Station staff at Newbury often seem to struggle to advise where the shuttle will leave from, and the platforms often change at very short notice requiring a stressful race across the connecting passenger bridge. Given the very high (and ever increasing) cost of a daily return the service levels achieved remain significantly below reasonable expectations. **Russell Wing.**

Your e-mail [23/11/2023] was very well timed as I was just getting back to my desk after an hour's delay today when I received it. The incoming train from London to Newbury was a few minutes late. As a result the shuttle left just before the train arrived at Newbury. This was not announced to anyone on the train, which would have at least let people know. Causing an hour's delay to anyone wanting to take the shuttle. **Francis Moore.**

Very simply, I still find that the connection seems to work on about 50% of occasions in the late afternoon, when I tend to use it. Almost always because of the late running train from Paddington. **Piers de Winton.**

As slightly older passengers we do find that having to clamber up and down stairs at Newbury to catch a train that is often 'due to leave' is a hazardous and unwelcome experience.

In addition the delay caused by this shuttle system to journeys to and from London is disappointing and acts as a deterrent to travel. We feel let down and cannot but express surprise that so much investment was put into the Class 800 bi-mode facility only to be abandoned. **Ian & Lesley Herd.**

If the powers that be wanted to run a railway down and turn passengers away in their droves, they could hardly have found a better way to do it than introduce shuttles to/from Newbury with their dreadful inconvenience and extended journey times. **Edward Lambert.**

Shuttles mean longer journey times, later arrival in London and less time to stay there. **Peter Turvey.**

As live example of the problem of forces to catch connecting trains, the extremely unreliable 17.36 is over 20 minutes late leaving Paddington tonight so connection missed at Newbury and forced to wait even longer. At least one train with no connections would only be 20 mins late. **David Price.**

I commute to Reading on weekdays. Changing to the 18.26 shuttle in the evenings prolongs my journey by approx. 50 mins. **María Pía Ruiz Pastorino.**

Since the change to shuttles the impact has been many delayed journeys, I cannot generally rely on the straight connections out of the 1703/1802 fast Class 800 bi-modes at Newbury, but I can't get out of work to get the one before. I'm getting home an hour late at least once a fortnight, sometimes a few times a week.

On occasions where we are travelling into London as a family, the connection time is extremely tight at weekends and the journey is very stressful and involves a footbridge. This means allowing an hour's contingency 'just in case' either end. **Simon Smith.**

If the Paddington/Reading train is late at Newbury then the Bedwyn shuttle will not wait, meaning an hour delay until the next one. (By the way the Newbury waiting room gets shut early on a Saturday evening leaving one to wait on a cold platform). **Alastair Campbell.**

In response to your request for info on how the lack of Class 800 bi-mode's and the need for shuttles is impacting us, it is quite simple. We frequently use Swindon now rather than have to make 1 or even 2 changes on our line. This means the overall journey time is similar but the bus journey to Swindon is longer and more liable to delays.

As soon as the Class 800 bi-mode issue is resolved we will return to using Bedwyn/Hungerford especially now with the Wilts Connect bus service – this is a no-brainer! **Gina Cooke.**

The shuttle is continuing to cause so many problems with connections. It makes life so difficult and unpredictable. For example, just yesterday (24th November) my daughter was returning from Oxford to Bedwyn and the journey from Oxford to Reading was fine. However her train from Reading to Newbury was delayed by around 35 minutes and she got into Newbury at 17.49 only to find that her connecting train had already left for Bedwyn at 17.25!! They didn't hold the train!!

She then had to wait an hour at Newbury until the next Bedwyn train scheduled at 18.26 - and even that was 10 minutes late!! If the train had gone direct from Reading to Bedwyn she would've been home almost 2 hours earlier!

Oxford to Bedwyn is not that far- in a car it would be about 45 minutes- but by train it is an endurance test. It shouldn't have taken her almost 3 hours to get home.

On several previous occasions she has been trying to get home and been stranded at Newbury station waiting for a Bedwyn train at 10.30pm when the station was unmanned. My daughter is 23 years old, 5'2 and it simply isn't safe to leave a young woman stranded like that - particularly as I can't drive and couldn't even come and rescue her. It's a shocking lack of care, and the lack of a through service from Reading makes planning journeys to and from Bedwyn almost impossible. My main reason for moving to Bedwyn because of the train service, but in the 23 years I've lived here it's changed beyond recognition- for the worse- and most of the problems stem from the need to change at Newbury. **Catherine King.**

Connecting trains from Paddington/Newbury are so unreliable for time that I have now resorted to getting earlier trains to Newbury and waiting longer to ensure I get the connection to Bedwyn.

I am now often driving to Newbury or even Reading, if I am coming back late from London, as cannot rely on trains making it to Newbury on time for connection.

Plus it is a total lottery whether the shuttle from Newbury to Bedwyn will be held at Newbury, if the connecting train from Paddington is running a few minutes late. Sometimes shuttle is held but often just leaves on time, with numerous people left to wait at Newbury for up to an hour for next shuttle.

In summary, service to Bedwyn is appalling and GWR should be ashamed of the low level of customer service they appear to believe is acceptable.

If there was competition on this service, I would gladly not get on a GWR service again in my lifetime!! **Stephen Munro.**

If the shuttles were in place when I was commuting, I think I would have suffered severe mental anguish over a daily dose of 'connection anxiety'. I now travel from Bedwyn for leisure and, because of the shuttles, always take earlier trains to have a chance of making a connection. Sometimes this means I, rather unfairly, end up buying peak time tickets to avoid using a shuttle. **Name Supplied.**

I take the Hungerford/Paddington trains once a week - sometimes twice. Never on peak times. The percentage over the last 6 months that the train has worked on time and

flawlessly is 30%. It persuades one to seek lifts from friends as often as possible. **Campbell Gordon.**

The current Rail service provided by the current rail franchise is completely unusable. I find when I use the trains I'm always having to use Delay repay. The service and attitude from this rail franchise is disgraceful that's from the Gate line staff and the management. I now find I have to allow lots of extra time for journeys into Reading or Paddington. The train especially the shuttle is very often in dirty condition. **Ian Briggs.**

I face delays every single week which is incredibly stressful as I am a teacher in London (so need to get there with a strict start time) and also need to return to Hungerford to collect my little boy from nursery. I have had to get taxis from Newbury multiple times due to delays and cancellations. My journey this week took 3.5 hours to get home. I wish I could say this was unusual. I regularly aim to get the first train of the day due to the anxiety about the ones after being cancelled or delayed. Which means I am COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED! My husband also commutes into London which means if the trains are messed up then no-one can pick up my son from nursery. You can imagine how stressful this is. **Lauren Campbell.**

I commute in 5 days a week. I even allow a 30min buffer time in the morning to ensure I get to work on time, but when the delay is near 45/60mins it becomes really problematic, having to inform patients to reschedule their appointments, because I cannot start my clinic on time. **Louise Barrett.**

Appendix C – Bill Wells's Interim Service Improvements Timetable

In the event of two 5-car Class 800 bi-modes being made available, it should be possible to replace two out of every three Paddington - Newbury off-peak services with Paddington - Bedwyn IETs. For example, this could involve departures from Paddington at 0906, 1007, 1207, 1307, 1507 and 1608, with those at 0705, 0805, 1107 and 1407 remaining as Class 387 operated to Newbury. The existing Class 165 DMU would be used as necessary, either from Newbury or Reading to Bedwyn.

Given the current overall situation with Class 800 bi-mode availability, the timetable that we have produced below offers more resilience at Paddington (and Newbury) in the event of short notice stock problems or other disruption.

This proposed timetable would represent an interim solution to provide an improvement to the current Newbury – Bedwyn off-peak shuttle service that does not involve the return of all three 5-car Class 800 bi-modes which were allocated to this service prior to the pandemic. As such, it closely follows the December 2021 timetable and as this operated perfectly well before being replaced by the May 2022 downgrade, there should be no reason why this could not be adopted.

The changes that we are proposing to the Kennet Valley timetable are shown in [blue](#).

	I	T	E	T	E	E	T	E	I	E	T	E	I
Paddington	0334		0505			0550			0703	0705		0732	0804
Reading	0512	0515	0550		0613	0637		0710	0730	0734		0803	0829
Theale		0525	0556		0622	0646		0717		0742		0812	
Aldermaston		0530			0627	0650		0722				0817	
Midgham		0533			0630	0653		0725				0820	
Thatcham		0538	0604		0634	0658		0729		0750		0824	
Newbury Rc		0543			0638	0702		0733				0828	
Newbury (a)	0527	0546	0611		0642	0705		0737	0744	0756		0832	
Newbury (d)	0528			0624			0722		0745		0813		
Kintbury	0534			0630			0729				0825		
Hungerford	0539			0635			0733				0830		
Bedwyn	0544			0641			0740				0837		
Pewsey									0804				
Westbury									0822				
Frome													
Castle Cary									0843				
Taunton									0903				0944
Tiverton Pw									0917				
Exeter SD									0934				1010
Paignton									1016				
Plymouth													1112
Penzance													1307

	E	E	I	E	I	I(a)	I	E	I	I (b)	I	E	I
Paddington	0805		0838		0904	0906	0937		1004	1007	1035		1104
Reading	0836	0846	0905	0913	0929	0937	1003	1012	1029	1038	1101	1112	1129
Theale	0844	0853	0912	0920		0945		1019		1046		1119	
Aldermaston		0859		0925				1023				1123	
Midgham				0928				1026				1126	
Thatcham	0852	0906	0920	0932		0953		1030		1055		1130	
Newbury Rc				0936				1034				1134	
Newbury (a)	0858	0912	0925	0940		0959		1038		1101	1115	1138	
Newbury (d)			0926			1000				1103	1116		
Kintbury			0932			1006				1110			
Hungerford			0937			1010				1114	1126		
Bedwyn			0943			1016				1121			
Pewsey			0951								1138		
Westbury			1010				1046				1156		
Frome													
Castle Cary							1106				1216		
Taunton					1047		1127				1237		1245
Tiverton Pw					1059		1140						1257
Exeter SD					1115		1154		1204		1307		1315
Paignton							1250						
Plymouth					1214				1310				1412
Penzance									1500				

	E	T(C)	E	I	I(d)	I	E	I	E	T	E	I	I(e)
Paddington	1108	1118	1131	1204	1207	1235		1304	1305		1331	1404	1407
Reading	1137	1148	1212	1229	1237	1301	1312	1329	1337		1412	1429	1437
Theale	1144	1157	1219		1244		1319		1344		1419		1444
Aldermaston			1223				1324				1424		
Midgham			1226				1327				1427		
Thatcham	1152	1204	1230		1252		1331		1352		1431		1452
Newbury Rc			1234				1335				1435		
Newbury (a)	1200	1211	1238		1257	1315	1338		1401		1438		1458
Newbury (d)		1212			1258	1316				1408			1459
Kintbury		1218			1304					1415			1505
Hungerford		1223			1308	1325				1420			1509
Bedwyn		1230			1314					1428			1515
Pewsey						1337							
Westbury						1356							
Frome													
Castle Cary						1416							
Taunton				1347		1436		1445				1546	
Tiverton Pw				1359				1457				1559	
Exeter SD				1416		1508		1513				1614	
Paignton													
Plymouth				1516				1612				1718	
Penzance				1708								1923	

	I	E	I	E	T	E	I	I(f)	I	T	E	I	I
Paddington	1436		1504	1505		1531	1603	1608	1636			1704	1708
Reading	1502	1510	1529	1537		1612	1629	1636	1702		1710	1729	1741
Theale		1517		1545		1619		1646			1718		1750
Aldermaston		1522				1624					1722		
Midgham		1525				1627					1725		
Thatcham		1529		1553		1631		1654			1729		1758
Newbury Rc		1533				1635					1733		
Newbury (a)	1516	1537		1602		1638		1700	1716		1737		1804
Newbury (d)	1517				1610			1701	1717	1724			
Kintbury					1617			1707		1731			
Hungerford					1622			1711	1726	1736			
Bedwyn					1628			1718		1744			
Pewsey	1536								1738			1759	
Westbury	1554								1757				
Frome													
Castle Cary	1614						1727		1817				
Taunton	1635		1647				1749		1838			1846	
Tiverton Pw			1659				1802					1900	
Exeter SD	1703		1717				1818		1904			1915	
Paignton	1744												
Plymouth			1820				1925		2014			2027	
Penzance			2010				2120					2225	

	I	T	E	I	I	I	T	E	I	I	E	E
Paddington	1736			1804	1808	1836			1904	1906		
Reading	1803		1807	1829	1838	1901		1910	1931	1937	1942	2010
Theale			1815		1846			1918		1944	1950	2019
Aldermaston			1820					1922			1954	2023
Midgham			1823					1925			1957	2026
Thatcham			1827		1854			1930		1952	2002	2031
Newbury Rc			1831					1934			2005	2035
Newbury (a)	1817		1835	1843	1859	1915		1936		1958	2009	2038
Newbury (d)	1818	1826		1844	1900	1916	1924			1959		
Kintbury		1833			1907		1931			2005		
Hungerford		1838			1912	1925	1936			2009		
Bedwyn		1846			1918	1931	1944			2015		
Pewsey	1838				1927	1941						
Westbury	1856				1944	1959						
Frome					2001							
Castle Cary	1915					2019						
Taunton	1936			1948		2040			2056			
Tiverton Pw	1949					2053			2108			
Exeter SD	2004			2014		2109			2124			
Paignton												
Plymouth	2125			2118		2209			2222			
Penzance									0033			

	I	T	E	I	T	E	T	I	T
Paddington	2003		2032	2104		2128		2230	2332
Reading	2028		2105	2129		2210		2259	0017
Theale			2111			2219		2308	0026s
Aldermaston			2115			2224		2314	0032s
Midgham			2119			2227		2319	0035s
Thatcham			2122			2231		2325	0040s
Newbury Rc			2127			2235		2329	0045s
Newbury (a)	2042		2131	2143		2239		2333	0049
Newbury (d)	2043	2049		2144	2156		2247	2334	
Kintbury		2056			2203		2254	2340	
Hungerford		2101			2207		2258	2344	
Bedwyn		2108			2214		2305	2349	
Pewsey	2102			2203					
Westbury	2121			2221					
Frome									
Castle Cary	2141			2241					
Taunton	2201			2304					
Tiverton Pw	2214			2318					
Exeter SD	2228			2334					
Paignton									
Plymouth	2336			0033					
Penzance									

	E	I	I	E	I	E	I	T	E	I	E	T	I
Penzance													
Plymouth										0454			0533
Paignton													
Exeter SD										0552			0639
Tiverton Pw										0606			0654
Taunton										0620			0706
Castle Cary										0641			0727
Frome							0612						
Westbury					0559		0623			0702			0746
Pewsey					0616		0641			0719			>>>
Bedwyn		0533	0600		0626		0651	0700		0729		0749	
Hungerford		0539	0606		0633		0657	0706		0736		0755	
Kintbury		0544	0611		0638		0702	0710				0759	
Newbury (a)		0550	0617		0644		0708	0717		0744		0806	
Newbury (d)	0527	0551	0618	0631	0645	0652	0710		0724	0745	0753		
Newbury Rc	0529			0633		0654			0726		0756		
Thatcham	0533	0555	0623	0637	0650	0658	0715		0730		0800		
Midgham	0537			0642		0702			0734		0804		
Aldermaston	0540			0645		0705			0737		0808		
Theale	0545	0605	0631	0650	0702	0710	0723		0742		0813		
Reading	0555	0615	0641	0700	0710	0721	0735		0751	0810	0822		
Paddington		0637	0709		0736	0755	0801			0835	0859		

	I	I	E	T	I	E	E	I	E	T(g)	E	I	I(h)
Penzance					0503							0605	
Plymouth	0555				0652			0640				0812	
Paignton													
Exeter SD	0652				0749			0758				0912	
Tiverton								0812				0925	
Taunton	0715				0813			0823				0939	
Castle Cary								0844					
Frome		<<<						0858					
Westbury		0756						0910					
Pewsey		0813						0927					
Bedwyn		0823		0846						0952			1041
Hungerford		0829		0852				0941		0958			1047
Kintbury				0857						1003			1052
Newbury (a)	0818	0838		0904						1010			1058
Newbury (d)	0819	0839	0846			0920	0925		0949	1010	1026		1059
Newbury Rc							0927			1012			
Thatcham			0853			0925	0931		0957	1016	1034		1103
Midgham							0935			1020			
Aldermaston							0938			1023			
Theale			0901			0932	0944		1004	1028	1042		1111
Reading	0836	0857	0909		0930	0943	0955	1002	1013	1038	1051	1058	1122
Paddington	0901	0921	0938		0955	1008		1029	1042	1112	1122	1129	1152

	E	I	I	I(i)	E	E	I	E	T	I	I	I(j)	E
Penzance			0710				0815				0910		
Plymouth		0835	0915				1013				1116		
Paignton										1055			
Exeter SD		0943	1015				1115			1142	1215		
Tiverton Pw							1128				1228		
Taunton		1006	1042				1143			1205	1243		
Castle Cary		1027								1226			
Frome													
Westbury		1047								1249			
Pewsey		1103								1307			
Bedwyn				1141					1252			1341	
Hungerford				1147					1258	1322		1347	
Kintbury				1152					1303			1352	
Newbury (a)		1123		1158					1313	1330		1358	
Newbury (d)	1106	1124		1159	1211	1221		1310		1332		1359	1410
Newbury Rc	1108				1214			1312					1412
Thatcham	1112			1204	1218	1228		1316				1403	1416
Midgham	1116				1222			1320					1420
Aldermaston	1119				1226			1323					1423
Theale	1124			1212	1231	1235		1327				1411	1427
Reading	1136	1138	1201	1222	1242	1249	1258	1336		1347	1402	1422	1436
Paddington	1206	1204	1229	1252	1324	1322	1329	1414		1416	1427	1452	1507

	E	I	E	T	I	I	I(k)	E	I	E	I	E	T
Penzance		1015									1215		
Plymouth		1216				1313					1415		
Paignton									1412				
Exeter SD		1315			1343	1415			1454		1515		
Tiverton Pw		1328			1358	1428					1529		
Taunton		1341			1411	1442			1517		1542		
Castle Cary					1431								
Frome													
Westbury					1453				1555				
Pewsey					1510								
Bedwyn				1457			1541						1655
Hungerford				1503	1524		1547		1622				1701
Kintbury				1510			1552						1706
Newbury (a)				1517	1531		1558						1713
Newbury (d)	1420		1507		1532		1559	1604		1634		1706	
Newbury Rc			1510					1606				1708	
Thatcham	1427		1514				1603	1610		1640		1712	
Midgham			1518					1614				1716	
Aldermaston			1522					1617				1719	
Theale	1435		1527				1611	1622		1648		1724	
Reading	1443	1458	1536		1547	1557	1622	1632	1642	1657	1701	1734	
Paddington	1509	1529	1607		1614	1629	1652	1705	1707	1727	1729	1805	

	I	I(l)	E	T	I	E	T	I	E	T	E	I	I
Penzance					1415							1615	
Plymouth					1615			1650				1815	
Paignton													
Exeter SD	1542				1715			1751				1915	
Tiverton Pw					1728			1806				1929	
Taunton	1605				1742			1818				1943	
Castle Cary	1625							1839					
Frome													
Westbury	1646							1900					
Pewsey	1702							1917					
Bedwyn		1741		1804			1855			1955			2042
Hungerford	1717	1747		1810			1901			2001			2048
Kintbury		1752		1815			1906			2006			2052
Newbury (a)	1724	1758		1822			1915	1935		2012			2058
Newbury (d)	1724	1759	1806			1847		1938	1942		2017		2101
Newbury Rc			1808			1849					2019		
Thatcham		1803	1812			1853			1949		2023		2105
Midgham			1816			1857					2027		
Aldermaston			1819			1900					2030		
Theale		1811	1824			1905			1956		2035		2113
Reading	1742	1825	1835		1857	1915		1954	2004		2045	2100	2121
Paddington	1807	1854	1908		1924	1954		2019	2035		2125	2129	2152

	E	I	T	E	T	E	T
Penzance							
Plymouth							
Paignton		1905					
Exeter SD		1955					
Tiverton Pw		2008					
Taunton		2021					
Castle Cary		2043					
Frome							
Westbury		2105					
Pewsey		2122					
Bedwyn		2132	2137		2225		2317
Hungerford			2142		2231		2323
Kintbury			2146		2235		2327
Newbury (a)		2143	2153		2242		2333
Newbury (d)	2108	2144		2156		2247	2334
Newbury Rc	2110					2249	2337
Thatcham	2114			2204		2253	2342
Midgham	2119					2257	2347
Aldermaston	2122					2300	2350
Theale	2128			2211		2304	2356
Reading	2138	2200		2220		2313	0006
Paddington		2229		2245		0014	0113

Key

- Direct Class 800 bi-mode replacement. Projected journey time 1 hour 10 minutes. Current timing, 1 hour 36 minutes with one change.
- Direct Class 800 bi-mode replacement. 1 hour 14 minutes. Current, using Paddington 1006 departure, 1 hour 42 minutes. Paddington 1035 departure, 1 hour 13 minutes (both change at Newbury).
- Reading to Bedwyn Class 165 DMU Turbo service. 1 hour 12 minutes (change at Reading). Current 1 hour 34 minutes (change at Newbury).
- Direct Class 800 bi-mode. 1 hour 7 minutes. Current 1 hour 30 minutes (change at Newbury).
- Direct Class 800 bi-mode. 1 hour 8 minutes. Current, using Paddington 1407 departure 1 hour 35 minutes. Paddington 1436 departure 1 hour 6 minutes (both change at Newbury).
- Direct Class 800 bi-mode. 1 hour 10 minutes. Current, using Paddington 1608 departure 1 hour 36 minutes. Paddington 1635 departure 1 hour 9 minutes (both change at Newbury).
- Current 0954 Bedwyn to Newbury replaced by 0952 Bedwyn to Reading, which picks up the calls of the 1010 Newbury to Reading all-stations. This would cover the loss of one Class 387 EMU set due to the 0906 Paddington departure switching to Class 800 bi-mode operation.

- h) Direct Class 800 bi-mode. 1 hour 11 minutes. Current 1 hour 10 minutes (change at Newbury).
- i) Direct Class 800 bi-mode. 1 hour 11 minutes. Current 1 hour 25 minutes (change at Newbury).
- j) Direct Class 800 bi-mode. 1 hour 11 minutes. Current 1 hour 21 minutes (change at Newbury).
- k) Direct Class 800 bi-mode. 1 hour 11 minutes. Current 1 hour 37 minutes (change at Newbury). 1 hour 19 minutes (change at Hungerford).
- l) Direct Class 800 bi-mode. 1 hour 13 minutes. Current 1 hour 50 minutes (change at Newbury).

Appendix D – Brief History and Timeline

During the 1960s, the ‘Beeching Axe’ and subsequent actions resulted in the closure of many of the stations on the Berks & Hants line. Several stations in the Kennet Valley were due to close but, fortunately they were reprieved and are very much in use today.

As a result, Bedwyn developed as a terminus for stopping trains from Paddington, Reading or Newbury. Initially, most of the trains serving Bedwyn terminated at the station, making use of a bay platform on the ‘up’ side of the station. A newly sited turn-back siding, west of the road bridge, was added in 1976. This remains in place today, having been extended in 2018. Bedwyn trains also served Hungerford, Kintbury and Newbury, with some also serving stations between Newbury and Reading.

Unlike the other local stations, Pewsey was served by West of England trains, but for many years only had a sparse service. The service level has improved in recent years, now operating on a two-hourly basis for most of the day.

In 1992, Class 165/166 ‘turbo’ trains were introduced on Bedwyn services, with a gradual increase in the number of through trains to and from Paddington. As a result, at the beginning of the 21st Century, there were fifteen Monday to Friday through trains to Paddington out of a total of twenty.

Following privatization, there were two separate franchises operating on the Berks & Hants line. Thames Trains ran services within the ‘Network South East’ area (east of Bedwyn), and First Great Western (FGW) operated the longer distance services. In 2006, it was decided that all services would be combined under FGW. At this point, the frequency to and from Bedwyn was hourly for most of the day and largely consisted of through trains for Paddington.

As part of the new, merged service, it was initially announced that the Paddington to Bedwyn trains would be extended to and from Westbury. In principle, this would have been a sensible move, allowing connectivity further west via Westbury. Unfortunately, someone decided that it would be a good idea to only call alternate trains at Bedwyn and Kintbury. Furthermore, Pewsey would also have alternate calls, but on the trains not stopping at the other two stations. This was, not surprisingly, unacceptable to users of these stations. As a result, Bedwyn Trains Passenger Group (BTPG) was formed in order to fight against these cuts.

Following coverage in the local press, a very well attended open meeting was held in Great Bedwyn, which marked the start of a vigorous campaign involving local MPs and others. This was followed by a meeting in Reading with senior FGW managers. In due course, FGW announced that the hourly service would be maintained from the December 2006 timetable. However, the plan to extend to Westbury would be dropped. BTPG welcomed the retention of hourly trains, but were surprised that the proposed extension was not pursued.

Having achieved success with the campaign, BTPG decided to continue to work for improvements to local services and to do so by working with FGW, this at a time when the company was having major problems in other areas of the franchise. We began to hold twice-yearly meetings with the Route Director to discuss relevant matters. From 2007,

following our suggestions, several West of England HSTs began to make additional calls at Bedwyn. Also, again following our suggestions, some additional evening peak connecting services were provided from Newbury to Kintbury, Hungerford and Bedwyn. Further positive changes were made during 2008, including an additional train to close a two-hour gap in the middle of the day.

In 2009, the government announced an electrification plan for the Great Western area. On the Berks & Hants line it was decided to wire only the short section between Reading and Newbury. This was a strange decision given that almost all trains operating from Paddington go to destinations west of Newbury, with only a handful terminating at Newbury. This decision marks the start of a campaign by BTPG to preserve through trains for Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury to and from Paddington.

2009 BTPG submit a detailed response to the consultation for the Network Rail Route Utilization Strategy (RUS). Naturally, the retention of through trains is listed as our main concern.

2010 The RUS is published. Amongst its recommendations, it calls for an additional hourly Paddington – Exeter St David’s service, but does not specifically mention how Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury will be served in the future.

2011 BTPG step up the campaign to preserve the through service to and from Paddington. This included a petition to this effect to the DfT.

BTPG publish *A Review of Train Services on the Berks & Hants Line*. This document also sets out our proposals as to how the potential loss of through services could be corrected. This review is circulated locally and receives a positive reaction.

2012 DfT issue the Great Western Franchise Replacement Consultation Document. BTPG again put forward a detailed response.

BTPG meet with a DfT representative in order to further discuss our concerns.

DfT publish their Invitation to Tender, which effectively recommends a diesel shuttle to and from Newbury. BTPG respond citing strong objections to this.

2013 DfT appoint Arup to carry out a study into the potential extension of electrification beyond Newbury, with four different options. These options are to electrify to either: 1) Bedwyn; 2) Westbury; 3) Westbury and the Mendip Quarries; 4) additionally to Bathampton and Thingley junctions. BTPG join with a group from Pewsey to carry out a detailed survey. The survey shows a strong desire for through trains to continue.

The report is published. The Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) is good for extension of wiring to Bedwyn (2.58). This ranks it as ‘High Value for Money.’ The BCRs for the other options are ranked as very poor, though this is hardly surprising when considering the terms of reference regarding these options.

Despite the positive BCR, the Network Rail response suggests that financial constraints will make any further extension of wiring unlikely in the immediate future. In the event, the actual electrification programme is eventually delivered very late and over budget. Also, nothing more is heard of any possible extension to Bedwyn.

The DfT issue another New Franchise Consultation Document which covers the period from 2015-2020. This again assumes a diesel shuttle between Newbury and Bedwyn.

BTPG again respond at length, outlining concerns and putting forward alternative suggestions. Local MPs also voice their concerns, along with a large number of individual users.

- 2015 Publication of the Franchise Document. 'The Bedwyn through trains' situation is top of the list of responses to the consultation. Despite this, there is no change to the intention to end through services between Bedwyn and Paddington, with a few exceptions.

FGW, now renamed Great Western Railway (GWR) are granted a second Direct Award, to run from September 2015 to April 2019. They publish a detailed review of their intended service patterns following electrification to Newbury. This includes only a couple of through trains to and from Paddington in the peaks.

The DfT acknowledge this problem and ask GWR to look into the feasibility of IPEMU operation on Bedwyn services which, if implemented, would allow through trains to continue. This would involve adding batteries to the Class 387 EMU electric units that were due to operate between Paddington and Newbury. A decision to be made by the end of 2015.

GWR inform BTPG that they will not be able to use the IPEMU option at this time. However, they will look at the viability of using 5-car Class 800 bi-modes on these services. This will be subject to GWR being able to source a number of additional units and would also require an extension of the Bedwyn turn-back siding.

- 2016 Major delay to electrification programme results in expected commencement of EMU-operated services for Newbury being put back for up to two years.

GWR confirm an order for seven additional 9-car Class 800 bi-modes, which would result in three 5-car sets being re-allocated for the proposed Bedwyn core services.

- 2017 Plans are drawn up by GWR and Network Rail for an extension of around ten metres to the turn-back siding. Diversion of a footpath is also necessary, so planning permission is sought.

BTPG play an active part in local issues relating to the extension work.

DfT begin work on the next franchise renewal, to take place at some point after the Direct Award ends in 2020.

- 2018 BTPG meet with DfT representatives and subsequently submit a response to the franchise consultation.

The turn-back siding extension project is approved along with planning permission to divert the footpath.

GWR hold a timetable meeting in July in order to inform and discuss with stakeholders their planned major timetable change, subsequently set for December 2019.

BTPG welcome large parts of the draft timetable, but outline serious concerns in some areas, in particular the morning peak service. As a result, and following several further meetings, GWR make a number of changes which meet most of those concerns.

After a long delay, the electrification work between Reading and Newbury is completed via a series of complete track closures. This would enable trains to run east of Newbury by the end of the year.

During a blockade in August, the work on the turn-back siding and foot crossing is carried out.

In September, the first test of a Class 800 bi-mode in the turn-back siding is successfully carried out.

- 2019 Deployment of Class 800 bi-modes on Paddington – Bedwyn services is scheduled for January, but is postponed due to issues with the on-board cameras.

Class 800 bi-mode operation commences with the May timetable, though Train Managers are used on all services.

GWR organise a special event in May to celebrate the Class 800 bi-mode introduction on these services.

The new timetable duly commences on Sunday December 15th.

- 2020 From the outset of the pandemic in March 2020 everything, including the railways, was seriously affected. Following official instructions to the public not to use public transport, the train operating companies were forced to reduce services. Initially, GWR operated an hourly Class 165 DMU Turbo shuttle service for all stations between Bedwyn and Reading. Given the drastic drop in usage, this was a sensible decision. The DfT then effectively took over responsibility for services, a situation that still remains today.

- 2021 As restrictions were gradually relaxed, GWR were able to bring back a number of Class 800 bi-mode through trains between Bedwyn and Paddington. These were able to operate alongside Class 165 DMU Turbo shuttles to and from Newbury, with some extended to and from Reading. By the end of 2021, this system appeared to be working well and BTPG were advised that, all being well, the intention was to restore the full timetable as soon as possible. Therefore, there was some optimism that the May 2022 timetable change would allow this to happen.
- 2022 In early March, 2022, GWR informed BTPG that there would not be a full restoration of the pre-pandemic timetable in May, as we had previously been led to believe. Instead, there would be a further downgrade with the core off-peak service of through trains to and from Paddington (serviced by three 5-car Class 800 bi-mode sets), replaced by a Class 165 DMU Turbo shuttle between Bedwyn and Newbury. This was exactly what we had campaigned against since the announcement of electrification to Newbury in 2009.