

Wessex

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LOCAL ACTION



■ ■ The 2008 timetable
South West Trains now runs two trains per hour to Weymouth and this initiative has generally been well received as passenger numbers on this important South Coast route have been rising steadily. They will no doubt continue to do so during the summer and rail will be the best method of travel for those going to the Olympic sailing events in 2012.

There are, though, disadvantages for some: At Totton where the hourly through train from Waterloo now involves a wait at Southampton Central for around 15 minutes.

Southern has produced an imaginative new pattern of services from Southampton and Portsmouth eastwards along the South Coast and up to London Victoria via Gatwick Airport. It is understood further changes might be introduced when the Brighton mainline rail utilisation study is implemented.

The new SWT Salisbury-Romsey-Southampton-Eastleigh-Chandlers Ford-Romsey "figure of 6" service is a welcome new initiative inspired by the Three Rivers Partnership (Avon, Itchen and Test). Some people have suggested it should run in the reverse direction, Salisbury-Romsey-Chandlers Ford-Eastleigh-Southampton-Romsey, to give faster access to Southampton airport from Salisbury.

■ ■ Late night and weekend engineering

Bus substitution at weekends and for some late night services seems to have become almost a norm. The Portsmouth area, even after the long and over-running resignalling scheme has officially been completed, and lines through Basingstoke are cases in point. We acknowledge the need for substantial infrastructure renewal and the safety of the workforce engaged but is every closure really necessary? Who decides? If the answer is Yes, should there not be an automatic 50% rebate of the fare?

■ ■ Portsmouth to Cardiff

This Cinderella service deserves so much better. It is hard to believe it has become steadily even worse than when run by Wales & West, then by Wessex Trains and now First Great Western. Delays, cancellations and miserable little trains are a disgrace for a service which links the important regional cities of Cardiff, Newport, Bristol, Bath, Salisbury, Southampton, Portsmouth and, occasionally, Brighton.

Wessex branch members can only hope that Andrew Haines, who was well respected when he ran SWT, once he has sorted out pressing problems on his main line, will turn his attention to *The Mainline They Shouldn't Ignore* – the title of an RPC West and Southern England report in 2004 – and persuade the Department for Transport of the pressing need for new rolling stock. Portsmouth MP Mike Hancock has raised several questions on the subject but to date the minister's responses have been unforthcoming.

■ ■ Class 450s

Portsmouth line passengers continue to press for SWT's class 444 trains to be restored to their mainline services. An ergonomic study carried out by SWT carried little conviction with commuters faced with cramped journeys in suburban class 450 trains with 3+2 seating.

Railfuture campaigners conference

Saturday 5 July 2008 at Banqueting Hall, The Guildhall, Market Square, Salisbury SP1 1JH



STAGE ONE: TGV lookalikes line up for South Korea's first high-speed line which opened four years ago

Super-fast Korea

High-speed trains have been running in South Korea since 2004 and the country is now moving on to stage two of its fast rail policy.

Its first high-speed trains were the KTX – largely French-built and designed TGVs which travelled at 186mph. Rail revenue shot up by 90% in a year.

This year new 215mph trains will be entering service with 80% of the trains being produced in Korea.

The HSR 350X trains will be launched to coincide with the 8th World Congress on Rail Research which is to be held in Seoul from 18 to 22 May.

The new train incorporates several technologies the French TGV doesn't have, including an aluminum body, digital traffic control, and a pressure compensation system.

It will also allow passengers to rotate their seats, giving them the choice of a forward facing or a rear facing seat, in response to the many complaints about the fixed one-directional seating arrangements on the KTX.

In the 1950s, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in Asia but since the 1960s has had one of the fastest growing economies in the world and is now the third largest economy in Asia and the 11th largest economy in the world.

It is now one of the world's most technologically and scientifically advanced countries. It is the only country in the world with nationwide 100Mb broadband internet access, full HDTV broadcasting and digital multimedia broadcasting. It is developing cheap wireless broadband and high-speed downlink packet access for mobile phones.

Buses, taxis, subways, and trains provide comfortable and cheap methods of travel around South Korea. Major cities have subway systems including the popular Seoul Subway.

More information: http://info.korail.com/2007/eng/eng_index.jsp

Below: The South Korean high-speed lines plan

Construction of the second phase started in June 2002, and is expected to be completed by 2010. High-speed track for the section from Osong to Gwangju and Mokpo is also planned, with a tentative target date of 2017.

A spur line from Seoul to Gangneung on the northeast coast is under consideration, and was linked to Korea's bid for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

Map from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KTX>



NETWORK DEVELOPMENT: South Korea's shared track is in green, 186mph line in yellow. The classic track in dark blue and red will be mostly upgraded within the next three years