Rail Delivery Group

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Response to consultation:

InterCity West Coast Rail Franchise

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Introduction: The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was established in May 2011. It brings together Network Rail and passenger and freight train operating companies to lead and enable improvements in the railway. The purpose of the RDG is to enable Network Rail and passenger and freight train operating companies to succeed by delivering better services for their customers. Ultimately this benefits taxpayers and the economy. We aim to meet the needs of:

- Our members, by enabling them to deliver better outcomes for customers and the country
- Government and regulators, by developing strategy, informing policy and confronting difficult decisions on choices
- Rail and non-rail users, by improving customer experience and building public trust

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Overview

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Transport's (DfT's) consultation on the future InterCity West Coast (ICWC) Rail Franchise. Our response is intended to provide the DfT with a useful contribution and responds to the ICWC rail franchise consultation questions.

This response reflects the views of the majority of our members. It has drawn on input from our members, in particular Network Rail, but also technical experts at ATOC and RDG.

The response has been led by the RDG Planning Oversight Group, who's remit is to provide strategic planning information for decision makers, including input into franchise competitions.

Responses to the consultation questions

The key points of the RDG's response are as follows:

- In determining the priorities for improvements to address customer experience and satisfaction, we have highlighted the data that exists in this area, particularly the National Passenger Survey and the Passenger Demand Forecasting Handbook
- The West Coast franchise operator should continue to drive forward digital ticketing innovation that improves the customer experience and is consistent with the principles of the RDG ticketing vision
- Supporting the customer – we highlight RDG's work on preferred methods of communication and our recent research to establish preferred methods of communication at times of unplanned disruption, the results of which are set out in this document
- The rail industry's Long Term Planning Process (LTPP) has considered in detail the various options for making best use of the West Coast Main Line and associated routes which should provide a helpful starting point for any train service options being tested by bidders. This includes the Scotland and Wales route studies, and several planning workstreams covering the route in England.

A - Passengers: Customer experience and satisfaction

Q1: We have listed below examples of areas identified that customers would most like improved on their ICWC journey and would ask you to rank your top five. It would help us analyse this information if you could explain why you think this area warrants/needs improvement, if it relates to a particular station or train service, and what you think the new train operator could do to help.

If there are other areas for improvement not included in the above table, please explain what these areas are and why you think this area could be improved?

The most extensive piece of research that provides a view of customers' priorities for improvements is the National Passenger Survey, which entails the consultation of more than 50,000 passengers a year, resulting in a network-wide picture of passengers' satisfaction with rail travel. A prioritisation made on the basis of the Spring 2016 results for the current operator relative to other long distance train operators is set out in the table below. The percentages reflect the proportion of passengers reporting a specific item as satisfactory or good.

Description	Your priority for improvement (1 = highest to 5 = lowest)	Reason why you think this warrants/needs improvement, location if appropriate and examples of what you would like to see done
Availability of seating at train stations	2	This is the largest negative gap between the current operator (49%) and long distance satisfaction (58%); and is the lowest of all 35 satisfaction measures for the current operator.
Getting a seat on trains	4	Whilst satisfaction is good (81%) and higher than for the long distance sector (73%) this is one of only two measures included that

		correlate with overall (dis)satisfaction – i.e. this measure is important to customers.
Car parking facilities at train stations	5	Satisfaction for the current operator is 4% higher than for the long distance sector (61% vs. 57%), but is the 4th lowest ranking satisfaction measure for the current operator – i.e. better than other long distance TOCs but satisfaction is low.
Customer recognition and reward (e.g. loyalty schemes)	-	No NRPS data
Increased staff visibility (at train stations)	-	Satisfaction is 75%, similar to the long distance sector (74%) and ranked 23rd out 35 for the current operator; this ranks as the 7th highest 'description' criterion.
Increased staff visibility (on trains)	4	There is a small gap between the current operator and the long distance sector (69% vs. 68% respectively) but ranks towards the bottom of the satisfaction table for both the current operator and the long distance sector as a whole.
A more proactive approach to customer service at train stations	-	In accordance with the 'how request to station staff was handled' NRPS measure, this does not emerge as a priority - it is (one of) the highest areas of satisfaction (91% for the current operator and the overall sector).
Luggage space on trains	-	No NRPS data
Overall satisfaction with the station and their cleanliness	3	Overall station environment is the second biggest gap between the current operator and the long distance sector (72% vs. 80%).
Getting between the train and station concourse	-	No NRPS data
Toilet facilities on train	-	Satisfaction is 62%, but this is better than for the overall long distance sector (52%) and ranked 31st out of 35 for the current operator; it ranks as the 6th highest 'description' criterion.
Being kept informed about delays	1	Whilst satisfaction is higher for the current operator (58%) than for long distance overall (54%), how well the train company deals with delays is one of the lowest performing measures and one of only two measures included that correlate with overall (dis)satisfaction (i.e. this measure is important to customers).
Access to catering and refreshments on board	-	No NRPS data

The Passenger Demand Forecasting Council (PDFC) brings together all of the train operating companies, Network Rail, Department for Transport, Transport Scotland, the Office of Rail and Road, Transport for London, the Urban Transport Group, and Welsh Government. Its aims include the procurement of research into demand forecasting issues relevant to the rail industry and to maintain and develop the Passenger Demand Forecasting Handbook (PDFH). PDFH draws on extensive research to place values on a range of journey attributes to allow the industry to assess the case for investing in improvements. The table below sets out a prioritisation on the basis of the evidence presented in PDFH:

Description	**Your priority for**	**Reason why you think this warrants/needs**

	improvement (1 = highest to 5 = lowest)	**improvement, location if appropriate and example of what you would like to see done**
Availability of seating at train stations	4	The section of PDFH covering station facilities gives an uplift to demand for improvements in a number of station facilities. Seating is included but has a relatively low impact
Getting a seat on trains	2	PDFH covers this under the impacts of crowding. Demand begins to be dampened by the need to stand and this effect increases in line with further overcrowding.
Car parking facilities at train stations	-	This would be expected to have an impact on stations demand but PDFH gives no evidence. The price of the parking is an additional factor, as is the provision of short-stay drop-off and pick up areas.
Customer recognition and reward (e.g. loyalty schemes)	-	PDFH recognises the importance of marketing but gives no specific advice in this area
Increased staff visibility (at train stations)	3	The value of station staff has been studied by PDFC and this aspect has a definite impact
Increased staff visibility (on trains)	-	PDFH gives no specific guidance here
A more proactive approach to customer service at train stations	-	The level of staff training and management culture is relevant to how customers are treated but PDFH gives no guidance on this impact
Luggage space on trains	5	Luggage storage is not currently covered in the PDFH section of rolling stock but will be included in a revised version of this section
Overall satisfaction with the station and their cleanliness	4	PDFH ascribes some value to clean stations but not overall satisfaction. See below.
Getting between the train and station concourse	-	PDFH does not address accessibility within the station
Toilet facilities on train	5	Toilet facilities on trains are not currently covered in the PDFH section of rolling stock but will be included in a revised version of this section
Being kept informed about delays	1	Not clear if this means at station, on train, or both. Provision of the facilities for passengers here at stations appears to have one of the largest relative impacts. One would tend to presume the same applies to on-board.
Access to catering and refreshments on board	4	Covered in PDFH section on rolling stock. Has an impact on demand for long distance travel.

With respect to facilities at stations, the PDFH recognises a wider range of facilities that have an impact than those listed above. These are summarised in the response to question 8.

Taking the NPS and PDFH together suggests a prioritisation broadly as follows (1 being the area where the need for improvements is greatest and would be most valued by customers):

1. Being kept informed about delays
2. Availability of seating at train stations
3. Getting a seat on trains
4. Increased staff visibility (at stations)
5. Overall satisfaction with the station and their cleanliness

A - Passengers: Information

Q2: What type/method of communication do you find most effective to:

a. **Enable you to plan your end to end train journey?**
b. **Be informed in advance about known disruptions such as planned engineering works?**
c. **Be informed during unplanned disruptions both before you travel and during the journey?**

This could include, but is not limited to, talking to customer services, notices at stations, leaflets, voice announcements, information on websites or social media.

Where possible please provide reasons for your answers.

National Rail Enquiries undertook research between December 2015 and the end of February 2016 amongst passengers who experienced an unplanned rail disruption. 5,755 completed responses were received, and the results suggested that updates that are more 'personal' were generally preferred. For example, emails are preferred over having to consult a website and individual contact with station and on-train staff are the most positively received, preferred to announcements and departure board updates. Updates provided by fellow passengers emerged among respondents as the least popular approach.

Although the RDG does not have access to similar research covering journey planning and planned engineering works, it may be reasonable to assume that passengers' preferred methods of communication would be similar.

In more detail, the findings were as follows:

- Online websites are the most common means by which customers learn of unplanned disruption before setting off (62% made aware this way) but emails (11%) are preferred, in that the information is seen as the most accurate, useful and timely
- Departure screens are the most common means by which customers learn of unplanned disruption at the departure station (68% receive information about delays this way) but announcements (on the train or at the station) are preferred (10% and 40% respectively). The data suggests that the channel that currently works best is information provided by ticket office staff, but so few customers (2%) receive information this way that the data is not reliable.
- Announcements by staff on the train are currently the most common means by which customers learn of unplanned disruption on the train (79% receive information about delays this way) but one-to-one discussion with a member of on-board staff is preferred (8%)
- On-board announcements were rated positively overall on all measures, as were (to a slightly lesser extent) station announcements heard from the train.
- Only 5% of customers who hear about unplanned disruptions do so through fellow passengers, and perhaps contrary to expectations, rated this channel the lowest
- Only 5% of customers who experienced unplanned disruptions said they received information on these at station interchanges – of these 57% did so through departure boards at the interchange station, and 36% through station announcements. Of these channels, station announcements are preferred, being consistently rated positively by the majority, and consistently outperformed departure screen info on unplanned delays.

B – Train services: Ensuring train services meet the needs of the areas and passengers they serve

Q3: Are there are any direct journeys currently provided by ICWC that you would want to see protected at a minimum level (e.g. 1 train every 2 hours)?

Please say where would this be and your reasons why where possible.

Some evidence regarding the flows most likely to warrant protection at a minimum level is provided by the Long Distance Market Study (published October 2013), however it is important to note that its aspirations are long-term (2043) and conditional on feasibility. This is likely to be challenging in light of

existing constraints on the route, and the impact of HS2 construction at Euston which would be expected to further limit the ability to provide additional services.

The Market Study assumes that, for all flows for which data is presented, existing levels of service should at least be broadly maintained. There are some flows where a case could potentially be made to offer significant increases in speed or journey time, conditional on this being achievable at a reasonable cost:

Flow	**Journey time reduction**	**Desirable frequency increase**
London to Coventry and Birmingham	Y (requires HS2)	-
London to Wolverhampton	-	Y (from 1 to 2 or 3 trains per hour)
London to Telford and Shrewsbury	-	Y (from 2 per day to 1 or 2 trains per hour)
London to Chester	-	Y (from 1 to 2 or 3 trains per hour)
London to the North Wales Coast	-	Y (from 6 per day to 1 or 2 trains per hour)
London to Wrexham	-	Y (from 1 per day to 2 or 3 trains per hour)
London to Liverpool	Y (requires HS2)	Y (from 1 to 3 or 4 trains per hour)
London to Manchester	Y (requires HS2)	-
London to Blackpool	-	Y (from 1 per day to 2 or 3 trains per hour)
London to Edinburgh and Glasgow	Y (requires HS2)	Y (from 1 or 2 per hour to 3 or 4 trains per hour)
Milton Keynes to Birmingham	-	Y (from 1 to 2 or 3 trains per hour)
Birmingham to Edinburgh and Glasgow	-	Y (from up to 1 to 2 or 3 trains per hour)

Network Rail is leading the industry strategic planning for the future of the West Coast Main Line from 2026 to provide the levels of connectivity envisaged by the Market Study. This work has benefited from the active involvement of passenger and freight train operators, DfT and transport / local authorities.

West Coast services in England

The industry has taken as its agreed starting point that demand growth up to 2026 is best met on the WCML through the provision of on-train capacity within the broad structure of the existing timetable.

It identified that the future train service, post-HS2, could include direct connectivity from Bolton to London, a half-hourly HS2 service from London to Liverpool, a second hourly CrossCountry service routed via Coventry and Birmingham International instead of via Solihull, and additional connectivity for Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury by extending existing London-Birmingham services.

The emerging investment strategy for the WCML, identified as a result of the industry's work and informing the Initial Industry Advice for CP6 is:

Meeting passenger demand in CP6

- On-train capacity to be provided through the new ICWC and West Midlands franchises
- Station capacity improvements at Euston (in conjunction with HS2 works), Watford Junction and Preston (in conjunction with wider station area enhancement)
- East-West Rail Phase 2 integration including options for capacity between Milton Keynes and Bletchley
- Traffic management deployment on West Coast South as part of Digital Railway programme

Towards 2026: HS2-ready, aligning strategic options with renewals

- Preston station area enhancement
- Crewe area programme
- ETCS deployment north of Crewe as part of Digital Railway programme

Longer-term: Emerging enhancement candidates for 2026-2043

- Warrington Bank Quay and Carlisle station area enhancements
- Crewe-Preston and Preston-border capacity enhancement options
- Crewe-Manchester capacity enhancement options
- Freight capacity options:
  - Northampton area capacity enhancements
  - Colwich-Stafford capacity enhancements

In addition, the following stations on the WCML and/or served by the ICWC franchise have been identified as potential further candidates for station passenger capacity improvements, subject to further analysis and franchise plans:

- Milton Keynes Central
- Macclesfield
- Blackpool North
- Birmingham International
- Bletchley
- Carlisle
- Hemel Hempstead
- Warrington Bank Quay
- Wigan North Western
- Rugby
- Tamworth

The West Midlands & Chilterns Route Study has recently been published in draft for consultation. This again assumes no change in the pattern of ICWC services into Birmingham or on the Coventry corridor prior to HS2 opening, and that passenger demand through CP6 should be met through on-train capacity including train lengthening through the relevant franchises. Towards 2026, it proposes a significant programme of investment in the 'Midlands Rail Hub', creating the capacity for up to 10 extra trains per hour into Central Birmingham to support economic growth, provide new journey opportunities and maximise the benefits of HS2.

In parallel, the Merseyside Strategic Rail Study was issued in draft to industry participants and Liverpool City Region stakeholders in summer 2016 and is in the process of being finalised. This work confirmed that the enhanced layout at Liverpool Lime Street being delivered in CP5 is capable of supporting enough services to meet forecast growth through to the end of CP6. This is with or without a second direct hourly service from London to Liverpool, which the new layout is capable of providing for, were an end-to-end train path to be available (for example without adding services on the WCML) and viable for the new franchise.

Further work is being taken forward in conjunction with High Speed 2 Ltd and Department for Transport on train service options for the WCML following the opening of HS2. This includes aspirations for improved connectivity and journey times between London and Stoke, and considering strategic options for the north end of WCML that recognise aspirations for HS2 to provide dramatically improved journey times from London to the north and Scotland.

West Coast services in Scotland

The Scotland Route Study (published July 2016) cross-border aspiration is to retain two trains per hour. The level of service provision to accommodate 2043 forecast demand requires six trains per hour over the WCML; four of which may split and join at Carstairs in addition to five freight services. Chapter 4 of the Route Study covers the likely level of infrastructure required to enable this increase in services that cannot be achieved on existing infrastructure.

The proposed choices for funders over the next 10 years include: Carstairs Area Enhancement, which linked with renewals in CP6, is required to deliver journey time and capacity improvements on the WCML for existing passenger and freight operators. High Speed Enabling Project options will continue to be developed during CP6 to work towards the introduction of HS2. In addition, there are proposals to increase platform lengths at Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Central; however, the options for Glasgow Central are dependent on the other choices made by funders. Further information on Chapter 5 and the route study can be found on Network Rail's website.

West Coast services in Wales

The Welsh Route Study was published in April 2016 and set out a series of choices for funders in North Wales, reflecting Welsh Government and other stakeholder aspirations to improve capacity along the North Wales Coast and improve connectivity between the area and North West England and beyond (including London).

The Welsh Route Study specifically set out the following choices for funders in North Wales:

- Improve journey times along the North Wales Coast Main Line. CP6 choice to upgrade track to enable optimum line speed afforded by resignalling of the route (Phase 1 between Chester and Llandudno Junction in CP5, and Phase 2 west of Llandudno Junction in CP6).
- Modernisation of the North Wales Coast, including electrification. CP6 choice potentially phased over a number of years.

The Welsh Government's key aspirations, set out in the Welsh Route Study, are about delivering improved journey times and frequencies between North Wales and North West England (including direct services to/from Liverpool) and extension of more London services beyond Chester into North Wales. Improved connectivity with HS2 at Crewe is also seen as important.

Q4: Please rank the options below to indicate your priority for potential changes you would like to see to ICWC train services. Please say where would this be and your reasons why where possible.

The rail industry is continually looking for ways to better match the services it provides to the level of passenger demand, with the aim of strengthening value for money and supporting the wider economy.

In light of the constraints described previously, the most appropriate way for the future ICWC operator to address forecast demand is likely to be either through the provision of extra on-train capacity on existing services, or through changes to the origins and destinations of services, without increasing the broad quantum of services on the core route.

B – Train services: Capacity

Q5: Based on your journey, please could you state whether you consider any priority should be placed on either:

- **Protecting long distance capacity on trains; or**
- **Providing maximum choice of operator over short distance journeys.**

Where possible, please provide reasons for your answer.

The rail industry's Long Term Planning Process (LTPP) is operator-agnostic and aims to prioritise the most effective solutions for passengers and overall industry affordability. The priority should therefore be in providing the best match between capacity and passenger demand, in the context of limited capacity and affordability.

Q6: What methods do you think could enable more people to travel and improve the railway's ability to cater for passenger growth?

Where possible, please provide reasons for your answer.

Since the mid-1990s the railway has been facing the challenge of growing demand. This can be met through one (or a combination) of three approaches:

- Managing demand through yield management to encourage shifts to less busy times of day
- Increasing the number of passengers carried by each train through train lengthening
- Running more trains, likely to require investment in signalling or infrastructure

Passengers could be encouraged to travel at less busy times through changes to fares. Within the limits of fares regulation, the operator may offer cheaper fares to travel on less busy services, increasing the likelihood that spare capacity is utilised and offering an incentive for passengers to shift from busier services if they are able. These types of changes could be made for a minimal cost. Ticketing is explored more fully in the response to Q10.

Trains could carry a higher volume of passengers through lengthening, which also may be achievable at a relative low cost if spare vehicles are available and existing station platforms are of sufficient length. Changes to the density of seating are an alternative means of accommodating higher passenger volumes on each train, for example through replacing tables with airline-style seating.

There may be parts of the network where it is possible to accommodate more trains without requiring investment in the infrastructure. However, the West Coast Main Line (WCML) is busy and it is unlikely that extensive changes could be made to the timetable without requiring changes to the infrastructure. HS2 is expected to provide the bulk of the capacity required on the route for the foreseeable future, however its construction will have a significant impact on the ability of the franchise to enhance services. DfT should ensure that appropriate contractual mechanisms are in place to manage the disruption that will be a feature of the franchise.

Consideration must also be given to the sustainability of the long term market and demand for this route. HS2 construction and operation of services over the completed route could have a detrimental impact for long term growth in passenger numbers and revenue of this franchise. The modelling of this impact should be made available for the prospective operator.

Alongside HS2, changes to signalling have the potential to support a higher level of train service without requiring further investment in some additional physical capacity. This is being progressed by the Digital Railway programme, which is expected to commence rollout during the life of the new franchise in the Manchester area.

By releasing additional capacity, the Digital Railway gives the rail industry an increased ability to plan each route to meet passenger and freight operator's needs. However, some level of conventional infrastructure enhancement will still be required, as Digital Railway solutions do not remove the constraints of terminal capacity, flat junctions, and mix of traffic speeds and stopping patterns.

C – Communities, heritage and a sustainable railway: Supporting the community

Q7: Based on your knowledge of your local area/station, how could the new ICWC train operator:

a. Improve rail services (including all the support functions it needs) in a way that respects and helps to maintain the environment?

The Rail Industry Sustainable Development Principles define the strategic vision of a sustainable industry, with the objective that they are embedded in all industry organisations, activities and operations. In accordance with the principles, the new ICWC train operator should be ambitious to not only respect and maintain but improve and enhance the environment. This should be achieved through adopting a sustainable approach that actively measures, implements and communicates activities to mitigate risk and maximise opportunity.

The operator should seek to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions through optimising energy efficiency and seeking new power sources. There should be a focus on improving resource consumption, such as water (from metering to water harvesting) and waste (implementing the waste hierarchy reduce, re-use, recycle). Operators should also take

account of their importance in the supply chain and implement policies that embed sustainable procurement practices.

To implement these ambitions, the operator needs to recognise the importance of working closely with all stakeholders and interested parties. This will enable them to deliver a railway that is better for the environment, which delivers real economic benefits and helps local communities prosper.

b. Better support the economic growth of the areas it serves?

Improving rail connectivity – that is, the speed, frequency and network of rail connections – can help create the necessary conditions to drive economic productivity higher, in effect bringing cities and their catchments closer together, opening up new markets, employment opportunities, encouraging the transfer of knowledge and improving the efficiency of supply chains. Improved rail connectivity can also help rebalance growth through a well-targeted portfolio of investments, contributing to the Government's 'One Nation' vision. Research produced by Oxera on behalf of the RDG in 2014 valued the contribution of rail to the economy to be in the order of £10 billion, including alleviating congestion in the road network and facilitating the development of economic activity. More than four million train journeys a day are taken to work, study, or visit friends and family.

The future ICWC could support the economic growth of the areas it serves by enhancing its services in a range of ways – reducing journey times, improving frequencies, or improving the ambience of its trains and stations in a way that encourages further travel on the network. Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) produced in 2011 a report on the 'Value of Station Investment'[1] which aimed to quantify the impact of station investment on economic development, using a range of station investment projects that have taken place over the past ten years as illustrative examples. SDG found that station investment can support economic growth in a number of ways, for example by providing sufficient capacity to sustain local economic growth, acting as attractive 'gateways' to the local area, offering development opportunities or acting as commercial or community centres.

The RDG would recommend the development of station master plans, or at least a commitment to engage with Local Authorities, BIDs and enterprise bodies to identify relevant opportunities for supporting economic growth within the local. The master plans should not be static but updated regularly with input from local stakeholders to reflect changing local needs.

c. Improve its support and development of its workforce?

The Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy 2016 (TISS)[2] set out government's expectations and plans for the development of a sustainable skills base across the transport sector. The TISS includes the following recommendations for developing the transport sector's workforce:

- Greater diversity and inclusion: increase representation of women and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups in transport, with 20% of new entrants to technical and engineering apprenticeships to be women by 2020, and parity achieved with the working population by 2030. Support Government target of 20% increase in number of BAME candidates undertaking apprenticeships by 2020.
- Maximising local opportunities – work with local authorities and LEPs to support local apprenticeship growth
- Promotion of careers in transport to young people, parents and schools from primary age, in particular collaborative action to support sector promotion
- Use of procurement levers to deliver apprentices. DfT have set a target of 2.5% of the workforce should be in apprenticeships and are seeking to enshrine this in contracts. Hitting the target is stretching but achievable, with some changes in current practice. The target can be met in a range of ways, and employers should consider the value to

[1] SDG, The Value of Station Investment: http://www.steerdaviesgleave.com/sites/default/files/newsandinsights/Station_Investment_Report.pdf
[2] The full Strategy document can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-infrastructure-skills-strategy-building-sustainable-skills

employees and economic value added through investment in different apprenticeship in developing their apprenticeship strategy

- Making the best use of apprenticeship levy[3] for whole sector. This has the potential to drive behaviour and consequently have a sizeable impact on the composition of the workforce. Where work is outsourced (e.g. engineering), then the subcontracts can reflect the target and be recognised in doing so. Employers should consider developing plans to support (particularly smaller) subcontractors as appropriate.

The National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR) has been working with the Rail HR Directors Group to provide advice and develop mechanisms that will support operators in the delivery of TISS and their existing and/or future franchise obligations. The HR Directors Group, which reports to the RDG has, in conjunction with NSAR, developed plans to support TOCs collectively and to individually take action to address their challenges.

d. Play a greater role in supporting and improving the community it serves, the heritage of the railway and help develop their stations into hubs for the community?

In October 2015 the RDG produced its 'Vision for Stations', which set out nine principles for the future of Britain's stations, one of which is to reflect local needs and opportunities. The station supports the functions required by the rail industry but equally creates a thriving space utilised by the local community. How the station scheme evolves in relation to the local, social and environmental context will define the individual identity of each station. This may mean, for example, using local suppliers and retailers who recognise the needs and opportunities of the local community, and the addition of public services to the facilities available will enable the station to become embedded within the everyday activities of the local residents. Furthermore, there is an inherent heritage to many of the railway's stations that serve to enhance the local sense of identity and ownership.

To play a greater a role in supporting the community that it serves, the community should be empowered to have an input into the management and development of the station. Community Rail has proven a successful concept in facilitating more active engagement of the local community. Across almost 50 Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) the generation of passenger demand growth has exceeded the averages for the regional sector and the network as a whole.

Station adoption is a key feature of many CRPs and has been successful in improving the physical infrastructure at a number of stations, creating a more welcoming environment which acts as a 'gateway' to the local village or town. A group of local volunteers acts as a station adoption group, thereby strengthening the link between the railway and the local community. This approach may be appropriate for the less well-used stations on the route.

e. Improve the services offered to reduce discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for people from protected groups?

The rail industry recognises the importance of putting customers at the heart of everything it does, and understanding the various needs and desires of different passengers. However, the focus of efforts to reduce discrimination has focused on customers with disabilities. This reflects the nature of customer feedback, the clarity of the linkage between physical disabilities and specific infrastructure interventions and the lack of data regarding usage of the network by other protected groups. Indeed, one potential means to improve the services provided could be to undertake research to identify levels of usage by the various protected groups to assess the scope for targeted interventions.

Potential interventions to address discrimination can be grouped under following headings:

- Human factors
- Technology

[3] The treasury will implement an apprenticeship levy from April 2017, set at 0.5% of UK payroll.

- Information
- Physical infrastructure at stations

Human factors comprise the need for adequate management and staff training. The current West Coast operator combines the post of accessibility manager with that of franchise manager, whereas a division of these roles could provide more focus. Including integration within the accessibility manager's remit could also be sensible. The complaints received from disabled customers most commonly focus on inconsistent service from staff, which can be a particular problem where a customer's disability is not obvious. Better staff training could help address these types of issues.

A further area of improvement could be the more widespread use of technology – for example, to allow staff to locate customers who have requested assistance much more quickly. Although there are many reasons why assistance fails, a common issue is that staff are not available at the arrival station at the correct time. Disabled customers' experiences during times of disruption may deter them entirely from using rail in the future. The operator could make improvements to the provision of information during times of disruption, for example by providing a dedicated accessibility social media feed. Operators could focus more generally on the accessibility of information provided at stations and on trains, for example by ensuring that both audio and visual information are provided. Any apps should be designed to be accessible to as wide a range of users as possible and poster campaigns could be used to encourage customers to be sympathetic to users from minority groups, similar to the recent campaign by TfL.

Whilst acknowledging differences, stations should be:

- Inviting environments, which appear attractive, uncluttered and safe both on the approach to the station and once inside
- Inclusive so that everyone can use them, thereby going beyond the minimum standards set out in the Equality Act's public sector equality duty (2010);
- Informed so that travellers feel empowered by knowing their way round the station and when and where their train is going from
- Intuitive so stations are easy to use, engaging people to use them, whether or not they are familiar with them

For more vulnerable travellers, safety and security concerns could be a deterrent to using the railway. Adequate lighting should be used throughout the station to create a comfortable and secure area. The station environment should be well maintained to minimise tripping hazards and maintain the quality of the space as a civic asset. Technology such as CCTV and help points should be accessible in the public and platform areas and be used alongside local and transport police to reduce anti-social behaviour. Ideally staff should be on hand to provide reassurance, although this should be balanced against the need to maintain value for money in the operation of the franchise.

C – Communities, heritage and a sustainable railway: Stations for passengers and communities

Q8: Please list, in priority order, the top five facilities you would like to see either improved or introduced at the station(s) served by the ICWC Franchise

a. you use; or
b. as a non-user would encourage you to use the rail network.

Please provide the name of the station(s) and why you think these improvements are needed.

With respect to facilities at stations, the PDFH recognises a wide range of facilities that are generally valued by passengers, although the list is not exhaustive. The top five below are based purely on PDFH estimates for demand uplifts from station facility improvements that have been ranked from highest to lowest:

1. Secure facilities (either through CCTV or otherwise)

2. Improved electronic information on service disruptions
3. Provision of better timetable information
4. Improved shelters from wind/rain (depending on station)
5. Provision of improved seating

The National Rail Passenger Survey statistics are currently the industry's best indicator of the quality of the overall experience for passengers. The recent results from the Spring 2016[4] survey outline the top five areas of dissatisfaction with the current West Coast franchisee relative to the long distance sector as a whole. All of the top five areas for improvement relate to station facilities – the results have not been filtered to focus on stations.

Description	Current operator % satisfied or good	Long distance TOCs % satisfied or good	Operator vs. long distance % satisfied or good	Priority for improvement (1 = highest to 5 = lowest)
Availability of seating	49	58	-9	1
Overall environment	72	80	-8	2
The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	73	80	-7	3
Cleanliness	78	84	-6	4
Overall satisfaction with the station	84	87	-3	5

Taken collectively, the findings from both PDFH and NRPS demonstrate the importance of seating provision; particularly as availability of seating is the aspect of the journey the current franchisee's customers are least satisfied with overall. PDFH demonstrates the value to passengers of good information, safety and security; but the results of the NRPS do not suggest that customers are currently dissatisfied with these items. The findings however are not reflective of each individual station and it is imperative for the train operator to identify and address the needs of local passengers and the community.

D - The whole journey: Make the railway more accessible for all

Q9: Thinking of the journeys you make or have made on the ICWC, or a journey you could make by the ICWC but where you decide to use an alternative transport mode instead:

- **what specific changes could be made to make the railway easier to access and therefore more attractive to use; and**
- **why do you think these changes would help?**

The Equality Act 2010 sets out minimum standards for accessibility, which the rail industry should strive to exceed as it focuses more closely on the needs of its range of customers. The Vision for Stations sets out potential approaches to make the railway easier to access and therefore more attractive to use.

As the gateway to the rail network, each station needs to be accessible both in terms of providing a seamless journey and a station that is accessible from the entrance to the platform. This requires investment into station design and the provision of a range of modes of transport, including investment in the sufficient provision of cycling and car parking spaces, and collaboration with local public transport providers to provide effective integrated services from the station to the local area.

Further information is provided in the response to Q7e above.

D - The whole journey: Fares, ticketing and paying for your journey

[4] SDG, Access for All Benefit Research: http://www.steerdaviesgleave.com/sites/default/files/elfinder/Reports/Access4AllBenefitResearch2015.pdf

Q10: Considering the above, what do you think the future ICWC train operator could do to modernise and improve the ticketing experience for customers? Please include your views on the elements or parts of service the train operator should consider when developing their ticketing and ticket retailing plans.

The current franchisee has played an integral part of formulating the RDG ticketing vision, which at its heart aims to provide customers with an easy to understand and convenient to use ticketing proposition. Our vision is to move to a fully digitised 'ticket in the cloud' where customers are identified by a range of methods, be that a card, a phone or even biometrics. The RDG ticketing vision has a number of defined tactical workstreams; the first one (barcode ticketing) is being led by the current franchisee, who has already made significant progress in rolling out barcode ticketing. Barcode ticketing will continue to be rolled out across the entire rail network with a completion date of 2018. Barcode tickets will replace cardboard tickets as the minimum customer proposition for ticketing, which will enable cardboard tickets to be retired in 2022. Underpinning the ticketing vision is to provide local ticketing propositions for local markets, which will result in a mix of solutions that will interact. The West Coast franchise operator should continue to drive forward digital ticketing innovation that improves the customer experience and is consistent with the principles of the RDG ticketing vision.

Accompanying this, the structure of fares regulation should allow operators to set fares according to the needs of today's passengers and reflecting the long distance nature of the franchise. Currently the government regulates the price of off-peak return fares, meaning train operating companies are able to price other tickets including off-peak singles more freely. This can lead to a situation where the cost of single tickets is similar to that of returns. By removing the regulated return fare and regulating off-peak singles at 50% of the regulated return, the franchisee could develop a suite of single fares tailored to the needs of a range of passengers. In addition, the division between advance and walk-up fares could be reduced by utilising new technologies to allow customers to purchase advance fares up until the point of travel. These types of changes would encourage efficient use of capacity, generating franchise revenue and returns for the taxpayer.

Other areas not addressed

Q11: If there are any additional areas that you think it is important for us to consider that have not already been addressed in this consultation please explain them here.

HS2

The current timeline for implementation of HS2 Phase 1 Services assumes implementation of 10 trains per hour (7 of which will operate over the Network Rail infrastructure north of the proposed Handsacre Junction) in December 2026, with an announced intention to extend the high speed route to Crewe one year later. HS2 represents an opportunity to establish new standards of customer centric service design, and to improve the capacity and connectivity not only between the city regions it serves directly but also through the wider connectivity of being integrated with the rest of the national passenger rail network. Establishing an effective transition plan for the markets served, the service proposition and the operational solutions to support the Programme's objectives which include the delivery of wider network benefits will require participation by the West Coast franchise operator as the HS2 proposition develops and moves towards implementation.

RDG expects HS2 to be a core part of the franchise proposition; there is an opportunity beyond simply 'co-operation' by the West Coast franchisee for it to have obligations to actively support DfT and HS2 Ltd in the development of service design solutions that will efficiently and effectively enable the implementation of HS2 Services.

The market that will be serviced by HS2 contains many customers who currently travel on West Coast services (and those of other franchisees operating on the WCML). It will be important for these customers to be considered by the new West Coast franchise operator in the context of an objective to secure their long term advocacy for rail travel – this will be especially important in terms of 'joined up' industry planning and communication during the construction phase of HS2.

Freight

Any new franchise specification should take into account the important role that the WCML plays for moving goods to industry and consumers. Rail freight generates £1.6 billion per annum economic and environmental benefits to the UK off the railway balance sheet. The WCML is the most important route for intermodal freight in the UK – over 90% of intermodal services use it at some point on their journey. The WCML connects the major ports with the major conurbations and distribution hubs. Intermodal services are forecast to grow considerably, for both deep-sea intermodal and domestic intermodal flows.

Freight operators and Network Rail have delivered considerable efficiencies over the last 10 years through investment and collaboration and it is important that further efficiencies can be delivered, particularly through longer trains and improved journey times that will make rail freight more competitive with road freight. There is a once in a generation opportunity to enable more goods to be moved by rail by creating more capacity for freight on the WCML once HS2 phase 1 has opened.