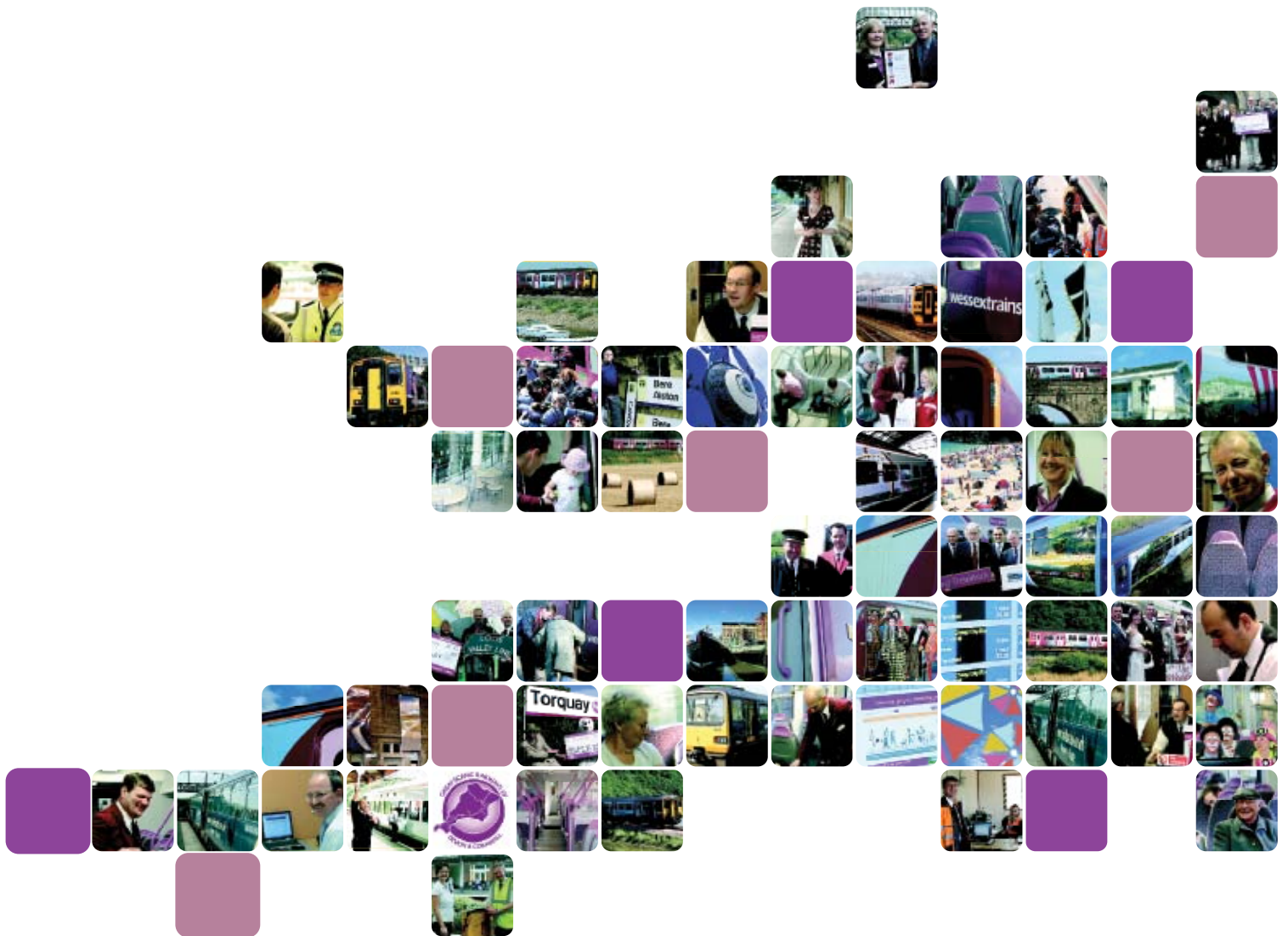


Wessex Trains

2001-2006





Wessex Trains 2001-2006

The History of Wessex Trains has been one of constant evolution. Created by National Express Group in 2001 it intended to address the needs of the South West region's rail users. Expressions were invited to bid for a twenty year franchise, including the South West Main Line service to London Waterloo. The private sector responded eagerly, with seven companies shortlisted.

However, Britain's rail industry was still coming to terms with the impact of the tragic accident at Hatfield and the escalating costs of delivering the railways. In 2002, the organisation responsible for overseeing Britain's rail industry, the Strategic Rail Authority, proposed a new policy for franchising involving larger, stronger businesses. From this strategy, following a period of consultation with the rail industry and stakeholders across the regions, the new Greater Western franchise concept was born and the death knell of Wessex Trains was sounded.

Against this backdrop and although four years is a very short time in relation to the history of Britain's railways, we believe our business made a real difference to rail travel in the region.

During this time:

- Our passengers have undertaken over 53 million journeys, equivalent to almost every person in the United Kingdom having travelled on one of our trains.
- We have increased the number of people travelling by rail in the South West by over 27%.
- Many locally focused ideas and initiatives we implemented have been adopted by other train companies through the new Community Rail Strategy.
- Our approach to the training and development of our employees led to us being one of the few train operators accredited as an Investor in People.
- We have been partners in projects that delivered over £50 million of improvements to the region's railways.

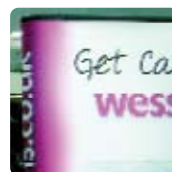


Identity

To reflect the communities Wessex Trains served, we created an identity to match the region and our customers.

The strongest element of our operations was our branch line services and these were each given personalised identities to reflect their individual characteristics. Using specially designed logos and easily identified names, many of which were chosen by the line's users, all ten lines were given their own identities.

- The Tarka Line (Exeter - Barnstaple).
- The Avocet Line (Exeter - Exmouth).
- The Riviera Line (Exeter - Paignton).
- The Tamar Valley Line (Plymouth - Gunnislake).
- The Looe Valley Line (Liskeard - Looe).
- The Atlantic Coast Line (Par - Newquay).
- The Maritime Line (Truro - Falmouth).
- The St Ives Bay Line (St Erth - St Ives).
- The Severn Beach Line (Bristol - Severn Beach).
- The Heart of Wessex Line (Bristol - Weymouth).



In addition, it was important to ensure our customers would identify with our business and, through dedicated marketing campaigns, branding and advertising, we achieved high levels of public awareness across the South West that helped develop the levels of growth we achieved.

Innovation was a key element of this success. Our sponsorship of the regions TV weather bulletins to coincide with the Met Office's move to the region helped entrench our identity in the community. We were also the first train operator to auction redundant station signs on eBay and, in 2004, we sent out one million free tickets to households across the region.

Station Improvements

Alongside trains, we have been active in delivering a better overall environment for our passengers across our portfolio of 125 stations.

As an active partner in Cornwall County Council's 'Riviera Project', we have made substantial improvements to Cornwall's stations; including the transformation of Penzance and Bodmin Parkway into transport interchanges and the award-winning redevelopment of Liskeard. Sympathetic renovations such as Redruth 'down side' platform waiting room have brought station buildings back to life and local styles and artistic sculptures have made railway stations a part of the local scenery.

Liskeard station (National Heritage Award 2005 winner) forms the largest railway station project undertaken in Cornwall for nearly 100 years. The station buildings were completely rebuilt to modern standards of appearance and accessibility and an open-plan café with panoramic views across the station was constructed. In addition, the adjacent station buildings on the line to Looe were refurbished to provide a visitor centre and waiting area.

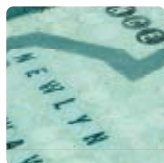
And it's not just in Cornwall that we've made a difference. Stations in Devon, Somerset, Bristol, Dorset, Wiltshire and



many other areas have seen improvements, all designed to improve passengers' experiences of travelling by rail. At Bruton we have seen a new footbridge installed together with new waiting shelters and at Romsey the waiting room was reopened after being derelict for over 10 years.

Over the five years of our operation we have ensured that every one of our stations has received some form of enhancement. For example, we have installed or replaced 60 waiting shelters and CCTV now operates at 39 locations. Cycle racks have been put in at many stations and car parks have been resurfaced and improved to make arriving at stations easier. Signage and lighting have been augmented alongside better information and facilities on platforms.

In all, investments, either directly from Wessex Trains or through valuable third-party partnerships with local and national stakeholders, have seen many millions of pounds invested in improvements at railway stations we operated across the South West.



Infrastructure

Without any major infrastructure projects on the scale of the East and West Coast main lines, we concentrated our efforts on partnering the delivery of smaller, but no less important, improvements to the region's rail infrastructure. Two major schemes have been undertaken during the last four years both of which we have played an important role: the remodelling of Filton Abbey Wood near Bristol and the removal of the last major section of single track on the Great Western Main Line between Probus and Burngullow in Cornwall.

Filton Abbey Wood Previously, the single-track section and only two station platforms made this a 'bottleneck' on the busy main line between Bristol and South Wales. With more trains needing to stop at the station as passenger numbers grew, it was apparent that this problem needed resolving. In partnership with Network Rail and the Strategic Rail Authority a new platform and redesigned track layout were opened at Filton Abbey Wood station in July 2004. The completion of this project has enabled Filton Abbey Wood station to continue to enlarge its commuting market, while removing a restraint on other rail passengers' journeys.

Probus - Burngullow Reduced to only a single line almost twenty years earlier, this seven mile section of track was a major factor in restricting improvements to both local and long-distance services in Cornwall. However, in November 2004 following the largest single investment in enhancing the county's rail infrastructure, the line was reopened with two tracks enabling trains to pass between Truro and St Austell. Since its reopening passengers have benefited through better punctuality and improvements to the timing of their rail services.

As well as these two major projects, we have been an active partner in an abundance of small improvements to the region's rail network, many of which have passed almost unnoticed by our passengers. In partnership with Network Rail we have been instrumental in increasing the speeds on many of our branch lines in our quest for faster journeys and to introduce more 'clockface' timetables.

Trains

We determined at an early stage that, although only halfway through their operational life, the external and internal qualities of our mixed fleet of diesel trains required refreshing to modern standards.

In 2002 we began a programme to modernise our Class 150 trains that formed the backbone of our fleet and operated across the franchise. All 25 of these trains undertook an internal refurbishment programme, with new seats and more passenger-friendly arrangements including a number of table settings. Externally, vinyl imagery was fitted depicting the scenery and attractions visible and reachable from the railways, many of which were provided in partnerships with local stakeholders.

Our long-distance Class 158 trains required little modernisation. However, the number we operated grew as we expanded the routes we operated and a number of the trains we acquired were refurbished to match the standards of our other trains. Four were also externally liveried to commemorate specific events, including the anniversaries of the railway pioneers Brunel and Trevithick. The most significant enhancement for these trains was the implementation of three-carriage variants to increase the capacity of trains on our Portsmouth-Cardiff services.

We also implemented improvements to our other trains. Our entire fleet of Class 153 trains were externally liveried



to profile our two largest Rail Partnerships – Devon & Cornwall and Heart of Wessex. In addition, two trains were fully refurbished internally and, externally, a striking eggshell-blue livery with pictures of two Cornish branch lines was fitted.

A significant problem experienced in our region was seasonal overcrowding, with growing numbers of people wanting to travel to the regions many beaches and seaside resorts. A short-term measure was implemented during the summer months, with the hiring of a set of coaches and locomotives to operate the peak services on the Heart of Wessex line between Bristol and Weymouth. Refurbished in our livery, this service was used specifically during the high-summer weeks in July and August.

Wherever appropriate, each of our refurbished trains was also named to reflect elements of our region, its heritage and characters.

This booklet highlights only some of the successes achieved by Wessex Trains and its employees between 2001 and 2006. It is not an epitaph to mark the end of a franchise, but a testimonial to the hard work and dedication of people working together to make a better railway, not just for its passengers but also the regions it served. The full number of improvements delivered by Wessex Trains and their impact can be seen every day by rail users across the South West.



Wessextrains

Connecting People, Connecting Places

