

# **SALISBURY TO EXETER RAIL USERS GROUP (SERUG)**

Issue Number 2 September 2016

**Supporting the stations of:**

**TISBURY, GILLINGHAM, TEMPLECOMBE, SHERBORNE. YEOVIL JUNCTION AND  
CREWKERNE.**

**Now includes the Blackmore Vale Line Community Rail Partnership.**



**Class 159 outside Sherborne with an up train to Waterloo (credit: Paul Blowfield)**

This is our second newsletter, covering the stations between Tisbury and Crewkerne on the Waterloo to Exeter railway line, currently operated by South West Trains (SWT). SERUG works with local authorities, local station communities and the Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership role is to lobby Government, Network Rail and railway operators for passenger service improvements to the line

## **Our short term aims are:**

- ✓ **Yeovil Junction to Waterloo – 2 trains per hour throughout the day.** To do this the track requires doubling between Tisbury and Wilton Junction (just outside Salisbury). The signalling also needs to be upgraded.
- ✓ **Trains should be able to split and join at Yeovil Junction** This is called “permissive working” and will enable a wider range of journey opportunities.
- ✓ **New and faster trains to replace these 25 year old class 158 and 159’s.**
- ✓ **later evening trains from Waterloo to Yeovil Junction**

**It is likely that the Government will concentrate investment on the London end of the line so we urgently need your help to achieve our aims.**

**The growth of rail travel...** The number of passengers using the UK rail network has grown by over 69% since 2003. Over 1.6 billion passenger journeys are now made every year. SWT alone operates 1689 train services each day and now carries over 230m passengers a year. Many services start or finish at London Waterloo – now Britain’s busiest railway station. **HOW MANY PEOPLE USE OUR TRAINS LOCALLY?** - Figures published in December last year show the following annual passenger numbers using each station as follows:

Tisbury	241,524
Gillingham	423,212
Templecombe	113,732
Sherborne	216,114
Yeovil Junc	218,434
Crewkerne	141,812
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,354,828.</b>

Over the past 10 years the average growth for these stations is 25%. Our trains are now fuller than ever, with standing commonplace on many services. With plans to build over 35,000 more houses in Yeovil, West and North Dorset alone over the next 15 years, rail patronage will certainly increase. We urgently need a half-hourly service between Yeovil and Waterloo, and longer trains on the section between Yeovil and Exeter. If the A303 does not get improved the railway will have to take even more of the strain.

So far the focus has been on the commuter lines around London, and we need to keep telling Government that better services on our busy line are critical.

### South West Trains franchise ends...

Our current operator SWT is bidding to retain the franchise – the new term starts in June 2017. The Government have issued the tender (ITT) but there is only one other bidder - Great Western Railway (First Group). Both Companies now are working to complete their bids, due for submission on 7 September 2016. We should know the Government's decision on who will operate the new franchise by February 2017.

The small number of bidders and the timing of the tender is unusual. There is a very large amount of infrastructure work due to take place in the Waterloo area in 2017/2018. Parts of the station will be closed or services affected from next year when the suburban platforms (1 to 4) are lengthened to take 10 coach trains and the old Eurostar platforms will also be brought back into use. This will involve major signalling and track changes and we are concerned that the new franchise could encounter immediate problems. It will be essential that the operator has the experience to operate some of the UK's most intensive network/services when this work is being carried out.

We await developments with interest and will keep you updated in our next newsletter.

### SWT timetable and new routes.

The additional services (which commenced earlier this year) from Yeovil Junction to Pen Mill, Frome, Bruton, Westbury and Salisbury, (and on to Waterloo) have also been increased by a Summer Saturday service from Salisbury to Weymouth.

Do pick up your timetable from the station and watch out for fare specials (July had a £16 cheap day return to anywhere on the SWT network)

### Network Rail (NWR)...

NWR look after the track, signalling and infrastructure investment in on the line. They have many pressures for investment from around the UK, and we need to lobby and ensure they deliver improvements to our line. The priority is to put double track back from Tisbury to Wilton Junction which will provide capacity increase for two trains an hour and time saving at Tisbury (we all complain about the regular wait in the loop for trains to pass!).

Tisbury station needs its second platform back as well, and hopefully the developers (St Modwen) will be able to help NR achieve that goal.

**Contact us: SERUG's aim is to lobby the Government, NR, SWT and others to improve services and the passenger experience on this line. Join us and receive regular updates. Simply send an email to: [bruce.duncan@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:bruce.duncan@railfuture.org.uk) or Secretary Nick Hurrell on [nickjhurrell@aol.com](mailto:nickjhurrell@aol.com)**

**The Blackmore Vale Line Community Rail Partnership - CRP** - covers the same stations as SERUG, and whereas SERUG will lobby independently for better train services and infrastructure improvements the CRP will look after the stations and their communities. We thank SWT for their initiative and are delighted to welcome Caroline Rowlands is officer in charge of the CRP. She writes below...

This Community Rail Partnership is off to a flying start! We have been busy over the past three months assembling a great team who share our core aims of promoting the area to rail users and working together to enhance our stations. Representatives from all of our stations and communities, Crewkerne, Yeovil Junction, Sherborne, Templecombe, Gillingham and Tisbury, have come together to form our new Board. We have a governing document and draft Line Plan from which has been drawn six priorities to take forward over the coming months.

- Line Guide
- Website
- Planting schemes for (a) Tisbury and (b) Yeovil Junction
- Litter Picking Seminar
- Bus timetable for all our of stations

Our first promotional tour of the area was a 'Cream Tea Special'... the station groups got together with Haselbury Mill, a beautiful and scenic venue in Crewkerne to offer a cream tea and a trip from any of the stations for an all-in price of £10.00 per person. About 20 people of the over fifties group from Sherborne took up the offer on Tuesday and had a wonderful time at the Mill. They were greeted by owner Roger Bastable and taken on a tour of the buildings and grounds before a delicious cream tea.

Caroline Rowland, says "*I was so impressed by the idyllic and tranquil surroundings of Haselbury Mill. I felt sure that it would be ideal spot for our visitors from along the line. I am hoping that after this event we will be able to offer similar happenings in other towns along the line*"

A 'Special Tour' will be visiting Sherborne and includes a guided walk of the town and a fabulous cream tea. If you share our vision and would like to get involved, come and join us on one of our planting days at Tisbury or Yeovil Junction. For dates and details email: [blackmorevalecrp@gmail.com](mailto:blackmorevalecrp@gmail.com) or phone contact **Caroline Rowland, Partnership Officer for Blackmore Vale Line Community Rail Partnership on 07933 212 117. to and follow us on Twitter at Blackmore Vale CRP @crpVale.**

**SAVE THE DATE 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017.... well known historian/author Christian Woolmar and Nigel Harris, Editor of Rail magazine, will jointly present their thoughts on the future of our railways at the Yeovil Steam Centre transfer shed.**

This newsletter is supported by Railfuture - an independent voluntary national group campaigning for a better future for rail transport See [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk)