

A photograph of a woman and a young child sitting in a train, looking out the window with expressions of joy and anticipation. The woman is on the left, smiling, and the child is on the right, laughing. They are both looking towards the right side of the frame. The background is a bright, slightly blurred view of the outside world seen through the train window.

A look forward to 2025-26

September 2025

South Western
 **Railway**

A look forward to 2025-26



In July 2024, the Labour Government was elected with a manifesto commitment to transfer train operators to public ownership as their existing National Rail Contracts expired.

Just as our predecessor South West Trains operated the first privatised service to succeed British Rail in 1996, SWR was the first train operator to transfer to public ownership under Labour's new legislation.

On the morning of Sunday 25 May, we welcomed the Secretary of State for Transport, Heidi Alexander MP, to London Waterloo. She boarded the first service to depart the station under public ownership, an Arterio to Shepperton, branded with a special Great British Railways vinyl.

By transferring to DfT Operator, we joined other publicly owned operators LNER, Northern, Southeastern and TransPennine Express. c2c followed us in July and Greater Anglia is due

to follow us in October. Over the coming years, all remaining franchised operators will do the same.

Since our transfer, we have been working even more closely with our colleagues at Network Rail and the Department for Transport as we integrate track and train in preparation for Great British Railways.

Our new Managing Director, Lawrence Bowman, will lead an integrated SWR and Network Rail team, responsible for both train operations and infrastructure, with a renewed focus on delivering an excellent service for our customers together, leaving behind the division between us.

This process will take time, and we will be setting out more details on our journey to Great British

Railways soon. SWR will be leading this industry-wide transformation.

In the week leading up to our transfer to public ownership, the seventh Arterio entered regular passenger service. The rollout of the new trains has picked up momentum since then, and at the start of September, we introduced the 20th Arterio into passenger service, enhancing capacity, comfort and reliability for customers across our suburban network.

We made significant progress training colleagues over the summer, so we are now running Arterios on more than 250 services every weekday, on routes to Dorking, Guildford, Hampton Court, Kingston, Reading, Shepperton, Twickenham and Windsor & Eton Riverside.

We're looking forward to many more customers enjoying the increased capacity and comfort the Arterios bring to journeys as we introduce more trains into service for even more stations over the coming weeks and months.

While we recognise that the implementation of our summer timetable did remove a small number of services, just 4.5% of 38,664 total services on affected routes, this was done at a time when 12-17% fewer customers were travelling and helped protect our training programme to continue the rollout of Arterio trains.

Nevertheless, we would like to thank any affected customers for their patience during the five-week period the summer timetable was in place.

We also want to apologise to customers on the West of England line, and thank them for their continued understanding, as we contend with the effects of the hottest and driest period for around 200 years, causing a problem known as 'soil moisture deficit'.

The lack of moisture, caused by high temperatures and lack of rainfall, has dried out and shrunk the clay soil embankments that support our tracks between Gillingham and Axminster on the West of England line.

As track levels have been disturbed, our trains cannot travel safely at their normal speeds. Most

of the route west of Salisbury is made of single track, with only a small number of passing loops where trains travelling in opposite directions can pass each other.

The necessary speed restrictions, stretching for over 12 miles, mean trains can't pass each other at their allotted times, so services cannot operate to the normal timetable, with one train now running every two hours between London Waterloo and Exeter St Davids.

Even as we head into the autumn, we must allow soil moisture levels to improve and the ground to rehydrate and settle before engineers can carry out lasting repairs to stabilise the embankments and restore track levels, allowing the normal timetable to return.

We continue to cooperate closely with our stakeholders on the West of England line, including local schools, and rail replacement buses are in place to supplement the reduced timetable. The timetable will remain in place until further notice, and we will provide updates when we can.

Safeguarding customers and colleagues will remain a priority going forward, and we were pleased to have been awarded 100% for our re-accreditation for British Transport Police's Safeguarding on Rail scheme for the second year running. This score demonstrates our commitment to keeping people safe on our network.

Last year, we hosted the first national safeguarding conference for the railway, and we were delighted to co-host the second with Southeastern this year. These conferences are invaluable for sharing information and best practices and are another example of SWR leading a more integrated approach in the industry.

One of the tools highlighted at the conference was the use of body-worn video cameras for frontline colleagues. These can be activated by the colleague to record audio and video.

We have seen a significant increase in the scale of abuse directed at our colleagues. The number of reported incidents of violent and public order offences have doubled between 2020-21 and



2024-25, according to British Transport Police, and we now see over two assaults per day on the network.

The deployment of more body-worn video cameras for colleagues such as guards and gateline assistants, and an accompanying new poster campaign, will help us deter such incidents and capture crucial evidence for prosecutions if they do occur.

Initially launched in May, customers on services between Basingstoke and Earlsfield are the first in Europe to enjoy on-board superfast Wi-Fi, with unprecedented internet speeds up to 20 times faster than the previous average.

Across the 70 kilometres of track, on one of the country's busiest sections of railway, customers can now easily stream content like films or television shows, make video calls, download large files on the go, and much more, making journeys more enjoyable and productive.

It's just one of the ways we are improving internet connectivity on our services, which also includes tackling signal blackspots by allowing customers to use multiple networks, and more announcements coming soon.

We've also continued our support for local communities through our Customer and Communities Improvement Fund. In June, we announced a further £500,000 of investment in local projects on our network, with match funding taking the total amount available to projects to over £1.1 million.

Nineteen local projects across Devon, Dorset, Greater London, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Surrey and Wiltshire will benefit from this funding, and includes schemes addressing a social need such as equipping a kitchen for young people to learn catering and hospitality skills in Southampton to community-based support for survivors of sexual harm in Surrey.

Finally, throughout the year, we've been celebrating Railway 200, the bicentenary of our industry. From station birthdays to marking the railway's connections to events like the Hampton Court Garden Festival and showcasing two centuries of fashion at London Waterloo, SWR has been at the forefront of commemorations.

Not simply about the past two hundred years, however, Railway 200 is also about looking ahead with confidence to the technological innovations and next generation of colleagues that will take our industry forwards.

As we enter a new era for the industry, with Great British Railways coming down the tracks, that will be our focus, with an integrated track and train bringing in the best innovations and the best talent to build a railway that delivers for customers of the 21st century and beyond.



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