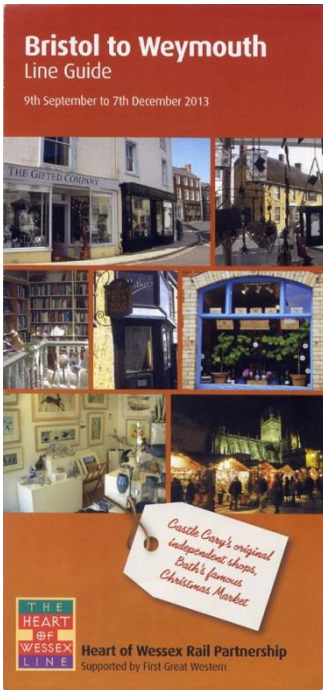


THE HEART OF WESSEX RAIL PARTNERSHIP



2013/ 2014

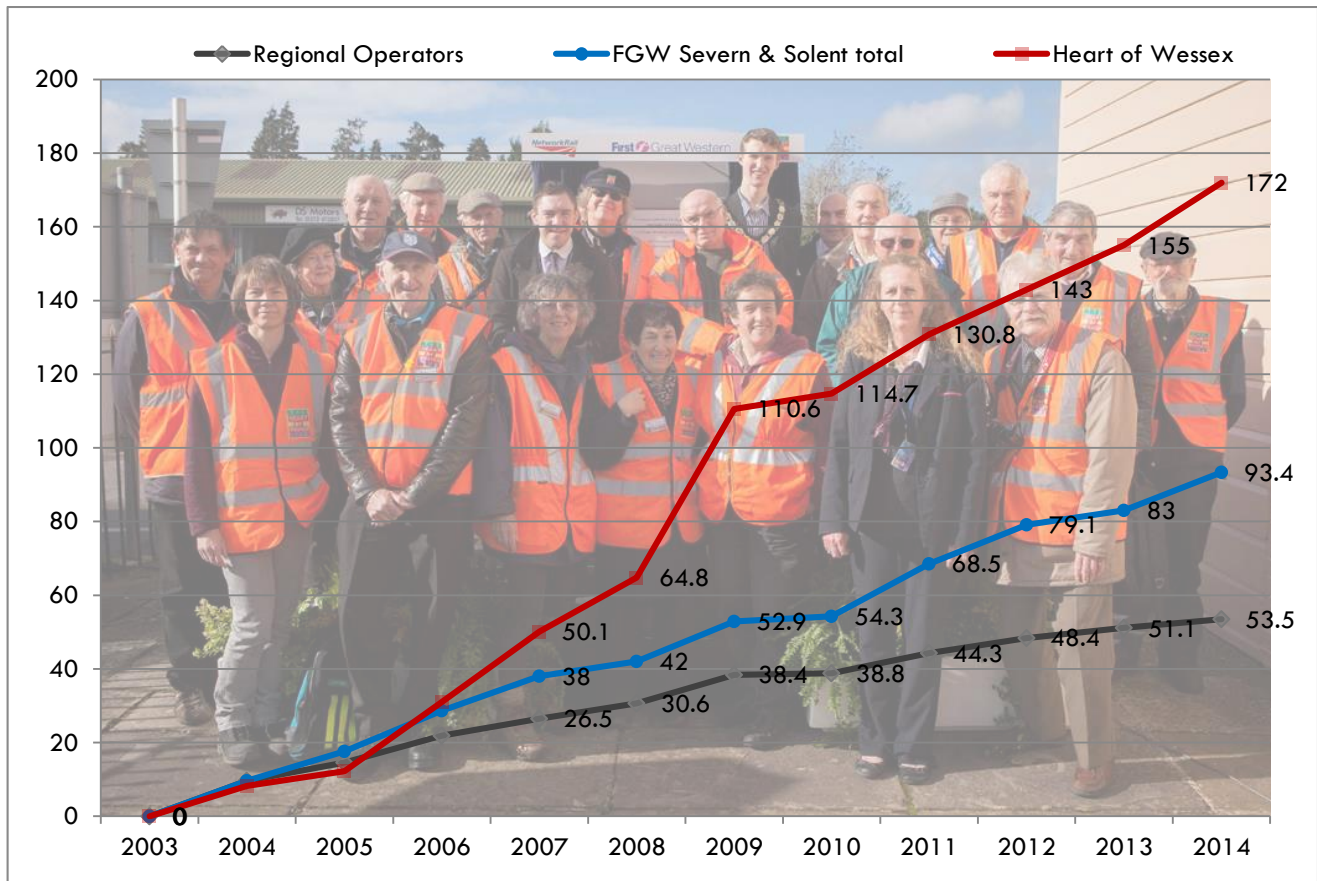
ANNUAL REPORT



THE HEART OF WESSEX RAIL PARTNERSHIP is a joint venture between Bristol City Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Wiltshire Council, Somerset County Council, South Somerset District Council, Dorset County Council, West Dorset District Council and First Great Western. The overall objective of the partnership is to raise awareness and use of the Bristol to Weymouth rail services, by marketing and enhancing the line and access to it, and working with local communities along the route

OVERALL RESULTS TO 1ST APRIL 2014

Passenger journeys grew 6.5% in 12 months to 1,924,100. The growth on the line continues to outstrip the average for lines in its region (Severn and Solent¹). In the chart below, cumulative percentage annual growth over 2003 is shown for the Heart of Wessex, the total of eight lines making up the Severn & Solent region and for national Regional Rail Operators²



Service levels remain the same as in 2003 (when passenger journeys were 707,500) meaning that:

- For every **100 passenger journeys** made in the year to 1st April **2003**, there were **272** on the same trains in the year to 1st April **2014**
- The line’s “share” of all **annual passenger journeys** in the Severn Solent region has hence gone up from **9.8%** to **14.9%**

¹ FGW data. SEVERN & SOLENT TOTAL includes total of passenger journeys on: Cardiff-Portsmouth, Bristol-Exeter, Bristol-Weymouth, Bristol-Great Malvern, Bristol-Severn Beach, Bristol-Cardiff, Bath-Filton and Swindon-Westbury. SEVERN & SOLENT, at 12.8 m journeys in 2013/ 2014, represents approximately 13% of FGW’s total passenger journeys.

². Office of Rail Regulation. Regional Rail Operators excludes London and South East.

COMMUNITY RAIL

The partnership's action plan is shaped by the needs of its communities, and direct involvement by local people in supporting, enhancing and promoting the line plays a key role in delivering increased passenger numbers. During the last year **112** people made voluntary contributions to the line, and our joint Task Force approach was further expanded. Increasingly, supporters of one station will go along to help at another, with "mobile teams" of between 4 and 18 gathering to assist with larger projects. For many of our supporters and friends, the social enjoyment from this teamwork is part of the interest and motivation to continue participating in it. In recognition of this, First Great Western supplied tickets for a summer Sunday outing in 2013 to thank everyone for their efforts.

In 12 months
13,570 hours
 of voluntary work
 invested in the line

<p>Station Gardens</p>  <p>8540 hours</p>	<p>Small scale station infrastructure e.g. seating, fencing, community notice boards etc</p>  <p>490 hours</p>	<p>WESSEX WANDERERS: Planning, promoting & leading Guided Walks from stations. Design, print & distribution of literature + new website created and launched</p>  <p>1400 hours</p>
<p>Cleaning, litter picking, recycling</p>  <p>1410 hours</p>	<p>Mobile teams & Task Forces</p>  <p>530 hours</p>	<p>Developing, disseminating, distributing information. Community Tourism projects. Websites: 580 hours</p> <p>Easter Overcrowding Watch: 50 hours</p> <p>Meetings and events: 570 hours</p>

Several of the stations also have a Station Watch scheme into which they have recruited local people, and another benefit of the regular presence of volunteers at unstaffed stations is help and advice for customers.

The **COMMUNITY RAIL WORKING PARTY (CRWP)**

This working group began with half a dozen people in September 2003 and held its **10TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING** in **OCTOBER 2013** with **24 lead representatives** of our local communities & voluntary groups.





The CRWP met three times with First Great Western's Regional and Station Managers, and Network Rail's Community Rail Executive to discuss and progress projects in 2013/14. The issues and aspirations raised at this meeting inform the partnership's ongoing priorities, including the longer term Community Wish List.

THE COMMUNITY PROJECTS GRANT FUND also celebrated its 10th year in October 2013. **15% of the rail partnership's budget** is set aside each year for projects initiated by voluntary/ community groups for equipment and plants for stations and their gardens, small scale infrastructure, community notice boards, tourism, walking or information initiatives and other items they identify to assist rail customers.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS 2013/14



The community of this lovely village have transformed their station over the last few years. They established stunning station gardens in 2008, recovered and reinstalled an original running in board in 2010, and in 2013 recovered yet another original part of their station and brought it home again. This board needed specialist help from the conservators at Cardiff University before it could be framed and installed at the station, where it was unveiled in August at a special community event hosted by First Great Western.



The footbridge, restored to superb heritage standards by Network Rail, was opened at a special event in summer 2013. The team restored and replaced two additional heritage style seats for customers.



The removal of the temporary bridge left yet another area for planting (left) in these magnificent, constantly evolving station gardens, which won the **BRADFORD IN BLOOM AWARD 2013**.





The new **Friends of Westbury Station** created three large, custom designed planters in December 2013. Minister of State for Transport, Baroness Kramer planted the first shrub for them on 7th February 2014, and took the opportunity



to chat to task force volunteers from our other stations who were there to help complete the planting.



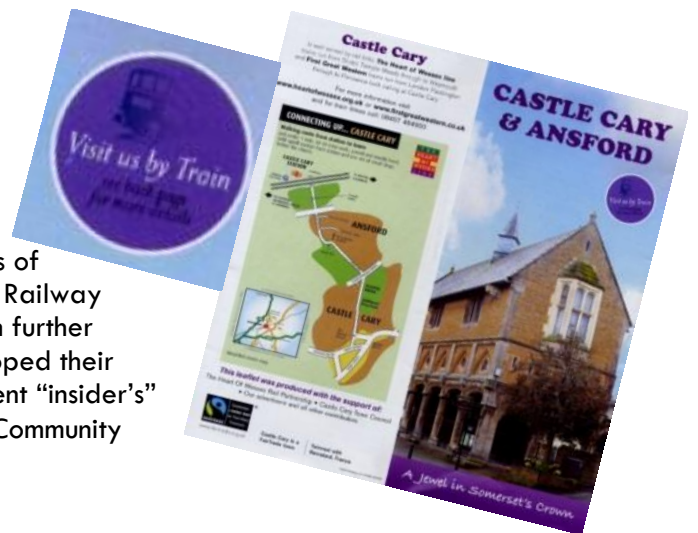
Prior to a special event to thank Network Rail for their magnificent renovation of Frome Station, 18 volunteers from Bristol to Weymouth gathered for a big team clean up, matched by an equal number of Network Rail staff. Work was completed for the arrival of VIP guests from Frome Town Council & the local community, who were treated to a delicious lunch by First Great Western.

BRUTON & CASTLE CARY



The Friends of Bruton Railway Station further developed their excellent "insider's"

website www.brutoncarytrains.co.uk and the Castle Cary Community Tourism Group produced their superb guide for visitors.





YEOVIL PEN MILL station became a glorious **shop window** for the town's famous annual summer transformation by the **YEOVIL IN BLOOM** team. A banner advertised the town to customers passing through on trains, and Pen Mill was our winning station for local produce in 2013 – with free beans from the Yeovil in Bloom planters and apples from the station gardens!



The award winning **FRIENDS OF DORCHESTER WEST** work with Cowden Care Farm, helping young people with learning difficulties to acquire new skills, in this case designing and building new planters & crafting replacement picket fencing. Other new developments from this dynamic group in 2013/14 were a composting area and a water butt. The Friends work at the station every Friday



morning throughout the year, collecting, sorting and recycling rubbish and undertaking regular (turbo charged!) cleaning operations, in addition to further developing the gardens.



THE FRIENDS OF UPWEY STATION are at their station every week, often more than once, cleaning and litter picking, and keeping a close watch – problems with ticket machines and information systems hence get sorted here as quickly as they would at a staffed station!



A leaflet dispenser for the Line Guide was installed, and their station gardens also continue to grow, with new planters and beds created over the last twelve months.

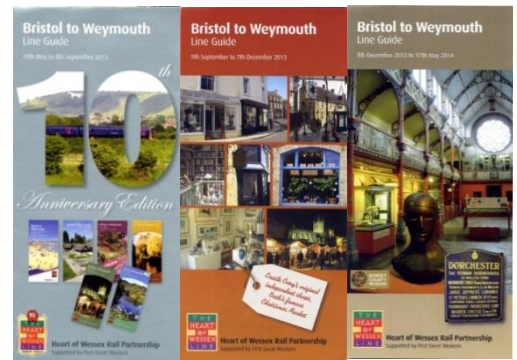
They also take on special “missions” along the line such as collecting and delivering Line Guides, and monitor train capacity and overcrowding at peak periods.



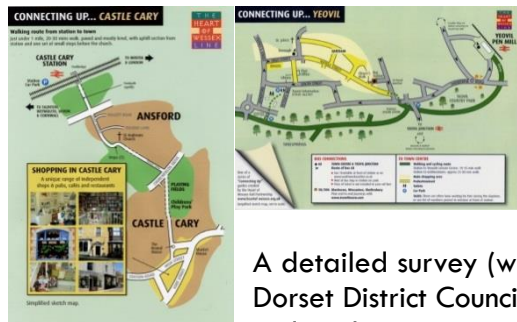
LINE GUIDES

The 10th anniversary edition of the Line Guide featured Top Ten things to do along the line – generating some of the largest feedback ever received (apparently a common reaction to such lists!). Autumn featured Castle Cary, Bath and Bristol, and Winter/Spring 2014 was a special joint edition with Dorset County Museum featuring Dorchester’s historical, literary and retail attractions.

Demand for hard copies remains high despite the increasing general trend away from print. Although some distribution points have reduced quantities, they are balanced up by those requesting more (often citing the easy read, large print timetable). Hence the print run per edition remains at 30,000 copies.



CONNECTING UP



Making it easier for people to find their way from/to stations (“Fixing the Link”) emerged as a primary theme in 2013/14. Connecting Up guides - which show walking routes, current key bus connections and general local facilities - were also produced in small print runs for the use of station staff, train crews and volunteers, in addition to being available digitally.

A detailed survey (with Dorset County Council, West Dorset District Council & Station Friends) was undertaken in January 2014 of the pedestrian route between Dorchester West and Dorchester South, and a new signing improvement project based on this is now underway.



At Yeovil Pen Mill, in direct response to customer feedback, a special project for additional signs at key points was implemented at the end of the year



PROGRESS AGAINST LINE PLAN 2013-2016

Funding partners' priority areas from Designated Line Plan (page 4) used here to sum up key 2013/14 projects. Full plan on request or from the website. **Brown** text: supported by Community Projects Grant Fund.

PARTNERS' PRIORITY AREAS	2013/14
1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Promoting more use of the line to the benefit of local economies	Line Guide: Bristol, Bath, Castle Cary, Dorchester & "Top Ten things to do along the line" Wessex Wanderers Guided Walks Limpley Stoke Valley guide
Making it easy for visitors to understand and use services, stations and connections	Dorchester Station to Station signing project Yeovil 68 bus link information improvements www. Brutoncarytrains.co.uk C Cary Community Tourism "Visit us by Train" Line guide includes maps, tips, connections
Stations as community gateways and "shop windows" to destinations	Yeovil in Bloom at Pen Mill Several significant improvements to station appearance, esp. Freshford, Bradford on Avon, Westbury, Frome, Dorchester West Gardens: 10 Grants for additional projects Community notice boards
Supporting and promoting local businesses	Line Guide. Castle Cary Community Tourism "Visit us by Train" Maiden Newton Community Welcome poster
2. CARBON REDUCTION, HEALTH & STAYING SAFE	
Encouraging more people to switch to rail by assisting new users to understand services, stations and connections	Connecting Up guides. Participation in Dorset County Council's personal travel planning project.
Continued improvement of station facilities/ making stations feel safer and more welcoming	Station Adoption: 14 stations now adopted. Total volunteer hours at stations: 10,970 Small scale infrastructure improvements: Freshford, Westbury, Bradford on Avon, Dorchester West
Encourage, facilitate and promote more walking to/from stations	Connecting Up guides, CC Community Tourism, Wessex Wanderers.
3. LOCALISM	
Manage, motivate, sustain and build community contributions to the line	3 Community Rail Working Party (CRWP) meetings 5 updates of CRWP "The Matrix"(short, medium and long term action areas/ community wish list) 23 Grants for Community Projects 3 Task Force/ special joint events
4. ACCESSIBILITY	
Assist understanding of connections, services and stations & those with visual and learning difficulties	Yeovil Pen Mill signing project Connecting Up guides Large print TT in Line Guide.