

South Western Railway
Timetable Consultation Co-ordinator
Overline House
Blechynnden Terrace
Southampton
SO15 1GW
Sent by Email: timetable.feedback@swrailway.com

20 December 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

South Western Railways Timetable 156 Consultation

I write on behalf of this Parish Council, and in accordance with its discussions at its Meetings on 6 November and 4 December 2017 when it was resolved to respond to the above Consultation.

Rowlands Castle village has a small and increasingly well-used railway station, located on the main Portsmouth to London Waterloo railway line. The line itself runs through the whole of the eastern side of the Parish.

The Council has sought comments from railway users in the Parish via its website and social media page, and also from local electronic message systems and questionnaires. Rail users raised 3 main areas of concern which are summarised below:

1. Students travelling to and from School and/or College

The proposed northbound service used by students travelling to schools and colleges in Petersfield, Liphook and beyond will depart 8 minutes later at 0805. This will not leave them enough time to walk to their respective educational establishments for the start of the school/college day. At the end of the day, the most popular current southbound service is to be discontinued, and it will be impossible for students to reach Petersfield or the other stations in time for the proposed new service departing 36 minutes earlier. The next train after that to stop at Rowlands Castle (RC) will be 1 hour 20 minutes later, leaving students with a much increased waiting time after the school/college day.

2. Off-peak passengers travelling to London using Railcards

To make use of the off-peak service to London, a train has to arrive in London after 10.00 am. Currently, off-peak users can board the 0846 service from RC, which arrives at London Waterloo at 1013. The proposed new timetable includes a 0831 service that is scheduled to arrive in London at 0959 and so presumably does not qualify as off-peak. To travel off-peak, users would presumably have to wait an extra hour for the 0931, which arrives at 1057. Likewise, Network Railcard holders are currently permitted to use their card on the 0946, even though the Railcard is normally only for use from 10.00 am, because otherwise the first available train from them would not get into London until after midday. Would these allowances be maintained for the proposed 0831 and 0931 services respectively? Were these proposed changes to be imposed without allowance being made for off-peak/card users, this would be a major inconvenience (or incur additional cost) for those with morning appointments in London, and may discourage passengers from using the train at all.

3. Commuters travelling during peak times to and from London.

The proposed new timetable will leave residents of RC and the surrounding area with far less train options on their daily commute, for example:

- The most widely used morning commuter train (currently the 0656 from RC) will depart later at 0704, arriving 7 minutes later into London, leaving less time to arrive in work for a 9am.
- There is a reduction in evening commuter services. Currently there are 7 trains leaving London which call at Rowlands Castle (with a change at Haslemere) but under the proposed timetable this is reduced to 3.

Future Impacts on Demands

In line with Government and Local Planning Authority targets, Rowlands Castle and neighbouring communities are already experiencing a considerable increase in local housing development, with over 200 new dwellings being built within the Parish and several hundred more in neighbouring Horndean.

These developments will significantly increase demand for rail services in future years. Indeed, developers often cite the proximity of Rowlands Castle station as an added attraction for house-buyers. Residents should be encouraged to use the railway to avoid increased traffic on our already over-crowded roads.

In addition, Rowlands Castle is on the edge of, and forms a 'gateway' to, the South Downs National Park. The Park's Authority is keen to encourage non-vehicular access to the Park for which Rowlands Castle station is ideally suited.

The implication of the proposed new timetables is that Rowlands Castle and other small communities on the line are being 'sacrificed' by South Western Railway to provide a faster service between Portsmouth and London. Were this timetable to be imposed, this Council believes it would be a grave error of judgement. This Council recommends SWR take account of its comments above in reflecting the increasing importance of Rowlands Castle Station to our growing community of rail users. A summary of the detailed responses we received is also attached.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this Consultation.

Yours faithfully



Lisa Walker
Clerk to Rowlands Castle Parish Council

**SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAYS TIMETABLE CONSULTATION
COMMENTS FROM USERS OF ROWLANDS CASTLE TRAIN STATION**

Comments from School/College Users

Trains to and from School/College Northbound:

- The proposed changes appear not to be taking into account the needs of students travelling to and from school and college north of RC, mostly at Petersfield (Pfd) and Liphook.
- This will lead to students having to leave home much earlier to get to school in time and then wait much longer for a return train e.g.:

<u>Petersfield School:</u>	<u>Current Timetable</u>	<u>Proposed Timetable</u>
<u>Start Time:</u> 08:30am	<u>Dep RC:</u> 07:57 <u>Arr Pfd:</u> 08:09	<u>Dep RC:</u> 08:05 <u>Arr Pfd:</u> 08:16
<u>Finish Time:</u> 15:20pm	<u>Dep Pfd:</u> 16:11. <u>Arr RC:</u> 16:21	<u>Dep Pfd:</u> 16:51 <u>Arr RC:</u> 17:01

- I have 3 children relying on this train service every school day. If the times change (especially the morning service) they will not arrive at school on time.
- The Liphook School (Bohunt) has recently changed their school day so that children don't start with tutor time, but go straight into lessons. If these proposed changes happen then the children would miss valuable learning time and would arrive at school late, rushed and stressed. This is not a good way to start the school day. They would also be marked as "late" on a regular basis, giving them a bad reputation through no fault of their own.
- We are also concerned about the safety implications of having to wait over an hour to get a train home. This is even more of a concern in the winter months when it is dark and the weather can play a detrimental part.
- It is highly likely that if these changes were put in place, we would have to seek alternative travel arrangements which would lose South Western Railway thousands of pounds as well as clog up our already very busy roads, impacting the environment further. This plan has clearly not been properly thought through, nor does it benefit the passenger despite this being the reason for the proposal!
- Lessons (not registration) start at the school at 08:30 sharp. Under the proposed changes the morning train arrives at Petersfield at 08:16; 14 minutes is inadequate to walk from the station (far side northbound platform) to the classroom. Note that in previous years we have received refunds against the cost of my daughter's season ticket because of late running of trains; any late arrival of the train under the proposed timetable would manifest directly as additional lateness for the affected pupils and would impact their education.
- I understand that return services from Petersfield would be scheduled at 15:35 and 16:51. As the last lesson finishes at 15:20 I contend that there is inadequate time to walk from the classroom to the station. If the last lesson finished late by even a small amount pupils will have to wait at Petersfield station for nearly an hour and a half to await the 16:51 service; the current 16:11 service having been removed. I think a near hour and a half wait to travel back from school is unacceptable, particularly for year 7 pupils who may only be 11 years old, and especially in the dark and cold of winter. The effect of a cancellation of the 15:35 return train would also mean a near hour and a half wait.

- The 'Timetable Document for Consultation December 2018' states 'increased frequency on some routes', but in this particular case the frequency is being reduced and the proposed times are unsuitable.
- I would contend that the statement in the Consultation Document at page 3: 'We understand that there are many school journeys made on SWR and feel confident that they are all catered for' is incorrect.

Trains to and from School/College Southbound

- The proposed changes work more in favour of students travelling to Havant & Portsmouth stations as they leave earlier so they reach their destination earlier.

<u>Portsmouth Grammar: Current Timetable</u>	<u>Proposed Timetable</u>
<u>Start Time:</u> 08:30am	<u>Dep RC:</u> 07:46
	<u>Arr P&SS:</u> 08:07
	<u>Arr PHbr:</u> 08:12
 <u>Finish Time:</u> 15:45pm	 <u>Dep PHbr:</u> -
	<u>Dep P&SS:</u> 16:24
	<u>Arrive RC:</u> 16:46
	<u>Dep RC:</u> 07:38
	<u>Arr P&SS:</u> 07:56
	<u>Arr PHbr:</u> 08:00
	<u>Dep PHbr:</u> 16:08
	<u>Dep P&SS:</u> 16:13
	<u>Arrive RC:</u> 16:31

Comments from Senior Citizen/Off-Peak Railcard Users

- To travel to London off peak, the train has to arrive in London after 1000 am. So at present one can use the 0846, which arrives at 1013 am. In the new timetable there is an 0831 but this arrives at 0959 and so presumably does not qualify as off peak. So to travel off peak one has to await the 0931, arriving at 1057 am. This will be a major inconvenience (or extra cost) for those with morning meetings etc in London.
- No reduction in number or frequency of trains
- No reduction in validity of off-peak services or fares. At the moment we can travel to London off-peak day return Monday to Friday leaving RC at 08:46. I would regard a later time on the new timetable as a reduction of service.
- Off-peak day returns are valid any time Saturday or Sunday. I would regard any restriction of this as a reduction of service.
- No reduction in validity of super off-peak services or fares. At the moment these are available on certain services on Saturday and Sunday. If this is withdrawn or restricted I would regard that as a reduction of service.

Comments from Commuters into London

- **Portsmouth Harbour (PH) to London Waterloo**
- Early morning trains OK but early morning commuter service is poorer:
 - Lost direct train to Waterloo at 0546 – have to change at Petersfield albeit arrive at Waterloo at same time.

- Why doesn't 0613 stop at RC? It is the only station that is missed out.
- 0656 currently misses out Witley & Milford – and gets to Waterloo at 0824 instead of new slow train at 0704 getting in at 0835.
- Overall morning commute to London is much poorer with only direct services at 0457 (0630 arr), 0604 (0735 arr) & 0704 (0835 arr).
- 0713 fm PH could usefully call at Rowlands Castle (RC) as there is a long gap between 0719 and 0805. The 0713 only misses out RC but stops at all other stations between Havant and Guildford.
- 0842 fm PH misses out RC and Liss but calls at all other stations to Guildford to provide a useful arrival time in London of 1027 for shopping or later morning meetings. This train should also call at these missed stations before the regular hourly service kicks in during the day.
- The afternoon peak period service is poor with only one additional train added between the hourly stoppers and that is an odd service, the 1605 from Havant to Haslemere!
- It is strongly urged that both the 1642 and 1742 from Portsmouth & Southsea call also at RC and Liss, as they call at all the other stations up to Guildford. This would provide school children, shoppers and people working in Portsmouth with more opportunity to get home in the peak period.

• **London Waterloo to Portsmouth Harbour**

- Good early morning down trains for commuters and school children. However the hourly service kicks in too early at 0845 from RC.
- It is strongly urged that the 0749 and 0849 also call at Liss and RC as these are the only stations missed out between Guildford and Portsmouth & Southsea for those services. They would provide convenient services for shoppers or those needing to into the city later in the morning.
- There is too large a gap between the 1419 from Waterloo calling at 1545 and the 1519 from Waterloo calling at 1701. The wait of 12 minutes for the 1519 at Haslemere is far too long. The stopper should carry on as it does earlier in the day and not have to wait for the later fast train to overtake it, there is no logic in that change. Equally with the 1549 and 1619 there is an unnecessary wait at Haslemere. (It is suspected the change is because this train also stops at Milford & Witley so is later into Haslemere. However, it is a very long wait especially as this is the first train into RC for 76 minutes)
- The 1649/1719 from Waterloo should call at RC otherwise there is a one hour gap between calls at 1801 (1619 ex Waterloo) and 1900 (1729 ex Waterloo with another long wait at Haslemere. At present there is a half hourly service from Waterloo changing at Haslemere but in future the only through trains changing at Haslemere would be at 1549, 1619, 1729, & 1829 which is semi fast but waits 16 minutes at Haslemere.
- The 1819 from Waterloo to Havant misses out Liss and RC but calls at all other stations between Guildford and Havant. Why should this be?
- The 1829 from Waterloo has a 16 minute wait at Haslemere before arriving at RC at 2001, again one hour after the previous train from Waterloo.
- The 2249 from Waterloo to Portsmouth & Southsea misses out just Liss and RC. Why?
- Overall the evening down service from Waterloo to RC (and Liss) is poor.

- The village has 3 new proposed building sites which will be around 150 houses and a possible 400+ people will increase our population greatly (at the moment there are approximately 1600 households in Rowlands Castle and nearby roads).
- The village is expanding and growing all the time and a lot of people use Rowlands Castle to commute to their work but also relishing the fact that we are a quiet village.
- The villagers value the train service, older residents are resorting to public transport to get around as the cost of fuel increases.
- Some time ago the regular 2 trains an hour were reduced to 1 an hour and this meant the slow trains were more crammed with people. Also that villagers had to travel by taxi or their own cars to Havant and Petersfield to catch trains, so having to pay and find a place to park or pay ever increasing taxi rates.
- Our village cannot take any more traffic but we can take trains that stop to bring in tourists and take the commuters to their places of work.
- RC has a growing population with over 200 new homes being built within the village boundary and many more to be built at Horndean over the next 2-3 years. People will be encouraged to use the trains if there is a decent service. If the service becomes poorer with the new timetable, the suspicion is that RC and Liss will have been sacrificed to help SWR achieve faster trains between Portsmouth and Waterloo.
- In the proposed new timetable there is a considerable lack of trains that will stop at Rowlands Castle during the evening home-bound commute period.
- Currently Rowlands Castle is well served during this period, with stopping trains every 30 minutes and the additional 18:15 Fast/Slow service, which is well used by residents and takes 1 hour and 16 minutes for the journey.
- The proposed new schedule only has an hourly stopping services at 16:19, 17:19 and 18:19 with the rest of the stopping trains (16:49, 16:59, 17:49, 17:59) not stopping at Rowlands Castle.
- There is also no longer a Fast/Slow train like the current 18:15 service.
- The end result for residents of Rowlands Castle and the surrounding villages is far fewer train options on the daily commute home and longer journey times. This is not what I expected from a timetable which is quoted by SWR as delivering "improved service frequencies and quicker journey times".
- I hope for everyone who uses our station that this is just an oversight in the programming of the new schedule and we will see more and faster trains stopping at Rowlands Castle in future versions of the timetable.
- The proposed timetable seems considerably worse for Rowlands Castle. The train most people catch in the morning is the 0656 which arrives at 0824, 1 hr 28 mins. This train is replaced by the 0704 which arrives at 0835, taking 1 hr 31 mins.
- The 0846 service, the first you can use a senior railcard on, is replaced by the 0831 which gets in at 0959. Presumably this will still accept the senior railcard otherwise people would have to wait for the 0931 which wouldn't get in until 1057 which would be completely unacceptable.
- Currently between 1530 and 1815, 7 trains leave London which call at Rowlands Castle (with a change at Haslemere). Under the proposed timetable this is reduced to 3. This is completely unacceptable. Particularly when extensive building is taking place at Rowlands Castle because it has a railway station. That's no good when services are being cut.