



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lawrence Bowman
Managing Director
South Western Railway

1 September 2026

Dear Lawrence,

Thank you for our many discussions about bringing forward this rail timetable consultation, particularly in relation to services between Bournemouth and London Waterloo. It was great to join many SWR colleagues at the consultation event at Bournemouth Station on 13 June.

Thank you, too, for our close collaboration in finally making Pokesdown Station step-free, with work set to begin shortly and conclude in early 2028, backed by a £3m Government investment. This would not have happened without close collaboration, so thank you.

I have been in touch separately about the reliability of services, where I have concerns. In this letter, I want to emphasise four key areas where I believe the timetable could be improved:

- Faster journey times between Bournemouth and London
- Improved service frequencies at Pokesdown and Christchurch
- Faster journey times on Sundays
- Improved Sunday services at Pokesdown and Christchurch

Faster journey times between Bournemouth and London

London is around 100 miles from Bournemouth, yet the fastest current journey times between Bournemouth and Waterloo are around 1 hour 50 minutes.

This is notably slower than the fastest services operated in the 1980s, when an hourly fast train could complete the journey in around 1 hour 35 minutes. At a time when rail journey times to London have improved in many other parts of the country, Bournemouth's journey times have gone backwards.

As the Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East, I cannot accept this as the status quo because it harms our connectivity and economy, and I am calling for an hourly express service between Bournemouth and Waterloo as part of the timetable recast.

In terms of journey time from the capital, Bournemouth is now comparable with destinations such as Cardiff and York, and even Brussels. Given Bournemouth's size, importance as a regional centre and status as a major visitor destination, there is a strong case for restoring such a fast service to London.

Improved frequencies at Pokesdown and Christchurch

Pokesdown Station serves a large and growing population, including communities in Boscombe, Littledown, Iford and Southbourne, as well as providing access to the Vitality Stadium. With the stadium expanding and the team enjoying growing success, it is a very important part of our town's economy, identity and future. Christchurch Station similarly serves Christchurch itself, as well as parts of Southbourne and Tuckton.

Despite serving sizeable populations, both stations currently have only one direct service to London each hour. The local stopping service does not provide an additional connection to the capital. This contrasts with Brockenhurst, a much smaller community, which benefits from two trains per hour to and from London.

With accessibility works and upgrades beginning at Pokesdown Station, my hope is that many more people travel through this part of our world.

I am calling for the timetable to consider the number of people served by Pokesdown and Christchurch and the important role these stations play in their local communities.

Improved Sunday services at Pokesdown and Christchurch

On weekdays, Pokesdown and Christchurch benefit from two trains per hour: a semi-fast service to and from Waterloo and a stopping service to and from Winchester.

On Sundays, however, these stations receive only one train per hour.

This is difficult to understand given that nearby New Milton and Brockenhurst both receive two trains per hour on Sundays, despite serving smaller populations.

I am calling for two trains per hour at Pokesdown and Christchurch on Sundays, bringing their service frequency more into line with the rest of the route.

Faster Sunday journey times

Journey times on Sundays are noticeably slower than during the rest of the week, even when there are no engineering works affecting the route.

The fastest Sunday trains between Bournemouth and Waterloo take more than two hours. From Pokesdown and Christchurch, trains before lunchtime can take nearly two and a half hours to reach London.

That is a particularly long journey for a route of this distance, comparable with the journey time from London to Paris, despite Bournemouth being almost three times closer to London.

Bournemouth has considerable potential as a destination for Sunday day trips from London. Slow journey times make travelling by train less attractive, potentially encouraging some people to travel by car and deterring others from visiting altogether.

I am calling for improved Sunday journey times, both to benefit rail passengers and to support Bournemouth as a visitor destination.

Conclusion

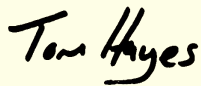
The timetable recast provides an important opportunity to address long-standing issues for a town that is a major population centre and an important destination for business, leisure and tourism. Faster and more frequent rail services would improve connectivity with London and make rail travel more attractive for local residents and visitors.

I therefore urge you to provide:

1. An hourly express service between Bournemouth and London Waterloo;
2. Improved frequencies at Pokesdown and Christchurch;
3. Faster Sunday journey times; and
4. Two trains per hour at Pokesdown and Christchurch on Sundays.

I understand that there will inevitably be competing demands on the timetable and that not every change will be possible, or possible in its entirety. However, I hope the consultation will recognise the importance of Bournemouth and our communities and the need to provide a rail service that reflects the size, importance and potential of the area.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Hayes". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Hayes MP
Labour Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East