

ACoRP Entry – Category 6 – best community engagement

Great Western Coffee Shop Forum – Community Involvement for the next decade

Concept and aims

The Great Western Coffee Shop is an online forum for passengers and potential passengers that's been running for a decade. A year ago, it was running on spare space on a private web server that was soon to be retired - yet still busy. However, there was no planned route forward to ensure the stable and useful continuation of the forum - "set up by passengers, run by passengers" for the next decade.

The aim of this project has been to ensure that the forum is set up for continued and growing community involvement for the next decade. To have a robust underlying structure that no longer relies on an ageing key person. To make use of current software to allow innovative interaction. To have technology to support current and future devices, and algorithms to make searching and data access ever easier for the community of public transport users, and those who are put off using public transport for the fear of not understanding the fare system, getting stranded in the wrong place, or for a myriad of other reasons.

What happened

The forum team of 3 administrators and 7 moderators reviewed the current running and future direction of the forum in a private board in the summer of 2018. A proposal including a bid to Great Western's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund was drawn up in the early autumn (ref document no. 1) including an analysis of the geographic interest of current members, and a feature / spread sheet comparing the Coffee Shop forum to other potential customer to customer engagement routes.

In November, Facebook and Twitter accounts were set up directing users towards the forum, noting that the forum's archive resource contains answers that remain valid for enquirers for many years, where Facebook and Twitter content ages away quickly.

Over Christmas, software upgrade work on linked pages brought a consistency to features that had been added over the years, and separated out the look and feel from the business logic so that these pages now work across a wide range of devices, and can all be easily extended to new devices. A tool to allow moderators and administrators to edit content of those pages was added.

In February, forum members formally met for just the second time "in real life" to consider the work the moderator and admin team had done so far, and to add their knowledge and thoughts. As a result, an interim constitution was written in March and adopted late that month (ref document no. 2), and the admin and moderator team appointed a treasurer and finance group.

In May, the group ran their own booth at "Community Rail in the City" in Reading, engaging the community of daily commuters on trunk services who typically rush past, looking at and taking through some of the issues they have. And in early June, the group held its first formal AGM, ratified the constitution, approved the finance team and the route forward. And just a couple of days before entries for the ACoRP awards closed, members of the forum's teams were guests at Great Western's Community Rail Conference at which partnership work ahead was planned.

Results

Though all of these activities and work, all undertaken by volunteers, the forum has kept running - 1,785 new subjects have been added by around 350 active "posters", with 27,257 messages with those and older subject threads in the past year, which is around 14% up on the previous 12 months. All the more remarkable in that history shows that the forum is

busier at difficult times for the franchise, yet major issues the franchise had in 2017 and early 2018 have been getting better since. In the six months from December 2018 to May 2019, 33,000 users visited the site - mostly guests arriving from search engine enquiries, and over 90% of those visitors were from within the area served by the Great Western franchise. Top cities - London, Bristol, Exeter, Torquay, Reading, Plymouth, Birmingham, Bath and Cardiff.

The forum's CCIF bid was awarded in full, and that allowed purchase of banners and materials for the successful outing to Community Rail in the City. Community Rail and User Groups tend to attract users who are newly retired, and who are interested in smaller lines. The Coffee Shop, however, has developed a wider community reach with more members using the London to Reading main line than any of the lines what are more traditionally engaged. Age spread of guests is nearly equal across each age range from 25-34 up to 55-64 and 65+, with fewer in the 18-24 range (but it's fewer years too). The forum does truly reach a wide cross-section of people.

2018/19 may be considered to have been a rebirth and groundwork year and the forum is now set to develop on the firm foundations that have been laid. The forum celebrates it new found stability as it partners closer with Great Western Railway, linking the railway's community of passengers and potential passengers with the railway that serves them. After completion of this submission, but prior to the ACoRP award evening in October, the Coffee Shop will be hosting an online "Meet the Manager" session for the managing director of First Great Western - that's a sure confirmation of the Forum's role in engaging the wide community of the railway customers.


The forum may be found at <http://gwr.passenger.chat>

Prepared by Graham Ellis – 01225 708225 - 16th June 2019

Descriptive paragraph

The Great Western Coffee Shop was set up to give passengers (actual and potential) a route to information and discussion about public transport and related issues across the Thames Valley, Cotswolds, South West England and South Wales. 2018/19 has seen it transformed from a personal website into a constituted organisation - a community with rail partnership - with a ten year continuity plan. Visitor numbers have grown over the year, with 330 different contributing members logged in over the last year, and some 6,000 visitors (90% from the UK) in the last month alone.

Cancelled or amended services - 1




Click on this image to select by station

Great Western Passengers' Forum

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Great Western Coffee Shop - [home] and [about]

[\[whole diary\]](#)
19/06/2019 - TransWilts Design entries end
22/06/2019 - Steam on the District
24/06/2019 - National Rail Safety Week
25/06/2019 - First Group Shareholder mtg
26/06/2019 - TransWilts Stakeholder Conf.
29/06/2019 - Melksham Carnival



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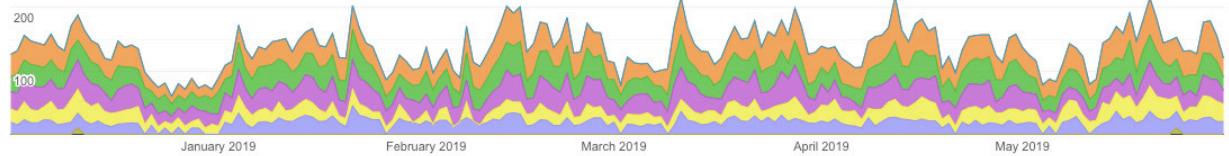
News: A forum for passengers ... with input from rail professionals welcomed too

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		Biggest investment since the Victorians.... <small>new</small>	YouKnowNothing	11	451	Today at 09:28:59 pm by bignosemac	
		My final ride on a full length HST? <small>new</small> « 1 2 ... 9 10 »	grahame	142	9384	Today at 07:38:09 pm by bignosemac	
		Shortage of train crews on Great Western Railway since September 2017 - ongoing discussion <small>new</small> « 1 2 ... 67 68 »	TaplowGreen	1011	102314	Today at 02:59:07 pm by Wizard	
		Infrastructure problems in Thames Valley causing disruption elsewhere - ongoing, since Oct 2014 <small>new</small> « 1 2 ... 220 221 »	IndustryInsider	3313	727260	Today at 11:15:07 am by eightf48544	
		IETs into passenger service from 16 Oct 2017 and subsequent performance issues <small>new</small> « 1 2 ... 117 118 »	LawrenceHillbilly	1759	154087	Yesterday at 02:01:47 pm by IndustryInsider	
		Great Western Railway: on-board catering, buffets, Travelling Chef, Pullman - ongoing discussion <small>new</small> « 1 2 ... 96 97 »	inspector_blakey	1454	408769	Yesterday at 08:37:59 am by TaplowGreen	
		2019/20 CCIF awards - full list sorted by award magnitude	grahame	0	227	June 06, 2019, 05:20:22 am by grahame	
		Major First shareholder 'demands' First pull out of UK railways	grahame	7	790	June 05, 2019, 06:25:56 am by Timmer	
		GWR Performance Figures <small>new</small> « 1 2 ... 14 15 »	IndustryInsider	223	51236	June 04, 2019, 10:53:44 am by IndustryInsider	
		Problems with the Night Riviera sleeper - December 2014 onwards <small>new</small> « 1 2 ... 45 46 »	bobm	682	165067	May 30, 2019, 08:10:33 am by Pb_devon	
		Great Western Main Line electrification - ongoing discussion <small>new</small> « 1 2 ... 54 55 »	Bmblbzzz	816	82426	May 29, 2019, 04:54:39 pm by IndustryInsider	
		Where's my train/carriage ? Wonder no longer..check scrolling displays « 1 2 »	chuffed	22	1168	May 29, 2019, 10:48:02 am by johnneyw	

● Users
 ● 65+
 ● 55-64
 ● 45-54
 ● 35-44
 ● 25-34
 ● 18-24

300



Primary Dimension: **Age**

Plot Rows

Secondary dimension

Sort Type: Default

advanced

Age ?	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions		
	Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages / Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?	Goal Conversion Rate ?	Goal Completions ?	Goal Value ?
	10,243 % of Total: 30.81% (33,243)	9,398 % of Total: 29.72% (31,620)	45,477 % of Total: 32.46% (140,098)	29.64% Avg for View: 28.37% (4.46%)	7.11 Avg for View: 6.77 (4.96%)	00:08:02 Avg for View: 00:07:14 (11.05%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	0 % of Total: 0.00% (0)	\$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% (\$0.00)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. 65+	2,317 (21.30%)	1,985 (21.12%)	12,448 (27.37%)	25.67%	8.41	00:09:09	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. 45-54	2,271 (20.87%)	1,940 (20.64%)	9,487 (20.86%)	28.16%	6.74	00:07:04	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3. 55-64	2,094 (19.25%)	1,751 (18.63%)	11,878 (26.12%)	26.60%	7.16	00:09:13	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4. 25-34	1,937 (17.80%)	1,739 (18.50%)	5,330 (11.72%)	39.29%	6.40	00:07:25	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5. 35-44	1,815 (16.68%)	1,577 (16.78%)	5,331 (11.72%)	35.64%	5.81	00:05:46	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6. 18-24	446 (4.10%)	406 (4.32%)	1,003 (2.21%)	45.66%	4.55	00:04:23	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	\$0.00 (0.00%)

