

To:- Michael VAUGHAN,
Head of Franchise & Stakeholder Management,
Arriva Trains Wales,
St Mary's House, 47 Penarth Road,
CARDIFF. CF10 5DJ

Ref. BT4C/ATW.TT 5/ 2012
Date 30th March 2012

By e-mail to: michael.vaughan@arrivatw.co.uk

Dear Michael,

Better Trains for Chepstow Response to May 2012 Timetable Consultation.

1445 Cheltenham Spa to Maesteg – Proposed to start from Gloucester 23 minutes earlier.

Your letter of the 21st March requesting comments on your proposed timetable changes has been forwarded to me and I wish to make the following observations before your deadline of the 31st March 2012.

The Need is for Regularity not Irregularity

You will appreciate that the tight timescale for the response has prevented me from gathering the views of many of our members but I know that these changes that worsen our haphazard services through creating further irregularities in the pattern of service will be unwelcome. This change represents a further departure from the much heralded introduction of clock-face timetables throughout Wales a few years ago.

Quick to Run the Service Down Slow to Improve.

Passengers need and desire is for services on the Chepstow Line to be improved particularly for the morning peak where we have an unacceptable 2 hour gap, they should be improved not made worse. I'm sure you know that since 2008 the Sewta has Regional Transport Plan has proposed a regular hourly service on the Chepstow Line and the original target implementation date was 2010!

I therefore feel I must draw attention to the contrast between the urgency attached to your proposal to worsen our services and the complacency and lack of urgency in bringing improvements. Let's hope this will change before too long!

Savings are Diverted Elsewhere and will Increase Cost to Bring Service up to Standard

This proposed timetable change is, I believe, the third of a series of reductions in rolling stock by ATW allocated to the Chepstow line. Each of these three moves has removed stock for allocation elsewhere and will therefore escalate the ultimate cost of planned future improvements. The first of these stock economies came about through combining the Maesteg to Cardiff and the Cardiff to Gloucester services saved a complete train unit. This saving could have been deployed to provide the basic hourly service but it was used elsewhere and we now have to try and justify several million pounds a year which is the estimated cost to get it back.

Turning the train around at Gloucester has 3 disadvantages:-

Longer journey times to and from Birmingham through changing trains:-

1. Terminating the 13.12 from CDF at Gloucester will require passengers for Birmingham to change at Gloucester and wait 25 minutes instead of the present 6 minute connection at Cheltenham.
2. Starting the return train from Gloucester instead of Cheltenham will require travellers from Cheltenham to leave 35 minutes earlier to meet the new departure time from Gloucester.

Increased Likelihood of Train Cancellation

3. With current schedules it is not unusual when trains are running late to turn them back at Gloucester instead of Cheltenham. The current timetable allows up to 37 minutes to be saved in this way. The proposal is for a turn trains back in 14 minutes. With limited opportunities to turn trains back between Newport and Gloucester this will inevitably lead to an increase in train cancellations.

This is a retrograde step that worsens services when passenger demand and fares are increasing. The public expect services to be regular and consistent not haphazard and irregular – they deserve better not worse.

Turn Up and Go!

If the new schedule comes into operation passengers who have become accustomed to the usual clock-face departure times towards Cardiff will be badly disappointed upon arriving at Gloucester, Lydney, Chepstow or Caldicot to find that their anticipated train left 23 minutes earlier. Because of the two hour intervals, they will be pretty angry to find they have to wait more than one and a half hours to wait for the next one! They will **Go Home** and not come back again.

Done in haste but I hope the message is clear. Please let me know if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Jenkins. Chair. Better Trains for Chepstow