

BETTER TRAINS FOR CHEPSTOW

www.bettertrains4chepstow.org

Monthuis, 33 Grange Park,
St Arvans,
CHEPSTOW,
Monmouthshire.
NP16 6EA
Tel. 01291 624 830
Ref BT4C 081104
Date 5 November 2008

To. The Rt. Hon. Geoff HOON MP
Secretary of State for Transport.

Your Ref

Dear Mr Hoon,

Better Trains for Chepstow Campaign.

Further to our email of the 17th October I am now writing to reiterate that our group (BT4C) has sought improvements to train services at Chepstow for the past 4 years.

One particular aim is for all the CrossCountry trains to stop and serve Chepstow increasing the number of trains serving the town from **28 to 54** and reintroducing through services to Birmingham.

We wrote to Douglas Alexander and Ruth Kelly proposing this change and each time we were informed that the **DfT was not opposed to these trains serving Chepstow**. We hoped that these stops would be specified in the new franchise contract, but they weren't.

Once the contract was let we were advised by your department (DfT) to engage directly with Arriva CrossCountry and to explain our proposals to them.

We duly wrote to Arriva CrossCountry and engaged with them in their consultations over the 2009 timetable. We provided them with **a list of reasons and the benefits of serving the town and pointing out that stopping would take no more than 2 minutes**. We explained the **benefits** that serving the town would **bring both to them and to our community**.

These consultations with Arriva CrossCountry in correspondence and at meetings continued **until May 21st 2008 when, with our Monmouthshire MP, Mr David Davies, we met Andy COOPER, CrossCountry's MD**. At this, our last meeting, we were informed that CrossCountry had completed their proposals for the 2009 timetable and that Chepstow was not going to get the service we sought. David suggested a trial period with a few stops each way morning and evening but this was also declined.

This was a disappointing outcome after 4 years of trying to achieve a sensible low cost measure to improve our train services.

Since we started this campaign demand for train services as an alternative to cars has accelerated and the current rocketing fuel costs and the imminent threatened increase in road tax are guaranteed to take this issue higher on the agenda.

We hope that there is still time for common sense to prevail and ask you to consider re-examining the issue of serving Chepstow with Arriva CrossCountry.

We presume that Arriva CrossCountry made their decision not to stop at Chepstow on purely financial terms in relation to their company profits. It appeared to us that their

overwhelming priority was to meet PPM targets. It looked to us as though accumulating spare minutes in their train schedule was more important than giving up 2 spare ones to provide a train service to our community.

We believe that the decision whether or not to serve our town should take account of social and environmental issues not just a companies profit.

The Cardiff-Portsmouth contract that left FGW with discretion whether or not to stop at STJ has also had a detrimental impact on Chepstow train services adding 30 minutes each way to journeys between Chepstow and our neighbouring city of Bristol. FGW are similarly reluctant to stop at STJ during the day and more concerned with accumulating spare minutes in their schedules.

Both of these contracts negotiated by your Department could have improved train services in this area at no cost. The FGW contract considerably worsened the situation for Chepstow with no advantage.

We hope that under your leadership common sense will prevail. We hope you will look again at these two decisions and with a more enlightened approach you will see the sense of restoring the services we once enjoyed at Chepstow and Severn Tunnel Junction.

Yours sincerely,

Jim JENKINS, Chairman

Better Trains for Chepstow Campaign:-

Chairman: Jim JENKINS, Joint Vice Chairmen: Alan VICKERS and Philip INSKIP.
33 Grange Park, St Arvans, CHEPSTOW. NP16 6EA. Tel. 01291 624830. Email
jjimjenkins@StArvans.net