

BETTER TRAINS FOR CHEPSTOW

www.bettertrains4chepstow.org

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NP16 6EA
Tel. 01291 624 830
Ref BT4C 081209
Date 9 December 2008

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

Your Ref

Dear Mr Hoon,

I write to remind you that we have received neither acknowledgement nor a reply to the issues raised in our email of the 17th October and repeated in our letter of the 5th November 2008.

The aim of BT4C is for train services in this area, particularly to Chepstow, to be improved which hopefully is an objective that you, as Secretary of State for Transport, also support. Unfortunately government rhetoric is at odds with its behaviour.

Our letter of the 5th November (attached) is an appeal to you as a newcomer to your office to take a fresh look at the situation that has arisen in this area on the Welsh border resulting from the mismanagement of the two recent franchise contracts drafted and awarded by the DfT.

Omitting to make STJ a compulsory stop in the Cardiff-Portsmouth franchise and Chepstow from the Cardiff-Nottingham franchises has eliminated train services that our community need and deserve. Not stopping these trains has benefitted no one. The end to end journey times are the same and the stops could be made without altering timetables. The remedy is simple: the contracts should be amended; little cost should be involved.

The blame for the fiasco with the FGW contract fell on FGW but we recognise that they have gone a long way in restoring services during the peak hours and we remain hopeful that they might still be persuaded to stop the off peak trains and connect Chepstow to Bristol again. This is a high priority for Chepstow Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.

We have not been able to persuade Arriva CrossCountry to stop trains at Chepstow despite the fact it would cost them nothing and could easily be accommodated in the existing schedules. They are content to meet your minimum contract obligation. Arriva have a monopoly on the Chepstow line and it is no surprise that they are unconcerned with the social and environmental consequences of their failure to serve our town. The excuse that Chepstow is not an appropriate destination or source of passengers for their prestigious cross country express route doesn't stack up and is an insult to our people.

Chepstow lies about halfway between Newport and Gloucester (45 miles) and if the trains stopped the 17.5 mile section from Newport to Chepstow would still be third longest on the route between Cardiff and Nottingham. In terms of passenger numbers: more passengers use Chepstow than currently use five of the stations between Birmingham and Nottingham which already have the CrossCountry service. University station has just been added to the CrossCountry schedule despite its close proximity to Birmingham New Street and the existence of frequent commuter services.

The impact of stopping trains at Chepstow is minimal because all trains pass slowly because of the track curvature as everyone in town knows. We have even had to dismiss an offer from the Chepstow Rotary Club to take turns standing in the track to make them stop!

We appeal to you to give these issues your serious attention.

The curtailment of train services to Bristol is an obstacle for those out of work who are looking and wishing to find employment in the Greater Bristol area. Please let us know what you will do to ensure this service is provided as soon as possible as it does not cost anything and could be implemented immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Jim JENKINS, Chair, Better Trains for Chepstow Team.

BT4C have now produced a map of train services in the area to help people understand the railway geography in this area. A copy is attached. More information can be found on our website;
www.bettertrains4chepstow.org

Better Trains for Chepstow Campaign:-

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