

From: Bjorn Rodde
Sent: 10 October 2011 21:08
To: Wyn Jones, Rhodri (Assembly - Committee Services)
Subject: PET(4)-04-11 Agenda 11-10-2011

Hi Rhodri

Thank you for getting in touch ahead of the Petitions Committee meeting tomorrow.

A few things have happened since we spoke last.

A fellow passenger and I met with the Commercial Director, Michael Bagshaw, and Michael Vaughan of Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) on 25th July. We took the opportunity to explain, professionally and constructively, the issues surrounding ATW services that prompted petition action by passengers. Aside from general issues such as the lack of suitable luggage space and the number of carriages (and therefore the number of seats available), we also discussed more specific issues relating to the previous timetable changes and how these changes affected commuters in particular. The meeting was very worthwhile and left ATW with a better understanding of why so many of its passengers were so unhappy. We discussed some potential timetable solutions, one of which ATW had not previously considered. The meeting was left with ATW considering this new option further and they would get back to us for further consultation as the December timetable was being finalised.

I have since met with others on the train regarding the issues, including representatives from the South West Wales Community Rail Partnership and the ATW Passenger Panel. I also kept in touch with Simon Pickering of the Welsh Government's Rail Unit for a period to give him an idea of the frequency of occasions when trains from Cardiff ran as two carriages instead of three. I also provided photographs of the overcrowding this caused.

On 3rd October I received an email from ATW with an extract of the draft timetable due to be implemented in December. The extract presents a solution which is likely to resolve the problems that commuters from West to South East Wales for their journey to work in the morning. The proposed train times for the morning journey return almost to what they were prior to the last timetable change in May, which is satisfactory. However, there is no evidence that there will be any changes made to the existing timetable to improve the situation on the return journey for commuters at the end of the working day. This means that the disconnect in train services travelling East-West in the late afternoon/early evening will remain, as will the issue of overcrowding. Passengers now miss the connecting trains to destinations further west which they used to be able to catch prior to the May changes and have long waits on platforms until the next train. The overcrowding is significantly worse after the May timetable change due to ATW trains leaving the larger stations (like Cardiff, Bridgend, Port Talbot, Neath and Swansea) before the First Great Western (FGW) Paddington-Swansea services. The introduction of the Fishguard services has eased this slightly but passenger comfort is still unsatisfactory with too many people being forced to stand, especially when rush hour trains run with less carriages than they are supposed to. One example of this is the 16:00 train from Swansea to Pembroke Dock which frequently runs as a single carriage and the number of people that ATW staff end up cramming on to this single carriage train is nothing short of ridiculous.

Regarding the issue surrounding the lack of stops at smaller stations further west, the uproar caused some request stops to be re-instated after the timetable changed in May. However, it

is still the opinion of many that not enough trains stop in Gowerton. All trains travelling west from Swansea pass through Gowerton station but not all stop – even at peak times during the day. This is the station that services much of the Gower and areas such as Gorseinon, Waunarlwydd, Fforestfach, etc., etc. and more trains should stop there. It is a popular station, not just because of the wide area that it serves but also because of free station parking and sizeable car park within very short walking distance which is also free of charge.

I would also like to point out that I was very disappointed by the letter from Carl Sargeant, which suggested that he did not have a firm grasp of the situation and also came across in support of ATW, rather than with sympathy towards members of the public using the trains for regular commuting.

I hope this is useful information for the Petitions Committee meeting tomorrow.

Kind regards
Bjorn.