

Head of Customer Services

Arriva Trains Wales

April 2011

To the Head of Customer Services

***Re: Arriva Trains Wales Summer Timetable Changes Adversely Affecting Commuters***

I write to you on behalf of fellow passengers in protest of the timetable changes being made to the service which starts at Carmarthen at 05:50 destined for Manchester Piccadilly. Like many other customers, I commute to Cardiff on this service daily. I board at Llanelli at 06:18 but this petition speaks for customers boarding at all stations between Carmarthen and Cardiff.

Currently, the service arrives at Cardiff at 07:40, giving those who start work by 08:00 enough time to travel by foot or by bus to their place of work in Cardiff. The proposed changes see this service arriving at Cardiff at 08:01, rendering the service useless to almost all passengers who currently board the train West of Cardiff.

For those who have the option, Arriva Trains Wales will lose customers to the First Great Western Service leaving Swansea at 06:58, however this service is not available to those boarding West of Swansea or at Pyle or Llanharan. However, since the First Great Western Service arrives at Cardiff 12 minutes later than current Arriva Trains Wales service, this solution may not be viable even for those who have the option of using it.

There is further outrage amongst customers regarding the following issues:

- Trains stopping less frequently at stations in West Wales on some services
- The 16:04 train from Cardiff to Milford Haven (used on the way home by many commuters who catch the service arriving at Cardiff at 07:40) will be leaving at 15:54 after the timetable

changes. Many people will no longer be able to catch this train and have to wait until the 17:04 train departs

- The fact that there are often only two carriages on the 16:04 train from Cardiff when customer numbers require at least three carriages in order for customers to travel in relative comfort

For more detail surrounding the background information, see the last page of the attached petition.

I trust that Arriva trains Wales takes the opinion of its customers seriously and that, as the national rail franchise holders for Wales, is dedicated to providing a service which your Welsh customers find acceptable.

On this basis, I look forward to hearing from you with constructive actions to address the issues which have prompted this petition from 85 unhappy customers.

Yours faithfully

Mr B.M. Rödde.

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Mr Bjorn Rödde

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31 May 2011

I hope the above is helpful in explaining why the changes have been made. We will be keeping the new timetable under close review and we will take on board the comments you have raised behalf of yourself and other passengers as part of this process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Bagshaw".

Mike Bagshaw  
Commercial Director

Mr Mike Bagshaw  
Commercial Director  
Arriva Trains Wales

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011

Dear Mr Bagshaw

***Re: Arriva Trains Wales Summer Timetable Changes Adversely Affecting Commuters***

I am grateful to have had a response from Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) but I am writing to you again since the response was not satisfactory.

In your letter of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011, you stated that the changes to the timetable have been made to improve journey times along the Swansea-Cardiff-Manchester corridor.

1. Firstly (as I speak on behalf of the passengers named in the previous petition and petition via the National Assembly website), I can assure you that the changes have most certainly not improved journey times to Cardiff in the early morning. As we have already established, the same train that used to arrive at Cardiff at 07:40 now arrives at 08:01 – I struggle to see how a 21 minute delay to a service which has run perfectly well for a number of years is an improvement? This train is now empty in comparison to previous passenger numbers when it leaves Swansea in the morning (now at 07:03) since any passenger who used to regularly use this service to travel to Cardiff before 08:00 (or any stations west of Cardiff – except Pyle and Llanharan - at earlier times) now use the First Great Western Service instead which leaves Swansea at 06:58.
2. Secondly, taking the first point into consideration, any improvements that ATW have managed to achieve as a result of the changes must be for the benefit of those passengers travelling on towards Manchester? I would question why ATW is sacrificing the satisfaction

of its customers who commute across South Wales in favour of those who travel outside of Wales and on to Manchester when ATW has the Welsh Rail Franchise? One might wonder whether it is more lucrative to prioritise the services outside Wales rather than within Wales. In your letter it states that 'it is likely' that those who start work after 08:00 in Cardiff will find the service more convenient than the previous times. This suggests that there is not currently any evidence of this. I am yet to meet a passenger who finds it more convenient to wait at Swansea station for 20-30minutes at 06:35 in the morning.

3. Thirdly, having used this service daily for over a year, I have come to notice the general trend of passengers boarding and leaving the train. As you would expect, the vast majority of passengers using the service along the stretch between Carmarthen and Cardiff leave the train at or before Cardiff Central station. The majority of passengers travelling up to Manchester from Cardiff seem to board at Cardiff (and presumably stations beyond Cardiff). So, it seems as if any improvements that might have been made would actually benefit the Cardiff-Manchester corridor, not the Swansea-Cardiff-Manchester corridor. This brings me back to the point made by the petition, that when considering the majority of passengers, the service has not been improved for those travelling to Cardiff from further west; instead, the passengers suffer a delay which either causes significant inconvenience or results in the service being unusable.

The best solution identified by ATW (which I acknowledged in my original letter as an option) is not to travel on an ATW train at all and use a First Great Western (FGW) Service instead. This cannot be accepted as a viable response from ATW to one of their customer services-related issues. As you are aware, this solution is also flawed in a number of ways:

1. The FGW service arrives at Cardiff at 07:52, leaving passengers 8 minutes to walk, cycle, etc. to their place of work by 08:00. By the time you have negotiated the ticket barriers and exited the station, this is not realistically enough time unless your place of work is within the immediate vicinity of the station. Furthermore, this assumes that that FGW train runs on time. With your previous timetable, one would arrive at Cardiff at 07:40 with ample time to get to the office by 08:00.
2. As you have already acknowledged, this is simply not an option for passengers who board(ed) your service at Pyle and Llanharan since the FGW service does not stop at these stations
3. Changing trains mid-journey is a significant inconvenience and time delay in itself. Many passengers are nervous and anxious of changes. If there is a delay to the running of the first train then there is a significant risk that a passenger will miss the connecting train which will result in further delay.

It is the opinion of many that ATW has grossly underestimated the number people who travel beyond Swansea from further west and the number of those passengers who use the service to travel to Cardiff to start work at 08:00. It is as if ATW have formed the opinion that most passengers travelling from West Wales don't usually travel further east than Swansea. This is not the case. Most passengers who arrive at Swansea station at 06:41 walk to the next platform and board the

FGW train to continue their journey (which of course doesn't include the passengers that would do the same if they weren't now travelling to work by other modes of transport following the timetable change). These passengers then have a 20 minute wait, as already discussed, which is inconvenient enough at any time of day but particularly so at that time in the morning.

Since receiving your letter, I have also spoken to some of your customers who stop at Kidwelly and Ferryside and they are equally dissatisfied with your response. It seems disproportionate and illogical to increase journey times for passengers travelling to these stations by 30 minutes in return for a saving of 3 or 4 minutes for those travelling further West on the same service if it doesn't stop at those stations along the way.

As I said in my previous letter, I trust that ATW takes the opinion of its customers very seriously and that, as the national rail franchise holders for Wales, ATW is dedicated to providing a service which its Welsh customers find acceptable.

I look forward to hearing from you again, this time with more constructive suggestions as to how ATW will address these, rather than an explanation of why your customers have to live with these inconveniences.

Yours sincerely

Mr B.M. Rödde.

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