

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

[Inquiry into the future of the Wales and Borders Rail](#)

Evidence from Wren Rose – WBF 47

Concerning the Aberystwyth to Birmingham line operated by Arriva Trains Wales, addressing the failure of the current franchise to adequately meet passengers' needs:

1. More coaches at peak times needed. Procurement of another company to run the Aberystwyth to Birmingham line is also highly recommended.

Aberystwyth is a university town, housing thousands of students all subject to academic terms or semesters. It is a FACT that just after or especially just prior to a holiday period, many of these students turn to the train service to travel into or out of Aberystwyth, creating a peak period. Let's face it, Aberystwyth isn't the most accessible location from the rest of the UK. For the majority who live far enough away that getting a bus is not feasible, do not have the luxury of a car or a lift in one and do not wish to spend torturous hours crammed onto a coach, the train service provided by Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) is the obvious option. It is relatively fast and relatively cheap when compared to petrol costs (based on Aberystwyth to London).

However, the service provided by ATW to their customers is nothing short of appalling. Despite operating trains on this route for years, Arriva Trains Wales are still providing 2 or occasionally 4-car services from Aberystwyth at these times. Arriva Trains Wales KNOW that these services will be especially busy. It's common sense. Yet it is the same story every time; passengers are packed tightly onto the train, having to bundle in, luggage and all, enduring high temperatures, high tempers and a lack of personal space. To add insult to injury, passengers are fobbed off with 'apologies' for the 'unexpected' overcrowding over the speakers. If ATW were really sorry, they would do something about it to ensure it didn't happen again.

ATW cause their customers considerable discomfort, both physical (many have to stand until at least Machynlleth where more coaches are added) and emotional (in the rush to grab a seat, knowing there will not be enough to go around, tension is high and squabbles inevitably break out). This is a far cry from the 'safe and high quality service [passengers] have the right to expect' (ATW Passengers' Charter, accessed on their website September 2013). It's not just sub-standard; it is unsafe. People are pushed, accidentally or on purpose, and luggage and people are scattered higgledy-piggledy, blocking routes to the exits or toilets; if an incident or fire were to occur, there is no way passengers would be physically able to move to another carriage, as per safety instructions.

This is not a rant based on one or two unfortunate experiences. This happens time and again, and it is high time ATW were called to account. Arriva Trains Wales are without doubt the worst train operating company I have been unfortunate enough to come across, and I know of many who share my view. Sadly, due to the lack of reasonable alternatives, ATW can continue to provide poor and even dangerous service and be sure of plentiful custom. I sincerely hope this consultation on the future of the Wales and Borders Rail Franchise will be the catalyst for change.

W. Rose

PS. It's not just the students, I have not forgotten the other passengers forced to share these ridiculous conditions, whether regular commuters or tourists. We all deserve better.