

27 Brycestoll  
Post Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 1DF

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Dear Dr Phipps

Mid-Wales Railway Services

Last week's *Cambrian News* reported that you are seeking comments from passengers on Mid-Wales railway services including the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth line, giving you as the contact point.

I have been a regular user of the Aberystwyth line for many years, increasingly so since I retired some three years ago. I use the service both locally, for example to Shrewsbury for shopping or a summer trip up the Cambrian Coast, and as a feeder service into the English network - in the last two months I have for example travelled to Brighton, Cambridge and Colchester. I shortly have two Eurostar trips planned starting from Aberystwyth station.

The main improvement I have seen recently has been in punctuality. Until about two years ago one always factored a likely delay into one's calculations, allowing for missed connections or, returning, a late arrival home. I am grateful that this is much less the case these days, and where it does occur it seems often to be due to problems with Arriva Trains Wales' rolling stock.

My main complaint with the present service is the limited length of trains. It is welcome that the 09:30 from Aberystwyth is now usually four coaches (becoming six from Machynlleth) but the popularity of the lines both to Aberystwyth and to Pwllheli now really require this to be the minimum for all trains.

For the future I would welcome an hourly service, which would also help with the loading mentioned above. It has occurred to me that such a service *throughout* the day is maybe not necessary - new services at 08:30 and 10:30 from Aberystwyth and ones arriving back at 16:20 and 18:20 would I suspect be the most appreciated by customers, though I can see that such a piecemeal solution could leave rolling stock in inconvenient positions.

Just one point on the idea of reopening a Carmarthen service. I'm afraid this seems to me a romantic notion that just cannot be justified. The logistics and cost are frightening enough but looking at the old timetable (which though relating mostly to steam trains could not be much improved upon given the gradients, route and number of stops) the slowness of the service would not attract custom away from the roads. Insofar as the Assembly has funding for better railway services in this area it surely makes sense to focus them fully on the lines west from Shrewsbury.

Yours sincerely,

  
(Jeremy Perkins)