

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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***Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport (2013)***

***promoting quality public transport.....***

Transport for Wales  
 5th Floor  
 Southgate House  
 Wood Street  
 Cardiff  
 CF10 1EW.

19<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Wales & Borders Rail Service Consultation**

TravelWatch NorthWest is an independent Community Interest Company representing public transport users in North West England. We welcome the opportunity to comment on this consultation. All our comments are about Section A in the document – Wales and Borders.

### **Trains to meet passengers needs**

To and from our area the class 175 units normally used are pleasant to travel on. Leg room is very good and this along with good and sufficient toilet facilities, a mixture of table and airline seats, enough space for luggage and bicycles and good visibility should be the hallmark of any new trains. The current 2-car sets are often inadequate for the longer routes that serve our region. Indeed, ATW's rolling stock often appears to be "stretched" and additional trains are needed, as on occasions a class 150 appears in Manchester and a loco-hauled set is in regular use. Clearly capacity is an issue.

One benefit not mentioned is the trolley service on the routes from Manchester. This should be retained and extended where possible.

We see a second member of staff on trains as essential for –

- Customer service
- Dealing with on train emergencies
- Dealing with mobility impaired passengers and general passenger security

***(See Appendix)***

## **Stations for passengers and the community**

Information is crucial at all stations of whatever size. There should be a rolling programme to equip all stations with CIS and also customer friendly and comprehensive ticket vending machines where there are no staff or to back up staffed ticket offices. Staff are important at larger stations. Toilets are needed at all staffed stations. Car parking is vital and should be maximised. A small charge would be acceptable if this meant more spaces. Bus interchange facilities should not just be provided but also well publicised and signed on the station.

### **Better Services**

Early and late trains should reflect modern society, also Sundays should reflect the many travelling for leisure purposes. Boxing Day is a major day for leisure activities and it is high time rail services were provided, inter alia, for sports and other events and the many retail workers travelling to work.

## **Cross border services: Services and stations in England**

### ***Train Services***

The consultation document states that the network will continue at least at its present size so there is no plan to split routes at Chester or Shrewsbury to separate out Welsh and English routes - something which would have made no sense in terms of travel patterns or indeed operationally. However there is no mention in the document of service patterns on cross border services.

Wrexham to Bidston needs better rolling stock, extra peak hour trains and a full hourly service on Sundays. Consideration should be given to bi-mode or electric through services into central Liverpool. There are strong connections between Wrexham and Merseyside, including healthcare.

The document does not appear to mention the recent extension of most North Wales - Manchester trains to Manchester Airport. ATW tried on several occasions to gain running rights from the ORR and paths from Network Rail. With competition for slots post-Ordsall Chord (including through Airport services from the Calder Valley) the ATW service will become an issue again in 2019. An alternative would be to serve the Airport via Crewe but overall we recommend that a Llandudno - Manchester Airport service should be a franchise commitment.

On this route we would also suggest an improved frequency if practicable - every 30 minutes Manchester - WBQ - Chester would be a worthwhile improvement. There is a need for an earlier train from Manchester to North Wales, plus the evening through service finishes before 2200 which is far too early. Also we look forward to through services from North Wales to Liverpool via the Halton Curve, given the close connections between North Wales and Liverpool.

Eccles, potentially an important interchange that can offer passengers from North Wales and Chester a convenient route into Media City avoiding a change in central Manchester, is poorly served at present. Manchester Airport is an obvious addition to Wales & Borders destinations but so also is Salford Quays and Media City. (The local group has noted rising numbers of passengers from the Liverpool city region changing here for the Quays). Northern have no plans to increase their current hourly off peak service and a call at Eccles by the Manchester – North Wales service would be welcome.

On the South Wales to Manchester route we recommend reintroducing through services from this route to Liverpool - possibly by splitting trains at Crewe.

The Crewe to Shrewsbury local service should be hourly Monday to Saturday and at least two hourly on Sundays and we believe the Crewe to Chester shuttle should to remain at least at current levels.

### ***Stations***

We consider that in general all stations should remain with the main operator as now to avoid the bureaucracy and cost that a cosmetic change would entail. Chester has 4 different operators and we have no fixed views other than it exhibits poor quality for a large station in an important city.

### **Fares and tickets to facilitate train travel**

We welcome all fares incentives and more integration with buses and in Greater Manchester trams (much could be done to improve the latter). We do not agree with the CrossCountry reservation system for trains on the move as it is an irritation for passenger who may be already sitting in a reservable seat.

### **Providing better information**

There is no specific mention of paper based information which should be complementary to website/media provision. This is especially true of timetable information leaflets. Passengers spend more of their time on trains rather than at stations. This a time when appropriate information, for example about service disruption, can be disseminated in an appropriate manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond

Yours faithfully

*John A Moorhouse*

John Moorhouse  
Company Secretary