



From the Parliamentary  
Under Secretary of State

Department for  
**Transport**

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11 NOV 2005

*Dear Mr Bunker*

**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES BETWEEN  
MAINDEE NORTH JUNCTION AND MAINDEE EAST JUNCTION  
(THE MAINDEE LOOP)**

**DECISION UNDER SECTION 43(9) OF THE RAILWAYS ACT 1993  
AS AMENDED**

On 11 May 2005, the Strategic Rail Authority published a Closure Notice for Arriva Trains Wales' proposal for the discontinuation of all rail passenger services between Maindee North Junction and Maindee East Junction (the Maindee Loop), near Newport Gwent.

Thirty written objections were received. The Rail Passengers' Committee for Wales and, more recently, the Rail Passengers' Council (RPC) considered the objections and produced a Hardship Report. The RPC submitted their report to me in September 2005.

Having considered all the evidence put before me, including the SRA's statement of reasons, objections to the closure which were lodged with me and the RPC report into Passenger Hardship, I have concluded that on balance consent should be given to the closure, without conditions. The main reasons for this are:

- I am satisfied that the new Standard Pattern Timetable introduced by ATW will improve the reliability and efficiency of their services, which will benefit passengers; and
- While the loss of ten direct services per week between Penzance and Crewe/Manchester will cause some inconvenience to passengers, I am satisfied that such journeys remain available, albeit with changes of train being necessary, and that the inconvenience does not outweigh the positive benefits which are likely to result from the introduction of the Standard Pattern Timetable.

### **The introduction of the Arriva Trains Wales Standard Pattern Timetable**

Arriva Trains Wales have an obligation in their Franchise Agreement to develop a Standard Pattern Timetable for their services. This process has been completed in accordance with the franchise obligation. In order for the services within the Standard Pattern Timetable to be provided within Arriva Trains Wales's financial and operational resources, the decision was made to withdraw the only railway passenger service that currently crosses the Maindee Loop. The Statement of Reasons for the proposed closure indicated that there would be a greater benefit to the majority of passengers using Arriva Trains Wales services by developing a timetable to provide a regular standard pattern to services resulting in improved punctuality and reliability and the best use of the operational resources available to Arriva Trains Wales.

Many of the objections to the proposed closure concerned the issue of the withdrawal of the direct service connecting Penzance to the North West of England. I appreciate the effect that this may have, but I also note that passengers will still be able to make journeys between the North-West and South West of England, albeit that such journeys will now require a change of trains. The existing 10 direct services per week are provided as non-franchised passenger services by Arriva Trains Wales, without subsidy from the Department for Transport, and they have made a decision to discontinue the service.

The RPC in their hardship report requested that a condition be imposed should the closure be permitted so that the RPC must be informed of any proposed changes which would limit the future use of the Maindee Loop by passenger rail services, and will have full opportunity to make representations before any such proposal is implemented. I understand the purpose behind the request, but I do not think it appropriate to put a requirement on Network Rail (who own the Maindee Loop track) as a condition of permitting Arriva Trains Wales to discontinue their services.

The RPC mention that the Penzance - Manchester services appear to have seasonal popularity. There still remains the possibility for a service operator to apply to Network Rail for Access Rights to run railway passenger services along the Maindee Loop. The Maindee Loop will continue to have freight and non-passenger services operate over it, and Network Rail will maintain the section of track as a diversionary route for railway passenger services.

The RPC report also suggests that consideration be given to increased passenger assistance at interchange stations, given that the change to Standard Pattern Timetable will involve some passengers making additional interchanges. I appreciate the concern, and have asked the relevant franchise management team in DfT Rail to monitor the impact on passengers through the normal channels of liaison with the RPC and Arriva Trains Wales.

I am obliged by law to require you to publish this decision at the stations affected. I am copying this letter to the Strategic Rail Authority, Office of Rail Regulation, First Great Western, Wessex Trains, Rail Passengers Council and the Welsh Assembly Government.

*Yours sincerely*

*Derek Twigg*

**DEREK TWIGG**