

P - 04 - 416 – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerk, 07.02.13

**VALE OF CLWYD TRADES UNION COUNCIL
CYNGOR UNDEBAU LLAFUR DYFFRYN CLWYD**

Secretary/Ysgrifennydd
Neil Taylor (NUJ)

Our Ref/Ein Cyf NT/Feb 13.

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Date/Dyddiad 7 February 2013

Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF

Dear Sir

Petition on improving north/south rail services

Thank you for your e-mail attaching copies of letters from Arriva Trains and The Minister for Local Government and Communities. This letter outlines my position on behalf of the Vale of Clwyd Trades Council. This will put my Petition in perspective and explain the background. My comments are based on the Arriva and Virgin Train's timetables from Holyhead operating from 9th December to 18th May.

The Arriva Trains Wales north/south rail service is a cobbled together system trying to make a long distance timetable out of three local services – North Wales Coast to Chester, the English Marches and Abergavenny to Cardiff.

Asking for improvements is easy but it needs something to aim for, an example that is attainable. For us in the north there are two examples. Firstly the Virgin Trains service from Holyhead to London. The difference in travel times from Holyhead to London and Cardiff is about an hour. Virgin's Service to London has about 9 stops, whilst Arriva's Cardiff service has about 22.

The number of stops after Chester confirms the major difference. Virgin's London train only stops twice, at Crewe and Milton Keynes. The journey time is literally two hours. I accept that Arriva's Cardiff service should stop at Wrexham and Shrewsbury but are the stops through the Marches really necessary for most journeys? This is the issue.

Its not just the number of stops that is different it is the number and frequency of trains. There are 14 Virgin trains from Holyhead to London some with changes but not much waiting time. They run between 0448 and 1921, 12 of

them hourly until 1544 arriving around 40 minutes past the hour. Return trains to Holyhead are hourly from 0710 to 2010, throughout the working day.

Arriva's Cardiff service has 9 trains, one starting at Llandudno Junction. These are only hourly to 0805 then about two hourly to 1610. There are only three return trains from Cardiff that are hourly being 1621, 1721 and 1821. The only express service to Holyhead is the 1821 arriving at Holyhead at 2238. The 1621 ends at Chester at 1904 where there is a connection. I have used the express service and found it verging on overcrowded.

Secondly there are express services by Arriva but only two a day. The first leaves Holyhead at 0533 and has only 10 stops taking 4 hours 25 minutes. There is now a second express service leaving Llandudno Junction at 0839 with nine stops arriving at 1208.

These must be the basis for an express service from North Wales to Cardiff. The service must allow time for meetings or shopping and return in one day. This could be done by making other services express.

The time between arriving in, and leaving, Cardiff with the 0533 service is 8 hours 20 minutes, longer than the working day. Those coming from Holyhead would spend 17 hours 22 minutes until arriving back. This is after an extremely early start possibly missing up to a third of a night's sleep.

My Petition has been prompted by the fact that since the establishment of the Assembly the number of all Wales meetings in Cardiff has increased considerably. I worked for the FSB and served on its Wales Policy Unit and three all Wales Partnerships some with regular meetings in Cardiff. Most times I travelled by car and stayed overnight before or after meetings.

The time away from the work place for employees and time off in lieu has to be a disincentive to sending staff to Cardiff for meetings. Many complain that people from the north do not attend all Wales meetings, this is a reason.

We are continually being asked to leave our cars at home and use public transport. Making all Wales meetings in Cardiff worker friendly will go a long way to achieving this.

I attend four-hour meetings in London at 1100 using the 0655 Holyhead. For shorter meetings starting between 1300 and 1400 I use 0855. My return train is the 1710 from Euston. For the longer meetings my Station-to-Station time is 12 hours, from Holyhead it is 14 hours, 0655 to 2059, which is better than the 17 hours 22 minutes for the Cardiff service. My train journey to London from Rhyl is 2 hours 40 minutes. The time to Cardiff is an hour longer.

The purpose of the Petition is to secure for Wales an express rail service Holyhead to Cardiff, similar to Virgin's Holyhead to London service. To achieve this I would make the following suggestion.

The Assembly discuss with a range of organisations; public, private and third sector that have all Wales meetings in Cardiff. This is to establish an acceptable start and finish time bearing in mind travelling to and from Cardiff Central station. This is to allow attendance at meetings without a very early start, long

travelling times by train and return on the same day. The information gained could be shared with Arriva and the Minister.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Taylor'.

Neil Taylor LL.M, MCIPR
Secretary/Ysgrifennydd