

VALE OF CLWYD TRADES UNION COUNCIL CYNGOR UNDEBAU LLAFUR DYFFRYN CLWYD

19 February 2015

National Assembly Petitions Committee

Dear Chair

North/south trains petition

I organised this petition on behalf of the Vale of Clwyd Trades Union Council following a motion to the Wales TUC Conference in May 2012. My concern for an express north/south Wales rail service is based on the fact that following the establishment of the National Assembly I started attending all Wales meetings in Cardiff. At the time I was a regular traveller to meetings in London. I was working for the FSB and was a member of the NUJ's NEC, Equality and PR Councils.

The Assembly has had a considerable impact on organisations in Wales with many setting up Welsh bodies. The FSB set up its Wales Council and the NUJ went from having an informal Wales Forum to an Executive Council.

In my FSB role I was appointed to a number of all Wales bodies including three chaired by Assembly Ministers. The more power the Assembly has the more all Wales meetings there will be. The number of meetings in Cardiff has increased considerably and travelling to them is now an issue. I, like many, usually travelled by car which often meant losing a number of hours sleep and then driving on rural roads for around four hours.

Following an important meeting we then drove home for another four hours. The A470, our north/south highway, is a rural B road to our English neighbours. Traffic and journey times are increasing with little hope of any improvements. This is an exercise no one would recommend when there is a north/south rail service. Many organisations are campaigning to get people out of their cars and onto public transport, trains in particular.

When comparing the train services from north Wales to London and Cardiff it is obvious that they are in totally different leagues. I was concerned at the journey times and the fact that for meetings in London I could easily travel there and back in a day. This was for meetings starting at 10.00 a.m. or finishing before 5.00 p.m. The train services are based on the Arriva Trains and Virgin Trains timetables for December 2014 to May 2015

For meetings in Cardiff I would have to leave Rhyl at 0531 whilst for London it is 0653. Returning home from London on the 1710 arriving at 1948, from [Cardiff](#) it was the 1721 arriving at 2106. The journey time to London is usually around two hours 40 minutes. The Cardiff journey is around an hour longer each way.

It is not just the journey times that need addressing, there are many other issues including the number of stops the services make. The London service from Holyhead is mainly hourly with 14 trains having 9 stops. The Cardiff service is at least two hourly with 9 trains, not all from Holyhead which have about 31 stops. The service is mainly local ones which may well subsidise the one express service.

As there are weekend meetings and of course Rugby Internationals Saturday's trains also need looking at. I attended NUJ WEC meetings by train until a journey ended at Hereford because of maintenance work. I caught a bus to Newport then a train to Cardiff which arrived as the meeting finished. As the member of staff lived in Manchester and travelled by car she dropped me off at Crewe. The last meeting I attended was from 1200 to 1500. The present service from Rhyl is at 0741 arriving at 1115. The return train leaves Cardiff at 1521 arriving at Rhyl at 1858, both services are now direct.

The carriages and services are again in totally different leagues, the Cardiff service and tracks are more Victorian than modern. The London service has modern carriages with a buffet car and sockets for laptops and mobile phones. According to a colleague "the poor rolling stock must have a devastating effect on our tourist trade. Some of the journeys can be horrific such as the Cardiff to Holyhead evening train on Saturday, its mayhem!"

The need to get the people who travel north/south to use trains is commendable and should be supported. Improving the service is essential and changing it from three stopping services tacked together must be a priority. There must be an express north/south service allowing people to attend meetings and return well within a day.

I would suggest that the Assembly discuss with Public, Private and Voluntary sector organisations to find a convenient period for all Wales meetings of not more than four hours around mid day. Then discuss with Arriva Trains Wales about providing a return service from Holyhead stopping at : Bangor, Llandudno Junction, Colwyn Bay, Rhyl, Prestatyn, Flint, Chester, Wrexham, Shrewsbury and Newport. This is similar to its 0533 service from Holyhead.

Yours sincerely



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Secretary/Ysgrifennydd