

**Warwickshire Public Service Board  
Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

**Draft Virgin and London Midland Timetable from December 2008**

The attached email has been received from Cllr Dennis Harvey, Leader of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, coupled with a request that the matter be considered by the Board at this meeting.

The Board is invited to consider and comment on the response attached and make such resolution as it thinks fit.

Nick Gower Johnson  
County Partnerships Manager  
Warwickshire County Council  
16<sup>th</sup> November 2007

**"HARVEY Dennis"**

**<dennis.harvey@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk>**

16/11/2007 09:09

To "CHATTAWAY Richard"  
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Subj FW: Nuneaton and Bedworth Rail Users Group : Response  
ect to the Draft Virgin and London Midland Timetable from  
December 2008

Dear Colleague,

Please find below a copy of the response by Nuneaton and Bedworth Rail Users Group to the proposed new timetable serving Nuneaton station from December 2008.

As you can see from the Group's response, this will be a disaster for this area, both economically and socially.

The Borough Council unanimously supports this fight to save our rail connections. Hinckley and Bosworth Council have now joined the campaign. We desperately need all the help we can get for the future of Nuneaton, Bedworth and the surrounding areas. North Warwickshire and Hinckley residents will also be badly affected.

Please do all you can to assist the group in its campaign. Sending in your own e-mails to the address Mark has given will be of help. Getting WCC and NWBC to join the campaign will be significant.

If the LAA is to mean anything, 'closing the gap' between the North and South of the County will need us all to work together to avoid the 'gap' growing as will happen if these proposals go ahead.

Many thanks for your attention to this matter.

Regards

Dennis Harvey

Leader-Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

-----Original Message-----

From: Mark Whitelegg [mailto:nuneatonrug@btconnect.com]

Sent: 15 November 2007 18:37

To: WCMRtimetables@dft.gsi.gov.uk; WCMRtimetables@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Subject: Nuneaton and Bedworth Rail Users Group : Response to the Draft Virgin and London Midland Timetable from December 2008

Nuneaton and Bedworth Rail User Group believe that the proposed timetables represent a completely unacceptable degradation of the existing services to

and from London and the North West and Wales. We welcome the new London Midland stopping service as an overdue improvement in the local service along the Trent Valley. Outside of the Trent Valley, it is of little use to the passengers of Nuneaton to get to the places they want to get to now.

Reasons given by the DfT and Virgin Trains as to why these cuts are proposed

'Only an average of 6 people use the trains to be cut each day'.

This is completely untrue. The DfT have based this on 100000 people using the trains to London. Statistics that we have obtained from Virgin Trains show that there are over 150000 journeys from Nuneaton to London each year, the DfT are 50% out! In addition this does not include the people travelling to other destinations on the West Coast mainline where Virgin set the fare (another 68000), anyone that changes trains at Nuneaton (238000) and all those people travelling to places beyond the Virgin network where Virgin does not set the fare. We also have many statistics that come from passenger counts, not computer programs, that prove that many of the services proposed to be cut have dozens of people using them every day. Some examples are given at the bottom of this note. Nuneaton has also seen a 38% rise over just two years despite having no weekend service and no other service improvements. All of the other stations that have seen this sort of increase over the last two years have both had some weekend services and better services during the week which goes to show just how impressive the increase at Nuneaton is. How can Wilmslow and Wigan justify an hourly service and we cannot? It makes no sense at all.

Wilmslow is to gain a service at our expense, only had 35,850 journeys to or from London last year. Wilmslow is only 7 minutes by train from Stockport. It has 5 trains virgin direct each way in the day and up to 3 per hour by changing at Crewe or Stockport. This adds 10-20 minutes to the trip. It has a 7 day a week service. Trivia about Wilmslow, car dealer Stratstone in Wilmslow is accountable for one fifth of all £100,000 Aston-Martin sales nationally. It seems the railways are being subsidised to provide first class travel for a few Aston-martin owners. Over 4 times as many people travel by train from Nuneaton than Wilmslow but we are to have our service removed and have 46 minutes added to our journeys so that a far smaller number of people in Wilmslow can save 10-20 minutes.

'Nuneaton is near the bottom of the West Coast revenue league table'

This may be true but it is absolutely no reason to cut services, for the following reasons

1. Nuneaton is closer to London than most West Coast towns and cities therefore the fares are lower and therefore the revenue is lower
2. Unlike virtually all other West Coast Main Line towns and cities, Nuneaton has had no meaningful weekend service for over 5 years. As well as destroying the weekend market it would also have a significant effect on the numbers of people using the off peak services at either end of the week. The combined effect would be to dampen off peak demand to an extent that would be seen elsewhere on the West Coast main line.
3. Nuneaton and the surrounding area must be a great opportunity for growth. As well as being well located regionally to attract traffic, 10000 new homes are planned to be built in and around Nuneaton in the next few years. In addition we have seen with our own eyes how a regular fast service to London and the main centres in the North West is encouraging people and businesses to move to Nuneaton. The proposals as they stand would be a huge economic backward step for the region. Journeys to all major destinations on the West Coast main line from Nuneaton have also gone up by about 36%

4. There has been almost a complete lack of promotion of Virgin services from Nuneaton up to now. One reason for this could be due to the fact that for some strange reason Nuneaton, unlike Rugby and Stafford, are not run by Virgin Trains. This promotion issue needs to be addressed urgently.

5. Nuneaton is one of the most important interchanges on the West Coast Main Line. The Virgin service should not be simply a London to Manchester/Liverpool service. It needs to be part of the whole rail network.

'Nuneaton will have a 'semi fast' service to London as fast as Bournemouth has'

If this is as good an argument as the DfT can use then it just shows how poor their argument is. The South East Trains network bears absolutely no resemblance to the West Coast Main Line. Also Bournemouth does not need the economic re-generation that Nuneaton and the surrounding area does. Nuneaton has the highest unemployment in Warwickshire and needs the benefits that a fast, frequent and direct service to London will give us. A better example is the much smaller town of Grantham. A similar distance from London as Nuneaton is, GNER has actively promoted the service from Grantham and, as a result, the station receives an excellent service with a corresponding increase in economic activity. Grantham has EIGHT trains between 0615 and 0900 to London during the week. No one could say that the London Midland service is 'semi fast' it is a slow stopping service as confirmed by London Midland themselves.

'Nuneaton will be well set up as an important regional centre as a result of the new London Midland service'

Whilst there is no doubt that local services will be improved; by Virgin Trains own admission, the new places to be served such as Wolverton, Stone and Rugeley are not the places most people want to go from Nuneaton! We need fast services to London, Manchester, Liverpool, Preston, Crewe and Stafford.

The main commuter demands for Nuneaton will be well met in the peak periods

We completely disagree. The 0651 up train to London is cut, along with the very important 1517 and 1617 down services from London. Also, the 0821 and 0921 down services to Liverpool and the up services to London at 1535, 1635, 1735 and 1835 are cut. Despite the fact that Nuneaton's peak traffic is growing rapidly, we will get a worse peak service.

Unfortunately some places have had to lose out for 'the Greater Good'

Nuneaton is the only major station to have nearly 80% of it's off peak services cut together with some peak service cuts too. At the Public Enquiry into the West Coast upgrade, Nuneaton was promised a better service is return for patience while the line was upgraded. Not only did we have the inconvenience of the upgrade works we are now being discriminated against because of reasons outside our control i.e. the disproportionate impact of the upgrade to Nuneaton's passenger growth . This is not acceptable. There will be seven trains an hour going up the Trent Valley and not one can be stopped at Nuneaton? This is not credible. At the very least we should expect services to stay the same as a result of the upgrade, not get much worse as they are proposed to do.

Comments on the detailed timetable

1. Currently there are 4 fast services to London between 0651 and 0831 an average of 1 per 25 minutes. Under the new proposal we will have 4 services between 0616 and 0845 an average of 1 per 37 minutes. This is a significant decrease. The biggest problem is that all the people from the current 0651 will not transfer to the earlier service, they will use the 0707. As we can easily get over 120 passengers (and growing) using both the 0651 and 0707, this will inevitably result in overcrowding on the remaining 0707 as most passengers will join it from the 0651. The 0616 is a useful addition but we must have another fast service between 0616 and 0730.
2. On the return from London we see a worse situation than the morning. The first fast service back is at 1710, which is too late. Both the current 1517 and 1617 are both very well used trains, we must have similar services in the new timetable to cope with the demand.
3. In the morning peak we currently have one up train per 25 minutes and in the evening peak 2 down trains within 45 minutes. Increasing the gap in the evening to one hour is not attractive at all unless we can have an additional train between 1710 and 1810. For many, the existing 1721 is just right to enable people to leave their offices at 1700. Moving it to 1710, without another service until 1810 could make the commute much less attractive.
4. Services northbound in the morning and southbound in the evening. There are no fast services planned at all, despite the 0821, 0921 and 1021 northbound services all being well used at present. The return services that arrive at Nuneaton at 1535, 1635, 1735 and 1835 are similarly well used too. We believe that there is a very strong case for retaining these services.
5. Off peak services. The only fast trains that are left, off peak, are in the late evening. A significant number of the services proposed to be cut have as many passengers as the peak services. These must be retained. A list of the most popular services can be found below. We still believe that it is essential for Nuneaton to have a fast, direct service in the off-peak including the weekend. No fast services during these periods is not acceptable.
6. Changing at Rugby. On the up service the time allowed to change between the incoming slow service and the fast Virgin service is too small and makes the change at Rugby very risky. This will be especially so in the first year or so of the timetable as the timetable settles down. We can see many people being stranded at Rugby for an extra hour, which will not be acceptable. On the down service, the connection time is greater but this means that the overall journey is lengthened. We also agree with the Rugby Rail User Group in that the combination of passengers changing from/to the Trent Valley slow service and the Rugby passengers will cause overcrowding and also result in the scarce availability of cheaper tickets. This will be especially so during the shoulder peak periods. We believe that this issue is another compelling reason to keep, at the very least, a good number of the well used Nuneaton off-peak services plus retaining the peak services that are proposed to be cut.
7. The London Midland service. As a direct service to London and Crewe from Nuneaton it is a feeble attempt at a replacement to the existing fast off peak service. At nearly double the fast time including a 10 minute wait at Northampton, this service is not acceptable as a replacement for the Virgin off peak service. Going north it is not any better. The decision to route it through Stoke from Stafford is a ridiculous one and results in very poor journey times to Crewe and Liverpool, double the time it could take with a fast direct service. The London Midland service also has significant gaps at either ends of the day. Otherwise, it is to be welcomed as long awaited Trent Valley stopping service. We also believe that the Desiro trains are not suitable for long distance travel, especially if you have to work on the train, which should be a major advantage of travelling by train. The few tables they do have are small and not very suitable for laptops. The trains are noisy, drafty and have no catering facilities at all. The only small advantage they do have is that a mobile signal is generally better than on a Pendolino.

In the words of Rail Magazine, 'Trent Valley stations are being forced to feed off the scraps left by the introduction of the VHF timetable'. It is

completely unfair to have promised a better service for all the Trent Valley stations when the upgrade was first planned only to go back on that promise now. What makes it far worse is that not only is the service not staying the same, which would be wrong in itself, the service is getting much worse. Nuneaton needs and deserves a fast, direct hourly service to and to and from London and the North West. The people of Nuneaton and the surrounding area are doing their bit to leave the car at home and use the train instead. Businesses and people are moving to Nuneaton to generate much needed jobs, capital and revenue for the local area.

Train Usage Statistics. These are examples and do not represent all the train we want to save, as we want a direct, fast hourly service throughout the day in addition to peak services

#### Down Trains

0821 to Liverpool. Average Passengers On = 29.85, Off = 10.83

1421 to Liverpool. Average Passengers On = 25.50, Off = 18.75

1521 to Liverpool. Average Passengers On = 35.40, Off = 23.00

1621 to Liverpool. Average Passengers On = 26.17, Off = 34.00

1721 to Liverpool. Average Passengers On = 29.55, Off = 43.27

#### Up Trains

0926 to London Average Passengers On = 20.00, Off = 18.33

1035 to London Average Passengers On = 16.50, Off = 13.50

1435 to London Average Passengers On = 16.00, Off = 31.67

1535 to London Average Passengers On = 22.50, Off = 33.50

1635 to London Average Passengers On = 18.25, Off = 57.50

1735 to London Average Passengers On = 24.33, Off = 49.83

1835 to London Average Passengers On = 14.00, Off = 58.00

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