

31/1/23

Dear Councillor Jones,

Thank you for your feedback regarding Avanti West Coast services following on from a Council meeting in December.

We recognise that Avanti West Coast's recent performance, particularly with regards to service levels on our North Wales route, has not matched expectations and we apologise for the inconvenience and disruption that has been causing to passengers. Over the last few months, our sole focus has been to do everything we can to return to a more resilient operation which delivers more services for our customers and communities across the network. Our new timetable introduced in December 2022 saw us step up services to seven trains an hour out of Euston with changes to calling patterns and timings. It's the biggest improvement and change to the timetable on the West Coast Mainline since 2008. As a result we believe that our customers are now starting to see the benefits of our work with more trains, greater reliability and reduced levels of cancellations. We know there is more that we can do to deliver the service that all our customers expect but we are moving in the right direction with a steadily improving picture.

We know in particular that Avanti West Coast services are highly valued by communities across North Wales for the inter-city connectivity that they provide. In order to support this, in December we increased direct services between Holyhead and Euston to a total of 10 trains per day between Monday and Friday, with weekend improvements to meet leisure demand on the route. We continue to work collaboratively with all our partners in North Wales, particularly Transport for Wales and Network Rail, to ensure that we can provide a reliable service focused on the needs of our passengers into the future.

Unfortunately some tickets for forthcoming Saturdays and Sundays have only been available at short notice due to having to write an unprecedented number of bespoke timetables to accommodate industrial action and engineering work which has stretched industry train planning resource. We understand that this causes huge uncertainty and inconvenience for passengers and we're sorry for that. We are working with our colleagues at Network Rail to get tickets on sale as soon as possible and are encouraging passengers to sign up for ticket alerts. We're also working closely with the ORR and keeping them informed. Weekend tickets are now on sale up to mid-February, and by mid-March we'll be selling weekend tickets six weeks out.

In addition to the above I can update you that our new £350m fleet of electric and bi mode Hitachi trains are due to enter service in 2023 and will serve the North Wales Coast Line. These new trains will add more seats to the route - each 5-car unit has an additional 50 standard class seats compared to a Voyager - and dramatically reduce carbon emissions across our network. They will continue to have Welsh language announcements and we have worked with a member of the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters on this.

I hope that this covers the main points outlined in the Council motion relating to Avanti West Coast. I would be more than happy to meet with you to talk through in further detail our service performance and any other matters which you would like to raise.

Many Thanks, Nick



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