

David Rowlands AM
Chair
National Assembly for Wales
Petitions Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

20 October 2017

Contact reference number: ATW-171005-BGY

Dear Mr Rowlands

Many thanks for the further correspondence from the Petitions Committee relating to free train transport for school pupils attending Treorchy School. Also, please accept my apologies regarding the non response to your letter of 24th May, as there is no record of that being received by us. I will address the question within it in this response also.

Ms Tuckwood says that she does not see any safety aspects taking place at Treorchy station. I outlined in my response of 24th April 2017 that we employ safety stewards who operate crowd management barriers at the platform entrance at Treorchy Station. This arrangement was put in place following an updated risk assessment at the station where crowding concerns on the platform had been raised. Safety incidents at the platform-train interface represent one of the biggest safety risks on Britain's railways today.

Since the introduction of that system at Treorchy, our monitoring of the environment shows that this safety risk has been eliminated. I recognise that the pupils themselves may not have been aware of this safety hazard which may contribute to Ms Tuckwood's assertion that she doesn't see any safety aspects taking place however, I and our Safety team am very satisfied that we have mitigated a significant risk.

Ms Tuckwood refers to free transport provision for those living within 3 miles of school. This must be a bus offering via the local authority. There is no such requirement for ATW rail services.

Ms Tuckwood refers to staff on the train being rude and ill-mannered. We would always regret any such behaviour however our conductor colleagues are routinely well regarded during customer satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping exercises. We would address any individual complaints as they were advised to us. I have personally travelled on this school train recently and was very disappointed to have to intervene on two occasions on that journey - one with a pupil climbing over seat backs and the other where one pupil decided to attack another pupil and myself and some other adults on the train had to intervene.

We have since had some other instances of bullying on the train and are liaising with the school on this. Where a bullying pupil is identified, they will have a warning and if there is a further incident, we will seek a banning order from the train. This will help create a safe and secure environment for others.

David Rowlands AM
Chair
National Assembly for Wales
Petitions Committee

-2-

20 October 2017

Ticket earnings support the cost of running our overall operations in the same way that it does for other retail or service providers. We carry many school and college pupils across our network with very little issue.

I recognise that because we offered free travel for such a long time to the pupils of Treorchy School this has created the perception that it should be a right. We provided free travel as a generous goodwill gesture, however the significant costs to deliver the platform safety operation means that we could no longer sustain the provision of the benefit.

With reference to the question about the size of the enclosure, my Safety team have reviewed the operation and consider it is entirely appropriate for the environment.

We have had a good take-up of the discounted scholar season ticket although are aware that some pupils choose not to pre-purchase and therefore have to queue to buy on each occasion. We would encourage season ticket purchase as it is the most cost effective option and will reduce that queuing time.

I hope this addresses the further questions raised.

Yours sincerely



Lynne Milligan
Customer Services Director