

HEART OF WALES LINE DEVELOPMENT Co LTD (DevCo)

In collaboration with

THE HEART OF WALES LINE TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATION (HoWLTA)

Proposals for further improvements to train services and passenger facilities on the Heart of Wales Line – September 2018

Introduction

1 DevCo is the Community Rail Business Unit for the Heart of Wales Railway Line, and HoWLTA is the Rail User Group (700+ members) for the route. We are glad to have the opportunity to respond to the Economy Infrastructure and Skills Committee in its review of the new franchise arrangements.

A positive response.....with reservations

2. Both are pleased by the terms of the new franchise contract - in that it meets local needs to a significantly greater extent than the existing timetable and facilities. Particularly welcome are:

- * An additional through train in each direction on Mondays to Saturdays on the whole of the line (Swansea to Shrewsbury)
- * The provision of new late evening trains from Crewe to Llandrindod and Cardiff to Llandovery every day, including Sundays
- * Improved rolling stock (2 car class 170dmus) with PRM toilets, wi-fi and internal passenger information screens
- * Improved facilities at stations (wi-fi, cctv and bike racks)

Further requirements

3. However, we believe that the social and economic needs of the areas served, especially on the middle section of the line (Llandovery to Llandrindod), require an even better service frequency and connectional opportunities. These would make it easier for local residents to find employment, get to medical appointments, schools etc.

They would also encourage tourism and the use of the service by business people and those attending conferences. We are particularly mindful of the need to try to prevent young people having to leave the area because the public transport system does not adequately meet their needs

Our proposals

4. Therefore, from the December 2022 timetable (or earlier if possible), we would like to see the timetable and rolling stock provision arranged in such a way as to serve key important markets, in particular:

- * Commuting into Shrewsbury and Swansea, to arrive between 08.00 and 08.30 on Mondays to Fridays. Return services would need to leave between 17.00 and 18.00. Similar provision in respect of commuting to and from Llandrindod is also important for those living in the Knighton to Llandoverly area, even though the potential numbers would be much smaller

- * Educational travel (particularly to and from secondary, tertiary or university level establishments in Shrewsbury, Swansea and Ammanford) arriving c09.00 and returning c15.30

- * Closer intervals than the current and proposed 4-5 hours between trains, in order to better serve residents' personal business/leisure needs, together with those of tourists and walkers

- * All trains to operate over the whole line rather than missing out the Llandoverly to Llandrindod section

- * The Sunday service to be the same as the weekday service, except that the first trains to leave Shrewsbury and Swansea c09.30

- * Additional through working to and from Crewe wherever practicable, to improve connections for long distance passengers, for example to and from Scotland

- * Provision of a multi-purpose space in each two coach diesel unit for at least six cycles, heavy luggage, mobile on-board facilities, etc. Provision of tip up seats in this area would allow more passengers to be seated if the space is not being used for other purposes

- * Provision of a buffet trolley service over at least the middle section of the line, probably by way of a subsidy to a third party (possibly DevCo) from TfW Rail Services

4. By December 2025 (or earlier if possible) and subject to satisfactory revenue growth and/or increased local social and economic benefits, provision of an additional daily service over the whole line. This ought to be possible without the need for an additional passing loop. Again, as many trains as possible would run to and from Crewe

5. By December 2029 (or earlier if possible) and subject to further satisfactory revenue growth and/or increased local social/economic benefits, provision of a two hourly interval daily service over the whole line. Once more, as many trains as possible would operate to and from Crewe. This level of service would probably need the provision of at least one additional passing loop between Craven Arms and Morlais Junction