

Chiltern Railways – Changes in Timetable

The correspondence below from North Chiltern Rail Users Group to Chiltern Railways outlines the issues of concern being raised locally. The Town Council were asked to support the efforts to have the changes reviewed.

Representative has agreed to attend the Policy & Resources Committee on Tuesday 22 January 2013.

Thank you for your email. We note that you propose to address the overcrowding on the 07:49 train from Haddenham, but in our view the overcrowding of this service, although regrettable, is a direct consequence of the removal of the fast services at 07:19 and 08:03 and of other unsatisfactory features of the December 2012 timetable.

However, rather than focus on a single service, we would like to reiterate our overall comments on the December 2012 timetable.

It seems to us that the new timetable is yet another step in what appears to be a systematic downgrading of the services to and from Haddenham and Princes Risborough, which began back in 2010. For example, with line speed increases one might expect the departure times of the trains to get later for a same-time arrival. However, in almost all cases the departure times of the trains gets earlier, leading to longer working days and, in some cases that have been highlighted recently, significant upheaval to childcare arrangements. The removal of the most popular train to and from Haddenham (at 07:19) and Princes Risborough has exacerbated the impact of these changes and made a large number of people question what is going on. (You will be aware, for example, that over 70 people have written complaints about the loss of the 07:19 alone.)

The December 2012 timetable also sees the complete removal of through services to and from Birmingham during the week, with an enforced change of trains - and waiting time - making the journey times north longer than the pre-Evergreen times. And finally - as if to add insult to injury - the off-peak weekday service has returned to 2009 journey times (50 minutes from Haddenham and 43 minutes from Princes Risborough into Marylebone), while an increasing number of fast trains bypass both stations.

For those of us who have commuted for many years, what is particularly galling is that the disruption of the various upgrades and higher than inflation fare increases were described to us as justified on the basis that the service would improve following those upgrades (which were being partially funded by the fare increases). Unfortunately for Haddenham and Princes Risborough customers there seem to have been very few improvements. This was graphically highlighted at the time of the present timetable launch by a poster at High Wycombe extolling the many benefits of the new timetable for customers from that station - and one at Haddenham apologising for overcrowding on the 07:49 train.

We recognise that Chiltern Railways is a commercial organisation and that no timetable will satisfy all customers. However, we would hope that the company gives some credence to the views of experienced commuters and consequently takes more seriously the comments made during the timetable consultation process from User Groups and (given the volume of concern from your customers at Haddenham and Princes Risborough) from this User Group in particular. Although it is tempting to say "We told you so" about the impact of removing the

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07:19 service without a suitable alternative, it benefits neither Chiltern Railways nor us to say so. Instead we would like to be assured that our views will be taken seriously in the future.

So, in the light of the many concerns you have now received from those who have emailed you about this timetable (and who have copied their emails to us) we hope that you will now accept that adjustments need to be made to the timetable in order to meet those concerns. We therefore look forward to meeting you and your team, with neighbouring Rail User Groups, to discuss how changes may be implemented as soon as feasible.

Copies of this email, and of your earlier response, go to all who have contacted us, to our two MPs and to relevant Councils who have shown an interest because of the volume of concerns raised.