

Date issued: 12 November 2020

Freedom of Information Request

We are writing in response to your Freedom of Information request. Your request has been considered in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and our information access policy.

You asked for the following information:

“Recently I have noticed a significant reduction in late evening stopping services from Crewe to Whitchurch. I was told that due to COVID a Sunday timetable was being operated across the network but note the service to Whitchurch on a Sunday is better than mid-week. The last train from Crewe to Whitchurch mid-week is now at 21:18, greatly reducing travel time from both Manchester and London.

Therefore, my first question is whether the recent changes to the timetable are due to COVID and if so, what plans there are to reverse these changes once the current crisis is over **(1)**.

Additionally, I would like to request a list of the services which stopped at Whitchurch, Shropshire prior to March 2020 that in October 2020 do not (unless they have been replaced with a similar service within 30 minutes of the service prior to March 2020). Please can this indicate day and end destination **(2)**.

Additionally, I would like to understand what consultation with residents was undertaken on these changes and whether there was an internal assessment of the impact of the cancellations on passengers' abilities to connect from connecting services **(3)**.

Further I would like information on when the timetable, affecting Whitchurch, Shropshire will be reviewed and who is the best person to contact regarding my concerns **(4)**.

Having reviewed your questions, we are able to provide the following information:

In response to question (1):

Along with all other train operating companies, Transport for Wales had to implement a reduced timetable in response to the Coronavirus pandemic in Spring 2020, when only essential travel was permitted on public transport. The reduced timetable was kept under constant review and there have been several uplifts in service since its implementation. Overall, the timetable has now increased from a 65% service level at the height of the lockdown back up to 90% of service levels, which is where we find ourselves currently in line with the rest of the UK rail network.

During these unprecedented times, we have carefully monitored any service changes that may impact passengers, particularly key workers and students who rely on these services. We value all the feedback we receive and feed this into weekly meetings with timetable planning colleagues with a view to addressing any issues in both the short and longer term.

Although we are currently running less train services, it is important to stress that all of our trains are in use. The reason for the current reduction in services compared to the pre-lockdown era are as follows:

- many of our train services need to run with more carriages than usual to allow for social distancing
- it now takes longer than usual to carry out our enhanced cleaning regimes
- staff numbers remain lower than normal due to Coronavirus-related absences, meaning there are less of our people available to run our services.

In response to question (2):

2019	2020
05:09 Crewe	04:31 Crewe
06:19 Manchester Picc.	06:17 Crewe
06:59 Manchester Picc.	07:00 Crewe
07:57 Manchester Picc.	07:56 Crewe
09:37 Manchester Picc.	09:37 Manchester Picc.
11:43 Holyhead	11:43 Crewe
13:43 Crewe	13:43 Crewe
14:28 Manchester Picc.	14:28 Manchester Picc.
15:45 Crewe	15:45 Crewe
16:28 Manchester Picc.	16:27 Manchester Picc.
17:43 Crewe	17:42 Crewe
18:29 Manchester Picc.	18:29 Manchester Picc.
19:29 Manchester Picc.	19:30 Manchester Picc.
20:29 Manchester Picc.	20:29 Manchester Picc.
21:41 Manchester Picc.	21:41 Manchester Picc.
22:34 Manchester Picc.	22:34 Manchester Picc.
23:35 Manchester Picc.	23:35 Manchester Picc.

In response to question (3):

The reduced timetable was implemented swiftly in Spring 2020 as part of the emergency response to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the immediacy of the response required did not allow time for public consultation. There is no public consultation planned as any service increase is based on guidelines provided partners such as Welsh Government, Network Rail and the Department for Transport. However, since the reduced timetable was implemented, we have closely monitored

customer feedback via all of our communication channels, implementing amendments where possible in response.

In response to question (4):

We are continually reviewing the timetable and expect to address the current gap in the morning timetable at Whitchurch by reinstating a service during the December timetable changes. We always welcome feedback and any queries or concerns can be raised via a number of communication channels as detailed here: <https://tfwrail.wales/contact-us>

In addition to your questions, we believe the following information will also be of use to you:

Do you know when services will return to 100%?

Not at the moment. The safety of our customers and our staff remains our top priority, and we continue to review the timetable based on passenger data, guidelines from the Welsh Government and changes to the wider UK rail timetable.

Our advice remains that customers should carefully plan their journeys and avoid travelling at busier times where possible. More information can be found on our website: <https://tfw.gov.wales/travel-safer>

Yours sincerely,

Transport for Wales