

SLRUG

SHAKESPEARE LINE RAIL USER GROUP



11 February 2024

Dear Mr McConnell

I find it incredible that, just a few weeks on from our previous correspondence on the continuing decline of the performance of West Midlands Trains, I am compelled to write yet again as Chair of the Rail User Group as WMT continues to plumb the depths of failure in its customer service. This time we must convey our deepest concerns and frustration regarding the unplanned and uncommunicated withdrawal of train services by WMT between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon on Sunday 11th February.

We understand that this decision was made as a result of 'a points failure at Worcester', a matter that clearly had no operational impact whatsoever on the ability to run train services between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon.

The decision to withdraw a public rail service without proper communication or justification is as incomprehensible as it is indefensible and severely inconvenienced hundreds of passengers who rely on your services. The decision appears to have been made without any consideration on the impact on your customers and without the provision of any explanation or consideration of alternative solutions.

The Shakespeare Line Rail Users Group demands an immediate response to the questions of:

- why this decision was made,
- by whom
- and at what level in the management structure it was approved and authorised?

As Chair I expect a clear and transparent account of the events that led to this decision and the measures that will be taken to prevent such occurrences in the future. Please, we need the facts, without intervention from bland rhetoric or WMT spin - we have simply had enough. Your recent performance is undoubtedly a major contributory factor in your inability to increase usage of your 'services'.

We urge West Midlands Trains to take immediate action to ensure that similar incidents do not occur again. Customers have the right to expect a reliable and transparent service, the lack of communication and the unjustified service withdrawal on Sunday was a clear breach of this expectation. We trust that your investigation will be speedy and thorough and take the necessary steps to address the decisions and actions that led to the withdrawal of train services on Sunday.

We look forward to receiving a prompt, full written response regarding this matter – I will also ensure it is given full attention at the Stakeholders meeting on 14th February.

I am forwarding this email, setting out the inadequate and unjustified performance, to WMRE, Transport Focus and others, highlighting the clear indifference shown towards hundreds of passengers on Sunday at Stratford upon Avon station, many of whom were undertaking much longer planned journeys requiring forward connections to be made, abandoned for hours with no access to any information (Train displays continued to show services as running when they were cancelled!) or alternative transport.

We await a comprehensive and credible response.

Yours sincerely

Peter Morris
Chair

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