

TO: NEIL PIRIE, CLERK, STOKE GIFFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Dear Mr Pirie

PATCHWAY'S TRAIN SERVICES - WINTER TIMETABLE CHANGES

I have examined the train timetables that take effect from 10/12/2006, and find as follows:

1) RESTORATION OF THE '0806' - PRACTICALITY ANALYSIS

In her letter of 20/10/2006, Ms Forster mentioned '*pathing problems*'. In simple terms, this means a *clash*, potential or actual, between services. Separation, in space and time, is what safety requires. Signals ensure that two trains cannot simultaneously occupy the same bit of line at the same time. Good timetables give trains *clear runs*, so that the safety system impedes them as little as possible.

Restoration of the 0730 ex-Cardiff's 0806 Patchway call, would give rise to two key considerations.

(A) The effect of this action on the train's forward (ie: post-Patchway) times.

(B) The possible impact of the (very slight) re-timing on other services.

Digression: The railway has two timetables: the public timetable (PT), and the working timetable (WT). WT departure times may be slightly later than PT ones, and WT arrival times may be slightly earlier than PT ones. All my analysis is based on PT times.

Firstly (A). The 0730 ex-Cardiff leaves Newport at 0744, and Filton at 0809, to arrive in Bristol TM at 0817. Allowing 1 minute for the Filton stop gives it a Newport-Filton running time of 24 mins. This comprises 20 + 4 mins. The 20 is what is actually needed and the 4 is slack. The time cost of a Patchway stop is 2 mins. Thus there is time available to accommodate it (*and restoration of the lost Severn Tunnel stop [time cost also 2 mins] as well*). Two schedules: a) Patchway only back in (at 0805), forward times unaltered; b) STJ (at 0755) and Patchway (at 0806) back in, Filton 0810, Bristol 0817. Under both schedules, the Bristol TM departure time would remain the same as it is now, ie 0822.

Secondly (B). *There are 6 possibilities for conflicts with other trains: a) with a following train ex-Sth Wales; b) at Patchway Jn with a Parkway-Sth Wales train; c) at Filton Jn with a Parkway-TM train; d) ditto with a TM-Parkway train; e) ditto with one off the Filton West Chord; & f) at Narrowways Hill Jn (ex-Avonmouth).*

a) The next train after the 0730 ex-Cardiff is the 0700 ex-Swansea. This leaves Newport at 0809, so it is well clear. (It should pass Patchway at 0827, by which time the 0730 has long left Bristol!)

b) The 0645 ex-Paddington leaves Parkway for Swansea at 0808. By this time, whether the 0730 is at 0805 or 0806 (or 0807), it will have cleared Patchway Jn. (*Adjacent trains ex-Parkway - 0646/0842.*)

c) 0730 at Filton at 0809/0810. Ex-Parkway's either side: 0755 (TM 0807) & 0825 (Filton pass 0827).

d) 0759 TM-Parkway passes Filton at 0805 (due Parkway 0807). Next one is not ex-TM until 0829.

e) *Filton West Chord* is where '*Filton AW terminators*' reverse. None there between 0740 and 0820.

f) Either side TM arrivals ex-Avonmouth are at 0800 (ie: well before) and 0900 (ie: well after).

I therefore conclude, that no problems would arise, under either of the considerations (A) or (B). As Ms Forster has stated her eagerness to accommodate our needs, she may do so in May 2007?

SUPPLEMENTARY POINTS

Ironically, it is plain that 'pathing problems' are more likely to afflict the 0730, without Severn Tunnel Junction and Patchway calls, than with them. The explanation for this is as follows.

The 0730 leaves Cardiff (and Newport) 5 mins behind a London-bound train. Such a time gap is possible, on sections of line before and after the Severn Tunnel, but (because of restrictive signalling) not through it. This situation means that the second train gets checked (slowed or stopped) by the first on approaching the tunnel; if it does not call at STJ station. If it does call there, the stop widens the gap, and the train gets a clear run.

That is the first possible check. There may also be a second. If the 0730 is non-stop, from Newport to Filton, with the 'London' ahead on time, it may be nearing Filton Junction as early as 0805, which is when the 0759 ex-TM for Parkway (due there at 0807), is passing through Filton station. In such circumstances, a check is highly likely. Add a Patchway stop, with or without an STJ in one, and this second potential clash is avoided.

NOTE: *Standard patterns mean that all xx30s are likely to be checked twice, without STJ & Patchway stops. So, this not good timetabling, operationally; let alone from any development & public service points of view.*

2) OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE TIMETABLE CHANGE

2a) GAINS

There will be hourly through trains to/from Bath (continuing to/from Westbury/Weymouth). But a disappointing aspect of this is that (*going there*) they will wait at Temple Meads for 12 mins, and so follow xx00 Bath (London) trains, which will (as now) be easily caught (on punctual arrival days!). Some extra Patchway calls will apply, but only by post-1900 trains (eg: by 1924/2024/2124 ex-TM).

2b) LOSSES

The 0637 (train out) and 1238 (stop out) are gone, as is the 2317 ex-TM (now at 2254, but stop out). Through services to Weston-s-M/Taunton are no more. Many services to South Wales suffer from extended transit times. Arising from various aspects of the new timetable*, my expectation is that Patchway users will experience a decline in (already not good) punctuality over this line. **I cannot describe it (speaking generally, not just from a Patchway viewpoint) as well-designed. As regards the effect of the FGW takeover of ex-Wessex services, they make as good a poultry farmer as would a fox in a chicken run! At many points there is bias, against the convenience of local services, and in favour of that of London trains.*

3) A SUGGESTION

As well as restoring the '0806' (*we should pursue other peak additions, in both directions, later*), it would be a simple matter to restore a late train. The 2317 served Filton/Parkway/Patchway/STJ. *I see no reason for the 2254 (why not make it 2300?) not to do the same. The last TM-Parkway train is now at 2206. It makes sense to extract the maximum potential value from the last train of the day.*

Please pass this to Ms Forster for consideration. Hopefully, her eagerness to help may be deployed this time?