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Dear Richard

Central Franchise

Thank you very much for talking to our group just before Easter. I hope it is not too late to send you our concerns regarding the new Central franchise. You have probably received an email from their communications manager about timetable changes from June. These certainly seem to be improvements with better connexions, and an extra train. However, I think the last train, the 22.21 has been removed, which makes it a worse service and we need to campaign to retain this.

What we require from the new Central franchise is fairly straightforward:

- Standard pattern timetable (something we almost have)
- An hourly service for the main part of the day (we almost have this)
- A late evening train – 23.00 or later departure from Bham (we **don't** have this)
- Four carriages on rush hour trains (we **don't** have this)
- Connexions with FGW where possible (this is apparently going to happen)
- More bike spaces

The Hereford-Birmingham service has improved since the 2003/4 timetable, we now have 12 through trains as oppose to 8 and the time taken is around 1hr 26min, which also represents an improvement. The return Birmingham-Hereford service is much the same as it was with 11 through trains but the near standard pattern timetable is welcome and the times are marginally faster. However to remove the last Hereford-Birmingham train represents a significant down grading of the service.

Having spent the last few days in a Chilterns line area I can confirm that it would be good news if Chiltern took over the line, though unlikely to happen I fear. Their stations have had money spent on them, the train are on time, clean and comfy. I agree with Cllr Wilcox that we need to retain the Bromsgrove faster route and not return to the slower Kidderminster route.

Yours sincerely

GERALD DAWE
Chair, Rail for Herefordshire