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Mike Mitchell
Director Rail Group
Department of Transport
76 Marsham Street
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Dear Mr Mitchell

Hereford, Central Train Franchise

The current Central service to Hereford is very poor. One of the main causes of complaint is that Hereford passengers are put off at Ledbury, 20 minutes short of their journeys end, to await a following Central Train whenever trains are running 15 minutes or more late. As Hereford is the end of the journey these 'turn arounds' also mean a cancelled Hereford-Birmingham train. This happens on average about once a day. While we understand the reasons for this it is still unfair on Hereford passengers who are forced to wait for an unspecified length of time on a station with no facilities, or experience yet another cancelled Birmingham train. With the new franchise we feel the fining arrangements should be changed so the franchisee finds it to their advantage to finish their journey, and to *not* cancel Hereford-Birmingham trains.

Another cause of complaint is the Sunday service. This is currently a very poor service with the earliest possible time of getting to Birmingham from Hereford at 15.20 (not a through service). The whole Sunday service is apparently run on a 'voluntary' basis, so if a member of staff decides not to turn up for work the service is cancelled. With the new franchise we feel there should be a minimum Sunday service with at least three trains a day each way, the first arriving in Birmingham from Hereford between 9.00 and 10.00 and one departing Birmingham for Hereford around 16.00-17.00 hours.

Trains arriving or departing Birmingham during commuting times are extremely crowded. To remove this sometime dangerous situation, the successful franchisee should provide a minimum of three carriages at all times and more than four during commuting times.

Finally the fourteen mile section between Hereford and Ledbury was made a single track in 1982 to save the wage of one signal man. The single track inevitably causes delays and cancellations for Central and First Great Western. We feel the successful TOC awarded the Bham-Hereford stretch should have some commitment to planning a passing loop halfway along the fourteen mile stretch. This would remove some of the delays and create a better service.

Yours sincerely

REBECCA ROSEFF
Secretary, Rail for Herefordshire