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Paul Keetch
M P for Hereford
House of Commons
Westminster
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20 February 2005

Dear Mr Keetch

The Central Franchise, Hereford-Birmingham

As you are aware the Central Franchise Hereford-Birmingham will cease in about one year. The two franchisees currently being considered to take over the Hereford end are Virgin and Chiltern. There is a very real danger that neither of these TOCs will want to continue the Hereford-Bham route as it may well be contrary to their main business interests. With this change Hereford-Worcester passengers may be left to rely on the FGW London service with a change at Worcester if they want to get to Bham, making a tedious and slow journey.

We feel a better arrangement for Herefordshire would be for this part of the franchise to go to Arriva Trains Wales, with the Newport north bound train bringing four (or more) carriages (this is a very over crowded service) splitting at Hereford with two (or more) going east to Bham and two continuing north as usual. Though this increases the possibilities of delays at Hereford, it would at least commit the TOC to continuing to Hereford. It would also improve the connections at Hereford which are currently poor, little thought is given to people changing trains regarding connections.

Please will you keep an eye on this development and suggest other franchisees (i.e., Arriva Trains Wales) are given the chance to bid for this section.

Yours sincerely

GERALD DAWE
CHAIR, RAIL FOR HEREFORDSHIRE

cc Cllr Mike Wilson, Cabinet Member Transport; Richard Ball, Head of Transport,
Herefordshire Council