

To: Vicky Cropper-Clarke, Community Strategy
Manager, West Midlands Trains
CC: Charlotte Ritchie, Head of External Communications
and Engagement, West Midlands Trains

3rd April 2023

Dear Vicky,

Marston Vale Line Services

I wrote to you on 16th February with regards to the suspension of Marston Vale Line services. At that time I emphasised that our focus would be on getting a rail service back for passengers as safely, quickly, and effectively as possible. This remains the case, as does our commitment to work in whatever way we can to help - supporting the restoration of services on a sustainable basis. Our priorities remain unchanged as:

- Supporting, championing, and facilitating the return of rail services as quickly as humanly possible
- Fully exhausting all options to achieve this, which are safe and sustainable
- Ensuring rail replacement services meet the needs of users as far as they reasonably and practically can as an interim measure
- Work with all parties, but primarily passengers, to push for the restoration of rail

For users of the line it is still not clear when their services will return, and in what form. I note there is a stakeholder update scheduled in 11 days' time, but with services being lost for such a prolonged period this has just taken too long. All our insight shows that passengers want and need clear and regular communications on the options available to them, to plan their journeys with confidence. Passengers cannot currently do this, and instead continue to have no option but rail replacement. This doubles journey lengths, and is a key reason why Marston Vale rail services are considered so vital to the area's transport arrangements. So, today we are asking you to:

- As soon as possible, publish a plan for service restoration with an indicative timeline – this will reassure local passengers whose perception is that the industry could be moving with greater pace to restore their services
- Publish a detailed review of the options considered and the selection of a safe and reliable solution – the independence of which will reassure passengers that this has not been a case of the industry marking its own homework (which is a perception of some passengers I have spoken to)

- Make sure people know what is going on and where things are at – the last line update on the London Northwestern website is dated 3rd March – a month ago, which is unacceptable for the passengers affected
- As services return, deliver an incentive campaign to win back passengers who have lost faith in rail to convince them to return
- Propose appropriate compensation / measures of recompense for passengers who have had no access to rail services since they were withdrawn
- Put in place a long-term resilience plan to ensure Marston Vale services are better protected in future

Users of this line have been enormously patient and understanding over the last three plus years, but this has understandably worn thin. Where the situation at Viva Rail has impacted services with other operators, they have been seen to have moved swiftly to put appropriate measures in place. This has not been the case for Marston Vale passengers, who believe this situation could and should have been redressed by now. Passengers need to be convinced that all is being done to reintroduce trains as soon as possible.

As always, we will work collaboratively and constructively with all parties on behalf of the passengers affected. They need to feel there is light at the end of the tunnel. The current situation is unacceptable and needs to be resolved without further delay, and after three years of continued disruption to their services they deserve nothing less.

Yours sincerely,



Geoff Grant
Stakeholder Manager, West Midlands
Transport Focus