

North West Electrification Announcement

Dear Lisa,

Since the start of our franchise in April 16 we have set out and shared the progress of our modernisation plans with you as we work to improve rail travel for customers in the north. We have already made important steps forward delivering the first real signs of our modernisation programme for our customers.

We have more than 60 refurbished Northern trains already out on the network and improvement work has started at more than 100 stations across the region. We have also introduced 100 new ticket vending machines, automatic barriers at stations, added hundreds of additional car parking spaces and recently opened our new train depot at Blackburn.

Another significant milestone of our modernisation plans are the service enhancements scheduled for May 18. Our timetable bid for May 18 was based on the Invitation to Tender and has always been critically dependent on the successful delivery of the North-West Electrification Programme on time. Our finite train resource means that we are reliant on the completion of this programme so that we can operate electric trains on new routes and release diesel trains to operate new services elsewhere in the north.

Network Rail have recently confirmed that the North-West Electrification programme has been experiencing delays and following recent discussions it became apparent that our May 18 timetable introduction was at risk. The most significant delay and primary concern is the phase 4 electrification between Bolton and Preston. This particular part of the electrification work was scheduled for completion in December but has been severely delayed due to poor ground conditions, which have prevented the installation of the power line stanchions. Network Rail have been carrying out work on the foundations over the Christmas period and this will continue throughout January with additional weekend engineering work which we have agreed to.

Despite all this additional engineering work Network Rail have confirmed that the required infrastructure will not be available in time for the introduction of our May 18 timetable as we planned. We have discussed a number of potential options with Network Rail including an additional extensive engineering blockade on the Bolton corridor during February & March, with the aim of recovering the programme.

As a responsible operator, we have always been very clear that we need to act in the best interest of our customers. If we were to agree to this extensive blockade it would present our customers travelling on the Atherton and Bolton lines with further disruption and delay at very short notice and with an uncertain defined benefit guaranteed beyond the closure. The impact of this closure would be a significant step-up in disruption from anything previously considered on what is one of the busiest parts of our network.

This risk is increased by the fact that a significant blockade of this kind would normally be planned at least 12 months in advance and is also not contained to the school holiday periods. We are therefore presently uncertain that we can secure sufficient bus resource to replicate the estimated 8,000 morning peak capacity for rail customers across these very busy lines.

Having considered the significant impact that our customers will be faced with if we were to go ahead with this closure, we have decided not to agree to this in favour of weekend and overnight possessions throughout summer. This option protects our customers from significant disruption and we will crucially not be attempting to deliver something that is extremely high risk, but

indeed adds certainty to future planning. It also provides us with the opportunity to deliver a 'robust' series of phased timetable improvements ensuring a seamless delivery of service improvements that will not impact negatively on our customers.

The railways across the north of England continue to be in need of additional services and capacity to cater for the growing passenger numbers. While our planned service improvements will deliver much of this requirement any service changes need to be delivered robustly, with minimal risk and minimal disruption to our customers.

This is disappointing news for our customers who will have a longer wait, with more disruption, before they can experience the service enhancements Manchester to Bolton electrification will make possible. We are committed to working with our industry partners to complete the project to its revised schedule, while doing everything we can to minimise disruption to customer journeys. We will share more detail on any changes the delayed electrification work will have on planned improvements for the May 2018 timetable change as soon as we can.

I would like to reassure you that despite this delay our modernisation plans to transform the train journey experience for our customers by 2020 remains our number one focus, however it is imperative that we act in the best interest of our customers and that is why we have taken this decision.

Yours sincerely

Liam Sumpter

Regional Director

Central Region - Arriva