

OXFORD-BICESTER RAIL ACTION GROUP

15 November 2016

Dave Penney Esq.
Managing Director
Chiltern Railways
2nd Floor, Western House
Rickfords Hill,
Aylesbury, Bucks. HP20 2RX

Dear Mr Penney,

We are the co-chairs of the Oxford-Bicester Rail Action Group. We have recently become aware of the proposed changes to the Islip-London commuter service being introduced in December, and we wish to object that these changes fail to conform to the evidence given by Alan Dare to the Transport and Works Act Inquiry (attached), which provides in relevant part,

Chiltern Railways is ... prepared to commit to running a service at Islip in excess of the [Passenger Service Requirements], without public funding. This will consist of 8 trains each way Monday-Saturday, in order to give a better range of departure times for commuter flows between Islip and Oxford, Bicester Town and London ...'

The new schedule is a breach of Chiltern's commitment to maintain a commuter service to London, and we intend to take all possible action to ensure that it does not do so. This may include legal action as well as community action adverse to Chiltern's interests.

From the time that the service re-opened in October 2015, a small but very regular group of commuters, who call themselves the 17.50 Club, have been travelling into London every morning and returning on the 17.50 in the evening. Originally, they travelled on the 07.14 in the mornings, but the connected service status of that train made it necessary early on to hold the connecting train to London. When the connecting service was moved to an earlier time, they moved with it.

Chiltern now proposes to eliminate that connecting service altogether, so that they will either have to make the journey at 05.49, arriving at 07.23, 1.5 hours later (a service too early and too long to constitute a 'commuter' service); or attempt to connect with the 07.24 train from Oxford Parkway on a train that will no longer connect, because it leaves Islip too late. This effectively eliminates the potential to travel to London during regular commuting hours: 07.00 to 09.00. Equally unsatisfactory is the change of the return evening trains, which depart at 16.50 (too early for commuters) or 18.50, which takes a long journey of 1 hour 20 minutes and arrives in Islip at 20.10 p.m.—well after a commuter train should.

We understand that the difficulty regarding the evening return involves scheduling at the Oxford station on the new London Marylebone service. The train cannot arrive more than five minutes late or it will delay the train by twenty minutes. This is an unacceptable

Postal Address: Evershot
Islip OX5 2SA

Email: scotmpeterson@gmail.com

reason. A stop at Islip takes approximately two minutes. This means that any delay will have been caused by other factors besides the Islip stop. This is not an efficiency issue; it is an effort to eliminate Islip as a commuter stop.

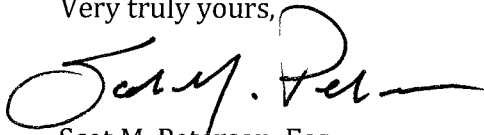
This schedule change is not in Chiltern's economic interests. Commuters will find alternative routes to London, which are more convenient, and these stops will not be used by anyone. Alternatives include traveling to Oxford and purchasing a separate ticket to travel to Paddington via Great Western in one hour; driving to Oxford Parkway and doing the same, and taking local buses, which leave Islip at 07.20 and 8.05 and stop within an easy walking distance of Oxford station. This is a way for Chiltern to drive down traffic on the Islip-London Marylebone commute and eventually eliminate it altogether. This will result in a significant waste of government money, as Railtrack has spent a substantial amount constructing the station at Islip.

Islip residents have been loyal and supportive users of Chiltern's new services and have been generally positive about the train access to Oxford Parkway and to London. However, this change risks alienating more passengers than just those who travel to London. Others will come to see Chiltern's service as unreliable when it can be changed so dramatically without consultation or consideration for the community's needs. OBRAG has been supportive of Chiltern's future expansion plans, and that support will be withdrawn (indeed, it may become active opposition) in the event that Chiltern fails to maintain its commitments to local communities.

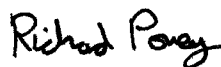
Finally, in the event that this change violates legal conditions on Chiltern's service agreements, we will challenge it legally under the Transport and Works Act 1992. We will seek all appropriate remedies, including re-institution of these services and compensation for any periods the service was suspended. We believe that the failure to properly consult in advance of the removal of commuter service from Islip strengthens any case that the change is a breach of Chiltern's duty under applicable law.

We hope that this unanticipated change is simply an oversight on Chiltern's part, which can be easily rectified. We will look forward to your rapid response to these concerns.

Very truly yours,



Scot M. Peterson, Esq.
Co-Chair



Richard A. Povey, D.Phil.
Co-Chair

cc: Helen Mountfield, QC
John Howell, MP (delivered by hand)
Dr Peter Collins, Chair, Islip Parish Council
Henrietta Leyser
Harriet Bayly
Ms Jayne Davis, the 17.50 Club

Postal Address: Evershot
Islip OX5 2SA

Email: scotmpeterson@gmail.com

10 RESPONSE TO OUTSTANDING OBJECTIONS

10.1 Objection 34 – Oxford & Bicester Rail Action Group (OBAG): Train service at Islip

10.1.1 The OBAG representation states that they are generally supportive of the Order Scheme, but that, as Islip station is currently served by 11 trains each way on weekdays, and 13 trains each way on Saturdays, Chiltern Railways should commit to this level of service.

10.1.2 The Secretary of State for Transport sets a Passenger Service Requirement (PSR) for all franchised rail passenger services, and this determines where the public interest lies. The present service is the result of an agreement between First Great Western (the present operator of the line) and Oxfordshire County Council, by which the latter subsidises the former to operate trains additional to those set out in the PSR. The Enhanced Service agreement expires on 31st March 2013.

Table 6: PSR and actual service at Islip, May 2010 timetable

Bicester Town-Oxford-return services per day, 2010			
	Mon-Fri	Saturday	Sunday
PSR as set by the DfT	7	7	0
Enhanced service as subsidised by Oxfordshire	11 (12 on Fridays)	13	9
Source: FGW & Oxfordshire County Council agreement, 2008			

10.1.3 The additional services on weekdays (i.e. those over and above the PSR) are all off-peak.

10.1.4 The Secretary of State has determined the PSR for Islip once the Order Scheme is in operation, as set out in Appendix 4 (CRCL/P/2/B), and summarised in Table 7 below. Chiltern Railways is however prepared to commit to running a service at Islip in excess of the PSR, without public funding. This will consist of 8 trains each way Monday-Saturday, in order to give a better range of departure times for commuter flows between Islip and Oxford, Bicester Town and London, and a Sunday service.

Table 7: PSR and Chiltern proposed train service at Islip

Services each way at Islip, per day			
	Mon-Fri	Saturday	Sunday
PSR	7	7	0
Chiltern Railways proposal	8	8	Trains will call at Islip, but number to be confirmed
Source: Deed of Amendment to Chiltern Railways Franchise Agreement, January 2010			

10.1.5 The main difference between the existing service and that proposed by Chiltern is that the number of train calls off-peak (1000-1559, and 1900-2359) are reduced. User surveys by Oxfordshire County Council show that relatively little use is made of these trains at Islip, as shown in **Table 8**.