

Service improvements on the Wrexham – Bidston line

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Transport for Wales says targeted improvements on a north Wales railway line have been reaping huge benefits for rail customers.

Since the introduction of a new timetable in December, the Wrexham to Bidston line has seen more daily trains than ever before running every single day.

And over the first 12 weeks of 2024, more than 80 per cent of trains have arrived either on time or within three minutes of their expected arrival time, a massive rise from 2023 where most months saw less than 50 per cent arrive within three minutes of the expected time.

“It’s excellent news to see how these targeted changes are making a real difference to customers’ journeys,” said Colin Lea, Planning and Performance Director at Transport for Wales.

“Our customers and stakeholders have been clear in what they want: a regular and reliable service that works for them.

“Quite simply, what we were delivering last year was not good enough. So, we appointed a dedicated route officer for the line to look at the issues we were facing.”

The Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport, Ken Skates said: “This is great news. We appreciate this has been frustrating for passengers, but I am pleased that after all the hard work we are clearly beginning to see a significant improvement to this important service.”

Also known as the Borderlands line, the Wrexham to Bidston line is 27 miles long with 15 stations between Wrexham Central and Bidston on the Wirral. Customers using the line can connect to other services at Wrexham General, Shotton and Bidston, as well as local bus services.

The new timetable saw the line move from one train per hour to one every 45 minutes, meaning an additional 8 trains per day – 4 in each direction.

This allowed for more recovery time during the journey, and longer turnaround times at each end, meaning more resilience and less cancellations.

Some of the problems last year centred around the reliability of new Class 230s which operate on the line. Engineers have been working hard in the background to address those reliability issues, with a funded plan in place to make changes which are expected to improve reliability further later this year. We have also been able to introduce the new Class 197 trains to the line, working in tandem with the Class 230 to ease the pressure.

“It’s been a very encouraging first three months,” added Colin.

“We will continue to work closely with our partners to keep a close eye on performance, so we can make things better for customers as the investments in new trains come on stream.”