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Subject: New Message (sent by contact form at Northern and Western Regional Assembly)
Date: Wednesday 6 February 2019 13:51:06

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Submission: Please see link below from the People of Athenry which was submitted as part of the Public Consultation on "The Role of Rail in Ireland and Funding its Delivery " which was made in 2017 and is still unpublished by the department as far as we know.

https://1drv.ms/b/s!Ak8CzAHd3jH6rn4m6O_q3cimjSO-

Summery

This submission has been the result of the work of a number of local residents in the Athenry area who use or would like to use, the train network more regularly. The overwhelming response given to this groups as to the main issue that needs to be addressed in relation to the train service from Athenry is that of the extremely high priced train tickets for the commuter service, followed by: security of the routes, parking, as well as the future development of the closed route to Sligo which Athenry is the mainline junction.

We as a group welcome the 2016 rail review affording the opportunity for a public consultation, something which has been lacking in the past. Members of this group have repeatedly raised the issue of the price of the commuter service from Athenry to Galway over the last number of years in the media and through various correspondences. The response has often been for example, that as it's an intercity mainline route prices are set high and that price reductions are only available when a commuter buys a monthly or annually ticket.

In the course of research for this submission we now know that much of this is incorrect, and that there are other mainline commuter services that are in the same Iarnród Éireann classification as the Athenry-Galway commuter one : for example the 2016 rail report lists both Clonsilla1 - M3 Parkway in table 3 commuter and DART routes along with the Athenry to Galway route. Despite the same classification, the fact remains that commuters in the East Coast can travel on the same classed commuter service as the people of Athenry, and both of which have on average the same travel time and yet the Athenry commuter must pay 2.5 times the fare of the Clonsilla one.

This type of price discrimination is not isolated to the East coast alone, as Irish Rail also offer free parking in all the stations stops adjacent to Athenry station, but not Athenry itself, and also offer special day return rates for the people of Oranmore although only 10 minutes down the line for six euro return.

This group has taken a view that until the rail network works equally for all its customers, people will not move out their cars and back on to rail. This groups focus is on the services from Athenry but much off what is set out in this submission could be relevant to many other rail routes in the country.

As a group, we are not just highlighting failures of the rail service in our local area, we are also offering viable long term solutions which we feel if implemented can make the rail network once again the hub for town of Athenry and see services grow and improve for the

next 100 years.

Conclusion & Recommendations

There is no one quick fix to solve the crises that Iarnrod Eireann finds itself in, and the solution will be a mixture of proper State funding, fair pricing and innovation. By giving a fair pricing ticket and parking to commuters in towns such as Athenry and opening up IE many assists to use as Greenways there is a future for rail once again in rural Ireland.

The report states that “Commuting by rail is almost irrelevant for trips to work into Galway” I hope that this document has highlighted to the authors of the rail review report as to why this is the case and it’s clear that they had not examined the issue in detail, if at all.

There are people from the Athenry area driving past Athenry station to Oranmore station to commute from there to Galway, adding extra cars on the route, extra, emissions in the environment. There are others working in the station and living in Athenry and it’s still cheaper for them to drive ahead of taking the train. The reasons for this is clear: the cost of tickets and parking in Athenry are outrageous and it doesn’t encourage people to use the service. That the East coast users benefit from these advantages already is salt in the wound.

Based on research carried out for this submission the authors of this submission and the people of the Athenry area it represents recommend the following:

Reduce the price of the train services from Athenry to Galway to the same level as the East coast and Oranmore.

Free parking is required as in Oranmore to encourage people to take the train and reward them for getting out of their car not penalize them for doing so. Currently the car park lies empty for the most part.

Taxsaver, Fare cards and student discounts and online fares all need to be reviewed and change as they are no longer fit for purpose

Taxsaver should be tied into by Revenue, and your tax returns. Anyone who makes a tax return should be allowed to claim the tax benefit, if even only on an arrears basis, on foot of a submitted tax return. it is in Iarnrod Eireann’s interest that this happen, and they should allocate suitable resources, representation and lobbying to make this happen.

Protect the Limerick- Athenry line from closure in and generate data as to its true value as a commuter route.

Any lines IE seek to closed need to open it up for privatisation

Reopen all closed routes as greenways as set out in this submission.

Open a greenway from Athenry to Tuam as a test base for such a model of IE working with Local Authority’s and the department of Transport, Tourism and sport. This will act as social good, sport & tourism amenity to the areas that border line.

Better offering for Tourists with real savings like in France, Japan and Scandinavia for rail tourists visiting In Ireland.

The current 5% of out-of-state tourists utilise the intercity rail network this is extremely low and IE should aim to increase this to close to 20%.