

Bus shake-up 'leaves passengers in the cold'



The falling standards on one Arriva bus route have left passengers out in the cold, sometimes forcing them to wait for up to an hour, it is claimed.

The 96 bus route used to travel from Telford, through Ironbridge and Buildwas and terminate in Shrewsbury. Since September 2009, however, the 96 and the X5, which travelled from Telford to Shrewsbury direct, have merged, along with two other bus routes.

Travellers claim this has caused delays, confusion and anger. Previously, an X5 left Shrewsbury bus station every 30 minutes, allowing quick travel between the two towns. This has now been cut to only one bus an hour. Arriva say the small number of passengers on the service merited this cut, but customers disagree. "It's become dog-eat-dog," one traveller said. "Everyone's out for themselves.

"People push in just to get a place on the bus. Because there's no proper system, they get away with it. Lots of people get left behind and have to wait another hour for a bus."

The 96 service has changed as well – the final bus of the day was put back 10 minutes in September, then another 10 in October, and finally another five just before November – all to 'ensure consistency'. Despite this, after a week passengers said the bus had been late three days out of seven. And this isn't all – one day, a drink spillage had been failed to be cleaned up after four hours of service, it is claimed.

Passengers also say that although other bus routes have started operating from Shrewsbury bus station again, after the explosion on January 3 one bus was still 60 minutes late, without explanation.

Keith Myatt, from Arriva, said: "Our surveys and data that we hold and held prior to introducing the new network last September indicated that the X5 could not sustain a 30min frequency and therefore we chose to reduce the frequency, but also then highlighting to our customers that our two sponsored services, the 96 and 81, which we run in conjunction with Shropshire Council, run to Telford town centre twice an hour.

"We haven't merged the services and there are still two buses in use between Shrewsbury and Telford town centre."

By Rory Kelly