



Department
for Transport

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

From the Secretary of State
The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: mark.harper@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

Our Ref: MC/435977

18 October 2023

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your letter of 24 August, about changes to railway station ticket offices.

I appreciate your concerns about the proposed closure of some station ticket offices.

Together with the rail industry, I want to improve and modernise the experience for passengers by moving staff out from behind the ticket office screens to provide more help and advice in customer focused roles. I have been clear that no currently staffed station should be unstaffed as a result of industry changes, and operators should ensure that staff are well located to meet passenger needs in future.

On 5 July, train operators launched consultations on their proposed ticket office changes under the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA). Following continued engagement with stakeholders and accessibility groups, operators extended the consultation period by five weeks, to the 1 September. This extended consultation period provided all users of the railway with more time to respond.

Exact staffing arrangements will vary by train operator and station and are subject to ongoing discussions with staff and their trade union representatives. Now that the consultations have come to an end, the independent passenger bodies will play a vital role in assessing and shaping staffing proposals.

When developing their ticket office proposals, operators would have considered passenger need on a station-by-station basis, taking in to account a common set of factors as set out in the TSA and recognising the differences in each locality.

When also proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours – including closures – train operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of passengers who are disabled, and to include this in the notice of the proposal sent to other operators and passenger groups. When consulting, operators should have also clearly considered other equality-related needs. Operators prepared Equality Impact Assessments, and these were available on their websites during the consultation.

The Passenger Assist service will continue to help disabled passengers, and those with additional needs, to use the rail network with confidence and in safety.

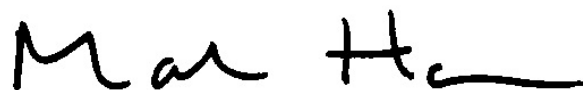
We are now in a period where the independent passenger bodies (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) are engaging with train operators on the basis of the consultation responses they have received and the criteria they have set out.

We expect train operators to work collaboratively with the passenger bodies in the coming weeks, to listen to the concerns raised and to refine their proposals accordingly.

The UK's rail network is one of the safest in Europe and we will never compromise the safety of passengers on our railways. As the industry takes forward vital reforms, safety remains a top priority for all. Moving staff out of ticket offices is expected to make them more visible to passengers.

Thank you once again for your letter. I hope this response has been helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Harper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT