



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Mark Harper MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

24 August 2023

Dear Mark,

I am writing to raise concerns about proposals to close approximately 1000 train station ticket offices nationally.

The passenger watchdogs overseeing consultations relating to this issue recently announced that they have received over 315,000 consultation responses. This overwhelming response reflects the interest and opposition there is to the proposals amongst the public. It is also worth noting that, in 2022/23, there were 1.5 billion passenger journeys, which equates to around 180 million journeys being facilitated by ticket offices. This clearly indicates that there is a demand for the service.

I share the concerns raised by rail unions and passengers to the proposals, which I will briefly outline below:

1. There are a range of products and services available at the ticket office, which may not be available from Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs), such as refunds; season ticket changes; ranger and rover tickets; ferry/bus connections; park and ride; group save; disabled persons discount; season tickets over one month in length; advance fares; rail card purchases; off-peak tickets before 9.30am; changes to ticket classes; seat reservations; cycle reservations; photocards for season tickets; scholar tickets; sleeper bookings and car parking.
2. The presence of staff ensures the railway is accessible to all. At many stations, ticket office staff are the only staff present, and their responsibilities often include assisting passengers on to trains, including with ramps where required, and meeting them off the train.



3. Staffed ticket offices help reassure passengers as staff are trained and experienced in dealing with difficult incidents, whilst also deterring anti-social behaviour
4. Ticket office closures will be counterproductive in terms of revenue, as it would disincentive rail travel for many.
5. The Government and train operators have failed to commit that staffing numbers will not reduce as a result of ticket office closures.

For these reasons, I believe the proposals should be rejected and I would be grateful for your observations on the matter.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'George'.

The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
Knowsley