



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Tricia Williams
CEO
Northern Trains Ltd
George Stephenson House
Toft Green
York
YO1 6JT

24 August 2023

Dear Ms Williams,

I am writing to raise concerns about Northern Rail's proposals to close ticket offices at 131 stations across your network.

The passenger watchdogs overseeing consultations relating to the issue of ticket office closures recently announced that they have received over 315,000 consultation responses nationally. 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 that reads "George Howarth". The signature is written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
Knowsley