



Department  
for Transport

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
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From the Secretary of State  
**The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps**

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*Dear George*

Thank you for your email of 7 October 2019, on behalf of your constituents, about the staffing, funding and operation of the Railway.

I am grateful to your constituent's for sharing their concerns and I fully appreciate that passengers value a well-staffed and well-funded railway that delivers safe and timely services across the network.

I would like to reassure your constituents that there is no industry strategy to reduce staff numbers or reduce services that customers want and need, and that there are no current plans to remove conductors from trains operated by either Northern or TransPennine Express (TPE).

Whilst it has always been a matter for the train companies to decide how best to staff and run their stations operations, the Department has stated that it wishes to see more staff on the railways in future, not fewer, helping passengers with their journeys and promoting the accessibility and overall safety of our stations. There is a desire to really improve the services that all passengers expect, and I would encourage all station staff to continue to work with the train companies to deliver the best service they can for passengers.

This is of particular importance when it comes to disabled passengers and those who need greater assistance with how they travel. That is why we have committed £300 million to continue the Access for All programme until at least 2024, to make 73 more stations accessible. The Department and the industry are also keen to ensure that all stations staff are confident about approaching and supporting disabled passengers or those who need some extra support, so our stations are more accessible and easier to use.

Stations staff will continue to have a key role in delivering this and it goes without saying that stations jobs must always be devoted to undertaking those activities that passengers are going to value most.

Like all other people whose jobs are about looking after customers, in future, station staff could be asked by their employers to undertake more of certain activities than others, to ensure that passengers get the services they most want and need. This means stations staff may need to change what they do or how they do it if that is how best to meet what passengers expect and are paying for, and to ensure stations remain safe and secure.

In regard to investment, your constituents may be pleased to know that TransPennine Express customers across the North will soon be travelling on one of the most modern train fleets in the UK. Each of the high-quality Nova trains features spacious, comfortable seating, free Wi-Fi, plug sockets, USB ports, improved information systems and access to complimentary Exstream entertainment.

Northern Rail is committed to improving the customers' on-board experience and it is investing £500 million in new trains in order to provide a much better passenger experience, with free Wi-Fi, at-seat power sockets, air conditioning and more space than the trains they will replace. The new trains are currently being rolled out on routes across its network. Northern's existing fleet of 243 trains is in the process of being fully upgraded to a high standard.

By the end of 2019 Northern will have invested more than £40 million in completed improvements at its stations, introducing better lighting, seating, security and new ticket vending machines.

Thank you again for your letter and for raising your constituent's concerns. I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours ever,



**Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**