



Department
for Transport

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From the Minister of State
Huw Merriman MP

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Dear Munira,

Thank you for your letter of 1 September, about proposed changes to railway station ticket offices in your constituency.

As you mentioned, 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.

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.

Together with the rail industry, we 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. The proposals should allow staff to move around the station to provide more personalised assistance in various ways, rather than being restricted to just selling tickets from a ticket office window.

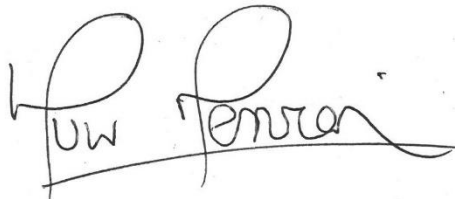
I have been clear that no currently staffed station should be unstaffed as a result of industry changes, and operators should ensure that staff are well located to meet passenger needs in future. This includes ensuring that staff are available to assist those who need additional support or do not wish to use digital tickets. The independent passenger bodies will play a vital role in assessing and shaping staffing proposals.

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours – including closures – train operators were 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.

I note your concerns regarding ticket vending machines (TVMs). We recognise that TVM capability and accessibility varies across the network. Industry is looking to expand digital ticketing options and to upgrade TVMs to make them easier for passengers to use. Train operators will be responsible for ensuring that station staff are able to assist passengers to use TVMs and help passengers to purchase tickets on their own devices. Passengers will not be expected to travel out of their way to buy a ticket and will be able to buy en-route or at their destination.

I hope this response has been helpful.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Merriman'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

HUW MERRIMAN MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT