

RESPONSE OF BEN BRADSHAW MP TO CITY COUNCIL LETTER ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURES OF RAIL TICKET OFFICES DATED 25 JULY 2025

Dear Howard,

Thank you very much for your email concerning the closure of railway ticket offices. I share many of the concerns raised in your letter to the Secretary of State, Mark Harper.

This announcement, driven by this Conservative government understandably causes huge anxiety to vulnerable, elderly, and disabled passengers, as well as rail staff.

Currently, 12% of ticket purchases are made at ticket offices with approximately 1,000 ticket offices still in operation. Following the Government's proposals, Great Western Railway will permanently close all the ticket office windows at Exeter St David's station. Over 186,000 tickets were sold from the windows last year.

There is widespread opposition to ticket office closures from such organisations including Disability Rights UK, the National Federation of the Blind, Transport for All, Royal National Institute for Deaf People. This action will significantly reduce the accessibility of transport, limiting the freedom of many affected individuals, including more than three million people over the age of 65 who have never used the internet. Furthermore, rail staff face potential job losses.

The Labour Party is deeply concerned with these issues. Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, Louise Haigh, has asked the Government what actions it will take to ensure these proposals take into consideration the impact on the accessibility of services and job security. To deny equal opportunities and accessibility through these measures will push people away from the railways, which we should be trying to make easier, cheaper, and more accessible. The Conservative Government needs to explain why it is cutting services when it should be cutting fares, as many of our European neighbours are doing. This also means that passengers are paying more for less under our broken rail system.

The Labour Party, at last year's party conference, reaffirmed its commitment to bring railways back under public ownership if it wins a majority at the next general election. Louise Haigh said putting "failing private operators in the hands of the public" would "improve services and lower fares" putting passengers at the heart of the British railway. My colleague on the Transport Select Committee, Ruth Cadbury, questioned Huw Merriman, Department for Transport, on the concerns of these measures for vulnerable individuals and railway staffing provisions.

I assure you that I will continue to raise concerns over the closure of railway ticket offices and support calls for building a fairer, more accessible railway.

I hope that this is helpful, but if you have any further concerns or queries please do not hesitate to get back in touch.

With very best wishes,

Ben Bradshaw MP