



Department
for Transport

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Our Ref: 433920

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Mark Devin
Civic Centre
Paris Street
Exeter
EX1 1JN

By email: Committee.services@exeter.gov.uk

Dear Mark Devin

Thank you for your letter of 20 July to the Rt Hon Mark Harper MP, Secretary of State for Transport, about changes to railway station ticket offices. This has been forwarded to the Rail Passenger Services team for reply.

We appreciate your and Exeter City Councils' concerns about the proposed closure of some station ticket offices.

There has been a significant shift in the way passengers purchase tickets, with just one in every ten transactions taking place at a ticket office in 2022/23, down from one in three a decade earlier. An estimated 99 per cent of all transactions made at ticket offices last year could be made at ticket vending machines or online.

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. We have been clear that no currently staffed station will become unstaffed as a result of this reform.

To propose any changes to the opening hours of a station ticket office, or to propose its closure, train operating companies must follow the longstanding process set out in the industry's Ticketing and Settlement Agreement.

Train operators must consult on any proposed changes, advertising them at the relevant stations and inviting members of the public who wish to comment to write to the relevant passenger body (Transport Focus or London TravelWatch).

When proposing major changes to ticket office opening hours (including closures), operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of all passengers, and to include this in the notice sent to other operators and passenger groups. We would also expect operators to consider other equality-related needs and make this clear in their consultation.

The Passenger Assist service will continue to help disabled passengers, and those with additional needs, to use the rail network with confidence and in safety. Since April 2022, passengers have been able to pre-book their assistance up to two hours in advance of their journey, at any time of the day. This ensures that reasonable adjustments and special assistance can be provided at a wider range of times, with minimal planning ahead required.

The Department recently hosted roundtable discussions with industry and accessibility and transport groups to discuss this matter. We continue to engage with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

You mention the safety of rail passengers. The UK's rail network is one of the safest in Europe and the Government will never compromise the safety of passengers on our railways. Safety remains a top priority for all parties.

To ensure that your views are taken into consideration, we would ask you to send your comments on the proposed changes to Transport Focus or London TravelWatch at the freepost address: RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ, PO Box 5594, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9PZ. Further information about the proposed changes will be available at stations and on train operating company websites.

Thank you once again for your letter. We hope this response has been helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Correspondence Team, Rail Passenger Services Directorate