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Dear Sir or Madam

### **Proposed Closure of Railway Station Ticket Offices**

The closure of Railway Station Ticket Offices and replacement with a roving member of staff will have a negative effect on those who:

- Are unable, or find it difficult, to use ticket machines.
- Do not have access to the Internet.
- Do not have access to a smart phone.
- Wish to obtain travel information and thus their tickets in advance.
- Wish to obtain a better deal than is available on line.
- Wish to obtain a better deal than is on offer at the ticket machine.
- Wish to pay using cash.
- Require specialised tickets such as discount cards – only to be available at larger stations.
- Have disabilities which may or may not be apparent and who need support.

The Train Operating Companies (TOCs) & Rail Delivery Group (RDG) advise that there will be better availability of Ticket Assistant staff once they have been 'brought out from behind glass screens'. How will this be possible without employing more people, as they say that this service would be available for longer than the present Ticket Office hours?

And what of the safety of the staff when there will be an assumption by low life that they will be carrying cash as they will be selling tickets? (We know that all the staff will be doing is helping with use of existing machines, but never the less that will be the assumption of those who have no regard for others.)

Is it not true that there are planned redundancies in the pipeline? This would imply that there will be no net gain of staff at stations – where there was a member on ticket gate duty at, say, Shoreham-by-Sea and a ticket assistant it is inevitable that that this would reduce to just the one multi-tasking member of staff on duty.

I have seen evidence of long queues at station ticket offices around the network so there is obviously a need for these sites to be manned. It is too simplistic to say that TfL successfully closed their ticket offices - their fares are broken down into a small number of specific zones on a self-contained system. National Rail ticketing is on a completely different level of complexity.

It is obvious that because all fare revenue goes direct to the DfT the closure of ticket offices will release property for rent to boost the only additional income stream that TOC's have and similarly for Network Rail at the larger stations that they manage such as London Victoria. At the expense of 12% of the travelling public who rely on being able to buy their tickets at a designated area of a station, rather than having to look for a member of staff who could be anywhere on the premises.

Finally, it is again too simplistic to say that only 12% - or 1 in 8 - of tickets are purchased at a Ticket Office and that this is justification for these sites to be closed. When looking at the total figures for rail journeys undertaken, the following is evident:

- A provisional estimate of 389 million journeys were made in Great Britain in the latest quarter (1 January to 31 March 2023).
  - There were provisionally 1.4 billion journeys made in the latest year (1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023).
- (Source - ORR Report d 8 June 2023)

Whilst acknowledging that these figures are lower *on average* than pre-pandemic levels , it still means that the following is true:

12% of 389 million = 46.68 million tickets were bought at Ticket Offices between 1 January and 31 March 2023, ie almost **52 thousand tickets each day**.

12% of 1.4 Billion = 168 million were bought at those Offices from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 ie around **46 thousand per day**.

So, you will see that the number of tickets purchased from those offices is increasing rather than decreasing!

The Transport Minister Hugh Merriman was quoted as saying in Parliament in May this year that, ***'The DfT expects the industry to ensure that passengers are at the heart of decision making and that any new processes protect and enhance the customer experience'***. The paragraph tailed his response to the way timetables are published, but underscores the importance of not discriminating against a large number of people who will be disadvantaged should the RDG and its Masters at the DfT go ahead with their closure plans.

Far from protecting and enhancing the customer experience, the closure of Ticket Offices will result in pushing people away from the Railways altogether, using either cars or buses for their travel if these are feasible alternatives.

Or maybe just giving up all together.

With kind regards.

Yours faithfully

**Phil Hamerton**