



September 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about ticket offices at railway stations.

Train companies are consulting on plans to modernise customer service across the railway network. I understand that proposals will see staff move from behind the ticket office screens to more visible and accessible roles around stations in order to better support customers.

I know ministerial colleagues are keen to see multiskilled, customer-facing staff on railways and stations may need to change what they do or how they do it to ensure that passengers get the required service. Staff will be able to provide a more personal service in future, which can be crucial for those who need additional support at stations and those who cannot or do not want to use contactless or mobile tickets.

It is important to note that ticket offices have seen a significant decline in use over the last decade. In 2022/23, around 1 in 10 transactions occurred at a ticket office, this is down from 1 in 3 a decade earlier and equates to 13% of total revenue, yet the number of ticket offices has not substantially changed.

An estimated 99% of all transactions made at ticket offices last year can be made at Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) or online and where needed. I understand that TVMs across the network will be improved and upgraded.

The process for train operators to propose any changes to the opening hours of ticket offices or close ticket offices is set out in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement. The agreement regulates what train operators do in terms of fares ticketing and retailing across the network and requires train operators to put notices at the station advising passengers of any proposals and what any changes could mean for them. If passengers have objections, these can be raised via the passenger bodies (Transport Focus and London Travel Watch).

More broadly, rail passengers are now able to obtain a smart card or barcode ticket across almost the entire rail network. The Government is accelerating plans to overhaul Britain's railways, ending the fragmentation of the past and bringing the network under single, national leadership in the form of Great British Railways. There will be a simplified ticketing system, as well as significant roll-outs of pay as you go, contactless ticketing and digital ticketing on smartphones. Tickets will be available from a single website, ending the current confusing array of train company sites and establishing a single compensation system in England.

In 2021, a £360 million investment in London-style contactless ticketing across England was announced. This will mean that people automatically get charged the best fare. In total, contactless



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pay-as-you-go ticketing will be made available to around 700 stations in urban areas, including around 400 in the North.

In February 2023, the Transport Secretary confirmed the extension of pay-as-you-go ticketing, with 53 stations across the south-east set to be equipped for this in 2023. This roll-out was detailed in full in July and includes Chiltern, London Northwestern, and C2C services across the south east of England.

The plan is to move staff out of the offices and into stations or the concourse to provide face to face help, giving passengers support where they need it most and I have been assured that no currently staffed station will be unstaffed as a result of any reforms.

Moving staff from ticket offices to more visible and accessible roles around stations is aimed to help passengers get help where they need it.

Under the TSA when proposing major changes operators are required to take into account the adequacy of the proposed alternatives in relation to the needs of passengers who are disabled.

I know that the Department for Transport recently hosted roundtable discussions with industry and accessibility and transport groups to discuss this matter. Industry will continue to engage accessibility groups.

As modern ticketing and payments methods roll out more widely, the Government will ensure that all passengers are able to buy a ticket including those who need to use cash or do not have access to smartphones or the internet. Moreover, there are no plans to remove ticket machines from stations.

Following these changes, if a customer is unable to buy a specific ticket before boarding the train because it was unavailable at the station, they would be able to buy one during their journey or at their destination.

I believe in making it as easy as possible for passengers across the country to travel on our railways.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY