



Abena Oppong-Asare MP

Member of Parliament for Erith and Thamesmead

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Mr Steve White
Managing Director
Second Floor
4 More London Riverside
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6th July 2023

Dear Steve White,

Re: Closure of Rail Ticket Offices in England

I am writing to express my concern over your plans to close rail ticket offices in my constituency.

On the 5th July, the Rail Delivery Group confirmed plans to move staff out of ticket offices and into stations, with the consultation on these significant changes to last just 21 days¹.

That news will be deeply worrying to my elderly and disabled constituents, the hundreds of thousands of people employed in our rail industry, the staff employed in my own constituency, and all those who rely on the support and advice provided by staff in ticket offices.

You will remember that on Thursday 1st December last year Minister Merriman, yourself and I met to discuss the new Southeastern Timetable. In that meeting, I raised if there were any upcoming plans to close rail ticket offices. The answer was no. Can I ask how long you have been looking into these plans of ticket office closures on the Southeastern line?

My constituents in Erith and Thamesmead will be very concerned about the proposed ticket office closures at Belvedere and Erith Stations. Given the fact that many of my constituents relying on ticket offices will be elderly and disabled rail users that may otherwise struggle to use digital alternatives, it is vital that you offer assurances that those rail users will still have access to the support they need to use our rail network with confidence.

You will be aware that one in nine tickets are still sold at physical ticket offices². That represents over 150 million of the 1.4 billion rail journeys recorded over the past year³.

¹ <https://media.raildeliverygroup.com/news/proposals-to-update-the-railway-for-how-passengers-use-it-today>

² <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-06-27/191337>

³ <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/passenger-rail-usage/>

Research by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), for instance, has found that only 3% of people with sight loss said they could use a ticket vending machine without problems and 58% said it was impossible⁴.

Given those serious concerns for my constituents, I would appreciate answers to the following questions:

- What will happen to the rail staff currently deployed in rail ticket offices in my constituency of Erith and Thamesmead?
- What will the impact be on their job security?
- What the impact of ticket office closures will be on the safety and accessibility of the local rail network for disabled and elderly passengers?
- When will digital and pay as you go ticketing technology be available across the whole of your existing network?

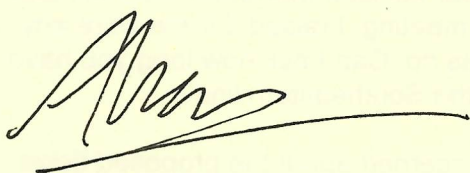
Passengers in my constituency are already suffering due to the chaos on our railways. They should not have to face any further disruptions to their travel plans due to rushed changes to our rail networks.

It is vital that staff have clarity about their job security and that vulnerable passengers have certainty that they will not be forgotten about as changes are made to the way our stations operate.

Finally, following our previous correspondence regarding the new Southeastern Timetable, you will remember that I asked if a review was going to take place to evaluate the impact of the timetable changes. At the time the Minister and you emphasised that upcoming rail strike may possibly reduce the accuracy and ability to do this review. Can you please provide an update on whether this review has taken place, what the outcome was and whether there has been any discussions about changing the timetable following this evaluation?

I look forward to receiving more information on your plans to protect both passengers and staff in my constituency.

Yours sincerely,



ABENA OPPONG-ASARE MP
Member of Parliament for Erith and Thamesmead

⁴ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/ticket-office-closures-announced-stations-england-b1092299.html>