



Department for Transport

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From the Secretary of State
The Rt Hon Grant Shapps

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Dear Katie,

Thank you for your letter of 9 August, signed by 15 organisations representing deaf, disabled and older people, about ticket office closures and the impact on disabled people.

I would like to reassure you that we want to ensure the railway is as accessible as possible for all passengers.

The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail¹ outlines the changes and modernisation needed for fares, ticketing and retailing to simplify and improve the passenger experience and to achieve a railway that is both financially and operationally sustainable. Potential reforms in this regard would allow station staff to better meet the needs of passengers by providing a more personal service.

It is imperative that passengers have access to a ticketing system that is user-friendly, where help and advice from a trained representative is available and is accessible to all. As modern ticketing and payment methods are rolled out more widely, we will continue to ensure that all passengers who need to use cash, or do not have access to a smartphone or the internet, can buy a ticket. As part of the modernisation, we also are looking at upgrading Ticket Vending Machines across the network so that they are easier to use and offer a broader range of fares and tickets types for passengers to buy.

Currently staffed stations will not become unstaffed as a result of any reform. We want to move staff from behind the ticket office screens to help passengers wherever they are at the station and so to provide a better customer service.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-british-railways-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail

In fact, moving staff from underused ticket offices to more visible and accessible roles around stations can help passengers more, which is crucial for those who need additional support and those who cannot or do not want to use contactless or mobile tickets. Station staff are vital for passengers' safety; therefore, they will always provide face-to-face services on the railways.

No final decision has been taken on ticket offices. To propose any changes to the opening hours, or the closure, of ticket offices, train operating companies must follow the process set out in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement². The Ticketing and Settlement Agreement regulates what train operators can do in terms of fares, ticketing and retailing across the network.

As part of this process the train operators are asked to set out the services provided at the ticket office and what their plans are for these. In addition, train operators are required to put notices at the station advising passengers of any proposals and what any changes could mean for them. If passengers have any objections these can be raised via the passenger bodies (Transport Focus³ and London Travel Watch⁴) for consideration.

We recognise fully and appreciate the importance of ensuring that the industry and all train operators carry out equalities analysis and impact assessments for any proposed changes to ticket offices in the future – for example, ensuring that the passenger assist service will continue. In considering any proposed changes, the Department will consider such analysis and the potential impacts of any decisions on individuals with protected characteristics, including disabilities.

Thank you again for your correspondence and I hope that this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

² www.raildeliverygroup.com/our-services/rdg-accreditation/ticketing-settlement.html

³ www.transportfocus.org.uk

⁴ www.londontravelwatch.org.uk