

4th July 2018

Heidi Allen, Sir Oliver Heald, Jonathan Djanogly
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Heidi, Sir Oliver and Jonathan,

Thank you for your joint letter; firstly let me again sincerely apologise for the disruption that your constituents and yourselves have experienced in the last six weeks. As expressed in our meetings this is not the position that we hoped to be in and the benefits that were anticipated have not yet been brought to fruition. I appreciate you will have received a detailed letter from my colleague Nick Brown, Chief Operating Officer on 25 June and do not wish to cover the same ground, but to answer the specific points raised in your letter.

I understand the communication you have had from us previously did not come quickly enough to alert you to the impact that the introduction of the timetable would have on your constituents. For this we are sorry and are working hard to rebuild your faith in us as a business. While we anticipated teething problems in the first few weeks, it was only in the final days when the driver schedules were finalised and applied to be implemented that the sheer scale of the problem became apparent. The timetable had to be introduced on 20 May as it dovetails with every other train operator in the country and to not do so would have created far wider spread disruption than is currently being experienced.

As you note we are in the process of implementing a two stage plan to provide greater stability for passengers. Phase one was implemented at the start of last week and will remain in place until 15 July when a phase two timetable will be introduced. We will continue to include some additional trains or add in station stops to existing trains where it's feasible over the next few weeks, so passengers are advised to check on the day of travel for amendments, including for short-notice cancellations or disruption. We will shortly provide details of 15 July timetable.

Additional stops for Royston, Letchworth and Ashwell & Morden are currently running. These are provided as Special Stop Orders, as an addition to the way the train is originally intended to run. However, the industry systems do not allow for these orders to be automatically included in the plans that we upload to National Rail. As a result, each night, our Control teams have to manually add these into the system. For this reason they appear on the day, however, are not shown in advance. Which is why we are advising passengers to check on the day of travel.

While we are preparing the phase two timetable we are unable to make any significant changes to the phase one plan that has been implemented. I'm aware of the impact that this may have on smaller village stations, such as Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton. We have liaised with the local rail user group and understand that there are several gaps in the service in the phase one timetable. We are addressing this by providing a regular rail replacement bus service to Royston and Cambridge, in addition to the train service, to allow passengers access to other rail links locally.

Govia Thameslink Railway

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In reference to weekend services we are advising passengers to visit nationalrail.co.uk and use the journey planner. Additionally passengers should check on-the-day of travel for any alterations. This information is on our customer facing websites.

In reference to your point about requesting changes to other train operators' services, normal industry process is that requests are made to Network Rail to manage as in line with normal timetable changes. We are still trying to work out a solution to accommodate the additional service stops that have been requested. These are all subject to being operationally viable and agreement with all parties involved.

We do not underestimate the impact that the current situation is having on your constituents and are using all customer information channels available (website, social media, station posters, information screens, and media advertisements) to encourage passengers to claim the compensation they may be entitled to. We urge anyone delayed by 15 minutes or more to apply for compensation. This can be claimed against the original timetable and there is enhanced compensation for season ticket holders. Additionally we are working with the Department for Transport on a special compensation package in addition to our existing Delay Repay scheme.

As you may be aware from Friday 29 June, first class has been declassified on all Thameslink and Great Northern services during peak journey times to create more space for passengers. This will continue until the interim timetable is implemented on 15 July which will prioritise peak hours services and reduce service gaps.

We appreciate that customers may already hold a Thameslink or Great Northern first class season ticket and they will be able to claim the difference in cost for journeys made where first class was declassified. More information is available here - <https://www.greatnorthernrail.com/firstclassclaimform>

We will keep you informed of the situation over the coming weeks and of progress being made to restore the service. We will be in touch to brief you ahead of the implementation of the mid-July timetable in next few weeks.

We have a copy of appendix A and will respond individually to the concerns raised in the next 3-5 working days.

We fully understand the concerns you have raised and are using all available resources to try and restore the service as quickly as possible. We will shortly provide details of 15 July timetable.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Cheshire
Passenger Services Director for Thameslink and Great Northern