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GWR Equality Impact - Summary Document

Section 1 – Proposal

There are industry changes to retail propositions across the GWR network and the eventual closure of ticket offices at 79 stations. This document looks at the overall impact the changes may have on the GWR network and our disabled and elderly customers.

Changes to ticket offices will follow updated individual station EIAs which will themselves follow a review of Welcome Points and TVM allocation, Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessments and discussions with colleagues and their trades unions and will not be immediate.

Stations with multiple ticket office windows, will have a more gradual, phased implementation where ticket office windows will close over time as customers move to digital and TVMs increase in capability. Colleagues will always be there (within current retailing hours) to assist customers.

All current staffed stations will remain staffed, station opening hours will remain the same, and access to customer areas (toilets, waiting rooms etc) will remain as is.

Colleagues at stations will be upskilled to support customers purchasing tickets through all self-service channels and staff will be equipped with mobile ticketing equipment. They will also move from a fixed location within a ticket office to be able to take a wider role in assisting customers

Passenger assist will continue to be provided and will not be affected during or after the changes have been implemented. Mobile assistance staff will still be deployed within the East region to support stations with Driver Only services.

Each station affected by the changes will have an individual EIA produced, to ensure any changes are fully mitigated against and the changes proposed make a positive enhancement for all our customers. These individual documents will be finalised, once a final proposal has been agreed.

Section 2 – Impact

Is there a potential negative impact?

Disability

At GWR we provide more assistance for customers than any other TOC (excluding Network Rail). Within the last financial year, 1st of April 2022 to 31st March 2023, GWR delivered a total of 185,846 assistance requests, which included 42,223 “Turn up and Go” requests. Most of these assistance requests are provided by dedicated assist teams and dispatchers. Currently, ticket office colleagues at most of our stations, do not provide assistance. As part of these proposals, colleagues will move from out of the ticket office to a multi-skilled role, that will include providing assistance. This will positively affect the number of colleagues available to assist our disabled customers and will help improve the customer experience.

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We provide a broad range of assistance to make sure all disabled customers can travel with us independently and with confidence, which is underpinned by robust accessibility training. We refresh our disability awareness training every two years and include the GWR Accessibility Panel in its creation. We continually seek to improve our Passenger Assist offering to support all disabilities, visible and non-visible, and continue to grow the number of disabled passengers travelling on our network, year on year. The proposals for GWR do not reduce staffing hours at any of our stations. The Passenger Assist service will not be affected by these changes and customers will be able to travel, as they are today. Moving the staff member from the ticket office, into multi-skilled positions, will also enhance the number of staff available to provide assistance and provide a positive customer experience.

The GWR network is one of the busiest and most diverse in the country with 201 stations, 198 of which are managed directly and a further 3 in partnership with Network Rail, as well as running services to various other operators' stations. We have a range of assistance mechanisms to support assistance on our different operating models across our network, such as station staff, onboard teams, and a mobile assistance team for our "Driver Only Operated" route. The proposals impact under half of our stations with 79 separate station level Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) having been carried out to support this. These assessments will remain live documents and will continue to grow and be adapted, dependent on the outcome of the consultation. Passenger Assist, will not change at any of the 79 stations and stations that are staffed, will remain staffed for the hours currently advertised.

The biggest impact to disabled passengers based on our current proposals will be, the removal of colleagues from a fixed point in the ticket office to cover a wider area around the station. Some passengers who are disabled, may not be able to use modern retail offerings and do not have access to the internet. The GWR proposals will mitigate this through using the current ticket office staff and using them in a new multi-skilled position. This role will be able to assist passengers using the TVMs to purchase tickets. Staff will also have access to handheld ticketing devices, to help sell tickets on the day. If passengers are not able to purchase a ticket at their boarding station, due to it not being accessible for them, they can purchase a ticket at the next opportunity that is accessible for them and at the price they would have purchased it for originally. For example, this could be from the onboard staff member, or at the alighting station. The closure of ticket offices will have a bigger impact on the number of customers using TVMs. GWR is looking at each individual location and will look at moving and increasing the number of TVM's if necessary. We will be upgrading the TVMs so a wider range of tickets can be purchased on these machines.

The ticket office currently sells specific products related directly to passengers with disabilities. The D34 & D50 discounts are currently only available at ticket offices. The Rail Delivery Group is currently looking at options on how best to retail these options when ticket offices do close. We will be working with our industry partners further on this, to help ensure a consistent and customer focused approach is applied across the whole industry. On the GWR network, Train Managers and Conductors have the capability to sell these tickets. The Disabled Person's Railcard is available to purchase online, via post or phone. At our stations where there were ticket offices, staff will be available to help support and assist our customers through these changes, including continuing to offer D34 and D50 discounts initially through the retention of ticket office sales equipment, followed by the use of handheld sales devices.

At GWR we offer "try the train" events, that invite passengers with disabilities onto our

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network, where we show them what to expect when travelling with us and introduce them to Passenger Assist. Between 1st of April 2022 to 31st March 2023, we had approximately 2,000 people attend these events. With the proposed retail changes, we will use these sessions as a method of building up confidence in using alternative retail options. We understand that anxiety often discourages passengers from travelling and so we feel sessions like these are vital in helping build customers confidence and demonstrate that the proposed changes could positively affect the assistance customers receive.

These proposals could have an impact on our disabled passengers, however, we are confident these are mitigated against, and having more colleagues available to provide assistance, may positively impact the overall experience.

Age

Many customers who travel with us are older and more likely to need additional support. Areas, such as Devon and Cornwall, have a higher-than-average older population and this is reflected in usage of ticket offices. Some people who are older, may not be used to technology and prefer to buy tickets from a person. Under these proposals, this will still be possible, with staff available to assist in purchasing tickets and offering travel advice including the printing of journey itineraries if requested.

If passengers are unable to purchase a ticket from the origin station, due to it not being accessible to them, they are able to purchase a ticket onboard or at the alighting station.

We are not reducing staffing hours at our staffed stations and so staff will be available to assist passengers on arrival at a station. With staff moving from out of the ticket office, it may provide more people available to help older passengers with luggage and guiding them to the train.

Section 3 - Outcome

Evidence

The proposals were put together through use of data and evidence. These are reflected in all the 79 individual EIA documents and were part of the initial consultation documents (provided in various formats). Each station will be evaluated separately and if further mitigations are required, these will be put in place. We are awaiting the outcome of the consultation and expect this to influence the final proposals and the final EIAs.

Passenger Assist information was provided for each of the 79 stations affected and reflected in the individual EIAs. This data was based on assistance requests between 1st of April 2022 and 31st of March 2023. This includes information on passengers who book ahead, as well as our customers that require assistance on the day. At GWR, we were early adopters of the RDG Passenger Assist app. We, therefore, have been recording and actioning assistance requests through the system over a few years, and are confident our assist figures accurately reflect the demand for Passenger Assistance.

Accessibility

The below questions provide an overview of the Passenger Assist process, provide clarity on how GWR operate and if it will be impacted by the proposed changes. Individual stations

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may have unique challenges and processes, and these will be reflected in the 79 individual EIAs.

1. Who is the person currently responsible for receiving calls and coordinating assistance at this station?

This is done station by station. Usually, it is the person responsible for providing the assistance, such as the dispatcher. However, bigger stations have control rooms that receive the call, whereas others will have a coordinator/supervisor. It is entirely dependent on the operations of that station. However, each station is aware that there needs to be a designated person at each station and on each shift that is responsible for receiving calls. The ticket office is not currently be part of this process unless it is a single staffed station. However, under the new proposals, staff will be more available and able to accept the call.

All our frontline teams have access to the Passenger Assist app and can add/amend bookings through it.

2. How are assistance bookings currently managed and logged at this station?

We use the industry Passenger Assist App. This provides live information of current and new bookings, as well as being able to input passengers who turn up on the day. This app allows assistance requests to be assigned to individuals and has a direct link to Station Connect, the industry telephone directory. All frontline colleagues have access to this through their work phone.

These proposals will improve our ability to log assistance requests. Currently ticket office staff are not involved in the assistance process, and so re-skilling these colleagues, will help provide greater capacity within the whole Passenger Assist process, including logging and actioning assist requests.

3. How do customers currently request TUAG assistance at this station (e.g. via staff, Help Point)? What measures could be put in place to ensure that passengers who have not booked assistance in advance can still receive it in a safe manner?

The proposed changes will not affect the Passenger Assist service and the level of assistance customers can expect at our stations. Staffed stations will remain staffed and therefore passengers who turn up at these stations, will have an improved assistance than was previously the case as ticket office colleagues will be able to assist over the whole station and not just in the fixed location which is currently the case

For unstaffed stations, most of our stations are operated by trains with onboard members of staff. Passengers will be able to receive assistance boarding and alighting their trains from the onboard member of team, as they do today.

For unstaffed stations which are accessible that are operated by DOO trains, we have mobile assistance staff to provide the assistance. Customers can either call the Passenger Assist team, make a booking request through the Passenger Assist app or press a help point, where we will then arrange a mobile assistance staff member to meet them. We provide booked assistance with only 2 hours' notice.

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4. Are station Help Points located in accessible locations with clear signage located nearby?

Yes. All help points meet DfT Design Standards for Accessible Railways.

5. Is there a taxi drop off and pick up point? Is it accessible?

This varies across our 201 stations. All station facilities are outlined <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>

6. Does this station have any Blue Badge parking?

This varies across our 201 stations. All station facilities are outlined <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>

7. Will there always be a member of staff responsible for receiving calls available to answer the dedicated assistance telephone number at all times trains are calling at that station?

The staffing hours of our stations are not changing as part of these proposals. Therefore, the current processes in place for receiving phone calls for the stations affected will remain the same. This includes stations receiving calls for unstaffed stations, the handover protocol being followed, and clear communication made to the onboard team member if the passenger is travelling to an unstaffed station. All our stations have a primary and secondary number and are all uploaded into Station Connect, the industry directory.

All frontline staff members have access to the Passenger Assist app, which has a list of all live and current bookings.

8. Is this station a “hub” for diverts of dedicated assistance telephone numbers for nearby stations? What ramp maintenance checks are currently in place at this station?

There will be no change to current operations around “hub” stations as part of these proposals. Stations are remaining open and staffed for the same hours they currently are advertised.

We have a comprehensive ramp maintenance programme that checks every ramp at every station that we manage. Ramps get maintained annually. Staff are trained to report ramps that look faulty/damaged and told not to use them, until they have been inspected or replaced.

9. Could there be any impact on availability of staff to deliver ramp assistance?

These proposals do not affect the hours the stations are staffed. Passenger Assist and the assistance provided will not be affected. With ticket office staff re-training to multi skilled roles, it may mean that even more staff are available to provide various levels of assistance,

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including ramp provision across a wider number of stations.

10. Will the station be unstaffed at any times when services are still calling there?

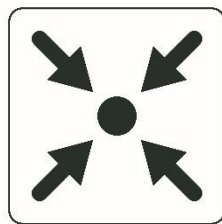
These proposals do not affect the hours the stations are staffed. We have various unstaffed or part staffed stations today where services call outside of staffing hours. However, there is no change to how we operate today.

11. Is it common for trains at this station to be re-platformed at short notice? If yes, please describe action taken to support disabled customers in this situation.

This varies station by station. At some busier stations, re-platforming happens regularly. All assistance is managed through the Passenger Assist App as well as monitoring other industry tools, which highlight where the train will be platformed. This is BAU and the proposals will not affect our ability to deliver when this happens.

12. Where is the current designated assistance meeting point for this station?

All staffed stations have designated meeting points that look like:



Meeting point

Location of these meeting points are outlined on <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>.

At unstaffed stations, passengers are asked to make their way onto the platform where the onboard team will assist.

Meeting points are located where staff will be located and passengers can easily receive assistance.

We will look at all the 79 stations affected by the changes to see if additional Welcome Points are required or if we can use existing meeting points as Welcome Points for retail advice. Welcome Points will be equipped with a Help at Hand button which will connect to a retail trained member of staff if staff are not in the immediate vicinity. Station EIAs will be updated appropriately.

What is the current process at this station for contacting customers with assistance bookings if the booking is affected by disruption and making alternative arrangements?

GWR Passenger Assist team (First Contact Centre) will proactively call all passengers

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affected and make alternative arrangements. This process will remain the same and not be affected by the closure of ticket offices.

13. What are the current processes for checking and reporting faults with: 1. station lifts; 2. station toilet facilities; 3. Help Points; 4. CIS/PA systems?

Station teams do regular checks of the station facilities. These checks can be part of Planned General Inspections (PGIs) or through simply finding a facility out of use on shift. Faults then get reported through our internal maintenance processes and prioritized dependent on the importance of the job.

Station lifts and CIS/PA systems will be directly reported to GWR control who update industry systems, including online information.

These changes do not propose reducing hours a station is staffed and will not affect reporting of faulty facilities. As ticket office staff are no longer in a fixed location they will be available across the whole station and will therefore be able to check facilities and report faults more readily than is the case today.

14. Could the proposed change have any impact on entry or exit routes at the station?

No. All facilities will be open for the same amount of time they currently are.

15. Could the proposed changes result in the permanent closure of any entrances or gates at this station? Could this lead to a reduction in accessibility for disabled passengers to any platform or facility at that station?

No. All facilities will be open for the same amount of time they currently are.

16. What impact could the proposed changes have on the station emergency and evacuation plans? Could this impact how disabled customers are supported in these situations?

No impact. All facilities will be open for the same amount of time they currently are. We are keeping staffing at stations for the hours currently advertised. All current emergency and evacuation procedures will remain unchanged.

17. Could the proposed change have any other impact on: 1. physical accessibility or step free access at this station; 2. how assistance is provided on a booked or turn up and go basis; 3. on disabled people compared to non-disabled people?

There is no change to the facilities that are open or hours a station is staffed. This means that step-free access and provision of assistance will remain unchanged, as part of these proposals. Potentially these areas may be enhanced, with more staff members trained in providing assistance.

The main impact on disabled people, is the change to the retail offering. Customers who do

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not have access to the internet or a smart phone, may rely on ticket office staff to provide information and sell tickets. These proposals aim to mitigate this impact through providing staff to help customers use the TVMs. Retail staff will have handheld mobile ticketing machines to assist selling tickets and the overall amount of TVMs will be reviewed at each individual station. If customers are not able to buy their ticket from their origin station, they will be able to from the onboard member or alighting station, at no extra cost.

The legacy discount tickets are being reviewed and can be sold by the onboard member of staff. An industry approach for how these tickets are sold, will be better for the customer and provide better consistency. We are working with Rail Delivery Group on further options around how these tickets are sold. They will also still be available at stations with a retailing presence.

Consultation

A public consultation on the GWR and industry proposals has taken place. We await the formal outcome to allow us to adapt our proposals to meet the needs of our customers, as well as the modernisation requirements for the industry.

The GWR proposals were presented to the GWR Accessibility Panel and feedback was received directly from them. We also encouraged them, and stakeholder partners involved in disability to submit views directly to Transport Focus and London TravelWatch.

Mitigating Action

The purpose of this proposal is to bring colleagues closer to customers and remove them from a fixed location so they can assist across the whole station. There will be some changes to the way we work and we have developed mitigations to help reduce the impact of these proposals on disabled people. These have been outlined in this document including having retail trained staff at our stations for the same hours as each ticket office, providing these staff with the means to sell products not sold digitally or online, and the provision of Welcome Points with Help at Hand alert buttons.

However, we understand that the stations we operate vary greatly and have differing demographics. Therefore, we have undertaken individual EIAs for each station affected. We will evaluate the proposals and how it impacts each station, whilst applying further mitigation if necessary. These individual EIAs are working documents and will be updated and finalised, once a final proposal has been agreed. These documents will look at the TVM provision, meeting points, how customers access the station, as well as how passengers are to get hold of a staff member.

We are conscious that there are many train operating companies making similar proposals and we will work with our industry partners to try and consider consistent approaches and mitigations where necessary. This is particularly relevant for industry products, such as the disabled persons railcard and the current legacy discounts that are available.

Summary and next steps

The consultation outcome will further our understanding of any concerns or “pain points” that customers may have. We will look at each of these concerns and put in mitigations as appropriate. We will then update our 79 individual EIAs and finalise any mitigations required

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for the proposal to be implemented.

We are continually meeting industry colleagues regularly and looking at providing consistent and customer focused approaches that are cross industry.

The changes GWR are proposing will not reduce staffing hours of stations, will not reduce the accessibility of a station/facilities within a station or reduce the ability to offer Passenger Assistance. Indeed, it has the potential to increase the ability of colleagues to assist across the whole station. Where there is change in the way we work mitigations (as outlined in this document) have been put in place.