

Annexe A

London TravelWatch Questions

Section 1

Easy and widespread availability of tickets

Adequacy of retail facilities

Where passengers are able to buy their tickets from a TVM we have questions about their ability to meet the retail capacity needed if ticket offices close, particularly at stations where ticket office sales are relatively high. This presents the risk of customers facing significant queues to purchase tickets, increasing instances of missed trains or boarding without a ticket. We realise you do have reserve TVMs that could be used but wonder how quick these could be deployed if needed.

Following the consultation, subject to DfT support for the additional spending, we now plan to have retail trained staff at all our stations for the same hours as we currently staff our ticket offices. Initially these staff will have access to existing ticket office sales equipment which can be used to “queue bust” and to retail tickets that are not yet available digitally or on our Ticket Vending Machines (TVM). We will also be updating the TVMs to be able to retail a wider range of tickets and there is a parallel workstream to digitise those tickets not currently available in this form presently. As such digital and self service will become more available for customers.

Following training and procurement we will replace access to the ticket office equipment with hand held devices with a ticket retailing function, which our trained retail staff will use for retailing tickets not available digitally/on our TVMs and for queue busting when necessary.

Our approach will be to help customers move to digital. Our retail staff will be trained to do this and will work with customers to set up digital on their own devices. This face to face guidance will help to reassure customers and give them the confidence to buy tickets in advance of travel. We will also use the opportunity to encourage mobile ticketing to reduce the number of digitally purchased tickets which are collected from TVMs. This will have the added advantage of reducing queues at TVMs.

Where digital purchase is not possible or desired, our retail staff will help customers to use the ticket vending machine. It should be noted that the vast majority of tickets we sell at ticket offices are available on the TVM, where they are not, we are retaining the equipment and the trained staff needed to be able to retail the full range of tickets. This dual approach of trained retail staff available to offer help and advice, along with access to ticket retailing equipment will mean we offer a continued high level of retail service to all our customers, while also offering an increased level of service to customers who need more help around the station.

In addition, while there has been significant switch to digital purchase, we have worked on the basis that we continue to provide a retail capacity that meets today’s demands, without making any further assumption of channel shift – albeit that this is what we expect.

We have included in a separate annexe graphs for Slough, Windsor Central and Castle Bar Park, showing the changes in customer behaviour and retail choices which demonstrate the rise in digital

sales since Covid. It has not been possible to provide the same graph for London Paddington given the difficulty isolating it from tickets originating from other London termini.

Our expectation is that this trend to digital and mobile ticketing will continue, and the use of paper tickets will reduce; particularly as smart ticketing and contactless payments spread further across our network.

We note that there is an intended 18-month transition period for some of the four stations within the London TravelWatch geographical remit, known as 'Appendix B' stations. However, it is not clear if Paddington, Slough and Windsor & Eton Central are all included in this as GWR's website states the latter two stations are due to close their tickets windows from June 2024. We understand there will be an 18-month transition period for Paddington station so we are seeking clarity on the others.

The changes to our proposals mean that we continue to have access to ticket office equipment until staff have handheld devices. This will mean that we can continue to offer the same range of tickets and services, but with staff able to leave ticket offices and offer multi skilled services. We will therefore be able to move to full multi skilling once training is complete.

Over this period, we plan for TVMs to be upgraded to offer a wider variety of tickets, those tickets which are only available by Ticket Office systems will be digitised and we will also continue to promote digital as the best option for customers. This will mean more customers will arrive at stations with their ticket already or, if not, the TVMs will be able to offer a wider variety of tickets which our colleagues will assist with purchasing where necessary.

Changes to ticket offices will follow station EIAs, Crime and Vulnerability assessments, discussions with colleagues and their trades unions and will not be immediate. Stations like Slough and Paddington, 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.

Depending on the updating of TVMs to provide a greater variety of tickets and the transfer to digital we would expect the full process to be complete by March 2025. Colleagues will always be there (within current retailing hours) to assist customers.

We understand that, as part of this transition, some ticket office counters will remain open i.e. they will not be closed straight away, and there will be a phased approach to closures. Whilst this is a welcome mitigation in some regards, we are not sure what impact this will have for those passengers who may need support with purchasing tickets once the transition period is over. This is particularly pertinent for those such as irregular travellers, visitors from elsewhere in the UK or tourists from overseas. The fact there is a planned transition period could possibly hint to an admission that some passengers will find using TVMs challenging both during and after the transition period.

Following the consultation, subject to DfT support for the additional spending, we now plan to have retail trained staff at all our stations for the same hours as we currently staff our ticket offices. Initially these staff will have access to existing ticket office sales equipment which can be used to "queue bust" and to retail tickets that are not yet available digitally or on the TVM.

As we transition from the Ticket Office facilities to the future state we will replace access to the ticket office equipment with hand held tablets with a ticket retailing function, which our trained

retail staff will again use for retailing tickets not available digitally/on the TVM and for queue busting when necessary. This will mean staff are more visible and more available to customers unfamiliar with the station who need help with their tickets, or indeed with any other aspect of their journey.

We will also continue with the phased approach to closing ticket office windows while upgrading TVMs to offer a wider variety of tickets, those tickets which are only available by ticket office systems will be digitised and we will also continue to promote digital as the best option for customers. This will mean more customers will arrive at stations with their ticket already or, if not, the TVMs will be able to offer a wider variety of tickets which our colleagues will assist with purchasing where necessary.

Changes to ticket offices will follow station EIAs, Crime and Vulnerability assessments, discussions with colleagues and their trades unions and will not be immediate. Stations like Slough and Paddington, 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.

Usability, functionality and accessibility of TVMs

We understand that not all tickets are available from TVMs. If your ticket offices were to close this would represent a significant decrease in retail capability at stations, which in the absence of a ticket office will stop some people buying the ticket they need.

Our decision to retain access to ticket office equipment for longer, along with the introduction of hand held ticket machines and the phased closure of ticket office windows at larger stations means that access to products remains unchanged.

We are also working with the Rail Delivery Group and the industry on the development of TVM and digital products making more products available through our TVMs in future. We are already making progress on this and now offer GroupSave in all our TVMs.

Even where tickets are available on a TVM, these are not accessible to all passengers. For example, they may not be at the right height for wheelchair users, and we have had particular concerns from the visually impaired and blind community that touch screens are inaccessible for them. If staff assistance to purchase a ticket from a TVM is not available it will be harder for passengers, particularly Disabled passengers, to purchase a ticket before they board.

We will have retail trained staff at the station to offer help and assistance with TVMs, with the switch to digital and if necessary to sell tickets. They will be available for the same time period as the current ticket office opening hours, fully trained, and also able to provide help to customers on other aspects of their journeys.

We are not making any changes to our existing assistance service and, as such, customers requiring assistance will not be disadvantaged by this change. The movement of colleagues from a fixed location in a Ticket Office to be available across the whole of the station will mean we can assist customers over a greater part of their journey.

Many responses from the public noted that they find TVMs generally difficult to use, for example they can be slow and confusing to navigate. Others noted that it is not uncommon for TVMs to be

out of order, which can result in longer queues at the remaining TVMs or even an inability to buy a ticket at all.

By redeploying staff from our ticket offices to offer help and assistance on the station concourse they will be able to give customers help and advice on how to use TVMs. They will also be able to “queue bust” and to sell tickets if the TVM is out of order.

They will be available at the station for the same hours as the station ticket office is currently staffed, and until they have handheld sales equipment, they will have access to ticket office equipment to retail tickets.

We have also mapped TVM capacity against current ticket office sales, and we will be completing a review of our TVM fleet and will make changes where we feel there is opportunity to better meet customer demand. We have included our Station Retailing Capacity mapping in a separate annexe.

Where there is no cash retail option many passengers who pay for their tickets this way will not be able to buy a ticket before they board their train. This risks worsening customer experience for these passengers and potentially losing industry revenue.

TVMs at Paddington, Slough and Windsor and Eton Central stations all accept cash.

Our multi skilled retail trained staff will also be able to accept cash for sales made by extending the availability of ticket office equipment and the use of hand held devices. This option will be available for the same hours each day as currently offered at the ticket office.

Customers will therefore retain the same options to pay in cash as they have today.

The existing National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCOT) also set out the conditions where a passenger may buy a ticket on board the train, or at their destination, without incurring a penalty fare. This includes purchase where the customer can only pay by cash and no cash option is available to them. Policy guidance and training will be issued to ensure that customers and staff are fully aware so that travel can be made under Section 6.1 NRCOT if necessary.

A migration of ticket sales to online and digital channels could impact certain types of passengers, including but not confined to Disabled passengers. We know from our own research that passengers with a range of characteristics face barriers in using digital sales channels (1 in 6 people in London say they are unable to buy a ticket as they can't use or don't have access to a smartphone or internet connection). These barriers to travel are exacerbated by the complexity and variety of ticket options for rail travel, particularly beyond London and its immediate hinterland. We would like to understand better how far such insights have been reflected in assumptions about future channel shift and in the range of potential mitigations which might be adopted.

The industry has set out its intention to ensure no passenger is left behind as a result of the proposed changes. Specific requirements vary by an individual's disability, and we accept that there will be some customers who will need additional help and support.

We expect more customers to move to digital purchase and TVMs. This is already happening, and we believe that by offering advice and support from trained staff at the station, this will continue to grow. However, we have based our plans to support current levels of transaction and customer use of our ticket offices.

Stations that are changing will have a clearly identified 'Welcome Point'. This will be a focal point that provides any customer who needs support and / or advice a place to start their journey. We

already have meeting points that we use to meet customers who have booked assistance, and in some cases, we may use those existing points.

Each station will be individually assessed, and an appropriate location agreed, and this will form part of updated and detailed EIAs for each station. Our intention is that these 'Welcome Points' will be clearly accessible, visible and close to ticket retailing facilities where that is possible.

Retail trained staff will monitor the Welcome Point to offer advice and support during the hours that ticket offices are currently open for each station. They will also be proactive and approach customers who need help at the TVMs or on the station.

While their primary role is to offer support and guidance to customers to either set up digital purchases or use TVMs they will also have access to a hand held sales device and can help with purchases if necessary.

Many members of the public have said they find the fares system complex and confusing, and they are often unsure of what ticket to buy. While we understand under your proposals staff at stations will be able to help people buy the right tickets at TVMs (where available), there are questions about whether they will have sufficient expertise to navigate the complex fares system. There are also instances where there are staff in multi-skilled roles, and not just retail, so there are questions about whether there will be enough capacity to meet all passengers' needs.

We have reviewed capacity of our TVMs and have included in a separate annexe our analysis which is based on current sales and does not include any further rise in digital sales, albeit that this is something we expect.

In addition, we will now have retail trained staff at the station who can help customers to migrate to digital sales, to using TVMs or where necessary to sell tickets directly. These staff will also be able to offer ticket and journey advice. We also envisage some of our existing station staff in roles outside the ticket office may choose to take on the new multi-skilled role. If this happens, they will be fully trained and will hold a retail competency, so that they can also offer journey and ticket advice, and retail tickets to the same level as today.

The changes will therefore mean that we are able to make efficient use of our skilled retail staff so that they are able to offer the same high quality service, along with additional help and support, as they will no longer be confined to the ticket office.

Can any of the following be provided from a TVM:

The table below sets the availability of each product on a TVM and at our stations going forward, our decision to retain access to ticket office equipment for longer, along with the introduction of hand held ticket machines and the phased closure of ticket office windows at larger stations, and stations with increased ticket offices sales means that there will be continued access to all current products at each station currently with a Ticket Office.

We are also working with the Rail Delivery Group and the industry on the development of TVM and digital products. We are already making progress on this and GWR now offer GroupSave in all our TVMs for instance.

Product	Available at stations
Advance Tickets and Reservations	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices and upgrade of TVMs is complete
Season tickets longer than weekly	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices and upgrade of TVMs is complete

Railcard Sales (National and Regional)	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices
Refunds	Yes - refunds will be possible through the existing ticket office equipment and we will configure the new hand held devices to process refunds as well
National concessions for disabled people (for wheelchair and visually impaired passengers plus a companion)	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices and upgrade of TVMs is complete
Boundary Zone add-ons	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices and upgrade of TVMs is complete
Staff Travel discount	Yes – through use of hand held devices
Buying tickets in advance rather than on the day of travel	Yes – our TVMs offer fares for future dates (tomorrow or the next day) and customers will also be able to buy tickets further in advance through our hand held devices.
Tickets for travel that do not involve the 'host' station (important for people wishing to use split-ticketing arrangements)	Yes - this is currently being added to our TVMs and will be available this Autumn.
Seat reservations	Yes – through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices – also available online
Changing a booking/tickets	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Use of Rail Vouchers	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Use of Rail Warrants	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Ranger and Rover tickets	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Car Parking	Yes – these will be available on our TVMs
Plus Bus tickets	Yes – available on TVMs
Ferry connections	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Group Save	Yes – already available on our TVMs
Off-peak purchases before the off-peak begins (i.e. before 09.30)	Yes - TVMs can be adjusted by station to allow the purchase of off-peak purchase prior to the start of off peak.
Cycle Reservations	Yes – through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices – these are also available on line
Photocards for Season Tickets	The industry has agreed the policy to remove the requirement for a Photocard when purchasing a Season Ticket. Where a form of ID is required for the purchase of a Season Ticket, any reasonable alternative form of ID shall be accepted. Subject to finalising the relevant funding agreements, these changes could be fully implemented by mid-2024. Until this time, it is the intention that customers with no photocard will be able to enter a generic number into retail systems.
Scholar Tickets	Our range of special scholar season tickets are retailed through or in collaboration with partner organisations including local authorities and education establishments. Whilst currently processed through the Ticket Office, we will transition the process to other parts of the organisation as part of this change.
Sleeper Bookings	Given the limited need across the industry sleeper booking are not currently being explored as part of the TVM changes. However, sleeper bookings will be possible at the station through our retail trained staff and their hand held devices
CIV tickets for connections with Eurostar international services	Yes, these will be available through our hand held devices

Will staff be able to access a ticket machine, or be issued with handheld machines to sell tickets not available from the TVM? If so, what reassurance can you offer that you will retain this option?

Our proposals, including the introduction of handheld sales devices, and extended access to ticket office equipment, have been carefully considered. We want to provide the best service possible and the changes will be incorporated into our operating model going forward. We want these changes to work and we will ensure we can retail effectively going forward and with the encouragement to go digital, upgraded TVMs and handheld devices we have a suite of solutions which will achieve this. We will continue to review how we retail as customer habits change so we can match changes as they take place. We have revised our original plans in response to the public consultation and we have a track record of listening and working with our customers and communities.

Providing assistance to travel in a timely and reliable manner

Customer Assistance

Station staff are a vital way in which many passengers receive assistance when travelling. This is not just with regards to buying tickets, but also providing further assistance, information and advice, support during disruption, and improving safety and security. However, we are concerned that under your proposals staff availability will be reduced, and in turn support for passengers will be worse in practice.

We agree about the importance of colleague availability and one of the key tenets of our proposal is to bring underutilised colleagues out from a fixed location to be able to assist over the whole of the station. Following the consultation, we have reviewed our proposals and have made changes to include the use of handheld sales devices, we have also looked at how we support customers needing assistance.

Ticket office staff who are not multi skilled, are not currently able to offer any additional assistance to customers outside the booking office. This is something that multi skilled staff will be able to do. This will however not be as a replacement to our existing assistance service, which will continue as now, but as additional help.

Customers needing help with ticket purchase will have a clearly identified 'Welcome Point' at each station. This would be an initial focal point that provides any customer who needs support and / or advice a place to start their journey.

We already have meeting points that other station staff use to meet customers who have booked assistance, and in some cases, we may use those existing points. Each station will however be individually assessed, and an appropriate location agreed. This will form part of updated and detailed EIAs for each station. Our intention is that these 'Welcome Points' will be clearly accessible and visible and close to ticket retailing facilities where that is possible. Retail trained staff will monitor the Welcome Point to offer advice and support during the hours that ticket offices are currently open for each station.

While their primary role is to offer support and guidance to customers to either set up digital purchases or use TVMs they will also have access to a hand held sales device and can help with purchases if necessary.

Staff will have full training and will be proactive in intervening where they can see that help is needed.

Following the consultation, we have also given some thought to how customers might contact staff if they are not in the immediate vicinity. Our solution is to add a “Help at Hand” device (similar to a call button) to the Welcome Point that connects through to retail trained staff at the station. This will allow customers needing help with retailing to interact directly with our staff so that we can give reassurance and advice even while returning to help.

We have attached in the annexe graphs showing the change in ticket office sales since Covid. It is clear from this that there has been a dramatic change in ticket buying habits and that modernising retailing is the right thing to do.

This does provide scope for efficiency in staffing and the opportunity for a wider multi skilled role in future. Changes will not impact our customer service, including assistance services. We have very high standards of customer service and this will continue.

We note that Paddington station had 34,477 Passenger Assist requests between 01/04/2022 and 31/03/2023. Slough station had 928 Passenger Assist requests between 01/04/2022 and 31/03/2023. Windsor & Eton station had 180 Passenger Assist requests between 01/04/2022 and 31/03/2023. Castle Bar Park station had no passenger assist requests - the station has no step free access.

Ticket office staff are not part of our current passenger assistance service, which at London Paddington is also provided by Network Rail. Assistance will continue as now, including for stations like Castle Bar Park where we will provide alternative travel for customers unable to access the station. There is the potential for greater help for customers who need assistance, particularly customers who Turn Up and Go, as redeployed ticket office staff will be able to offer additional help beyond retail sales.

There are additional concerns that with staff deployed in more multi-skilled roles, they may be stretched too thinly to meet passengers’ needs. Many respondents to the consultation questioned how they will be able to find redeployed staff at stations – while in theory they may be more visible outside of the ticket office, they may in reality be harder to find. At present, passengers have a clear focal point when looking for help from staff in the form of the ticket office. These locations are often set up to provide more accessible support, for example with some guide dogs trained to go to the ticket window, and induction loops to help people hear. Passengers need to have an easy to find place to go to find staff or notify staff that they need assistance. There should also be a simple way for people to know the order in which they will get assistance in the absence of a queuing system to provide clarity and assurance they will be helped, and avoid potential conflict.

Passenger assistance is already and will continue to be a high priority task for both our station and on board colleagues. Currently any GWR colleague whose role is purely ticket office, does not have passenger assistance in their job description and once the passenger has bought their ticket from the ticket office they can be left with no further assistance at the station. It is this demarcation issue that our proposals seek to address.

Once we redeploy colleagues from the ticket office, the level of support they can give to customers in their new multi skilled role will extend beyond the purchase of the ticket and potentially up to boarding of the train.

Where we have multi skilling in place, the change reinforces the current position, where ticket office colleagues do not currently provide assistance, we will be adding to the pool of staff who can help. The new industry multi-skilling grading structure will see all station colleagues able to complete passenger assistance duties.

Our proposals will not change the current position on assistance. We will continue to have staff at the station for the same period of time, they will be available for customers to ask for help, and the flexibility of the new multi skilled role will mean that they may be able to deliver that help themselves, improving the experience for customers who need help. We will place a “Help at Hand” button so colleagues can be reached if they are not immediately available.

We take our responsibilities for assistance very seriously, both for booked and turn up and go customers. We have a team of Accessibility Mentors who run our Try a Train service, offering familiarisation trips, advice and help to groups or individual customers who need reassurance about using rail. We will use this model to offer groups, and individual station users including blind and visually impaired customers, familiarisation opportunities to use the new Welcome Point and Help at Hand button, ensuring that they understand the new process. This will also be open to carers, and disability organisations including Guide Dogs for the Blind.

This is a particular issue at some of the major / busier stations including Paddington, Slough and Windsor & Eton Central. As you know, in times of service disruption, the main concourse can get very busy at Paddington. It is a major interchange and termini station with TfL London Underground, Heathrow Express and Elizabeth line services also calling at Paddington. How will GWR staff identify passengers who need assistance during service disruption and how will passengers locate where they can find support from rail staff?

These proposals do not change our existing customer assistance, service and support. We will continue to have colleagues, and helpdesks at London Paddington. We will also have Welcome Points, with Help at Hand buttons, and retail trained staff monitoring TVMs and queue busting with handheld devices.

By redeploying staff from ticket offices, we will have more staff on the concourse and around the station to offer advice and support to customers during service disruption – making use of the capacity that we now have from the reduced number of sales in the ticket office.

Slough station is a busy interchange especially when events are taking place and Windsor & Eton Central is a major tourist destination serving famous attractions / landmarks and leisure facilities. Again, we are concerned that during times of service disruption passengers will receive a worse service than today and this may disproportionately affect Disabled passengers.

These proposals do not change our existing customer assistance, service and support. We will also have Welcome Points, with Help at Hand buttons, and retail trained staff monitoring TVMs and queue busting with handheld devices during the same hours that the ticket office currently operates. By redeploying staff from ticket offices we will have more staff on the concourse and around the station to offer advice and support to customers during service disruption – making use of the capacity that we now have from the reduced number of sales in the ticket office. Staff will also be able to offer more assistance to customers as they will be able to accompany them if needed within the station, and not be confined to the ticket office.

While Castle Bar Park is not considered an accessible station i.e. it is not step free, we note services can connect for key airport links (changing at Reading for Heathrow

/ Gatwick and Bristol Temple Meads for Bristol airport). There is also an Elizabeth line change at Ealing Broadway for Heathrow (though this is only one per day currently in existing timetable). Some passengers will require assistance at Castle Bar for such services even if they do not necessarily need step free access e.g., a blind person who needs support with wayfinding. We would want to see that this has been factored into the plans.

There is no change to the assistance that we would provide for customers wishing to board trains at Castle Bar Park. This is not currently provided by ticket office staff and will continue to be provided by our assistance team, including the use of alternative transport for customers unable to access the station.

At stations where overall staff presence has been reduced Disabled passengers' ability to 'turn up and go' will be impacted. While mobile staff may be able to offer this service at some stations without static staff, there are concerns about whether this will be able to delivered in a timely and robust way. Additionally, it will inevitably worsen some passengers' experience, with those requiring this service to either pre- book or wait for staff to arrive.

Ticket office staff who are not multi skilled are not part of the current assistance team. We will not be reducing our assistance service and will continue to offer both booked and Turn Up and Go assistance to the same high levels as today. The significant change on how our customers are choosing to buy their tickets does provide scope for efficiency in staffing and the opportunity for a wider multi skilled role in future. Changes will not impact our customer service, including assistance services, bar the potential for a wider pool of multi skilled assistance trained staff being able to help across the station, and not simply from the ticket office. By moving colleagues from a fixed location in the ticket office to a more visible role across the whole of the station we will be adding to, rather than detracting from, the ability to assist customers across our stations.

Preventing unfair penalty fares

Issues relating to ensuring passengers are not penalised if they cannot buy the ticket they require from the station

As outlined previously, proposals to close ticket offices that rely on TVMs that are not fully accessible, do not sell the full product range, can be difficult to use and/or do not accept cash would mean an increase in passengers who are unable to buy the ticket they need before they board the train. Given this, it is important that passengers are made aware that they can board their train without a ticket if they cannot buy the ticket they need from the station, and be confident that they will not be penalised if they do so.

Our revised proposals mean there will be retail trained colleagues with hand held ticket devices at the station for the same hours as the current ticket office is open. This will allow retailing of all tickets not in the TVM and queue busting when necessary. These handheld devices will be able to accept cash payments, and cash is also accepted at TVMs in London Paddington, Slough and Windsor and Eton Central. The same policy applies regarding buying on board if you are not able to at the origin location as is in place today so there will be no detriment to customers.

There are concerns that if these ticket office changes are introduced many passengers will be relying on the good will of ticket inspectors to not issue them a penalty fare. There will be questions around what they would need to provide to prove that they could not buy the right

ticket before travelling. Additionally, signage at stations must not send contradictory messages. For example, penalty fare notices stating passengers are required to have a ticket before boarding a train must be consistent with other notices to instruct passengers to buy certain tickets on board or at their final destination.

The National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT) provide the conditions under which a passenger may travel without a ticket without incurring a penalty fare. This will remain in place and current customer guidance, station signage and information will not need to change. We will issue reminders to staff and customers about Section 6.1 NRCoT (which refers to the conditions that allow current boarding without a ticket). All of the tickets currently available will be available in the future during the retailing hours (which mirror the current ticket office hours) and therefore customers will have the same opportunity to buy a ticket in the future.

Safety and Security

Issues relating to whether passengers feel safe at the station

Passenger feedback so far has highlighted worries around anti-social behaviour and crime, particularly at certain stations, and concerns that these will get worse if there are fewer staff present. This is a particular concern in the evenings and later at night.

We propose to retain multi-skilled staff with a visible presence in the station, who will be able to offer help across the station and not just from behind ticket office windows. They will be at the station for the same hours as the ticket offices are currently open.

There will be no reduction in staff presence, but there is the potential for stations to be safer and for anti social behaviour to be deterred by the greater visibility of staff on and around the station.

We know that Paddington station is centrally located and there is significant nightlife nearby. Passengers using the station to interchange and for onward travel will want to see it well staffed for safety and security assurance.

Paddington is a Network Rail managed station and there are British Transport Police (BTP) based at the station. Network Rail also supply security staff who are based at the station 24 hours a day.

There is also a contingency team of Land Sheriffs who patrol the station on an ad hoc basis and will attend if BTP are unavailable. GWR provide platform and gateline colleagues who will remain at the station.

This is unaffected by the changes to the ticket office.

There are also some concerns about the security of passengers when buying tickets. If a person is situated in a ticket office it is clear they are an official member of staff. However, if they are roving around the station they may be more difficult to identify. While some visual markers will help, for those who are blind or have visual impairments there are questions as to how they will be able to verify the individual helping them is indeed a member of staff. This is a particular worry if the person is helping them with payment involving cash or card details, or requires the use of the customer's personal phone (for example to help them download a ticketing app).

Safety and security is a key priority for GWR. We were the first train operator to achieve the DfT's Safeguarding accreditation and we work closely with both the DfT and British Transport Police (BTP) on Secure Station status. We included a specific feedback session with our local BTP team during the consultation in order to clarify and update them on our plans. We are now working with BTP on a Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment to be completed once discussions on our proposals are

concluded with Transport Focus and London TravelWatch. The assessment was produced by DfT in collaboration with the BTP, and will be completed for each station, forming part of the decision-making process before any ticket office is closed. Colleagues wear identity cards and badges to give confidence to customers when dealing with queries/ transactions.

Our staff will be present and will be monitoring TVMs, we will be proactive in looking for customers needing help. We will also have visible Welcome Points with Help at Hand alerts for customers to contact staff members for help. Our staff will have hand held sales devices and this will further set them apart from other customers. As part of our plans for implementation we are also proposing familiarisation opportunities for disabled customers using our Accessibility Mentors team.

The public consultation feedback so far has highlighted a widespread concern that if ticket offices are closed and Schedule 17 regulation no longer applies, there will be no further protections to prevent train operators removing all station staff in future

without passenger consultation. Clearly, this would not be in the interests of passengers and would be a detriment to rail travel across the country. We believe that staffing is a crucial part of supporting people to use the rail network. An alternative regulatory mechanism covering station staffing would go some way to providing reassurance to passengers and stakeholders on this very important point.

The current Schedule 17 requirement of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA) is very narrow in its scope and only looks at ticket office operation. It is now almost 30 years old and did not anticipate the switch to digital, smartcard and contactless payment. Any future requirement for public consultation should therefore be part of a wider commitment to look at how customers are supported to use rail services, with the priority being customers most in need of in-person support and assistance.

This is being considered by the wider rail industry and the Rail Delivery Group with a recommendation that commitments on staffing levels should be linked to train operators Assisted Travel Policy (ATP).

Lastly, a significant number of public and stakeholder responses have questioned whether proposals to close ticket offices will in reality be cost negative, costing the railways money. While running costs may be lower, if people are deterred from using the rail network the potential fall in revenues may outweigh these savings.

The switch to digital tickets since Covid is significant. Current job roles do not allow for ticket office staff to take on a more efficient wider role. These changes bring opportunities for staff to be closer to customers, allowing them to provide more help and assistance on the station concourse.

We have listened and we have amended our proposals to ensure that:

- there is a visible Welcome Point with easy to use Help at Hand button at each station
- retail staff are at the station for the same hours that the ticket offices are currently staffed
- staff can retail all the tickets and products currently available at the station
- staff can queue bust if needed with handheld devices
- all other aspects of station assistance and operation can continue as now, or be improved by the extension of multi skilled staffing
- TVMs will be upgraded to provide a wider variety of tickets

By revising our proposals we can support the changes that our customers are already making to digital purchase, which is more convenient, and make our stations safer and easier to use; and we can do so in a way that means we can continue to support customers who use cash, are disabled or who need help and assistance to switch to digital purchase or use of TVMs.

We are grateful for the feedback from the consultation which we believe has improved our plans and will help us to continue to grow rail travel and customer numbers.

London TravelWatch Appendix Clarification Questions

Adequacy of retail facilities:

What assumptions have you made about how many / what proportion of people will move to digital if ticket offices are closed?

There has already been a significant switch to digital purchase, particularly post Covid. We have included some graphs in a separate annexe, showing the very rapid and very significant levels of switching. While there are variations across our stations, on average sales at ticket offices have reduced from over 80% in 1996 to around 15% today. Our expectation is that this trend to digital and mobile ticketing will continue, and the use of paper tickets will reduce, particularly as smart ticketing and contactless payments spread further across our network.

We have, however, worked on the basis that we provide a retail capacity that meets today's demands, without making any further assumption of channel shift – albeit that this is what we expect.

Do you have any existing programmes designed to help people migrate to digital and if so, how effective have these been?

The current switch to digital purchase which has been rapid post Covid (as shown on the graphs included in a separate annexe) has happened without campaigning. Customers are choosing to use digital purchase, online and through our app, because it is more convenient and is part of the national switch to digital purchase.

We are now working on a new campaign that will be piloted shortly in a small number of GWR stations and we have added as an appendix a flyer and station poster showing the style of campaign we are currently working on.

Have you assessed who will not / cannot move to digital and the effect on them of closing the ticket office?

Following the consultation, subject to DfT support for the additional spending, we now plan to have retail trained staff at all our stations for the same hours as we currently staff our ticket offices. Initially these staff will have access to existing ticket office sales equipment which can be used to “queue bust” and to retail tickets that are not yet available digitally or on our TVMs. Following training and procurement we will replace access to the ticket office equipment with hand-held tablets with a ticket retailing function, which our trained retail staff will again use for retailing tickets not available digitally/on the TVM and for queue busting when necessary. Our approach will be to help customers move to digital. Our retail staff will be trained to do this and will work with customers to set up digital on their own devices. This face-to-face guidance will help to reassure customers and give them the confidence to buy tickets in advance of travel. We will also use the opportunity to encourage mobile ticketing to reduce the number of digitally purchased tickets which are collected from TVMs. This will have the added advantage of reducing the potential for queues at TVMs. Where digital purchase is not possible or desired, our retail staff will help customers to use the ticket vending machine. It should be noted that the majority of tickets we sell at ticket offices are available on the TVM, where they are not, we are retaining the equipment and the trained staff needed to be able to retail the full range of tickets. We will also be updating the

TVMs to be able to retail a wider variety of tickets. Separate workstreams are underway to digitise those tickets which are not currently available in this form. This dual approach of trained retail staff available to offer help and advice, along with access to ticket retailing equipment will mean we offer a continued high level of retail service to all our customers, while also offering an increased level of service to customers who need more help around the station. The changes to our proposals mean we can now provide the same level of retail service to customers who will not/cannot move to digital. We are maintaining the current level of retail staffing capability and products will continue to be available for purchase at the station. There should, therefore, be no impact on this group of customers. We will continue to encourage and support customers to move across to digital where they can, as it offers a more convenient service, purchased at home (or even enroute) so customers can arrive at the station secure in the knowledge they have a valid ticket.

Do you have any forecast of the impact on revenue – i.e. in how many people will no longer travel as a result or will now travel without paying?

We are not forecasting a drop in travel or revenue. Having listened to feedback and made changes to our original proposals we will now be able to offer customers both an improved customer service and an equivalent ticket sales service. Staff will be better able to respond and help customers outside the booking office, making our stations safer, more pleasant to use and services more reliable. We will also still have retail trained staff able to offer advice and guidance with access to ticket sales equipment if needed. We have included several graphs in a separate annexe showing the change in customer behaviour at a number of stations including Henley-on-Thames. This station has not had a member of ticket office staff for some time, and the graph shows the changes that customers made to other channels without additional help from any member of station staff.

Do you intend to issue station staff with handheld ticket machines so they can still offer direct face to face retailing to those that need this support to access the full range of tickets?

Yes

What reassurance/ evidence can you provide that retail arrangements at each station will have sufficient capacity for the ticket sales displaced from the ticket office, especially at peak hours and at those stations with a higher than average proportion of sales from the ticket office?

We have reviewed TVM capacity for all affected stations. This has shown where TVMs can already manage with ticket office sales transferring across (see separate annexe Stations Retailing Capacity Report). Where capacity is tighter, at our larger, multi-window stations, as well as redeployed ticket office staff having access to retail equipment, we will be retaining ticket office windows for longer while monitoring TVM capacity as customers switch to digital or become more confident with TVM purchase. We have also included in our annexe several graphs showing the change in ticket sales, including Castle Bar Park station. This station has not had a member of ticket office staff for some time, and the graph shows the changes that customers made, without additional help from any member of station staff.

In addition to our retail trained staff having access to ticket sales equipment we plan to close ticket office windows more gradually at larger stations to reflect the change in behaviour over time. Our plan is for TVMs to be upgraded to offer a wider variety of tickets, those tickets which are only available by ticket office systems will be digitised and we will also continue to promote digital as the best option for customers. This will mean more customers will arrive at stations with their ticket already or, if not, the TVMs will be able to offer a wider variety of tickets which our colleagues will assist with purchasing where necessary.

Colleagues will always be there (within current retailing hours) to assist customers.

Has any assessment of the TVM capacity at each station has been carried out? This is both in terms of overall capacity and 'remaining' capacity – i.e. factoring in existing sales and Ticket on Departure collection per hour from the TVM?

We have reviewed TVM capacity for all affected stations. This has shown where TVMs can already manage with ticket office sales transferring across (see separate annexe Station Retailing Capacity Report). Where capacity is tighter, at our larger, multi-window stations, as well as redeployed ticket office staff having access to retail equipment, we will be retaining ticket office windows for longer while monitoring TVM capacity as customers switch to digital or become more confident with TVM purchase. This assessment was made without the addition of the hand-held sales equipment which add a further retail channel that can be used to queue bust, if needed. We will also maintain access to ticket office equipment, supplemented by the use of handheld devices.

What mitigations do you intend to put in place to help staff ‘queue bust’ at busy times – for example, will staff have access to handheld devices to sell tickets directly?

Our updated proposal will introduce handheld ticket machines for colleagues who are redeployed from the ticket office, this will allow colleagues to queue bust where appropriate. We will keep the current ticket office equipment in place whilst this transition takes place.

How will the adequacy of retail arrangements at stations be monitored and reported (including to passengers)? What KPIs will be in place?

Details of ticket retailing arrangements, including the times when trained retail staff will be at the station, will be on both the national rail website and our own gwr.com and we will monitor against planned delivery.

What impact is there on impartial retail obligations – something that currently applies to ticket offices. Will similar obligations be put onto other channels?

These changes will have no impact on our requirement to retail travel tickets in an impartial manner, through whichever channel the customer selects.

Usability, functionality and accessibility of Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs)

The table in our answer above sets the availability of each product on a TVM, our decision to retain access to ticket office equipment for longer, along with the introduction of hand-held ticket machines and the phased closure of ticket office windows at larger stations, and stations with increased ticket offices sales means that there will be continued access to all current products at each station currently with a Ticket Office. We are also working with the Rail Delivery Group and the industry on the development of TVM and digital products.

We are already making progress on this and GWR now offer GroupSave in all our TVMs. We were also pleased to work with the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership to create the first digital regional Railcard for Devon and Cornwall, which is showing excellent take up since its launch. If a customer is not however able to buy a ticket before travel because it is not available at the station of boarding National Rail Conditions of Travel – NRCOT Section 6.1 will apply allowing purchase at the first available opportunity without penalty.

Will staff be able to access a ticket office machine or be issued with handheld machines to sell tickets not available from the TVM?

Yes, our revised plans mean that staff would have access to ticket office machines until we had procured and trained them on the use of hand-held sales devices. These would be used primarily for tickets not available digitally or in TVMs but could also be used to queue bust. We are also working with the Rail Delivery Group and industry partners on development activity for our TVM’s including the potential for “staff mode”.

How will passengers access these products and services in future?

The changes we have already made and are making to our TVMs will give customers the opportunity to buy more of these products through a TVM.

More products will also be available online which will improve the range of products offered to customers, the majority of whom, are already using digital channels, as well as offering a route for customers who currently use ticket offices.

In addition, our amended proposals mean we will also have access to ticket office equipment/handheld devices with trained retail staff at the station to help customers who are unable to purchase online or through the TVM.

How will someone who cannot use a TVM, for example a disabled person, purchase a ticket?

The industry has set out its intention to ensure no passenger is left behind as a result of the proposed changes. Specific requirements vary by an individual's disability, and there will be some customers who will need additional help and support.

Stations that are changing will therefore have a clearly identified 'Welcome Point'. This would be an initial focal point that provides any customer who needs support and / or advice a place to start their journey. We already have meeting points that other station staff use to meet customers who have booked assistance, and in some cases we may use those existing points. Each station will be individually assessed, and an appropriate location agreed and this will form part of updated and detailed EIAs for each station. Our intention is that these 'Welcome Points' will be clearly accessible and visible from the station entrance and close to ticket retailing facilities where that is possible.

A retail trained member of staff will monitor the Welcome Point to offer advice and support during the hours that ticket offices are currently open for each station.

While the primary role of the staff member is to offer support and guidance to customers to either set up digital purchases or use TVMs they will also have access to a hand-held sales device and can help with purchases if necessary.

How will people summon a member of staff if they need help while using a TVM (i.e. the equivalent of the 'red light' at a supermarket self-checkout till)?

As our retail trained staff will be multi skilled, they may also choose to assist customers to other areas of the station, or to help with other aspects of keeping the station safe and pleasant to use. Their primary role however, particularly during the early stages of change, will be to monitor the Welcome Point and the TVM.

Staff will have full training and will be proactive in intervening where they can see that help is needed. Following the consultation, we have also given some thought to how customers might contact staff if they are not in the immediate vicinity.

Our solution is to add a "Help at Hand" device (similar to a call button) to the Welcome Point that connects through to the retail trained staff at the station. This will allow customers needing help with retailing to speak directly to the person waiting, so that we can give reassurance and advice even while returning to help. All our stations also have help-points on platforms which connect directly to the national rail contact centre should a customer reach the platform without a ticket. These are always operational and can offer customer reassurance such as boarding without a ticket and purchasing on board when they cannot do so at the station.

Is it proposed to upgrade TVMs to offer remote access/video help facilities?

Our TVMs do not offer audio or video remote access. This is something that is being considered elsewhere. We will monitor progress and have not ruled this out as something for the future, albeit that it is not in our current proposals.

We will have retail trained staff at the station monitoring TVM use with a hand-held sales device, who will proactively step in to help, along with a clearly identified Welcome Point with a Help at Hand button that will link directly to a retail trained member of staff.

Have you assessed the accessibility of existing TVMs, both in terms of their location at the station and useability (i.e are passengers protected from the weather when queuing, are they hard to see in sunlight)? Do you have any plans to relocate TVMs?

All our TVMs are in accessible locations. We continually review their locations to make sure they are best placed for our customers and will move TVMs if necessary to help. This is part of our regular checks on customer experience and service quality. We will be reviewing usage to see if we need to move any TVMs around our estate, and we will have some new additions, where TVMs are installed or moved we will check the location is suitable and will include in our final updated station EIA.

What are the contractual SLAs for fixing out of order TVMs and have these been reviewed given the future importance of TVMs? For example, in relation to replenishing consumables, i.e. ticket stock and ink, and repairs to faults

We are confident that our service level agreement for fault repair is among the best, if not, the best in the industry. We use an availability SLA and measure supplier performance against availability of 99% per four-week period. We manage replenishment of TVM ticket stock/ink etc ourselves and will continue to do so using the retail trained staff that we are retaining at every station.

Will there be standards for maximum queuing times at TVMs and how will queue lengths be monitored?

We do not propose to introduce maximum queuing times for TVMs, our review of TVM capacity has shown where TVMs can already manage with ticket office sales transferring across (see separate Station Retailing Capacity Report). Where capacity is tighter, at our larger, multi-window stations, as well as redeployed ticket office staff having access to retail equipment, we will be retaining ticket office windows for longer while monitoring TVM capacity as customers switch to digital or become more confident with TVM purchase.

Availability of staff to provide retail advice and help

Are staffing levels sufficient to ensure assistance with ticket purchases can still be offered at busier times alongside other duties? Do you have any evidence to support this?

The primary focus of our multi skilled retail trained staff will be supporting customers with their ticket purchases. This focus along with the now proposed hand-held ticketing equipment will ensure our colleagues can be agile and responsive to customer needs. We will also use a phased approach to the closure of ticket windows at larger stations and stations with higher levels of ticket office sales, so that we can be sure the combination of TVM(s) and queue busting hand-held devices will work. We would expect the number of customers using TVMs to reduce as colleagues also assist in helping them transfer to digital purchases.

What training will multi-functional staff have in ticketing/product range to ensure they can provide expert assistance necessary to navigate the complex fares system and ensure passengers get the right ticket? Will this replicate the training given to existing ticket office staff?

It is our intention to redeploy existing trained retail staff from our ticket offices into the multi skilled role. When training new staff for the multi-skilled role, the competence level for ticket retailing will be at the same level and require the same training as it does today. Multi skilled staff who are using our hand-held sales devices will therefore have the same training and competence levels as existing retail colleagues.

How will people find a staff member at the station if they are no longer in the ticket office: will there be a central point / method for calling them? What will the queuing arrangements be when multiple passengers want help/advice?

We already have meeting points to meet customers who have booked assistance, and in some cases, we may use those existing points. Each station will be individually assessed and an appropriate location agreed as a Welcome Point. Our intention is that these 'Welcome Points' will be clearly accessible and visible from the station entrance and close to any ticket retailing facilities where possible. A retail trained member of staff with a hand-held retail device, will monitor the Welcome Point to offer advice and support during the hours that ticket offices are currently open. We would expect customers to queue naturally at the welcome point as they do now for the ticket office. In addition, the welcome point will be equipped with a Help at Hand button which will link them directly to the retail trained member of staff who can offer advice and reassurance to customers waiting.

What should passengers do if they cannot find the ticket they need on a TVM and no staff are available to help? What evidence does the passenger need to ensure any revenue protection action against them can be withdrawn?

Customers will be able to use the Help at hand button at the Welcome Point to alert staff if they are not in the immediate vicinity. We will have records of any staff absence and any TVM faults and our Revenue Protection teams will also be able to speak to the station to verify any issues – as they do now.

How long is a passenger expected to try and find a staff member to help them?

Our Help at Hand button will provide a digital link to retail trained staff who will be able to offer advice while returning to help them.

Paying by Cash

If not all TVMs accept cash, are those that do in an accessible location?

All our TVMs are in accessible locations, and we have TVMs that accept cash transactions at Slough, Windsor Central and Paddington. We will also switch on the cash facility on TVMs where that facility has been suppressed, so customers who wish to use cash can do so on these enabled machines.

GWR retail staff manage the replenishment of the cash functions on the TVMs, this will continue, and we do not anticipate any issue from increased use of cash at the TVM.

Our retail trained staff will also be able to accept cash for sales made through extending the availability of ticket office equipment and the use of hand-held devices. This option will be available for the same hours each day as currently offered at the ticket office. Staff will have access to secure facilities to deposit cash.

If a person cannot pay by cash what arrangements will exist to enable them to travel? And will there be clear signage at the station to inform passengers about this?

The combination of TVMs able to accept cash and our use of hand-held ticket sales devices means that cash payments will remain possible at our stations. In the interim we will maintain our current ticket office retailing equipment to allow cash sales to take place if necessary.

The National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT) provide the conditions under which a passenger may travel without a ticket without incurring a penalty fare. Interim policy guidance and training will be issued to ensure that customers are able to travel under Section 6.1 NRCoT when necessary.

We have ticket examiners able to sell tickets on many of our Driver Only services, when they are not available, and customers have travelled without a ticket under Section 6.1 tickets should be purchased at the destination station.

Issues relating to whether passengers requiring assistance to travel receive that assistance in a timely and reliable manner.

When station staffing hours are reduced how will turn up and go assistance for disabled passengers be maintained?

Staffing hours are not reduced at any station as a result of our revised proposals.

If this is reliant on onboard staff how will passengers be assisted to move around the station to the platform / to purchase the correct ticket / get advice / journey plan? How will passengers alert the guard if they haven't pre-booked assistance?

Not applicable – station staffing hours remain the same.

How will people summon help if staff are not there?

Customers will be able to use our “Help at Hand” button during retailing hours which will be at our Welcome Meeting Points. This device will connect to our retail trained staff. Whether the assistance is booked or is “turn up and go” passenger assistance is a priority and this is an area that we expect to be able to improve with multi skilled staff.

Do all your stations have tactile paving fitted along the entire length of each platform face – the need for this is increased if the station is to have no or less staff in future? If not, which stations do not have this? What additional mitigations can be taken to ensure the safety of visually impaired passengers?

We do not consider that there is increased risk from the changes we are proposing. We are retaining station staff to match the hours currently covered by our ticket offices and will have a Help at Hand button to alert staff if not immediately present at the Welcome Point. Our existing accessibility service is completely unchanged by the process.

However, as ticket office staff will not be restricted to the ticket office, they will be able to play a greater role in station safety, helping customers to the platform (something they cannot currently do). There is the potential therefore to reduce risk at stations which do not yet have tactile paving in place.

Are staffing levels sufficient to ensure assistance can still be offered at busier times alongside other duties? Do you have any evidence or analysis that addresses this?

At GWR we provide more assistance for customers than any other Train Operator (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. The vast majority of these assistance requests are provided by dedicated assist teams and dispatchers. This is because currently any GWR colleague whose role is purely ticket office, does not have passenger assistance in their job description and are not able to help. This means once a passenger has bought their ticket from the ticket office ticket office staff are not able to give further assistance at the station. It is this demarcation issue that our proposals seek to address.

Once we redeploy colleagues from the ticket office, under the new multi-skill grading structure all colleagues will be able to complete passenger assistance duties. The level of support they can give in their new multi skilled role will therefore extend beyond the purchase of their ticket, potentially up to boarding of the train, and we will increase the pool of staff to help with assistance.

What training will multi-functional staff have in ticketing/product range to ensure they can provide expert assistance necessary to navigate the complex fares system and ensure passengers get the right ticket? Will this replicate the training given to existing ticket office staff?

It is our intention to redeploy existing trained retail staff from our ticket offices into the multi skilled role. When training new staff for the multi-skilled role, the competence level for ticket retailing will be at the same level and require the same training as it does today. Multi skilled staff who are using our hand-held sales devices will therefore have the same training and competence levels as existing retail colleagues.

What assurances can you provide that staff will not be pulled away to other duties due to understaffing?

Passenger assistance is already and will continue to be a high priority task for both our station and on-board colleagues. Where we have multi skilling in place, the change reinforces the current position. Where ticket office colleagues currently do not provide assistance, the changes mean we will be adding to the pool of staff who can help, as the new industry multi-skilling grading structure will see all station colleagues able to complete passenger assistance duties.

How will staff at the station know if passengers need help to board?

Our proposals will not change the current position. Customers will have either booked assistance through the industry wide passenger assistance app or may be a turn and go customer. If the customer has used the app, we will receive notification through the app (and an advice call from previous station if relevant) and we will meet the customer in the same way that we do today. If the customer has not booked assistance, they will arrive at the Welcome Point and either our retail trained member of staff will be able to help them, or to call on other members of the station team (where these are available) to help. Customers will be able to use the Help at Hand call device to alert staff if they are not immediately met at the Welcome Point. Whether the assistance is booked or is “turn up and go” the passenger will receive priority focus. Our retail staff will match the current ticket office opening hours and will be able to offer enhanced assistance from being on the concourse and not behind the ticket office window.

Ticket Office staff who are not multi skilled have no current role in assistance and they are not able to help customers who need help to board. The flexibility of the new multi skilled role will mean that they may be able to deliver that help themselves, improving the experience for customers who need help.

How will the focal point of the ticket office/ window be replicated?

The focal point will be our Welcome Point, we will review each station and agree the location, these will be close to the former ticket office, which is where the majority of designated 'meeting points' for assistance are currently at our stations. Our trained staff will regularly check these areas, largely basing themselves in these areas, where they will be available to customers, and able to proactively

approach customers who approach the no longer staffed ticket office. We also plan to have a “Help at Hand” device at these points which will connect to the retail staff member on duty.

Will induction loop facilities be provided elsewhere on the station/concourse?

We will review each station to agree the Welcome Point and will use this review to determine if our current induction loops need to be moved. This will be included in the updated, detailed, individual station EIAs.

What mechanisms will exist to monitor instances where assistance is not provided and to investigate why it happened?

We take our responsibilities for assistance very seriously, both for booked and turn up and go customers, and were the first train operator to achieve DfT Safeguarding Accreditation. As well as our mobile care team, we also have a team of Accessibility Mentors who run our Try a Train service, offering familiarisation trips, advice and help to groups or individual customers who need reassurance about using rail. We will use this model to offer groups, and individual station users including customers who use Guide Dogs and other animals for support, familiarisation opportunities to use the new Welcome Point and Help at Hand button, ensuring that they understand the new process. This will also be open to carers, and disability organisations. We have rolled out BSL translation app to all our frontline staff and we understand the importance of regular review. We have existing monitoring in place for all our assistance and this will continue. This includes reviewing data from the passenger assistance app, and customer feedback about assistance and will always include an investigation if assistance is not provided, or if a customer makes a complaint or observation about the quality of our assistance.

Issues relating to whether passengers can get the information they require to plan and make a journey, including during periods of disruption.

How will ancillary information traditionally displayed in the ticket office be provided e.g. timetable leaflets, local travel information, local bus timetables etc?

Our stations will remain open. Ancillary information will continue to be available in a variety of places including waiting rooms and concourses. We will also have staff at the station who will be able to provide advice including providing printed journey information.

What devices will staff have – e.g. will they be able to print journey itineraries for passengers who ask for one?

The handheld devices that we are proposing to introduce will be able to retail tickets and print journey itineraries.

Are help points at every station and are they in an accessible location?

All our stations have accessible help-points which meet DfT Design Standards for Accessible Railways. In addition to the help-points, which link to the National Rail Enquiry contact centre and are operational 24 hours a day, we have existing agreed meeting points for assistance and we will be reviewing each station to agree a Welcome Point with Help and Hand call button. These points will be monitored by retail trained staff who will be available to help for the same period as the existing ticket office hours. We are making no changes to how we manage our current assistance, bar the additional support of ticket office staff having increased flexibility and the opportunity to help customers outside the confines of the ticket office.

Are there any plans to position help points in concourse areas near ticket offices to avoid people having to walk along platforms or over bridges to summon help?

We will not be moving our existing help-points. It is important that these are available for customers on the platform for use when the station is not staffed and advice is needed. We will be reviewing our existing Meeting Points, creating Welcome Points which will be monitored by station staff during

retail hours and equipped with Help at Hand buttons to alert staff if they are not in the immediate vicinity.

What are you existing processes and SLAs for monitoring that help points are working and the response time to faults? What future commitments can you give?

We do not envisage increased use of help-points following the changes, given our proposal to use Welcome Points with Help at Hand call buttons; particularly as we propose to maintain staffing hours. Help-points are primarily in situ to provide remote support when the station is unstaffed. That said, help-points are regularly checked as part of our robust Planned General Inspections (PGIs) and by colleagues through the course of daily duties.

Help points are also measured / reported on as part of the recently introduced Service Quality programme which is audited by an external body on behalf of the DfT. We would introduce the same level of planned and daily checks for the Welcome Points and Help at Hand button and it is likely that the DfT would also include both in their Service Quality programme in future.

How will you monitor/report time taken to answer help point calls / proportion not answered?

We do not consider that our proposals will increase the use of help-points on the platform, customers will be able to seek advice from retail trained staff in the station, meeting them at Welcome Points with a dedicated Help at Hand button. Use of the station help-points, including use of the emergency button will therefore continue as now. That said, these are an important customer resource and there is a national contract in place to monitor speed of reply and quality of response. We will manage our Help at Hand buttons through the retail trained staff retained at the station in multi skilled roles. We also envisage more station colleagues switching to the new multi skilled role which will give greater coverage for the Help at Hand button (located at our Welcome Points).

Issues relating to ensuring passengers are not penalised if they cannot buy the ticket they require from the station.

What changes to ticketless travel rules will be made / where will these be written down to give people who can't buy a ticket some assurances that they won't be penalised?

Our revised proposals mean there will be retail trained colleagues with hand-held ticket devices at the station for the same hours as the current ticket office is open. This will allow for retailing of tickets not in the TVM and queue busting when necessary. These handheld devices will be able to accept cash payments, and we will also switch on the cash facility on TVMs where that facility has been suppressed, so customers who wish to use cash can do so on these enabled machines. We plan a phased closure of our ticket office windows and a review of our TVM fleet locations to best meet demand (including installing some additional TVMs). This should mean customers will be able to buy tickets before boarding as they do now. The National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT) provide the conditions under which a passenger may travel without a ticket without incurring a penalty fare. This will remain in place and current customer guidance and information will not need to change.

We will issue reminders to staff and customers about Section 6.1 NRCoT (which refers to the conditions that allow current boarding without a ticket).

What processes will be in place so that passengers do not have to publicly declare/evidence their disability to buy on the train without penalty?

We are currently working with the Rail Delivery Group and industry partners to develop a policy and an effective approach for facilitating Special Disabled Fares (SDF) The intention is to provide those passengers meeting the SDF eligibility criteria with a Disabled Persons Railcard (DPRC). This will mean they will be able to purchase discounted tickets from an increased number of retail channels and across a broader range of ticket types, for example, TVMs and online channels, making them much more accessible. This will require changes to policy, backend and retail systems. Subject to finalising the relevant funding agreements and assessments, these Rail Delivery Group consider changes could be fully implemented by mid-2024. Until then, passengers will be able to purchase

their tickets at our stations through the retaining ticket office equipment for longer and the introduction of handheld ticket devices. Customers will also be able to continue to use our dedicated freephone assistance service which can also facilitate SDF.

How will you review signage to avoid sending inconsistent messages about revenue protection?

All our station signage, printed materials and online advice will be reviewed, and where necessary amended, to ensure we avoid any inconsistent messaging about revenue protection. Although as all tickets currently available for purchase will remain so we do not expect to need to make any changes.

Issues relating to whether passengers can continue to use facilities at a station.

Are there any proposed mitigations designed to keep facilities open even where staff have been withdrawn.

We are not proposing to withdraw staff from stations and all facilities will continue to be accessed as they are now.

And if so when will any proposed mitigations be implemented?

Not applicable staff are not being withdrawn

And if facilities are to be open when staff have been withdrawn ...

Not applicable staff are not being withdrawn.

Issues relating to whether passengers feel safe at the station.

Have you liaised with the British Transport Police about the impact on staff and passenger security?

Safety and security are a priority for GWR. We were the first train operator to achieve the DfT's Safeguarding accreditation and we work closely with both the DfT and British Transport Police (BTP) on Secure Station status. We included a specific feedback session with our local BTP team during the consultation to clarify and update them on our plans. We are now working with BTP on a Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment to be completed once discussions on our proposals are concluded with Transport Focus and London TravelWatch. The assessment was produced by DfT in collaboration with the BTP, and will be completed for each station, forming part of the decision-making process before any ticket office is closed.

Are any mitigations planned?

Once the Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment is completed, we will review and assess the need for mitigations and agree any changes to be made.

Is CCTV coverage adequate, is it accessible 'live' from control and is there resource to monitor it remotely when required?

We use various CCTV options including live, comprehensive coverage at larger and busier locations, which is fully resourced for monitoring. We regularly review coverage as part our work on Secure Stations and Safeguarding and CCTV coverage will be considered in the Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment. There will also be no reduction in the number of hours that the station is staffed, and as ticket office staff who are not currently multi skilled, will in future be able to leave the ticket office, our staff presence will be more visible and available to help customers across the station.

Future changes

What assurances can be provided that the level of station staffing outlined in the proposal is delivered and maintained in the future?

Our proposals, including level of station staffing, have been carefully considered to deliver an improved level of service to our customers. We are confident we can deliver, and the changes will be incorporated into our operating model going forward. We have also revised our original plans in response to the public consultation. Whilst we will continue to review how it is best to serve our customers in the future, we believe this model will be fit for the retailing that we see today.

Can commitments be made that a fixed, advertised staff presence will not subsequently be removed without further passenger consultation?

The current Schedule 17 requirement of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA) is very narrow in its scope and only looks at ticket office operation. It is now almost 30 years old and did not anticipate the switch to digital, smartcard and contactless payment. Any future requirement for consultation should therefore be part of a wider commitment to look at how customers are supported to use rail services, with the priority being customers most in need of in-person support and assistance. This is being considered by the wider rail industry and the Rail Delivery Group with a recommendation that commitments on staffing levels should be linked to train operators Assisted Travel Policy (ATP).

How would any new staffing arrangements be advertised to passengers (in a similar manner to the way ticket office opening times are advertised)?

We will state the hours that retail trained staff, with access to ticket sales equipment, are available on the National Rail website, on our own website, gwr.com, and on station welcome posters.

How will compliance with any agreed new hours be monitored and reported?

We will be able to monitor use of ticket sales equipment and colleague attendance as we do now and will use as part of our regular management monitoring.

What arrangements have been made to provide staff cover for things like sickness and holiday?

Our staffing resource headcount has been factored to provide coverage for sickness, annual leave and training release.

Timing of mitigations

What guarantees can you offer that any mitigations proposed will be implemented before the implementation of a ticket office change?

The mitigations we plan are for handheld ticket devices to be used. Until staff have been trained and these are available staff will continue to have access to ticket office equipment. We will also monitor TVM capacity and phase the closure of ticket office windows at larger and busier stations. Changes will not be made before the completion of our TVM fleet review, our Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment and individual station Equality Impact Assessments which will include the location and operation of Welcome Points and Help at Hand buttons.

Is there any reason that London TravelWatch should not object to the change until the mitigations have implemented and can be demonstrated to be adequate?

Following our changes following the consultation we believe the proposal we have delivers a better customer service across our business. It utilises our colleagues fully and increases the opportunity to assist customers throughout their journey through the station. We will need approval from London TravelWatch to move to the next stage but we have been clear that the ticketing options available today will remain but, over time, will be delivered in a different way through handheld machines, upgraded TVMs, greater digitalisation whilst ensuring we leave no one behind. Without approval we cannot give our customers or indeed our colleagues clarity about our plans. This will create further uncertainty about the future of our stations. We are committed to the mitigations that we have offered, to put them in place we need a firm, clear decision before we can progress their implementation.

Has any necessary funding / agreement been secured to implement any mitigations?

The Rail Delivery Group has agreed in principle with the Department for Transport that funding support for the Retail Enhancements will be available. The release of this funding is subject to the conclusion of the consultation process. In his letter to the Chair of the Transport Select Committee, dated 11 September 2023, the Minister of State for Transport, Huw Merriman MP confirmed that no final decisions will be made until after the consultations have been concluded. He stated “*When authorising Operators to commence TSA consultations, the Department set out at range of parameters with which an Operator's proposal must comply. Operators then took action to consult on ticket office changes in line with the rail industry's Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA). The*

Department has not approved any proposal put forward by an Operator and will not do so until consultations are concluded.” The letter also clarifies the Minister's expectations that Train Operating Companies would be modifying their proposals. We have also discussed this with our DfT contract team and they have indicated that our approach is in line with Ministerial pronouncements.

Liaison with other operators

What assessment has been made of the impact on services operated by other train companies?

Have those operators agreed to the changes?

We are engaged with other operators both directly and through the Rail Delivery Group about including our revised plans to match current station opening hours and to use hand-held retail equipment, Welcome Points and Help at Hand devices. We will explore any impact they identify on their operations. Given there is no change in hours of operation and all other station facilities are unaffected we do not expect there to be any major issues, and none have been currently identified.

Have you liaised with Network Rail around staffing plans for Paddington station?

We are engaged with Network Rail about our proposals for London Paddington including our revised plans to match current station opening hours and to use hand-held retail equipment, Welcome Points and Help at Hand devices. We will explore any impact they identify on their operations. Given there is no change in hours of operation and all other station facilities are unaffected we do not expect there to be any major issues, and none have been currently identified.