

27 September 2023

██████████
██████████
London TravelWatch,
Europoint,
5-11 Lavington Street,
London,
SE1 ONZ

Dear ██████████

Ticket offices: response to clarifying questions

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding our proposal to close all ticket offices.

As was the intention of this public consultation, we have engaged customers and stakeholders, and we are grateful for your letter and the included clarifying questions, as they effectively summarise their key issues and concerns.

While we are committed to modernising our services in line with our customer behaviours and expectations, we also understand that some passengers have particular challenges and concerns about the transition process and what it might mean for them. We have listened and are bringing forward mitigations, so we can continue to deliver high quality services for all our customers as we make the transition to digital.

Please find enclosed answers to your questions, which we hope will alleviate the issues and concerns raised in regard to our proposal.

Our position

The SWR position remains that we propose to close all ticket offices and provide more face-to-face support to customers. We must modernise and update our stations so that we can:

- Embrace technology to catch up with customers' behaviours and expectations
- Offer customer service that aligns with what customers want and need
- Provide better career pathways for our colleagues
- Make the railway financially sustainable and provide better value for taxpayers

We intend to modernise by:

Multiskilling our colleagues

We know that our customers value our station colleagues because of the information, advice and support that they provide at stations across the network.

To enable more of our colleagues to support customers in this way, we are committed to transitioning station colleagues into new multi-skilled roles. In these new roles, SWR colleagues across the network will have the skills to help customers with different aspects of their journeys - including ticket purchasing.

Modernising our retail offer

Over recent years, we have seen customer habits change radically, with a significant increase in digital ticket purchasing. This is a trend that we anticipate will continue in the years ahead.

To support more customers in making the transition to digital ticket purchasing, the industry will be streamlining ticketing and fares. This will simplify digital ticket purchasing and increase the number of ticket types available to purchase digitally.

Developments since publication

As is always the purpose of effective public consultation, we have listened to feedback from yourselves and a range of stakeholders. Recognising that we have not had your formal station by station feedback yet, we have received sufficient feedback from the consultation process to reflect on and review our proposals, and as a result, we are bringing forward two key mitigations:

- We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours. When a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.
- For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

On the basis of these developments, while our underlying position remains the same, the enclosed responses to the questions that you've set us reflect these two key mitigations.

Ultimately, our customers will benefit from the changes we propose implementing, through much increased visibility and availability of staff. Our multi-skilled teams will work front-of-house to help our customers with their travel enquiries, being proactively available to offer assistance, guidance and where necessary, support with ticket purchasing. Our temporary retention of retailing capability will allow customers to continue to purchase the very small number of products and services that are yet to be made available via digital means.

We are confident that the information contained within this document will assure our customers and you that we have diligently and carefully considered all feedback and have put in place mitigations to respond to our customer concerns.

Throughout this process, SWR remains committed to working with customers, stakeholders and colleagues to ensure a smooth transition.

Yours sincerely



South Western Railway

Appendix - Responses to clarifying questions

1) Easy and widespread availability of tickets

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?

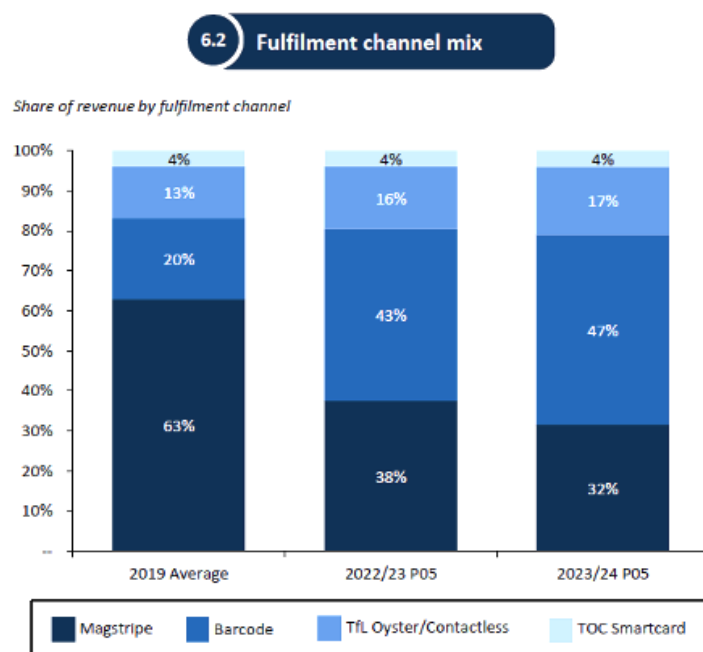
We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a Ticket Vending Machine (TVM).

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

With these mitigations in place and building on the trends shown below, we fully expect the up take of digital to continue in the future.

- National trend towards digital:

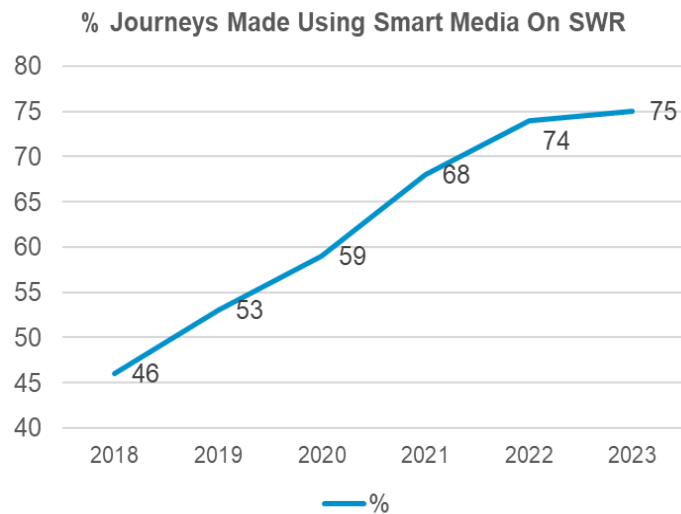
Nationally, there has been a clear shift to digital channels over time across rail. This has accelerated through the pandemic period and continues today. This graphic from the Rail Delivery Group shows the national trend:



- SWR trend towards digital:

75% of SWR passenger journeys are already made using smart media - contactless, Oyster, Tap2Go (PAYG), SWR Touch Smartcards, eTickets.

The graph below shows the rapid increase in journeys made using smart media on SWR in the past five years. We fully expect this trend to continue in the future as more ticket types become available digitally, as digital literacy increases and with the extension of contactless pay-as-you-go to 53 national rail stations in the South East from December 2023.



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

Our priority has always been, and continues to be, our customers.

We understand that some groups will find purchasing tickets digitally more difficult than others. In our Equality Impact Assessments, we assessed the local demographics and ticket office/cash sales. We used this data to assess which stations had a customer base that would need additional support in the transition to digital.

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

With these mitigations in place, our customers will get the support they need to transition to digital and customers who need support to purchase tickets will have multi-skilled colleagues on hand to help.

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

Around 75% of passenger journeys are currently made on smart media. This is made up of 4.5% ITSO smartcard, 25% barcode, 35% CPAY and 7% Oyster. Whilst smart products can be purchased at the ticket office, overwhelmingly customers buy these digitally.

Broken down by retail channel, we can see that purchases through the ticket office have reduced over time.

Our most recent figures (02/04/2023 - 20/05/2023) show, the retail channel breakdown for tickets as:

- Ticket Office - 9.2%
- TVM - 22%
- TfL/Smart - 19.6%
- Online - 36.7%
- Other (Call Centre / Corporate Travel / On-Train) - 2.6%

We have a number of programmes designed to help people migrate to digital. This includes smartcard printers being available in 80 stations across our network and our Tap2Go solution, including its weekly capping functionality.

Smartcard printers being available in 80 stations has helped migrate more customers (season ticket holders in particular) to a registered smartcard which has enabled those customers to switch to digital purchasing on the app or web.

Tap2Go, a programme we launched in 2019, allows our customers to travel without the need to pre-purchase a ticket online or at the station. Tap2Go simplifies ticketing for our customers by charging the best walk-up fare for the journey simply when they tap in and out of electronic machines at the start and end of their journey.

SWR also encourages digital ticket purchasing in all of our marketing. We are about to launch a significant marketing campaign around Tap2Go and the Flexi Season.

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

When developing our original proposal, we considered the number and types of tickets issued as well as the number of TVMs at every station across our network. We identified the maximum sales per 15 minute window and the total number of sales in 15 minute intervals between 05:30 and 20:00.

The methodology assumed that all ticket office sales would transfer to TVM. However, SWR still intends to use the findings to better meet demand at stations across our network.

The assessment allowed us to identify sites that would need additional TVM capacity to support the transition to digital and locations with surplus TVMs that could be better utilised elsewhere.

In some cases, we intend to move underutilised machines to stations that are forecasted to have higher demand. Where necessary, we will also purchase additional TVMs to meet our customers' needs.

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

We believe these mitigations will ensure sufficient capacity to meet demand.

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 will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

When developing our original proposal, we considered the number and types of tickets issued as well as the number of TVMs at every station across our network. We identified the maximum sales per 15 minute window and the total number of sales in 15 minute intervals between 05:30 and 20:00.

The methodology assumed that all ticket office sales would transfer to TVM. However, SWR still intends to use the findings to better meet demand at stations across our network.

The assessment allowed us to identify sites that would need additional TVM capacity to support the transition to digital and locations with surplus TVMs that could be better utilised elsewhere.

In some cases, we intend to move underutilised machines to stations that are forecasted to have higher demand. Where necessary, we will also purchase additional TVMs to meet our customers needs.

What mitigations do you intend to put in place to help staff 'queue bust' at busy times (including at stations which won't have staff with access to handheld devices to sell tickets directly)?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

Our proposal will see station colleagues out of the ticket offices and more visible to customers who require help. This will make it easier for customers to get the support they need, especially during busy periods.

As a result of our proposed mitigations, analysis of ticket purchasing at each station and the new role our colleagues will undertake, we do not anticipate lengthy queues that could risk reducing customer service or customers missing trains. However, we will continue to monitor ticket sales and customer experience.

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

As with other aspects of our customer service, we would expect any proposed KPIs and reporting requirements to be debated nationally with the relevant industry body.

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

SWR TVMs already provide impartial ticket sales displaying all routes and tickets available for a particular journey.

Our TVMs also have 'anywhere to anywhere' functionality allowing customers to purchase tickets from other origin stations on the National Rail network. Earlier this year the customer interface on our TVMs was improved to present all fares for multiple routes on one page. After selecting the journey destination and ticket type; One way, Return or 7 Day, all routes and tickets available are displayed side by side, making it much quicker and easier for the customer to see the fares for their journey so they can select the one most appropriate for their needs.

We will await industry guidance on the introduction of impartial retail obligations on other channels.

Usability, functionality and accessibility of TVMs

Which products are not available from your TVMs? This should include not only tickets but also things like reservations, concessions and discounts, tickets for travel that do not involve the 'host' station, use of vouchers and warrants, and tickets for connecting services (e.g. Plus Bus tickets).

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

The explanation for which fares and products are/are not available on TVMs is complex and we would be happy to set up a session with you to talk it through, particularly in light of developing industry proposals for retail mitigations.

How will passengers access products and services not available at the station in future?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

Tickets will also remain available for customers to purchase digitally or onboard trains across a large part of our network. This is clearly signposted to customers within the national rail conditions of travel and our penalty fares literature. There are no planned changes to this policy.

We are working with the Rail Delivery Group on a series of retail mitigations for these products and will be happy to discuss these with you in detail as they progress.

Do you have any plans to upgrade TVM functionality and if so, what would this cover and when would it be complete?

SWR is procuring an interface upgrade from our TVM supplier. The new interface will improve the machine functionality, the customer experience and the range of tickets offered.

The new user interface will allow passengers to plan their journey, obtain real time train running information and purchase a wider range of tickets including Advance purchases and Rovers and Rangers.

We are currently testing the functionality at our Basingstoke test suite and plan to roll this out, pending successful testing, to 5 live TVMs by the end of the year. We expect this to be completed during rail year 24/25.

We are also in active discussion with our supplier to allow our TVMs to complete an additional number of functions. Timescales for this are to be confirmed.

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?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

How will passengers access these products and services in future?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

Tickets will also remain available for customers to purchase digitally or onboard trains across a large part of our network. This is clearly signposted to customers within the national rail conditions of travel and our penalty fares literature. There are no planned changes to this policy.

How can passengers have confidence that this is not a precursor to withdrawing some of these products - for example, rover tickets?

This is not within the remit of this consultation or these proposals.

Industry-wide workstreams may look to simplify and rationalise processes and products, such as removing photocard requirements for season tickets. If any changes are proposed, we will follow the correct processes.

How will Disabled people who cannot use a TVM purchase a ticket?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

With these mitigations in place, we will have the same capability to service those with accessibility needs as we do now, and those who need support to purchase tickets digitally will have multi-skilled colleagues on hand to help.

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)?

We have Assisted Boarding Points at every station. These Assisted Boarding Points provide a good place for customers to make themselves known to colleagues. With the exception of Clapham Junction and London Waterloo, we also have Help Points at every station.

We are also investing in video-calling capabilities on TVMs at 91 locations, which will connect with our customer contact centre.

Alongside the rest of the industry, we are also exploring the option to bring in welcome points at stations.

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

We are investing in video-calling capabilities on TVMs at 91 locations, which will enable customers to see and interact with a colleague at our customer contact centre.

Have you assessed the accessibility of existing TVMs, both in terms of their location at the station and usability in different weather conditions?

Accessibility assessments were undertaken when TVMs were originally installed and during any subsequent relocations. Any specific accessibility issues that are raised will be dealt with under our standard practices.

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

Based on these mitigations, we will have the same capability to service those with accessibility needs as we do now, and those who need support to purchase tickets digitally will have multi-skilled colleagues on hand to help.

Have you made any specific assessment of the ability of TVMs to cope with the increase in cash, especially at stations where there is a higher than average use of cash to purchase tickets?

We will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available. This means that at stations where we currently accept cash payments, we will continue to do so. This will ease pressure on TVMs, as we make the transition to digital ticket purchasing.

When developing our original proposal, we considered the number and types of tickets issued as well as the number of TVMs at every station across our network. We identified the maximum sales per 15 minute window and the total number of sales in 15 minute intervals between 05:30 and 20:00.

The methodology assumed that all ticket office sales would transfer to TVM. However, SWR still intends to use the findings to better meet demand at stations across our network.

The assessment allowed us to identify sites that would need additional TVM capacity to support the transition to digital and locations with surplus TVMs that could be better utilised elsewhere.

In some cases, we intend to move underutilised machines to stations that are forecasted to have higher demand. Where necessary, we will also purchase additional TVMs to meet our customers needs.

It is recognised that in the longer term, a revised process would need to be put in place to facilitate TVM cash top-ups, collection and banking.

Are the TVMs which accept cash in an accessible location? e.g. can they be reached from all platforms, and if TVMs are in multiple locations is it clear where cash ones are?

We will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available. This means that at stations where we currently accept cash payments, we will continue to do so.

When TVMs were initially installed the suitability of location was carefully considered to make best use of the asset based on both passenger flows and demand. Where station re-development or re-configuration has taken place (such as additional entrances) TVMs have been considered as part of this wider change. We also reviewed this for a large number of our stations in 2021 when we rationalised our TVM fleet.

There is no planned change to our policy in regard to the accessibility of our TVMs. At most of our stations we have TVMs that accept cash, with all stations with a TVM having at least one cash TVM. In the event that the TVM(s) in a station are not accepting cash, and customers have no alternative means to pay, they will be permitted to board the train and buy on board or at their destination (as per our existing process).

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

There is no planned change to our policy. In the event that the TVM(s) in a station are not accepting cash, and customers have no alternative means to pay, they will be permitted to board the train and buy on board or at their destination (as per our existing process).

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

Our ticketing control unit monitors our fleet of TVMs daily for faults or issues that may arise and could put a machine out of use, including things like low levels of paper or ink. The results of this monitoring are reported on a daily basis to all station staff and station managers to alert them to any potential maintenance necessary to ensure the machine remains operational.

The majority of faults, including consumables of ticket stock and cash handling, fall under fingertip maintenance. We expect station staff to investigate with the support of the ticketing control unit.

In the majority of cases, these issues can be and are rectified locally. For anything that falls outside of fingertip maintenance or cannot be rectified locally, an engineer is called. The contractual response time is:

- If reported before 12:00 resolution is before the morning peak (07:00) the following day (week day)
- If reported after 12:00 resolution is before the afternoon peak (16:00) the following day (week day)

We believe that our current contractual response times are sufficient to service the TVMs on our network. However, we have increased the regularity of our internal TVM monitoring process and reporting to ensure the timely detection of faults or potential issues like running low on ticket stock.

The availability of TVMs is a key aspect of our Service Quality Audit regime. In the last 12 months, there were just 33 instances recorded across the SWR network where a TVM was not operational at the time of the Audit. After which, these instances were quickly rectified.

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

As with other aspects of our customer service, we would expect any proposed KPIs or reporting requirements to be debated nationally with the relevant industry body.

As a result of our proposed mitigations, analysis of ticket purchasing at each station and the new role our colleagues will undertake, we do not anticipate lengthy queues that could risk reducing customer service or customers missing trains. However, we will continue to monitor ticket sales and customer experience.

2) Providing assistance to travel in a timely and reliable manner

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 / assessments to support this?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

With greater numbers of customers transitioning to digital ticket purchases over time, we are confident our proposed staffing levels will provide sufficient capacity to support our customers.

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?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

All station colleagues will be trained to support customers with their retail choices. Multi-skilled colleagues will receive ticketing appreciation training that focuses on ticket types and validity to navigate the complex fares system and ensure passengers get the right ticket for their journey.

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 have Assisted Boarding Points at every station. These Assisted Boarding Points provide a good place for customers to make themselves known to colleagues. With the exception of Clapham Junction and London Waterloo, we also have Help Points at every station.

We are also investing in video-calling capabilities on TVMs at 91 locations, which will connect with our customer contact centre.

Alongside the rest of the industry, we are also exploring the option to bring in welcome points at stations.

Any customer who has pre-booked assistance or requested assistance via the customer app will trigger an alert to be sent to the colleague working at that station. When an assistance has been pre-booked, station and on-train colleagues are made aware of this and will prioritise the assistance over their other duties.

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

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

Based on these mitigations, we will have the same capability to support those with accessibility needs as we do today.

All our trains have a guard who can provide boarding and alighting assistance to any customer requiring it. As we transition our station colleagues to multi-skilled roles, there will be a higher proportion of colleagues available across the network than there are today to give face-to-face help to customers .

We will continue to provide Turn Up and Go Assistance through our unique Assisted Boarding Points, available at every SWR managed platform. More information on how this service works can be found at: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/travelling-with-us/assisted-travel/assisted-boarding-points>

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?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

Based on these mitigations, under our proposals, customers will be able to receive more assistance than they are currently able to do so from staff at the station as there will be a higher proportion of colleagues available across the network than there are today to give face-to-face help to customers.

Under current staffing arrangements, colleagues who do not have assistance as part of their terms and conditions. For example, ticket office staff do not provide support through the station. However, multi-skilled colleagues will be able to provide assistance throughout the station under current proposals, therefore making our accessibility support better under these proposals.

Customers may use the Passenger Assist system if they prefer to pre-book their assistance, or they can use Turn Up and Go Assistance and our staff will ensure customers receive the assistance they require, as per the terms of our Accessible Travel Policy.

If the mitigation is a mobile team how long will people have to wait? If you currently use mobile teams to provide assistance do you have any evidence on their effectiveness (e.g. time taken to arrive, passenger satisfaction)

We have no plans to introduce mobile assistance teams.

If the mitigation is to provide an accessible taxi what processes will be put in place and what is your assessment of the adequacy of this compared with travel by train?

Under the terms of our Accessible Travel Policy, if the local or most convenient station for a customer is not accessible to them, they can contact our Assisted Travel Team and we will arrange alternative transport, usually a taxi, to the nearest accessible station at no extra cost.

Our Accessible Travel Policy will not change under our proposals.

What monitoring regimes will be put in place to measure time taken and reliability?

As with other aspects of our customer service, we would expect any proposed KPIs or reporting requirements to be debated nationally with the relevant industry body.

As part of our Accessible Travel Policy, we currently monitor all passenger assist data, both pre-booked and Turn Up and Go in the Passenger Assist system. We also share information with the Office of Rail and Road.

We also receive feedback from customers and through our Accessibility Mystery Shopping programme. We investigate feedback and take the necessary steps to improve customer experience.

How will people summon help if staff are not there?

We have Assisted Boarding Points at every station. These Assisted Boarding Points provide a good place for customers to make themselves known to colleagues. With the exception of Clapham Junction and London Waterloo, we also have Help Points at every station.

We are also investing in video-calling capabilities on TVMs at 91 locations, which will connect with our customer contact centre.

Alongside the rest of the industry, we are also exploring the option to bring in welcome points at stations.

Do all stations have tactile paving fitted – the need for this is increased if the station is to have no or less staff in future?

Most of our platforms have tactile edge paving. However, Network Rail has a clear plan for installing tactile edge paving on all platforms in the Wessex region by 31 March 2024 at the latest, which is before any proposed changes would take effect.

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?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours and customers will be able to receive more assistance than they currently can from staff at the station as there will be a higher proportion of colleagues available across the network than there are today to give face-to-face help to customers.

Under current staffing arrangements, colleagues who do not have assistance as part of their terms and conditions. For example, ticket office staff do not provide support through the station. However, multi-skilled colleagues will be able to provide assistance throughout the station under current proposals, therefore making our accessibility support better under these proposals.

Any customer who has pre-booked assistance or requested assistance via the customer app will trigger an alert to be sent to the colleague working at that station. When an assistance has been pre-booked, station and on-train colleagues are made aware of this and will prioritise the assistance over their other duties.

We will continue to monitor delivery of our Passenger Assistance, as well as continuing our Accessibility Mystery Shopping programme and address any issues that arise.

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?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

All station colleagues will be trained to support customers with their retail choices. Multi-skilled colleagues will receive ticketing appreciation training that focuses on ticket types and validity to navigate the complex fares system and ensure passengers get the right ticket for their journey.

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 to replicate the ticket office/window and method for calling them?

We have Assisted Boarding Points at every station. These Assisted Boarding Points provide a good place for customers to make themselves known to colleagues. With the exception of Clapham Junction and London Waterloo, we also have Help Points at every station.

We are also investing in video-calling capabilities on TVMs at 91 locations, which will connect with our customer contact centre.

Alongside the rest of the industry, we are also exploring the option to bring in welcome points at stations.

What will the queuing arrangements be when multiple passengers want help/advice?

Any customer who has pre-booked assistance or requested assistance via the customer app will trigger an alert to be sent to the colleague working at that station. When an assistance has been pre-booked, station and on-train colleagues are made aware of this and will prioritise the assistance over their other duties.

What assurances can you provide that staff will not be pulled away to other duties rather than providing assistance? How will staff at the station know if passengers need help to board?

All station colleagues are issued with a phone which has access to the Passenger Assist system via an app, and emails from the system. Using this, any customer who has pre-booked assistance or requested assistance via the customer app will trigger an alert to be sent to the colleague working at that station. When an assistance has been pre-booked, station and on-train colleagues are made aware of this and will **prioritise the assistance** over their other duties.

Under current staffing arrangements, colleagues who do not have assistance as part of their terms and conditions. For example, ticket office staff do not provide support through the station. Therefore, alternative arrangements are made to support customers such as booking a taxi to take them to the nearest staffed, accessible station.

However, multi-skilled colleagues will be able to provide assistance throughout the station under current proposals, therefore making our accessibility support better under these proposals. This capability is currently only available at stations with a dedicated assistance team (London Waterloo and Clapham Junction) or at stations with Rail Operator grade staff (platform staff) such as Basingstoke and Woking.

All our trains have a guard who can provide boarding and alighting assistance to any customer requiring it. As we transition our station colleagues to multi-skilled roles, there will be a higher proportion of colleagues available across the network than there are today to give face-to-face help to customers.

We will continue to provide Turn Up and Go Assistance through our unique Assisted Boarding Points, available at every SWR managed platform. More information on how this service works can be found at: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/travelling-with-us/assisted-travel/assisted-boarding-points>

Are help points at every station and are they in an accessible location? Are there any plans to position help points in concourse areas near ticket offices to avoid having to walk along platforms or over bridges to summon help?

With the exception of Clapham Junction and London Waterloo, we have Help Points at every station.

Alongside the rest of the industry, we are exploring the option to bring in welcome points at stations.

What are your existing processes/SLAs for monitoring that help points are working, how quickly calls are answered and the response time to faults? What future commitments can you give?

As part of general inspections, our station managers ensure Help Points are tested at least once in every inspection period, which occurs once every four weeks.

We are in the process of procuring a new Help Point design across our network. As part of this procurement process, we will be discussing SLAs for repair and response with our suppliers.

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

As we are no longer planning to materially reduce staffing hours at our stations, monitoring arrangements will continue as they do today.

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

Over the past 6 years, we have been expanding the availability of induction loop facilities to cover more of the platform and at every Help Point on the station. We will continue to work with our Accessibility and Inclusion Forum to explore options for further expansion.

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

We will continue to monitor delivery of our Passenger Assistance, as well as continuing our Accessibility Mystery Shopping programme, and address any issues that arise.

We capture all passenger assist data, both pre-booked and Turn Up and Go in the Passenger Assist system. In addition, we also receive feedback from customers and through our Accessibility Mystery Shopping programme. We investigate each reported failure and take the necessary steps to improve customer experience.

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

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in journey planning.

Local information, including onward travel and connections, will continue to be displayed on posters around the station. Multi-skilled colleagues will also be trained to provide specialised information like the Accessible Travel Policy .

We will explore options for colleagues to continue to have access to printing facilities for the small number of customers that require them.

How will staff be able to give people journey itineraries and other printed info?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in journey planning.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

We will explore options for colleagues to continue to have access to printing facilities for the small number of customers that require them.

3) Preventing unfair penalty fares

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?

We will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

We are working with the Rail Delivery Group to agree an industry approach that would enable customers who can't buy specific tickets at their point of origin to travel without being penalised.

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?

In some cases, such as for the purchase of specific fares, evidence may be required, as it is today at ticket offices, to validate entitlement. This is currently the case for access to Special Disable Fares from Ticket Offices and the same policy will be continued for other retail channels where that fare is available.

To help ensure disabled customers have the best possible experience, SWR colleagues undertake comprehensive disability and equality awareness training when they join the business. In addition, customer-facing colleagues receive refresher training at least once every two years.

All staff training will be comprehensive and include customer service, accessibility awareness, and expertise in navigating complex travel scenarios, enabling staff to better assist passengers with diverse needs and queries.

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

SWR regularly reviews our signage to ensure it is consistent, up to date and easy for our customers to understand. Recently, following changes to our penalty fares, we successfully updated the penalty fare notices across our network. We will continue to review our signage on an ongoing basis, including as we implement this change process.

To ease customer understanding of penalty fares and other revenue protection measures, it is important that signage is as consistent as possible across the industry. To enable this, SWR intends to work closely with other train operators to align signage messaging. Ultimately, this approach will help to improve and simplify the experience for passengers.

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

As is the case today, at locations where the ticket office is either closed or there is not one available, we would advise that a customer first consider online purchasing, before seeking assistance via a contact centre or customer information centre.

We are working with the Rail Delivery Group to agree an industry approach that would enable customers who can't buy specific tickets at their point of origin to travel without being penalised.

4) Availability of station facilities

Are there any proposed mitigations designed to keep facilities open even when staff have been withdrawn?

We are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

And if so when will any proposed mitigations be implemented?

As we are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours, colleagues will remain available to support customers and keep facilities open as they are today.

Station colleagues will be trained into new multi-skilled roles over the coming months.

And if facilities are to be open when staff have been withdrawn, how will it be ensured that they are not subject to misuse or vandalism and will be maintained in good condition?

As we are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours, colleagues will remain available to support customers and keep facilities open as they are today.

5) Safety and security

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

Staff and passenger safety will always be an absolute priority for SWR. As a result, we have partnered with a third-party company to undertake risk assessments and make suggestions of mitigations SWR can implement to maintain the safety of our customers and colleagues.

SWR has been and will continue to be in constant dialogue with a variety of stakeholders - including the British Transport Police - so we can maintain staff and passenger security through any changes to station staffing.

In addition to this, the Department for Transport and British Transport Police have agreed that Operators should complete a Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment reflecting the change proposals once discussions with the Passenger Bodies have been finalised. This assessment was produced by the Department for Transport in collaboration with the British Transport Police for Train Operating Companies to complete for each station and will form part of the decision-making process before any ticket office is closed.

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

We are no longer planning to materially reduce staffing hours at our stations, so there will be no additional reliance on CCTV.

SWR is currently in year one of a three year programme to replace its entire CCTV system. Once complete, we expect enhanced coverage across our network.

At present, we can view live CCTV footage at some of the stations on our network. However, once the above programme of replacement is complete, we will be able to view footage of all locations from control.

Additionally, we have a dedicated team of evidence gatherers responsible for reviewing, and gathering evidence from, CCTV. This team operates during normal working hours, and also has the ability to monitor CCTV live.

6) Other issues

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 priority has always been, and continues to be, our customers. The commitments we make to our customers can be seen in our Passenger Charter here:

<https://www.southwesternrailway.com/other/about-us/passengers-charter>

Our charter is reviewed annually, including engagement with the Passenger Bodies (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) and includes a description of all aspects of the expected services a passenger should expect, including purchase of tickets and support at stations.

The production of this charter is a requirement under our contract with the Department for Transport. The charter ensures that train operators, like SWR, continue to communicate the services and availability of those services at stations that are no longer Regulated Stations under Schedule 17, as it does today.

SWR constantly evolves our services to enhance our customer experience and we will continue to do so in line with customer needs and behaviours.

We would expect any proposed regulation of future staffing requirements to be debated nationally with the relevant industry body. The Assisted Travel Policy, which is regulated and enforced by the Office of Rail and Road requires stakeholder involvement to make changes to provisions at stations. The Assisted Travel Policy will continue to be in place further to this consultation process.

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

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As is the case today, staffing hours and arrangements are advertised, for example on our website and wider industry sites such as National Rail Enquiries. SWR will continue to operate in this way.

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

As is the case today, staffing hours and arrangements are advertised, for example on our website and wider industry sites such as National Rail Enquiries. SWR will continue to operate in this way.

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

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

All our staff rosters build in contingency to provide resilience for sickness/holiday cover and will continue to do so in the future.

Timing of mitigations

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

We expect there will be two stages of mitigation - "Day 1" mitigations and longer term mitigations.

Our "Day 1" mitigations will maintain staffing hours and enable customers to buy the full range of tickets at our stations or online. These mitigations act as a full mitigant to concerns raised by the passenger bodies and therefore it is not necessary to wait until a longer term solution is in place before the ticket office closes and wider station changes and arrangements that will assist with modernisation and efficiencies are implemented.

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

We have listened and are bringing forward mitigations, so we can continue to deliver high quality services for all our customers as we make the transition to digital.

We remain committed to the principles of station modernisation, closing all ticket offices and providing more customers with more face-to-face support and modern retailing.

However, as clearly set out, we are no longer looking to materially reduce staffing hours so when a customer arrives at a station, there will be staff available who are able to assist in purchasing a ticket using digital means or a TVM.

For the 1% of products and services currently bought through ticket offices that are not available through digital means or TVMs, we will temporarily maintain the current ticket retailing capability at all stations until suitable alternative means of purchasing products and services are available.

On that basis, there is no reason that London TravelWatch should object to any of these proposals as prior to a longer term solution being implemented, our "Day 1" mitigations will maintain staffing hours and enable customers to buy the full range of tickets at our stations or online.

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

There is a clear understanding with the Department for Transport that funds will be made available for mitigation work, but final agreements cannot be secured until the conclusion of the customer and colleague consultation processes.

Liaison with other operators and Network Rail

What assessment has been made of the impact on services operated by other train companies? Have those operators agreed to the changes?

We are considering the need to meet interoperability requirements as part of the industry-wide mitigations review.

All train operating companies are represented in regular meetings and relevant sub groups chaired by the Rail Delivery Group. All policy proposals are shared with train operating companies for feedback to ensure the proposals meet requirements and demonstrate a workable solution.

Have you engaged with Network Rail about the impact where the changes are proposed at Clapham Junction and Waterloo? Are any mitigations planned?

All train operating companies are represented in regular meetings and relevant sub groups chaired by the Rail Delivery Group. Network Rail have been involved in these meetings. Through this, SWR has had continued dialogue with National Rail.

Cost benefits

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

We did forecast the impact of our original proposals on revenue. However, given the proposed mitigations we have outlined, we expect overall changes to revenue will be minimal.

Evaluation

What, if any, plans do you have to monitor and evaluate these changes should the proposals go ahead? What KPIs would you be using as part of this?

The railway is a highly regulated industry. SWR will continue to conform with all requirements from the Department for Transport and relevant industry bodies. We anticipate that the Rail Delivery Group will develop a national standard for monitoring and evaluating any changes under this proposal.

SWR already monitors and evaluates our performance on an ongoing basis against a variety of metrics, including service quality and customer voice. We will continue to do so as we embark on this change process.

We intend to implement these changes in a considered way with continual monitoring and evaluation of the process. Monitoring, evaluating and adapting as we move through the process will be critical to ensuring any changes work in the interests of our customers and station colleagues.