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Dear Mr Bolt

South West Trains – off-peak fare rise

You will be aware that South West Trains is introducing a new tier of ticket prices for the earliest weekday off-peak services towards London Waterloo. Off-peak times will vary from station to station, but Cheap Day Return tickets will be broadly available on trains arriving into London after 10am with a new 'Super Off-peak Day Return' ticket being broadly available on trains arriving into London after 12 noon. As part of this, passengers travelling between 9.30am and noon will see the Cheap Day Return fare increase by up to 20%. Those travelling later or at weekends will see a price rise averaging at 3%.

Passenger Focus is very concerned at the scale of the increase on the Cheap Day fare. We feel that this move is against the wider passenger interest and does not adequately reflect the situation facing many passengers. While rail is not the only means of travel for some passengers in the SWT area there is often little effective choice – especially for journeys into central London where rail is the dominant provider. Hence, while some passengers will be able to change travel patterns or transport modes some will have no option but to bear the full cost of the 20% increase. We do not feel that the decision by SWT takes adequate account of the specific market conditions faced by these passengers, nor the impact on them.

We would welcome your views on this. Do you agree that this is an issue that has an impact on passengers and is there scope for ORR to explore this further with the industry?

Yours sincerely

Mike Hewitson
Acting Policy Manager