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Informed Traveller 'T-12'

The large-scale investment in the Western route is warmly welcome and will bring significant passenger benefits. However, I am becoming increasingly concerned about the impact on passengers of late notice requests for engineering access and consequential non-compliance with Informed Traveller T-12 obligations. As you know, passengers are encouraged to assume that information in journey planners is correct at T-12. If it is not, people will make plans based on incorrect information, potentially causing subsequent inconvenience and implications for welfare, if for example travelling late at night. In some cases the industry is allowing passengers to buy tickets on trains that it knows cannot run, and with no warning. This is not acceptable.

Late access requests

It seems to me that there is a risk that the industry will undo the goodwill built up through well-planned and well-executed possessions as a result of last-minute notification of engineering work, such as the all-line block through Reading on 14 and 15 October. I am aware that GWR sought to make passengers aware of the closure in the handful of days available. However, the simple fact is that people had made plans and paid money in good faith, only to find out later that they were not getting what they paid for.

I also have concerns about the approach GWR has taken to compensation for delays on 14 and 15 October. While welcoming that goodwill gestures are now being made, passengers were initially told that they could not claim because the changes were 'timetabled'. There is an important point of principle, however. The timetable was changed after T-12 – natural justice, let alone consumer rights, suggests that if the product is changed after a promise or purchase has been made, compensation is an entitlement and not a gesture of goodwill.



Christmas timetable delay

I am concerned about how late the timetable for the Christmas period was showing in passenger information systems. This would be disappointing at any time, but is particularly so as many passengers want to plan their festive travel arrangements well in advance. For example, on 9 October the full normal timetable for Wednesday 27 and Thursday 28 December was showing for Paddington to Cardiff journeys - dates on which Paddington station is closed – without any warning that incorrect information was showing. See Screenshot A.

The situation was compounded by GWR's decision to promote availability of Advance tickets for Christmas in a marketing email on 19 October (See Screenshot B) before the timetable was correct in journey planners and before all Advance tickets were on sale. I note that on 21 October the GWR website stated:

"At present, not all train times in online journey planners are correct. This applies to GWR.com and all other train booking websites. It also means that information at stations is incorrect too.

Network Rail are working hard on this, but in the meantime, we won't release our discounted Advance Single fares for travel over the Christmas period just yet.

We expect to be able to do so towards the end of October, but we'll update this page when we have more information."

Journey planner discrepancies

Conflicting advice remains today about the best route from London when Paddington is closed. For Swindon on 27 December, the GWR website advises passengers to go via Waterloo and change at Reading. For Cardiff on the same date, the GWR website advises passengers to go via Waterloo changing variously at Basingstoke for Reading or Salisbury. On both these routings Advance tickets are not available so passengers always pay the higher 'walk up' price. However, National Rail Enquiries and Trainline advise travelling on through trains from Marylebone where Advance tickets are available. See screenshots C, D, E and F. The industry has presumably worked hard to divert trains into Marylebone, and yet GWR's own website is seemingly 'blind' to the existence of these services and their Advance fares, and as a result is charging passengers more to go via Waterloo.

Underground fares

It is disappointing that when passengers seek to buy tickets from Paddington, they are being charged £3 each way for the Underground fare to either Waterloo or Marylebone.



First, I should be grateful for your comments in response to the points I have made in this letter so far. Second, it would be helpful if you would address the following.

I am aware that the Western Route Supervisory Board has been discussing the timescale to achieve Informed Traveller T-12 as a matter of routine. For the record, please would you confirm the date from which you expect passengers will be able to rely on data being correct at 12 weeks out? What are the key steps that Network Rail and GWR intend to take to achieve this?

As well as the fundamental underlying issue that Network Rail must finalise engineering works in sufficient time for train operators to 'bid' timetable changes 18 weeks in advance, two other issues need urgent attention:

- i. when timetable data in the public domain within T-12 is known to be wrong it must either be suppressed or 'flagged' to passengers as wrong. And in our view that must happen 'at source' when it emerges from the System Operator so that it is visible automatically to passengers planning journeys using National Rail Enquires, a train company website or through a third party retailer.
- ii. that GWR's train planning and its marketing/retailing teams do not appear sufficiently joined up. Not just to avoid starting Christmas marketing campaigns before the timetable is finalised and all tickets are on sale, but not joined up sufficiently to 'sense check' that GWR's website is offering passengers the expected journey options. It is presumably not intended to hide Marylebone to Cardiff trains in favour of sending passengers via Salisbury.

I look forward to receiving your reply.

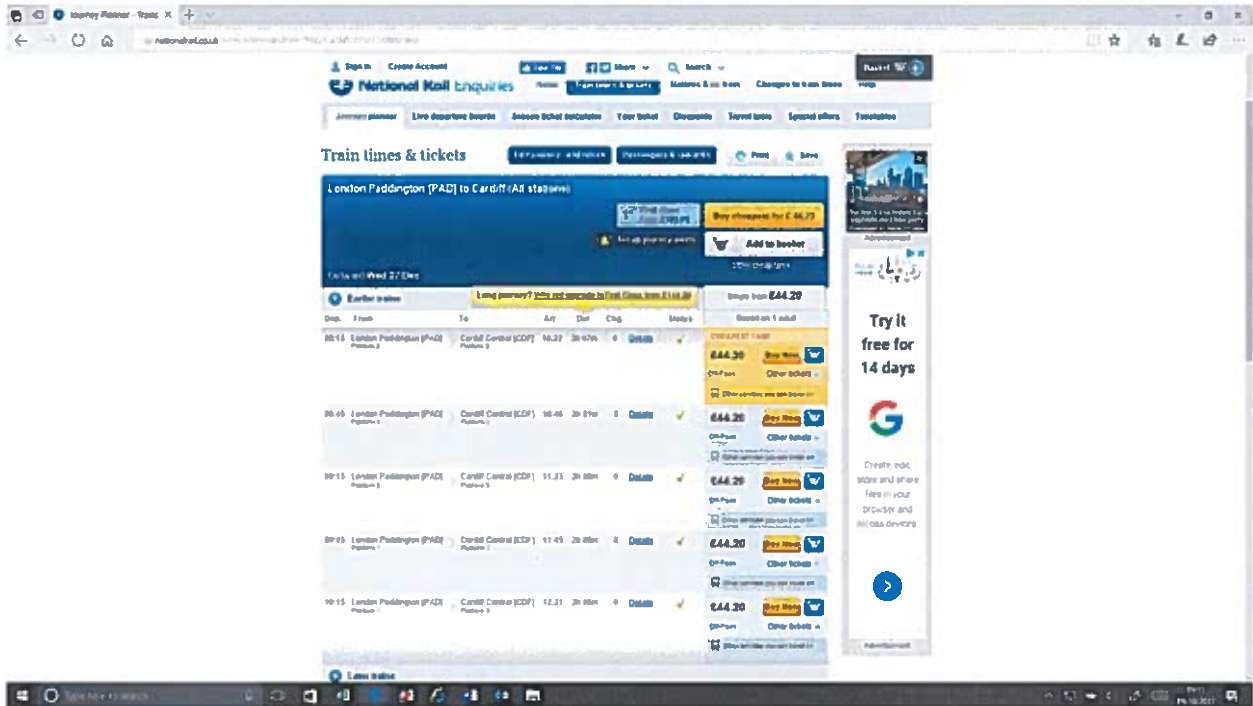
Yours sincerely

A. J. C. G.

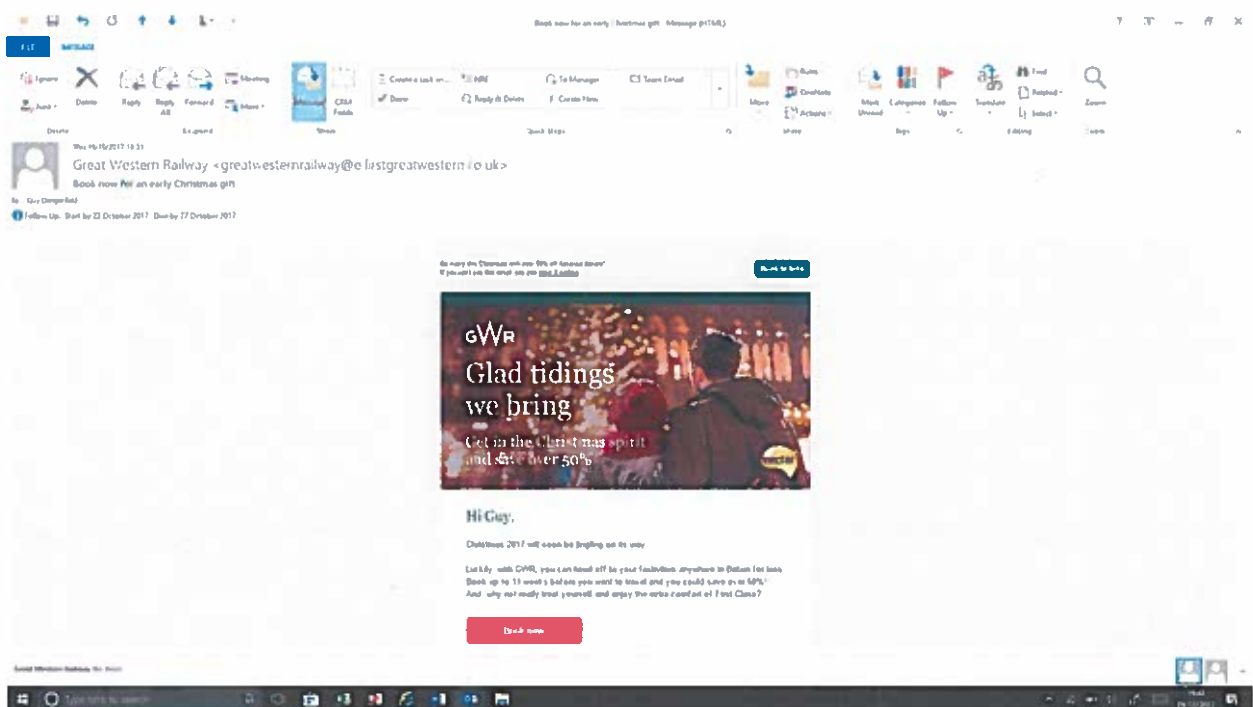
Anthony Smith
Chief Executive

Enc

Screenshot A



Screenshot B



Screenshot C

Industrial action is affecting services (2)

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Buy cheapest for £21.00 Add to basket

Outward Sun 24 Dec

Earlier trains Long journey? Why not upgrade to First Class from £27.00 Single from £21.00

Dep.	From	To	Arr	Dur	Chg.	Status	
09:20	London Paddington (PAD)	Swindon (Wiltshire) (SWI)	11:16	1h 56m	1	Details	£29.90 Buy Now
10:20	London Paddington (PAD)	Swindon (Wiltshire) (SWI)	12:16	1h 56m	1	Details	£21.00 Buy Now
11:20	London Paddington (PAD)	Swindon (Wiltshire) (SWI)	13:16	1h 56m	1	Details	£29.90 Buy Now
12:20	London Paddington (PAD)	Swindon (Wiltshire) (SWI)	14:16	1h 56m	1	Details	£21.00 Buy Now

Based on 1 adult

CHEAPEST FARE £21.00 Buy Now

Advance Other tickets

Ticket valid for this service only

Other services you can travel on

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Screenshot D

Industrial action is affecting services (2)

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Outward Sun 24 Dec

Earlier trains Long journey? Why not upgrade to First Class from £27.00 Single from £21.00

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Based on 1 adult

CHEAPEST FARE £21.00 Buy Now

Advance Other tickets

Ticket valid for this service only

Other services you can travel on

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Change information

Leaving	From	To	Arriving
09:20	London Paddington (PAD)	London Marylebone (MYB)	09:32
09:42	London Marylebone (MYB)	Swindon (Wiltshire) (SWI)	11:16

Screenshot E

Screenshot E shows the GWR Tickets page. The 'Outward' journey is selected from London Paddington to Swindon (Wilts) on Sunday 24 Dec 2017. The 'Return' journey is currently empty, with a message: 'Currently you only have an outward journey selected' and a button to 'Add a return journey'. The 'Total' is £0.00. A 'Live Chat' button is visible on the right.

Dep	Arr	Chg	Dur	Single
07:33	10:37	2	3h 4m	£29.90
09:03	11:46	2	2h 43m	£29.90
10:03	12:46	2	2h 43m	£29.90
11:03	13:46	2	2h 43m	£29.90
12:03	14:46	2	2h 43m	£29.90
13:03	15:46	2	2h 43m	£29.90
14:03	16:46	2	2h 43m	£29.90

Screenshot F

Screenshot F shows the GWR Tickets page with the 'Route details' modal open. The route is from London Paddington to Swindon (Wilts) on Sunday 24 Dec 2017. The 'Route details' modal shows the journey time (21m) and the connection time (15m). The 'Order Summary' shows the total price (£0.00) and a 'Continue' button. A 'Live Chat' button is visible on the right.

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07:33	10:37	2	3h 4m	£29.90
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