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Mr David Brown  
Managing Director  
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Northern House  
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Dear David

### **Northern – recovering services and passengers' confidence**

We know unprecedented delays, cancellations and confusion have made life miserable in recent weeks for many Northern passengers. When we met last month, I raised concerns that Northern was failing to communicate with passengers. Not only failing to provide reliable information about services to travelling passengers, but also failing to explain why services were deteriorating and demonstrate understanding of the impact this was having on people's lives.

Passengers will hope that the emergency timetable implemented this week allows Northern to begin to stabilise services. However, those who have temporarily lost services, have every reason to feel aggrieved, not least where buses now replace trains, as on the Lakes Line in Cumbria.

We have welcomed the inquiry into what has happened – Transport Focus raised concerns with the industry about timetabling problems as long ago as last year. Today's passengers cannot wait for the inquiry and are looking for three things from Northern now:

- Reliable train performance and clear communication about the timetable that will be provided over the coming weeks.
- Compensation that recognises the extent of the disruption to people's lives and Delay Repay measured against the original timetable promised, not just the slimmed down one now on offer.
- A robust plan to reinstate the 165 train services that have been removed from the timetable as soon as possible.

While there has been an understandable focus on disruption over the past few weeks, we should not lose sight of the sustained poor performance on some routes. For example, at the turn of the year, we talked with Northern, Transport for Greater Manchester and the office of the Mayor of Greater Manchester about the poor performance on the Bolton corridor over the autumn.

Through the commitment in Northern's "Customer Promise" to compensate passengers where there has been sustained poor performance, we discussed a potential free extension period for season ticket holders and free travel on rail replacement bus services during the long-running engineering works on this route. This approach equally applies for other hard-hit routes. We also talked about the introduction of "Delay Repay 15", an improvement which is now urgently needed.

As you know, the Transport Focus board is meeting in public next week in London and Manchester to discuss the current timetabling, information and performance issues. I hope you will be able to attend the Manchester meeting to discuss your plan to recover services and passengers' confidence in train travel.

David Sidebottom

Yours sincerely



David Sidebottom  
**Director**