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AS/2019/072

Dear Suzanne

Informed Traveller, T-12

Thank you for your letter dated 13 November 2019. I appreciate your comprehensive explanation of why passengers are experiencing the problems they are and the steps you are taking to address them.

You rightly mention the importance of communication. I welcome that you have taken a number of initiatives to help, however there is a key area of weakness with the LNER website. Namely that your “we can't complete that search” message (Appendix A) doesn't:

- a. acknowledge that tickets *should* have been on sale by now on the date in question (with a link to an explanation why elsewhere on the website); and
- b. help passengers understand, even in a broad “I can or I can't get there” sense, what level of service will be provided that day – important to help people make indicative plans (this could be a link to a date-specific explanation elsewhere on the website).

Please would you look to make early improvements to this message?

In terms of the NRE yellow triangle message, this is an important advance. We would, though, suggest some tweaks to the wording – less ‘railway’ language, slightly fewer words, shorter sentences. Please see Appendix B.

Welcome as this initiative is, as you know, not all retailers ‘take’ the NRE messages and apply them within their own websites, and current processes continue to allow the sale of walk-up tickets against trains that the industry knows are going to be altered. I am pleased to say that Transport Focus has organised and is chairing a workshop next week with RDG, the System Operator, the Third Party Rail Retailers’ Association and ORR to discuss the practical steps required to address this and related challenges. My colleague Guy Dangerfield will let you know the outcome.

In your letter you did not address the issue of individual early morning trains having no Advance tickets available on days where reservations are otherwise open. There is no information to passengers at point of purchase explaining why on some Mondays the price is vastly higher than other Mondays. And even if there was, I would suggest that it is unacceptable for passengers to



be paying more as a result of this industry problem. Is this practice actually necessary? On how many occasions when you have delayed opening reservations on the 04:40 York to Kings Cross and 05:05 Leeds to Kings Cross on a Monday morning have those trains subsequently been materially altered?

I look forward to hearing from you further.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Smith
Chief executive

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Appendix A

travel-information/

LONDON NORTH EASTERN

ces (i) Sign in / Register

ggers

Adults (16+) 0

ailcards and Discounts

Find trains >

View timetables only

WE CAN'T COMPLETE THAT SEARCH

Your travel date isn't available for sale just yet. Sign up below for an early bird ticket alert where we'll email you as soon as your date is available for sale.

[Sign me up! >](#)

IN TIMES AND LIVE DATES

es can change. Here you'll find everything you stay completely up to date.

LONDON N

Taskbar: File Explorer, Edge, Word, Chrome, Outlook, Excel, PowerPoint, Network, Volume, Battery.

Appendix B

Current:

“LNER Advance fares and seat reservations have not been released for this date due to the timetable not being finalised. If you buy a ticket now, you will not have a reserved seat and may be overpaying for your journey as only fully flexible fares are showing. Reservations and advance fares will be available from xx/xx. For more information visit LNER.co.uk”

Suggested:

“LNER Advance tickets are not yet on sale on this date and you can't reserve a seat. This is because the timetable is still being finalised. If you buy a ticket now you may pay more than you need to and you won't have a reserved seat. Advance tickets and seat reservations will be available from xx/xx. For more information visit LNER.co.uk”