

Martin Moran
Commercial and Customer Service Director
Greater Anglia
11th Floor
One Stratford Place
Montfitchet Road
LONDON E20 1EJ

Transport Focus, Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8JX

07711 319760
guy.dangerfield@transportfocus.org.uk
www.transportfocus.org.uk

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Dear Martin

Proposed closure of Newport (Essex) ticket office

As part of your consultation process passengers were invited to submit their views on the proposal to Transport Focus. This elicited 16 contacts, all of which objected to the proposed closure. Transport Focus also visited Newport station on 28 August 2019 to view its facilities.

The Department for Transport defines 'busy' as an average of about 12 issues per hour. Transport Focus reviewed the data supplied by Greater Anglia, which covered the ticket sales from Newport ticket office in Rail Periods 1, 2 and 3 of the 2019/2020 year. We found that between 06.15 and 09:45 hours, Monday to Friday, ticket sales exceeded 12 issues per hour and therefore Transport Focus sees no justification for closure. Noting that there is a train to London at 06:13 hrs, we encourage you to retain the ticket office and open it at least between 06:00 and 10:00 hours.

I thought it would be helpful to summarise the issues raised in the consultation responses.

Community

The majority of those who wrote to us said how valued the ticket office staff are by the village; they are part of the community.

Security

The removal of any staff presence will leave the station at risk from antisocial behaviour. The presence of ticket office staff is important for some elderly and disabled passengers and it is felt that it is important for the safety and security of the school children who use the station. The question was raised as to who would be responsible for laying down salt treatment in icy weather. One respondent suggested that in the event of closure better CCTV, improved lighting and panic buttons should be installed.

Transport Focus's visit to Newport brought to light that neither of the help points, one on each platform, were working. This was raised at the time and we are pleased to have received confirmation from Greater Anglia that these will shortly be repaired.

Ticket machines

Several respondents cited difficulty using the ticket machines and one person complained that the ticket machine does not offer the full range of tickets. The example given was a particular ticket to Stansted Airport, and it was suggested that sometimes it is not possible to apply discounts. It was also suggested that the ticket machine is often out of order and customers are concerned about boarding the train without a valid ticket in the event that they are unable to buy one from the machine.

Local development

Some respondents felt that the proposed closure was unreasonable in light of plans to build approximately four hundred houses in the area.

Season ticket sales

It was noted that ticket sales numbers will not account (other than as a single transaction) for high value season ticket purchases, including by school children, who would be disadvantaged in having to purchase tickets elsewhere.

I hope this is helpful. Catherine Folca would be happy to clarify any of these points if anything is unclear.

Yours sincerely

Guy Dangerfield
Head of Strategy