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Dear Paul

Railcards

I am writing to express concern about the passenger implications of changes to the industry's railcard support arrangements.

Passengers are being inconvenienced, are worried about where they stand with front-line staff and, potentially, are being left out of pocket. No single issue has caused more passengers to contact Transport Focus since establishment of the Rail Passenger Ombudsman. Here is a flavour of what passengers have said to us:

"After hanging on unanswered for 45 minutes I gave up! Disgraceful customer service."

"Been stuck on the national railcard phone line for 2 hours now with 2 phones holding at one point."

"I am extremely keen to get a new code so I can re-download my railcard onto my phone. It is extremely stressful travelling without one, as I do not want to pay for full price ticket (because I have bought a railcard) but at the moment, the only proof I have is the email receipt."

"It is simply impossible to contact staff at railcard. They fail to respond to mails even after days. I have tried ringing but give up when I have been on hold for 30 minutes. The organisation is a disgrace."

"I have tried to contact Railcard themselves - I have phoned but been left on hold, emailed several times but received no reply, tweeted to no avail and even sent a DM on Facebook which was opened and left on read by the Railcard account - as you may imagine, I am starting to feel a little exasperated with this level of service."

"I have tried a further 2 days of extensive 'on-hold' to your Customer Service line without success. Please accept this email as a formal complaint as you have taken my monies and not sent my Railcard, indeed on the website (under "my account") it just states "ordered" despite you having charged my account and not sent the item, I cannot believe this is lawful practice?"



It is striking that not only have passengers suffered because the changes have not gone well, but RDG's response to the situation appears to have been poor. Inability to answer the phone promptly when passenger need support and reports of people being charged more than once are especially concerning.

I should be grateful if you would assure me about the following:

- That RDG and its members accept that passengers should not be out of pocket as a result of these problems and that reimbursements will be prompt where this has happened.
- That RDG is fully focused on addressing the issues passengers are continuing to experience
- That phone calls to the railcard support number will be answered promptly
- That all train company websites provide advice to passengers about what they should do if they have been unable to buy or have not yet received a railcard
- That train companies have issued guidance to front-line staff and those working in customer relations teams about how passengers should be treated.

In addition, it would be helpful to in due course see the conclusion of your investigation into what has gone wrong and the measures you intend to take to prevent a recurrence when other transitions of this nature take place.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. J. C. S.', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Anthony Smith
Chief executive