

Guy Dangerfield
Head of Strategy
Transport Focus
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LONDON
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4th October 2019

Dear Guy,

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF NEWPORT (ESSEX) TICKET OFFICE

Thank you for your letter of 25th September and for hosting the consultation exercise in respect of our aspiration to close the Ticket Office at Newport (Essex). I would like to respond individually to the points you have raised: -

Community

As with many such facilities the value of the Ticket Office to the local community has to be offset from a business perspective against the practicality and economics of providing them, particularly where the actual usage of the facility is so demonstrably low and declining.

Security

There will be no change to our commitment to assist elderly and disabled passengers in addition to affording security to schoolchildren and such would be provided in the same way as it is now outside the hours of the Ticket Office which currently is only open from 0615 to 1400. There will be no change to the method of treatment of platforms in icy weather which will be done, as now, by our specialist contractor. There is no record of anti-social behavior at Newport either during or outside of the opening hours of the Ticket Office. It is accepted that the Help Points were out of order at the time of your visit. These are being transferred to a new digital platform and will be reinstated very shortly. There is also in any event a secondary means of obtaining help and assistance for any situation via the assistance button on the Ticket Machine which connects to a dedicated Greater Anglia location in Norwich.

Ticket Machines

It is not the case as suggested by your respondent(s) that the Ticket Machine is often out of order. During the 12 weeks covered by the data supplied the availability was 100% except for one particular week when it was 99.56 and was rectified within the contracted time period. We do not recognise the point over the full range of tickets being available without specific examples and any difficulties encountered with using the machine to find the correct or cheapest fare or applying discounts can be immediately resolved by contacting our 24/7 team via the assistance button who will either advise, or take over the machine remotely, to ensure the customer is issued the correct and cheapest ticket they require for their journey.



Local Development

It is accepted that usage of the station may increase in the future but with the accelerating use of digital platforms this is not, in our view, a reason for retention of the traditional ticket office facility. You will be aware that new stations such as Cambridge North with a larger footfall than Newport have opened and operated successfully without a traditional ticket office and without any adverse reaction from customers.

Season Ticket Sales

In the case of Newport a few of the issues will involve large value season tickets. Many currently unstaffed stations have similar numbers of season ticket holders and such issues, on this route Roydon would be a good example. We have not encountered any difficulties in fulfilling the needs of these customers particularly with the substantial and ever-increasing transfer of such transactions to Smartcards. Again, with Schoolchildren our Business Travel section are well versed in fulfilling the needs of, and not disadvantaging, schoolchildren whose journey commences at a station where there is no Ticket Office

On the core matter of the proposed ticket office closure reduced hours are not a practicable business proposition or responsible use of available funding. The current occupant of the role would have a claim under his terms and conditions to remain in situ and maintain his existing salary despite working radically reduced hours. With a closure he would be offered suitable alternative roles within GA

It is our firm view that the relevant Guidelines issued by the Secretary of State provide for him to consider a Major Change Application on the basis of average sales of about 12 issues per hour over a representative 12 week period and that individual figures on particular days that are not radically out with that figure and do not disturb the 12 week average should not prejudice the application. Our position remains that the data we hold clearly meets the criteria set down in the Guidelines and therefore whilst thanking you for and noting your concerns which we have addressed above it would be our intention to proceed with a formal application to the Secretary of State for closure of the Ticket Office at Newport (Essex)

Yours Sincerely,



Martin Moran
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