

Guy Dangerfield  
Head of Strategy  
Transport Focus  
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17 February 2020

Dear Guy,

**Re: Disruption on rural routes and Informed Traveller T-12**

Dear Guy,

Thank you for your response dated 20 January 2020 regarding disruption on our rural routes and Informed Traveller T-12. I am happy to follow up on these points as well as provide an update on our service improvement action plan.

#### Rural routes disruption

Since I last wrote to Anthony, I can confirm that all our rural routes are back to normal running and we are seeing performance improve week on week. Following the comprehensive investigation that took place, it has been established that neither our new nor old trains were responsible for the signalling issue.

The outcome of this investigation was that Network Rail needed to carry out enhancement work to the bespoke signalling system along the Sheringham to Norwich route, which was where the serious level crossing incident occurred. Network Rail has since installed treadles to strengthen the detection and precision of train movements on the line. In the weeks since this work was completed, we have seen a significant improvement on this line with a PPM of approximately 97.5% at the time of writing. This is a higher punctuality than was achieved by the legacy trains operating on this route previously. Our efforts will now be on sustaining this level of performance and of course we continue to stay in close dialogue with Network Rail on the matter.

I am sorry that you have observed weaknesses in our communication with customers during this time. We placed great emphasis on keeping our website, social media, mobile app and Journey Check data up to date. Our Press team were constantly engaged with media outlets so that we could get this information out to as wide an audience as possible. I do however accept any observations that will assist us in improving how we handle these situations for our customers. Regarding your example of rail replacement bus information not appearing in Darwin on 14 January, there was a specific problem that day due to the Nexus Alpha server suffering an outage. This put limitations on the information our Control team could display on the screens.

More widely speaking, it has only been possible to have the buses appear in Darwin where we have a complete timetable in place or at least specific timings for the single bus. When we have stand-by buses at key locations as a contingency to cover ad-hoc cancellations (as we did on this occasion), this is not always possible. At the height of the issue we were able to include buses within Darwin because a complete and scheduled bus timetable was in place. Nevertheless, we take your feedback on board and will look at what alternatives we can put in place.

Where customers have made claims for recompense, either via Delay Repay or by making a complaint to our Customer Contact Centre, the team have responded sympathetically to requests for additional costs, such as taxis or petrol costs. We know some customers will have incurred further costs when there have been ad-hoc cancellations, so it is only right that we have reimbursed these.

In terms of introducing the hourly Ipswich to Peterborough service, we need to focus first on completing the transfer of the new trains and bedding these fully into service. Once our new fleet is in place, we will be in a stronger position to look at the timetable and utilise the technical and performance improvements these trains bring. The biggest barrier however is with Network Rail's infrastructure, such as the bottlenecks at Haughley Junction and Ely, as well as the single stretch of track through Soham. We are working hard with Network Rail and applying constructive pressure to help them resolve



these issues. I share your aspiration to have this in place for the benefit of our customers, although based on current circumstances, I am unable to commit at this stage to an earlier introduction of this hourly service as we are reliant on Network Rail's formative scheme at Ely, amongst other infrastructure enhancements.

#### T-12 Informed Traveller

We do remain behind in our informed traveller bidding to Network Rail, for which the main reasons have been:

- The late release of the December 19 permanent timetable from Network Rail which in turn delayed the Short Term Planning for Christmas and New Year alterations
- Network Rail were also unable to publish our late bids within a 5 working day turnaround, which did mean there was a further delay to the publication.
- Complexity of the Norwich to Great Yarmouth/Lowestoft extended Network Rail blockade in February and the added time required to plan the block in accordance with our new fleet introduction.

To overcome this, we have an agreed recovery plan in place with Network Rail and are currently working in collaboration on this.

#### GA Action Plan

I would also like to take this opportunity to outline our action plans for improving reliability as we continue at pace to introduce our new fleet of trains. These are:

- Additional work, in partnership with Stadler, to overcome teething issues with the new trains, thereby reaching the high levels of reliability that they are scheduled to achieve, as quickly as possible. This includes a new taskforce from Stadler sent over to the UK to tackle the relevant issues (including all the technical issues or faults that have led to delays or cancellations) and deliver the high quality train performance we all wish to see asap
- Work to speed up the completion of all the testing, commissioning and training associated with the introduction of the new trains
- Action to help enable smooth overnight operations at Norwich Crown Point depot, which will also become simpler as we fully switch over to new train operation (which is due to happen for the regional routes within the next month)
- Work to review and revise, where appropriate, contingency plans for when problems do occur.

We believe these initiatives will result in a progressively improving service in the weeks ahead, so we can then consistently provide the high-quality service customers rightly expect. Although we have already seen significant improvements this week, we fully expect to see more improvement on a week by week basis from now on (so cancellations become rare). In short though, we are confident that we will succeed in our objective of providing the best rural service East Anglia has ever seen, within a few weeks from now, which will be great for our customers. I travel regularly on our bi-modes and the experience really is excellent, so as soon as more of the teething issues are squeezed from the system, our service proposition will compare very favourably indeed.

If you have any other queries about this issue or any other rail matter, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,



**Jamie Burles**  
Managing Director

