

Our Ref: LG/SK

23 December 2019

Mr A Smith
Chief Executive
Transport Focus
Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square
London, EC4Y 8JX

Dear Anthony

Current Performance

Thank you for your correspondence on 19 December, in relation to TPE's current performance.

I agree that our current performance is unacceptable and is having a significant impact on customers and communities who rely on our services. As set out in this letter we are taking appropriate action to resolve the issues affecting performance and we are making short term amendments to the timetable to allow us to deliver a more reliable service for customers.

As you will be aware, we took a number of steps in advance of the December 19 timetable to mitigate the risk on service reliability of new trains reliability and availability of traincrew with sufficient new trains competence.

Specifically, we made the following changes to our advertised timetable and we discussed with Transport Focus our plans to communicate these changes to customers:

- 10 daily Manchester Airport – Newcastle services have been retimed to continue to operate as class 185s vice the new Hitachi trains from 15th December – 17th February inclusive. This results in a small reduction in calls at Northallerton and Darlington reflecting a 5% and 1% reduction in daily services respectively.
- On weekdays and Saturdays, 10 trains in each direction have been withdrawn per day planned on the Liverpool – Edinburgh corridor from the 15th December – 5th January inclusive, a lower number of trains (14) has been withdrawn on Sundays and on certain pre/post-Christmas dates. This is broadly equivalent to around 5% of the overall TPE timetable.

Whilst the level of current of performance may look similar to May 18, the root cause is not the same. Unfortunately, since the start of the December 19 timetable we have suffered a higher level of cancellations primarily due to traincrew availability, resulting from industrial relations issues and a failure to agree new rosters at four crew depots. This issue has significantly reduced traincrew productivity at the affected depots, which include our two largest driver depots, and has led to a high level of late notice cancellations to our services. We have been working extremely hard to resolve

these issues with the Trade Unions and together we have now resolved most of the outstanding matters with changes being implemented over the next ten days.

In response to the issues faced we have also taken the following action:

- Increased staffing in our resourcing/ control teams with support from FG and Network Rail
- Increased staffing at stations, including managerial support for frontline colleagues
- Put in place standby buses at key strategic locations

Due to delays in manufacture of the CAF fleets and the on-time delivery of our Hitachi fleet, we have three new fleets of trains which are all being delivered in parallel. We are contractually obliged to make all reasonable endeavours to introduce these new fleets as quickly as possible to provide additional capacity and to release existing rolling stock that has been contracted to other operators. The concentrated and compressed period which we have to train our crew has unfortunately led to disruption to our existing services, which we had hoped to avoid and for which we have apologised to customers.

To minimise further disruption and ensure we can deliver our advertised timetable, we have therefore decided to continue with an amended timetable during January to stabilise performance ahead of the return to work period. The amended timetable will represent a reduction in Nova 1 operation on the route between Liverpool – Edinburgh whilst we continue to increase crew traction competence. We are currently finalising the details of the timetable amendments and will provide you and customers with details of the specific changes ahead of the 6th January.


As we did for the initial timetable amendment, we will contact customers who have booked for travel on affected services and give them advice regarding their options to travel the day before/after, have a fee free refund or travel on other operators' service where we have ticket acceptance in place.

We will continue to closely monitor our train crew training progress and new trains reliability and we will confirm in January the planned date for reinstatement of currently amended services once we are confident that these services can be reliably delivered.

We fully recognise the impact our recent performance has had on our customers. Therefore, in addition to delay repay compensation, we are proposing to offer enhanced compensation for rail season ticket holders. We will be in contact shortly to discuss with you our customer compensation plans.

I trust this information assures you we are extremely focused on improving our delivery to customers. We are taking appropriate steps to ensure customers can rely on our amended advertised service and we will restore our full timetable as soon as practicable, but not until we are confident it can be delivered reliably. We also have plans to compensate customers for the recent service disruption, which we look forward to discussing with Transport Focus in the near future.

Yours sincerely



Leo Goodwin
Managing Director

CC P Wilkinson (DfT), Barry White (TfN)