

Linda McCord
Transport Focus
Albany House
86 Petty France
London SW1H 9EA

27th September 2023

Dear Linda,

Ticket Office Proposals – Greater Anglia response to emerging issues

Many thanks for your letter, dated 6 September 2023, that outlined your initial feedback from the public consultation that closed on 1 September 2023. We note that this letter was intended to be a summary of the emerging issues and themes that you had identified from the feedback received.

Included in the letter was a request that Greater Anglia (GA) formally respond in writing to the specific questions raised in your letter by 27 September. Appended to this cover letter is GA's detailed response, as well as accompanying supporting evidence where relevant.

We've drafted our reply by taking each specific question raised in your letter individually and providing a detailed response, as appropriate, in each case.

To help identify each answer, we've provided an excel table which lists every question and next to it the specific response, so each question and answer can clearly be identified, and you can see that all questions have been answered. Where relevant to an answer, we have indicated where supporting evidence can be found in the supporting documentation.

We have sought to provide a robust and thorough response to all the issues identified and we believe the format used enables you to readily identify all the answers and information provided, with additional evidence provided where appropriate. However, should any further information be required please just let us know.

Yours sincerely

Greater Anglia



Greater Anglia response annexe

#	Transport Focus Questions	Greater Anglia (GA) Response
<i>Issues relating to whether passengers can easily buy the right ticket for the journey they want to make:</i>		
Adequacy of retail facilities		
1	Do you have any evidence showing how many / what proportion of people will move to digital if ticket offices are closed?	Please see response as Evidence No 1
2	Do you have any existing programmes designed to help people migrate to digital and if so, how effective have these been?	Please see response as Evidence No 1
3	Have you made any assessment of who will not / cannot move to digital and the effect on them of closing the ticket office?	<p>Yes, we have completed Equality Impact Assessments for all stations that are in scope for ticket office closure on our network to assess the impact against people with protected characteristics (defined by the Equality Act 2010). Research into digital exclusion (e.g. Office of National Statistics - 'Exploring the UK's digital divide' - March 2019) reveals that whilst the number of non-internet users has been declining over the last decade, there remains a proportion of people who cannot or will not move to digital. We know that older citizens and those with a disability are more likely to be amongst those groups. The EqlAs consider this and set out the following in mitigations:</p> <p>Proposed on site, static, rostered staffing is directly aligned with periods of peak customer demand to support customers who may need assistance to buy a ticket. Outside of static hours, there are ticket machines at every station that conform to DfT's 'Design Standards for Accessible Stations'.</p> <p>Our ticket machines also have Virtual Ticket Assistance (ViTA) – which is a 'help' (ticket assistance) button connecting customers to our 24/7 Customer Contact Centre in Norwich. Not only can they provide advice on the best ticket option for a customer, but colleagues based there can take over ticket purchase and issue for the customer (and can also organise assistance), if that is helpful to them. In addition, our Accessible Travel Policy commits to a customer being able to board a train without a ticket if the ticket machine is inaccessible to them. Customers can then buy a ticket onboard (if available via a conductor or revenue protection officer) or at their destination station without a penalty. This is an ORR requirement. This is also referenced as an acceptable mitigation in the National Technical Specification Notice – Persons with Reduced Mobility (January 2021) (Section 4.4.1 – Infrastructure Subsystem) and the National Rail Conditions of Travel (6.1.3.3).</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have also reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. As a result, most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will be available to assist customers with ticket purchasing for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours.</p>

4A	Do you have any forecast of the impact on revenue – i.e. on how many people will no longer travel as a result or will now travel without paying?	<p>Yes, GA has assessed the potential impact and GA provides regular revenue forecasts to the DfT and these reflect a range of different internal and external factors.</p> <p>Due to the confidential nature of commercially sensitive information, it is not possible to share actual numbers. However, we believe that by making staff more accessible to passengers at the stations and with the introduction of concepts such as welcome/assistance points (subject to business case approval) and continued improvement to services such as Passenger Assist and easier digital ticketing that we can encourage more people to use the railway on a more regular basis. We also continue to promote both the convenience of buying on line or from ticket machines and we continue to promote rail travel both through promotions such as our "Hare Fares", which have been successful and by highlighting the improved service standards delivered by the introduction of new trains across our entire network.</p> <p>The cost of delivering an effective service is also a key consideration in light of the most recent National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) conclusions. The survey highlighted that the proportion of journeys rated as satisfactory by passengers regarding value for money for the price of their ticket nationally was 47%. Any cost savings made through the redeployment of staff and closure of ticket offices will ensure better value for money for the taxpayer and passengers.</p> <p>In his letter to the Transport Select Committee, dated 11th September 2023, the Minister of State for Transport, Huw Merriman MP supports this view:</p> <p>“At present, I believe that ticket office staff are underutilised. Enabling ticket office staff to move from behind the screens into new multi-skilled roles providing additional face-to-face support to whom and where is most needed, could be an opportunity to make better use of taxpayers’ money, given the current unsustainable subsidy levels”</p> <p>We continue, across the rail industry, to explore alternative channels for ticket retailing, but working towards making all ticket types universally available on all channels is likely to drive up the costs of running the railway. Therefore, a strategic approach to retailing and reestablishing the best balance of tickets available via each channel will represent better value for money.</p>
4B	Do you plan to issue station staff with handheld ticket machines so they can still offer direct face to face retailing to those that need this support to access the full range of tickets?	<p>Staff would undertake a new, more flexible ‘customer host’ role, providing advice about the best and cheapest fares, and supporting customers with other queries and accessibility needs, rather than being confined to the ticket office. There are no plans to issue station staff with handheld ticket machines and it is worth noting that our handheld ticket machines do not offer the full range of tickets. Support will be provided to customers in accessing the full range of ticket types by colleagues at the station. Our multi-skilled hosts will advise customers on how a full range of tickets can be purchased via online channels, via a ticket machine, via a conductor (on all those routes where on-train conductors are currently available), via telesales or at Customer Information Centres. Colleagues would also be provided with mobile devices (tablets) in assisting customers (subject to business case approval). Please note only 1.94% (1.59% if priv tickets are not included) of tickets sold through a ticket office (including our proposed Customer Information Centres) from the six week data provided were tickets that currently cannot be purchased via a ticket machine at the station. Our ticket machines also have Virtual Ticket Assistance (ViTA) – which is a ‘help’ (ticket assistance) button connecting customers to our 24/7 Customer Contact Centre in Norwich. Not only can they provide advice on the best ticket option for a customer, but colleagues based there can take over ticket purchase and issue for the customer (and can also organise assistance), if that is helpful to them.</p>
5	Staff at two GA stations, Cambridge North and Bury St Edmunds use handheld ticket machines. Is there evidence that this works well for passengers and could consideration be given to replicate this at other GA stations?	<p>Static colleagues at Cambridge North do not use handheld ticket machines. It is possible that you may have noticed revenue protection colleagues at the station previously, undertaking ticketless travel exercises. Colleagues at Cambridge North provide support in using online ticket buying facilities and support in using the ticket machines. Colleagues undertake a flexible ‘customer host’ role, providing advice about the best and cheapest fares, and supporting customers with other queries and accessibility needs, rather than being confined to a ticket office. This is exactly the same principle we are looking to implement at our other locations.</p> <p>Colleagues at Bury St Edmunds do not use handheld ticket machines, either. They do have access to a desk top ticket issuing system. However, since the closure of the ticket office in July 2022, the number of tickets sold through this system is very minimal. On average the number of tickets sold through the ticket issuing system since then, is 3.2% of overall ticket sales at the station. The remainder of tickets were sold via the ticket machine with assistance provided by the multi-skilled host. (See Evidence No 2)</p> <p>Customer feedback received on the retail propositions at both Cambridge North and Bury St Edmunds is positive. Specifically, the scores received from our in-house "We're All Ears" customer survey show that Cambridge North has amongst the highest customer satisfaction of all our stations; averaging 4.5/5 for overall customer experience, with notable praise for the host roles deployed there.</p>

6	<p>Has any assessment of the TVM capacity at each station been carried out? This is both in terms of overall capacity and ‘remaining’ capacity – i.e. factoring in existing sales and Ticket on Departure collection per hour from the TVM?</p>	<p>Yes, GA have overlayed the number of tickets retailed through both ticket offices and on ticket machines, using 15-minute time bands, to highlight if the number of ticket machines is sufficient at each station (see Evidence No 3). This assessment has taken the busiest hour of ticket sales during the six week period of data provided, both from the ticket office and the ticket machine, and assumed a deliberately low and conservative 15% conversion rate onto on line channels (previous evidence suggests the actual switchover to online channels would be much higher, but it was felt appropriate to use a more cautious rate in preparing our plans). Analysis of this data has shown that additional ticket machines would be required at some locations. See Appendix A which sets out station specific mitigations, including if an additional ticket machine will be installed (subject to business case approval).</p> <p>To further support the anticipated increase in ticket issues on ticket machines, GA is trialling a plain paper print roll ticketing solution on 38 ticket machines, between November 2023 and January 2024, which will see barcode tickets being issued from ticket machines for the majority of tickets resulting in quicker ticket printing time. GA plans to roll out this technology to all of the 188 compatible ticket machines at staffed stations between April and July 2024 (subject to funding approval).</p>
7	<p>What reassurance/evidence can you give that there will be sufficient capacity for the ticket sales displaced from the ticket office, especially at peak hours?</p>	<p>GA have overlayed the number of tickets retailed through both the ticket office and on ticket machines, using 15 minute time bands, to highlight if the number of ticket machines is sufficient at each station (see Evidence No 3). This assessment has taken the busiest hour of ticket sales during the six week period of data provided, both from the ticket office and the ticket machine, and assumed a deliberately low and conservative 15% conversion rate onto on line channels (previous evidence suggests the actual switchover to online channels would be much higher, but it was felt appropriate to use a more cautious rate in preparing our plans). Analysis of this data has shown that additional ticket machines would be required at some locations. See Appendix A which sets out station specific mitigations, including if an additional ticket machine will be installed (subject to business case approval).</p>
8	<p>What assessment have you made of the impact of seasonal peaks, especially at tourist destinations?</p>	<p>Customers travelling to tourist destinations predominantly purchase either day or period return tickets, so no additional burden is placed on ticket machines at these locations. The ticket machine capacity 15-minute time bands analysis during the six week period of data provided included these destinations (see Evidence No 3). However, we have also completed an assessment of ticket office sales and ticket machine sales during the peak summer periods (250623 to 020923) at our tourist destinations and have concluded that no further capacity, other than that we have already highlighted in Appendix A, is required. For the majority of tourist destinations on our routes (e.g. Sheringham, Cromer, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Felixstowe and Clacton), conductors are also present on board trains serving those locations, to provide assistance with ticket sales.</p>
9	<p>Has any assessment of the location of ticket machines been carried out - are they in the right place to meet demand? Are they easily accessible for all passengers?</p>	<p>GA ticket machines are located in the optimal positions on stations so customers can easily find them using clear wayfinding signage. Ticket machines are located in accessible positions and take into account the peak demand at the station. Further considerations such as sun glare, visibility from a safety and security perspective and the requirements for shelters have also been taken into account.</p>
10	<p>What mitigations do you intend to put in place to help staff ‘queue bust’ at busy times – for example, will staff have access to handheld devices to sell tickets directly?</p>	<p>There are no plans to issue station staff with handheld ticket machines. Support will be provided to customers by colleagues at the stations in using online ticket buying facilities or by providing support at a ticket machine. The multi-skilled host will be able to quickly assist customers who need help at the ticket machine during busy times, reducing any queuing time that may occur. Our ticket machines also have Virtual Ticket Assistance (ViTA) – which is a ‘help’ (ticket assistance) button connecting customers to our 24/7 Customer Contact Centre in Norwich. Not only can they provide advice on the best ticket option for a customer, but colleagues based there can take over ticket purchase and issue for the customer (and can also organise assistance), if that is helpful to them. GA have overlayed the number of tickets retailed through the both ticket office and on ticket machines, using 15 minute time bands, to highlight if the number of ticket machines is sufficient at each station (see Evidence No 3). This assessment has taken the busiest hour of ticket sales during the six week period of data provided, both from the ticket office and the ticket machine, and assumed a deliberately low and conservative 15% conversion rate onto on line channels (previous evidence suggests the actual switchover to online channels would be much higher, but it was felt appropriate to use a more cautious rate in preparing our plans). Analysis of this data has shown that additional ticket machines would be required at some locations, therefore alleviating any queues that may occur. See Appendix A which sets out station specific mitigations including if an additional TVM will be installed (subject to business case approval).</p>

11	How will the adequacy of retail arrangements at stations be monitored and reported (including to passengers)? What KPIs will be in place?	<p>Feedback will be actively sought from colleagues on the adequacy of retail facilities. Local and senior managers are also constantly monitoring ticket purchasing trends across the network at busier times of the day and will also be observing any emerging issues as part of their roles, as well as assessing if any further actions are necessary.</p> <p>The Ticketing and Staffing section of the Service Quality Regime (SQR) also includes specific criteria relating to the availability and full functionality of ticket vending facilities, help points and colleague presence (where it is expected and scheduled to be). The results of these third-party audits are reportable to customers via the website on a periodic basis.</p> <p>In addition, GA has recently launched a new customer satisfaction survey (We're All Ears) where customers can directly give us feedback. This survey – with a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions – includes a specific section on the retailing proposition at the station. The results and the verbatim feedback from this survey are regularly reviewed and analysed by the Customer Experience Team before being discussed internally with colleagues throughout the business on a periodic basis, to assess whether any improvement actions or interventions are needed. By enabling us to understand any specific issues (as well as more general trends) relating to customer satisfaction right across the network, it provides customer-focused evidence to ensure we are respond to any emerging concerns or issues.</p> <p>From Spring 2024, a new, independent, national Rail Customer Experience Survey is expected to be launched which will measure all parts of the customer journey and provide granular detail on customer satisfaction on a station by station basis - providing another source of feedback on retailing issues.</p>
12	What impact is there on impartial retail obligations – something that currently applies to ticket offices. Will similar obligations be put onto other channels?	<p>There is no impact on our impartial retail obligations. As set out in the Ticketing & Settlement Agreement we will continue, as we do today, to comply with the impartiality obligation across all our retail channels.</p> <p>Our ticket machines currently offer tickets for all available routes and our multi-skilled hosts, if required, will be available to ensure a customer purchases the required ticket for their journey based on their individual choices and needs.</p> <p>If a customer is purchasing a ticket online the available journey times, prices and operator are all displayed, so they have all the relevant options available to make the right choice for them.</p>
Usability, functionality and accessibility of Ticket Vending Machines (ticket machines)		
13	We would also ask whether any of the following can be provided from a TVM:	
13A	National concessions for disabled people (for wheelchair and visually impaired passengers plus a companion) 1Boundary Zone add-ons 2 Staff travel discount 3Buying tickets in advance rather than on the day of travel 3 Tickets for travel that do not involve the 'host' station (important for people wishing to use split-ticketing arrangements) 5Seat reservations 6Changing a booking/tickets 7 Use of rail vouchers 8Use of rail warrants 9Ranger and Rover tickets 10 Plus Bus tickets 11Ferry connections 12Group Save 13Off-peak purchases before the off-peak begins (i.e. before 09.30) 14 Cycle reservations 15Photocards for season tickets 16 Scholar tickets 17Sleeper bookings 18	Please see response as Evidence No 4
14	Are there any other products, not mentioned in the list above, that passengers will no longer be able to easily purchase from the station if the ticket office is closed?	Please see response as Evidence No 5

15	Do you have any plans to upgrade TVM functionality and if so, what would this cover and when would it be complete?	<p>Yes, GA's ticket machine supplier has a development roadmap for a new customer interface on our ticket machines which will simplify the buying process for customers. The base plan includes a target date of June 2024 for this improved functionality to be available.</p> <p>GA is also trialling a plain paper print roll ticketing solution on 38 ticket machines, between November 2023 and January 2024, which will see barcode tickets being issued from ticket machines for the majority of tickets resulting in quicker ticket printing time. GA plans to roll out this technology to all 188 compatible ticket machines at staffed stations between April and July 2024 (subject to funding approval).</p> <p>GA is also working with RDG and the industry to identify the functionality needed to provide further mitigations for those products not currently available from ticket machines. Please refer to question 13a and 14 which detail the list of products not currently available on ticket machines and the retail channels from which they are available. Most of the approaches for enhancements to ticket machines require engagement with the ticket machine suppliers and development activity. Initial estimates for the development time required for specific products has been set out in our response to question 13a and question 14. In most cases these changes are not planned to be completed until mid- to late-2024. Final plans will be dependent on funding agreements and supplier contracts.</p>
16	Will staff be able to access a ticket machine, or be issued with handheld machines to sell tickets not available from the TVM?	<p>There are no plans to issue station staff with handheld ticket machines and it is worth noting that our handheld ticket machines do not offer the full range of tickets. Support will be provided to customers in accessing the full range of ticket types by colleagues at the station. Our multi-skilled hosts will advise customers on how a full range of tickets can be purchased via online channels, via a ticket machine, via a conductor (on all those routes where on-train conductors are currently available), via telesales or at Customer Information Centres. Colleagues would also be provided with mobile devices (tablets) in assisting customers (subject to business case approval). Please note only 1.94% (1.59% if priv tickets are not included) of tickets sold through a ticket office (including our proposed Customer Information Centres) from the six week data provided were tickets that currently cannot be purchased via a ticket machine at the station.</p> <p>GA is also working with RDG and the industry to identify the functionality needed to provide further mitigations for those products not currently available from ticket machines. Please refer to question 13a and 14 which detail the list of products not currently available on ticket machines and the retail channels from which they are available. Most of the approaches for enhancements to ticket machines require engagement with the ticket machine suppliers and development activity. Initial estimates for the development time required for specific products has been set out in our response to question 13a and question 14. In most cases these changes are not planned to be completed until mid- to late-2024. Final plans will be dependent on funding agreements and supplier contracts.</p>
17	How will passengers access these products and services in future?	<p>The overall mitigation approach is predicated on a 'Digital First' approach to ticketing, with the promotion and use of digital ticketing and services as the primary retail channel. We have set out in our response to question 13a and question 14 the intentions for the retailing of products that are current not available on the ticket machine. Where time is required to implement changes due to ticket machine upgrades or other process changes, to facilitate earlier implementation of the proposals, interim workarounds may be necessary and follow a standard hierarchy of mitigation: 1. Direct online (website or App) - Remote from station. 2. Telesales functionality or Travel Agent - Remote from station. 3. TVM - At station. 4. Mobile Ticketing Issuing System (from an on-board conductor on all those routes where on-train conductors are currently available) 5. Customer Information Centre - At station.</p>
18	How can passengers have confidence that this is not a precursor to withdrawing some of these products - for example, rover tickets.	<p>GA has no plans to withdraw any of the product range that it currently offers. This is evidenced by the positive steps being taken to provide alternative purchase channels for that very small proportion of products that are currently not available on ticket machines. GA seeks to match its product range to the prevailing market and where customer demand exists and is continually monitoring its product offering and associated demand. GA would not be able to remove any product without prior approval from the DfT.</p> <p>The industry may be simplifying processes, such as removing photocard requirements for season tickets, but withdrawal of products would require a full and formal review of the ticketing and fares system. That approach is not within the remit of this consultation or these proposals.</p>
19	What assistance will be offered to those who do not use the alternative options to pay for car parking offered by GA (e.g. by app) or when there is an issue with these alternatives?	<p>Car Park tickets are not currently sold via our ticket offices.</p> <p>Many of our car parks now have automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) which means you don't need a ticket, you can pay either online, using PayByPhone, at the car park payment kiosk on arrival or departure. The stations which are not equipped with ANPR technology require you to pay for parking as you arrive using either PayByPhone or Pay and Display, which you can purchase at the station ticket machine.</p> <p>The proposed multi-skilled hosts would have the same options to assist as a current member of station staff has today. They would firstly try to assist the customer in making a booking via one of the means highlighted and if that was not practicable, they would make reference to the NCP customer help line. They would only make direct contact via our contract manager if there was an apparent fault with one of the methods of payment to seek rectification. Our station staff do not normally have any direct contact with NCP under the current arrangements, as the latter have the full responsibility for management of the Car Parks.</p>

20	How will disabled people who cannot use a TVM purchase a ticket?	<p>Our proposed multi-skilled hosts' presence at stations, is aligned with periods of peak customer demand to support customers who may need assistance to buy a ticket. These hosts will be positioned at designated welcome / assistance points (subject to business case approval) in which the default position will be as close as possible to the ticket machines (positioning will be reviewed on a station-by-station basis with input from our Accessibility Panel). It would be a consistent and common location at stations to offer reassurance to those who need it; a clear and obvious place to get help and support. Please see Evidence No 6 for an example of a welcome / assistance point at one of our stations.</p> <p>Our ticket machines also have Virtual Ticket Assistance (ViTA) – which is a ‘help’ (ticket assistance) button connecting customers to our 24/7 Customer Contact Centre in Norwich. Not only can they provide advice on the best ticket option for a customer, but colleagues based there can take over ticket purchase and issue for the customer (and can also organise assistance), if that is helpful to them.</p> <p>In addition, our Accessible Travel Policy commits to a customer being able to board the train without a ticket if the ticket machine is inaccessible to them. Customers can then buy a ticket onboard (from a conductor, if available) or at their destination station without a penalty. This is an ORR requirement. This is also referenced as an acceptable mitigation in the National Technical Specification Notice – Persons with Reduced Mobility (January 2021) (Section 4.4.1 – Infrastructure Subsystem) and the Nation+B30al Rail Conditions of Travel (6.1.3.3).</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will be available to assist customers with ticket purchasing for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours.</p>
21	How will people summon a member of staff if they need help while using a TVM (i.e. the equivalent of the ‘red light’ at a supermarket self-checkout till)?	<p>Our multi skilled hosts will be positioned at designated welcome / assistance points (subject to business case approval) in which the default position will be as close as possible to the ticket machines (this will be reviewed on a station-by-station basis with input from our accessibility panel). A ‘Welcome Point / assistance point’ would be an initial focal point on entering a station that provides any customer who needs support and / or advice a place to start their journey. It would be a consistent and common location at stations to offer reassurance to those who need it; a clear and obvious place to get help and support. If assistance is required customers will be able to ask for this support. Please see Evidence No 6 for an example of a welcome / assistance point at one of our stations. At stations where there is one colleague on duty and they are called away to assist a customer on another part of the station, as they could be today from a ticket office, the colleague will return to the area of the welcome point / assistance point once this is assistance is provided.</p> <p>Our ticket machines also have Virtual Ticket Assistance (ViTA) – which is a ‘help’ (ticket assistance) button connecting customers to our 24/7 Customer Contact Centre in Norwich. Not only can they provide advice on the best ticket option for a customer, but colleagues based there can take over ticket purchase and issue for the customer (and can also organise assistance), if that is helpful to them.</p>
22	GA ticket machines have the facility to access assistance from your customer centre at Norwich. How is this advertised on your ticket machines?	<p>The main screen on ticket machines displays a 'Ticket Assistance' button that customers can press to connect to a colleague. GA is developing further signage and a campaign to increase customer awareness of this facility. This is expected to include vinyls on ticket machines alongside station promotional material such as posters. The campaign will initially operate as a trial to ensure we can measure its effectiveness before rolling out to all stations.</p>
22A	Have you carried out a review on how easy it is for people to use it and how effective it is?	<p>GA has carried out a full review of the useability and functionality of status of the ticket assistance function on its ticket machines. This review provided a detailed picture of the speed of connectivity and audibility of the machines, identifying opportunities to further improve performance in both areas. GA has worked with supplier S&B to introduce rigorous testing including upgrading servers, and customer experience tests - including factors such as connection timings and audio. Audio testing remains an integral part to both engineer and internal team’s daily regimes, and it is also part of normal practice to test audio and other facilities on the ticket machines when undertaking maintenance or fixes. Improvements have been seen as a result and GA is currently part way through a programme to further upgrade the operating systems in our ticket machines, as well as moving all ticket machines in a phased approach to fibre. This approach will provide a more consistent delivery to customers on our network which historically have not had fibre / broadband links in their area. This upgrade will then further increase the quality of service provided through the ticket assistance (ViTA) option.</p> <p>In addition, our ticket machine supplier has confirmed that the ticket machines at GA stations conform to DfT's 'Design Standards for Accessible Stations'. As noted above, customers can press the ticket assistance button for our 24/7 Customer Contact Centre in Norwich to provide assistance and take over ticket purchasing if necessary. If the customer is unable to do this, they are able to board the service and buy a ticket onboard or at their destination station without a penalty.</p>

22B	How reliable is the technology and what alternatives are there for people if this function does not work?	<p>Ticket assistance from our Customer Contact Centre in Norwich through our ticket machines (through the ViTA function) has been in place at GA from 2018 and is embedded as a mature function. The Contact Centre are available 24/7 to assist customers with support. There are also established arrangements internally to enable the team to advise Control where any function fails, alerting the business should there be any ticketless customers, and to also report faults for timely attention. This reporting is in addition to the contract arrangements with the supplier and the internal response team, as well as the proposed mobile teams and station-based staff which also ensure support for customers.</p> <p>Our contractor and internal response team test the functionality of ticket machines when undertaking regular maintenance or when remedying any reported faults - this includes checking the operation and responsiveness of our touchscreens and the audio function. We have enhanced the customer experience by improving the connectivity of machines by moving to a new server facility and have a programme to upgrade the internal operating systems currently underway. This will enhance all aspects of the customer experience. During 2023 -24 there is also a programme of works to migrate all machines to fibre broadband, where currently some machines are not on fibre due to restrictions in their geographical area. As we roll out these further enhancements, we will continue to monitor ticket machine performance, through our own reviews, via customer feedback, through engineer and colleague attention and by proactively visiting stations to test functionality.</p> <p>Where a customer is unable to obtain a ticket the ViTA support team will report both the fault and also ensure that messaging is sent out across the GA network indicating the journey/journey time being made. As highlighted above, this process is already established. If this instance happens when a multi-skilled host is present (which as previously highlighted in other answers is now being proposed to be for the same hours as now), the multi-skilled host will firstly seek to resolve the issue with the ticket machine themselves. If the fault continues the host will report both the fault and also ensure that messaging is sent out across the GA network advising the non-availability of ticket purchase facilities from that station. This process is already established. Stations also have help points for customers to report issues if necessary.</p>
22C	Have you assessed the accessibility of existing ticket machines, both in terms of their location at the station and useability? This includes whether they are under cover, whether passengers queuing are protected from the weather and whether they can be read in direct sunlight.	<p>Yes. GA has reviewed the accessibility and useability of existing ticket machines. Ticket machines are located in the optimal positions on stations so customers can easily find them using clear wayfinding signage. Ticket machines are located in accessible positions and take into account the peak demand at the station. Further considerations such as sun glare, visibility from a safety and security perspective and the requirements for shelters are also taken into account.</p> <p>Our ticket machine supplier has confirmed that the ticket machines at GA stations conform to DfT's 'Design Standards for Accessible Stations'.</p> <p>However, we've identified a very small number of ticket machines where there would be benefits from relocating them (if funding were available).</p>
23	What are the contractual SLAs for fixing out of order ticket machines and have these been reviewed given the future importance of ticket machines?	<p>GA has a robust Service Level Agreement with our supplier to maintain ticket machines, with specific respond and fix times to resolve faults. GA has a business plan commitment to meet this Service Level Agreement with the supplier. GA is currently reviewing this SLA with our supplier to reflect expected future usage.</p> <p>Multi-skilled hosts will continue to replenish ticket machines of ticket stock and perform basic maintenance for immediate fault remedy. GA have internal field engineers who monitor the availability of our ticket machines and respond to any faults that may occur. GA is also looking at the feasibility of increasing the number of GA field engineers (subject to funding).</p>
24	Will there be standards for maximum queuing times at ticket machines and how will queue lengths be monitored?	<p>GA will use reasonable endeavours to ensure we minimise queuing times at ticket machines. Feedback will be actively sought from colleagues on any build-up of queues. Local and senior managers are also constantly monitoring ticket purchasing trends across the network at busier times of the day and will also be observing any emerging issues as part of their roles, as well as assessing if any further actions are necessary. GA have overlaid the number of tickets retailed through both ticket offices and on ticket machines, using 15 minute time bands, to highlight if the number of ticket machines is sufficient at each station (see Evidence No 3). This assessment has taken the busiest hour of ticket sales during the six week period of data provided both from the ticket office and the ticket machine and assumed a 15% conversion onto on line channels (previous evidence suggests the actual switchover to online channels would be much higher, but it was felt appropriate to use a more cautious rate in preparing our plans). Analysis of this data has shown that additional ticket machines will be required at some locations and therefore alleviating the queuing times. See Appendix A which sets out station specific mitigations including if an additional ticket machine will be installed (subject to business case approval). Customers are able to provide on the spot feedback to GA directly through its new in-house customer satisfaction survey ("We're all Ears"). Feedback is regularly reviewed with underlying data trends discussed and acted upon.</p>
Availability of staff to provide retail help and advice		
25	GA are proposing a number of hub stations in various parts of your network. What rationale was used for determining which stations were classified as hub stations? How will people learn about these hub stations and the range of services that they will be offering as an alternative to the current arrangements at a given station?	<p>GA is proposing 7 Customer Information Centres at our major stations, London Liverpool Street, Chelmsford, Colchester, Ipswich, Norwich, Stansted Airport and Cambridge. Customer Information Centres would sell a full range of products, as well as providing help with more complex transactions.</p> <p>The rationale for determining the location of the Customer Information Centres was based upon the highest level of customer footfall and the number/complexity of transactions through the ticket office channel. The location and service offering of the Customer Information Centres would be advertised on our website, the National Rail website and on all non Customer Information Centres stations, including those that are unstaffed.</p>

26	What rationale was used when determining staffing at various stations i.e. in terms of de-staffing on a Monday or Friday and replacing with weekend staffing? Clacton is an example of a reduction Mon – Sat afternoons, but little change on Sundays.	<p>The rationale for determining the staffing at stations was based on the peak customer demand at the station, assistance requests and the number of ticket sales at a station, either via the current ticket office or ticket machine. No station would become unstaffed as a result of these proposals.</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours.</p>
27	Are staffing levels sufficient to ensure assistance with ticket purchases can still be offered at busier times alongside other duties? Do you have any evidence / assessments to support this?	<p>The rationale for determining the staffing at stations, was based on the peak customer demand at the station, assistance requests, the number of ticket sales at a station, either via the current ticket office or ticket machine, and the removal of certain duties from colleagues at some stations. The consolidation of former platform duties and ticket office duties will result in an adequate number of staff to assist customers.</p> <p>At busier stations the number of colleagues assigned to assist customers with ticket purchases and at the ticket machines has been determined based on the number of ticket sales at that station (both via the ticket office and ticket machine). For example, the proposal at Witham station is for 3 multi-skilled hosts to be assigned to assist customers with ticket purchasing during the busier period in the morning. The removal of certain duties at Witham (as an example) allows a multi-skilled host to concentrate fully on assisting customers with a ticket purchase, providing assistance or providing information.</p> <p>Evidence of ticket sales for a six week period by 15 minute breakdown has already been provided Evidence of ticket machine sales for a six week period by 15 minute breakdown has already been provided Evidence of booked and unbooked assistance data over the first six periods of the 2023 / 2024 year (010423 - 160923) is shown in Evidence No 7</p>
28	What training will multi-functional staff have in ticketing/product range to ensure they can provide expert assistance necessary to navigate the complex fares system and ensure passengers get the right ticket?	All multi skilled hosts, including the proposed mobile teams, will be provided with the same level of training in relation to ticketing and the product range that colleagues in the ticket office receive today.
29	How will people find a staff member at the station if they are no longer in the ticket office: will there be a central point / method for calling them?	<p>Our proposed multi-skilled hosts will be positioned at designated welcome / assistance points (subject to business case approval) in which the default position will be as close as possible to the ticket machines (this will be reviewed on a station-by-station basis with input from our Accessibility Panel). A ‘welcome point / assistance point’ would be an initial focal point on entering a station that provides any customer who needs support and / or advice a place to start their journey. It would be a consistent and common location at stations to offer reassurance to those who need it; a clear and obvious place to get help and support. Please see Evidence No 6 for an example of a welcome / assistance point at one of our stations.</p> <p>At stations where there is one colleague on duty and they are called away to assist a customer on another part of the station, as they could be today from a ticket office, the colleague will return to the area of the welcome / assistance once this is assistance is provided.</p>
29A	What will the queuing arrangements be when multiple passengers want help/advice?	Our proposed multi skilled hosts will be positioned at designated welcome / assistance points (subject to business case approval) in which the default position will be as close as possible to the ticket machines (this will be reviewed on a station-by-station basis). It would be a consistent and common location at stations to offer reassurance to those who need it; a clear and obvious place to get help and support. If assistance is required customers will be able to ask for this support. Please see Evidence No 6 for an example of a welcome / assistance point at one of our stations. The multi skilled hosts will be able to assist with ticket transactions through the ticket machines to maximise the number of sales per hour. The queuing arrangements at stations will follow the same principles that are used today at ticket offices. At busier stations if barriers/queuing systems are needed to organise any queues at ticket machines they will be used as required. These arrangements are currently employed at a number of locations when justified.
30	We understand that GA is eliminating the dispatch duty at your stations and reducing staffing accordingly. This resource currently offers assistance with information particularly during times of disruption. How is that service going to be offered in the future if there are even less staff as a result of the ticket office changes	Removing the requirement to undertake some duties (e.g. dispatch) at certain stations will free up the future multi-skilled hosts to provide flexible customer service and information provision, especially at times of disruption. Colleagues will no longer be restricted to a particular platform at a certain time dictated by dispatch requirements as the train movement part of their role will be withdrawn, meaning they are able to concentrate on providing customers with the information and support they need.
Paying by cash		
31	Have you assessed how much cash transactions will migrate to ticket machines?	GA has reviewed the level of cash transactions through both Ticket Offices and ticket machines and there are no concerns with the increase in cash payments through the ticket machines. The ticket machines will continue to be emptied of cash with no limitations of the number of coins or notes accepted. We have taken steps to ensure the continuation of this facility in the future, with arrangements for machine maintenance, together with cash deliveries and collections, to support this method of payment. In addition our multi-skilled hosts will be trained to attend to minor faults to ensure this facility is maintained.

32	Have you made any specific assessment of the ability of ticket machines to cope with the increase in cash, especially at stations where there is a higher than average use of cash to purchase tickets?	GA has reviewed the level of cash transactions through both Ticket Offices and ticket machines and there are no concerns with the increase in cash payments through the ticket machines. The ticket machines will continue to be emptied of cash with no limitations on the number of coins or notes accepted. GA will ensure that ticket machines are sufficiently resourced to ensure cash usage at the required levels. We have taken steps to ensure the continuation of this facility in the future, with arrangements for machine maintenance, together with cash deliveries and collections, to support this method of payment. In addition our multi-skilled hosts will be trained to attend to minor faults to ensure this facility is maintained.
33	If a person needs to pay by cash and cannot, what arrangements will exist to enable them to travel? And will there be clear signage at the station to inform passengers about this?	<p>At least one of our ticket machines at every location accepts cash as a method of payment and is clearly signed to that effect. We have taken steps to ensure the continuation of this facility in the future, with arrangements for machine maintenance, together with cash deliveries and collections, to support this method of payment. In addition our multi-skilled hosts will be trained to attend to minor faults to ensure this facility is maintained.</p> <p>In the event that a ticket machine is unable to take cash, as per the policy today, appropriate discretion would be applied. The National Rail Conditions of Travel provides the conditions under which a passenger may travel without a ticket without incurring a penalty fare.</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours.</p> <p>Therefore if a customer is unable to obtain a ticket the multi-skilled host will firstly undertake basic maintenance of the ticket machine to resolve the issue. If the fault continues, the host will report both the fault and also ensure that messaging is sent out across the GA network advising the non-availability of cash purchase facilities from that station. This process is already established.</p> <p>Whilst there is no specific station signage, advice will be available from the multi-skilled host at the station, or via the ticket machines through our Virtual Ticket Assistance (ViTA) – which is a ‘help’ (ticket assistance) button to connect customers to our 24/7 Customer Contact Centre in Norwich or via the help point.</p>
34	How will passengers with cash be able to buy the products listed above in relation to ticket machines (page 3)?	<p>There is at least one ticket machine at the current ticket office locations that accepts cash, so if the products listed in question 13a are available through the ticket machine then they can be purchased using that method of payment.</p> <p>In relation to tickets that are not available on ticket machines currently, please refer to the answers to Q13a and Q14 in regard to the mitigations for these products, noting only 1.94% (1.59% if priv tickets are not included) of tickets sold through a GA ticket office (including our proposed Customer Information Centres) from the six week data provided were tickets that currently cannot be purchased via a ticket machine at the station.</p> <p>The intention is to ensure that customers can continue to pay for tickets in cash. GA are currently working with the industry to facilitate access to those products that cannot at present be purchased via a ticket machine, subject to finalising the relevant agreements and assessments.</p>
Issues relating to whether passengers requiring assistance to travel receive that assistance in a timely and reliable manner.		
35	When station staffing hours are reduced how will turn up and go assistance for disabled passengers be maintained?	Station staffing hours are aligned with peak customer demand. Developing our proposals has been a data driven, evidence-based process involving reviewing Passenger Assistance data for each station in scope. Any proposed reduction in staffing hours was limited to stations where unbooked assistance levels are low, particularly at certain times of day. Outside of station staffing hours, assistance will either be provided by onboard staff (where available) or our mobile team. Customers will be asked to contact us via the help point or ticket machine (using the ticket assistance button) so that their assistance can be arranged. As per ORR Accessible Travel Policy requirements (3.2A), we will advise customers that unbooked assistance from stations that are unstaffed will take a period of time to be arranged and therefore we will encourage customers to book in advance. However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available at stations to deliver booked and unbooked assistance for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. This will also be supported by our mobile teams.

36	If this is reliant on onboard staff how will passengers be assisted to move around the station to the platform / to purchase the correct ticket / get advice / journey plan? How will passengers alert the guard if they haven't pre-booked assistance?	<p>Currently, outside of staffing hours, on board conductors provide assistance at Clacton-on-Sea, Colchester Town, Diss, Frinton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Manningtree, March, Stowmarket, and Thetford. On board conductors are equipped to sell tickets and are able to advise customers on journeys. Conductors have access to the Passenger Assist app so they can see who has booked assistance for their service. Conductors are trained to identify key signs that a customer may need some help - such as having a mobility aid, guide dog, cane, or wearing a sunflower lanyard. Customers can also ask the conductor for assistance if they haven't got a booking.</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available at stations to deliver booked and unbooked assistance for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. There will also be support from our additional mobile teams.</p>
37	If the mitigation is a mobile team how long will people have to wait? If you currently use mobile teams to provide assistance do you have any evidence on their effectiveness (e.g. time taken to arrive, passenger satisfaction)	<p>Our proposed mobile teams are placed in strategic locations across the network. The length of time a customer has to wait for unbooked assistance will depend on a number of factors, such as notice period, traffic conditions, location of the team etc.</p> <p>We currently use a mobile team between Wickford and Southminster, and Billericay and Prittlewell, providing assistance to customers outside of current ticket office hours (where applicable) or at unstaffed stations along these routes. This approach has been successful, with positive feedback received through our 'We're all Ears' survey, as a result of the assistance received from this mobile team.</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available at stations to deliver booked and unbooked assistance for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. There will also be support from our additional mobile teams.</p>
38	If the mitigation is to provide an accessible taxi what processes will be put in place and what is your assessment of the adequacy of this compared with travel by train? I.e. how easy is it to source accessible taxis and how reliable are they.	<p>An accessible taxi will be used as last resort (as is the case today). There is a national issue with the provision of accessible taxis because of the lack of regulation. However, we meet bi-weekly with our taxi provider to review issues and to develop an action plan. For example, our taxi provider is currently approaching accessible taxi suppliers at some stations on our network where provision is not adequate.</p> <p>It is important to note that the proposed introduction of mobile teams will reduce our reliance on accessible taxis to enable customers to complete their full journey by train.</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available at stations to deliver booked and unbooked assistance for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. There will also be support from our additional mobile teams.</p>
39	What monitoring regimes will be put in place to measure time taken and reliability?	<p>GA already has an established complaints review process whereby our Accessibility & Inclusion Manager has oversight of all accessibility related complaints to drive an appropriate investigation and corrective actions. They also chair a monthly working group attended by key areas of the business to review customer insight (from complaints as well as other sources - e.g. GA's We're All Ears customer survey, feedback from the Passenger Assistance customer-facing app, and mystery shops completed by our Accessibility Panel) to drive strategic actions. Staff will be asked to report any known issues (as today) to drive any investigations necessary. Our taxi provider also supplies us with data on time taken to arrive at booked location and levels of cancellations. Specific issues are raised with our taxi provider, including at a bi-weekly meeting, with action plans developed as applicable.</p>
40	How will people summon help if staff are not there?	<p>We will install signage (subject to business case approval) at stations that are staffed part-time to let customers know how assistance can be obtained (and at what times) and what to do if they have a booking or do not have a booking. This has been an outcome of our Equality Impact Assessments. In 2023, we installed signage at unstaffed stations served by services with on-board conductors to let customers know how to obtain assistance from conductors. These signs have worked well. Please see Evidence No 8 which shows an example of this signage. The signage was positively commented on by a customer, to one of our Service Quality Regime auditors stating ' how helpful he thought the sign was which advised passengers how to obtain additional assistance if required". However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see no change in the staffing hours and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available at stations to deliver booked and unbooked assistance for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. There will also be support from our additional mobile teams.</p>
41	Do all stations have tactile paving fitted along the entire length of each platform face? – the need for this is increased if the station is to have no or less staff in future? If not, which stations do not have this?	<p>All stations in scope of this consultation will have tactile paving installed on all platforms by the end of 2023.</p>

42	GA are removing platform dispatch duties and staffing accordingly. How will those needing assistance be helped at GA stations where DOO trains run services?	<p>Removing the requirement to undertake some duties at certain stations will free up multi-skilled hosts to provide assistance. Colleagues will no longer be restricted to a particular platform at a certain time dictated by dispatch requirements and will be better able to concentrate on providing customers with the information and support they need.</p> <p>The majority of stations served by DOO (Driver Only Operated) trains currently do not have platform staff, in some of these cases assistance is provided by ticket office staff who in the future will be more readily available by virtue of their new multi-skilled role, (no longer being largely behind a ticket office window). Where there are currently dispatch staff, the train movement part of their role will be withdrawn meaning they are able to concentrate more time on customer assistance which will improve availability for the core customer service role.</p>
43	Are staffing levels sufficient to ensure assistance can still be offered at busier times alongside other duties? Do you have any evidence or analysis that addresses this?	<p>The rationale for determining the staffing at stations, was based on the peak customer demand at the station, assistance requests, the number of ticket sales at a station either via the current ticket office or ticket machine and the removal of certain duties from colleagues at some stations. The consolidation of former platform duties and ticket office duties will result in an adequate number of staff to assist customers.</p> <p>The provision of assistance will be a priority for our multi-skilled hosts.</p> <p>At busier stations the number of colleagues assigned to assist customers has been determined based on the assistance requests at that station. For example the proposal at Witham station is for 3 multi-skilled hosts to be assigned to assist customers during the busier period in the morning. The removal of certain duties at Witham (as an example) allows a multi-skilled host to concentrate fully on assisting customers with a ticket purchase, providing assistance or providing information.</p> <p>Evidence of booked and unbooked assistance data over first the six periods of the 2023 / 2024 year (010423 - 160923) is shown in Evidence No 7</p>
44	What assurances can you provide that staff will not be pulled away to other duties rather than providing assistance?	<p>The provision of assistance will be a priority for our multi-skilled hosts, both those based at a station and the mobile teams. The removal of certain duties at some stations and the movement of staff from behind a ticket window will allow multi-skilled hosts to focus on providing assistance when required.</p>
45	How will staff at the station know if passengers need help to board?	<p>As is the case today, customers will need to speak to a member of staff to either let them know that they have pre-booked assistance or require assistance (but have not pre-booked). We also train our staff to identify key signs that a customer may need some help - such as having a mobility aid, guide dog, cane, or wearing a sunflower lanyard.</p>
46	How will the focal point of the ticket office / window be replicated?	<p>Our proposed hosts will be positioned at designated welcome / assistance points (subject to business case approval) in which the default position will be as close as possible to the ticket machines (this will be reviewed on a station-by-station basis with input from our accessibility panel). A welcome point / assistance point would be an initial focal point on entering a station for any customer who needs support and / or advice, as the place to access that support before they start their journey. It would be a consistent and common location at stations to offer reassurance to those who need it; a clear and obvious place to get help and support. Please see Evidence No 6 for an example of a welcome / assistance point at one of our stations.</p>
47	How will people summon help if staff are not there?	<p>We will install signage (subject to business case approval) at stations that are staffed part-time to let customers know how assistance can be obtained (and at what times) and what to do if they have a booking or do not have a booking. This has been an outcome of our Equality Impact Assessments. In 2023, we installed signage at unstaffed stations served by services with on-board conductors to let customers know how to obtain assistance from conductors. These signs have worked well. Please see Evidence No 8, which shows an example of this signage. The signage was positively commented on by a customer, to one of our Service Quality Regime auditors stating ' how helpful he thought the sign was which advised passengers how to obtain additional assistance if required". However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see <u>no change in the staffing hours</u> and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available at stations to deliver booked and unbooked assistance for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. There will also be support from our additional mobile teams.</p>
48	Will induction loop facilities be provided elsewhere on the station/concourse?	<p>Yes (subject to business case funding), also noting that our help points are already fitted with induction loop facilities.</p> <p>Our proposed hosts will be positioned at designated welcome / assistance points in which the default position will be as close as possible to the ticket machines (this will be reviewed on a station-by-station basis with input from our accessibility panel). It is anticipated that in the majority of cases an induction loop facility will be provided in this area. However, this again will be determined on a station-by-station basis with input from our Accessibility Panel.</p>
49	What mechanisms will exist to monitor instances where assistance is not provided and to investigate why it happened?	<p>GA already has an established complaints review process whereby our Accessibility & Inclusion Manager has oversight of all accessibility related complaints to drive an appropriate investigation and corrective actions. They also chair a monthly working group attended by key areas of the business to review customer insight (from complaints as well as other sources - e.g. GA's We're All Ears customer survey) to drive strategic actions.</p>

Issues relating to whether passengers can get the information they require to plan and make a journey, including during periods of disruption.

50	How will ancillary information traditionally displayed in the ticket office be provided e.g. timetable leaflets, local travel information, local bus timetables etc?	In the majority of cases ancillary information is displayed in the ticket hall area, at the front of the station or on the platforms. At stations with a ticket hall, this will remain open for the same amount of time as today. At the small number of locations where this information is displayed in the ticket office, the information will be moved to an area accessible to customers.
51	What devices will staff have – e.g. will they be able to print journey itineraries for passengers who ask for one?	Multi-skilled hosts will be provided with tablets and mobile phones (subject to business case approval). If a customer requires a printed travel itinerary, this will still be able to be provided.
52	With the reduction in dispatch who currently are able to assist passengers during disruption how will GA ensure this critical service is maintained?	Removing the requirement to undertake some duties at certain stations will free up the future multi-skilled hosts to provide flexible customer service and information especially at times of disruption. Colleagues will no longer be restricted to a particular platform at a certain time dictated by dispatch requirements as the train movement part of their role will be withdrawn, meaning they are able to concentrate on providing customers with the information and support they need.
53	Are help points at every station and are they in an accessible location? Are there any plans to position help points in concourse areas near ticket offices to avoid having to walk along platforms or over bridges to summon help?	Yes, help points are in place already at all of our stations in scope. All help points have been checked to ensure they are accessible. There are no plans to position help points near ticket offices as most are visible from the entrance of platforms. No customers need to use a footbridge to access a help point.
54	What are your existing processes and SLAs for monitoring that help points are working, how quickly calls are answered and the response time to repair faults maintained? What future commitments can you give?	GA have an in-house telecoms team that monitor help point functionality and respond to any arising technical issues. When any technical issues arise, GA aim to rectify the issue within 7 days, though any sites with a single help point are given priority. GA is looking at integrating Artificial Intelligence software on its help points to provide faster responses to customers; this will provide considerable detail on how help points are used by customers, which in turn will support longer-term improvements.
55	What are the standards for answering help points (i.e. within how many seconds)?	Our agreement with National Rail Enquiries (through the Rail Delivery Group), who answer our help points, is that calls will be answered within 30 seconds of being dialled.
56	How will you monitor/report time taken to answer help point calls / proportion not answered?	We track National Rail Enquiries performance through our contract with the Rail Delivery Group and receive periodic compliance data which is reviewed. Testing of help point functionality and answering is also included within the DfT specified Service Quality Regime. All forms of help point performance data is reviewed as part of our internal customer experience governance processes.
57	Do you have enough resource in place to ensure that an increase in calls via help points can be answered promptly and in accordance with standards?	There are no current concerns with the resourcing of help point answering. Our contract with National Rail Enquiries allows for any required resource uplifts to be implemented on a three monthly rolling basis. The longer-term potential for an increase in help point call volumes has already been discussed with National Rail Enquiries, who have assured us that other resources can be deployed to support help points should an immediate need arise.
Issue relating to ensuring passengers are not penalised if they cannot buy the ticket they require from the station.		
58	What changes to ticketless travel rules will be made / where will these be written down to give people who can't buy a ticket some assurances that they won't be penalised?	GA Conductors and Revenue Inspectors currently operate in an environment where many stations are unstaffed or have ticket offices open only in the morning. Procedures are already in place to provide information to on-train staff about short term ticket office closures through sickness etc and any ticket machines that are out of order. They are therefore experienced in ensuring that customers who genuinely have been unable to purchase a ticket before travel are not penalised. In that environment it is not considered that any change to ticketless travel rules is required. National Rail Conditions of Travel provides the conditions under which a passenger may travel without a ticket without incurring a penalty fare. However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see no change in the staffing hours and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available at stations to assist customers for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. There will also be support from our additional mobile teams. Therefore if a customer is unable to obtain a ticket the multi-skilled host will be able to provide advice and reassurance. If required, messaging can be sent out across the GA network advising that a customer has not been able to buy a ticket from a station. This process is already established. Whilst there is no specific station signage, advice will be available from the multi skilled host at the station, or via the ticket machines through our Virtual Ticket Assistance (ViTA) service – which is a 'help' (ticket assistance) button to connect customers to our 24/7 Customer Contact Centre in Norwich - or via the help point.
59	What processes will be in place so that passengers do not have to publicly declare/evidence their disability to buy on the train without penalty?	As is the case today, where customers join at an unstaffed station, or one where the ticket office is closed, GA on-train staff are trained and experienced in dealing with this situation and there is no evidence of adverse customer feedback to our approach.
60	How will you review signage to avoid sending inconsistent messages about revenue protection?	All current Revenue Protection signage is compliant with the Penalty Fare Scheme rules and considered appropriate in not sending an inconsistent message. There is no evidence of customer confusion around the Penalty Fares Scheme.
61	How will GA manage this communication at stations where some train services, such as Great Northern do not sell tickets on board their trains?	GA only has the remit to display the regulations around its own Penalty Fares scheme. Great Northern will be responsible for displaying the rules for customers who travel on their services. GA will ensure that Great Northern comply with this requirement at affected GA stations.
Issues relating to whether passengers can continue to use facilities at a station.		

62	In respect to facilities that are to be open when staff have been withdrawn, how will it be ensured that they are not subject to misuse or vandalism and will be maintained in good condition?	<p>GA have committed to ensure that customer facilities will remain open for the same amount of time as they are today, as well as ensuring that no station would become unstaffed as part of these proposals. Mobile teams will also be in place across the network. This approach is supported by a station cleaning team who visit stations to ensure each customer facility is maintained to a high standard. This all allows regular checks of customer facilities to remain in place, supported by CCTV. GA currently has in excess of 3000 cameras across its station estate all of which are in high definition. All Station CCTV can be accessed from our control centre and can be monitored if required. Also to note, is that the DfT Service Quality Regime requires us to achieve certain standards of station facilities and presentation, and we are regularly audited against these standards by an independent third party.</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see no change in the staffing hours and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available at stations for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. There will also be support from our additional mobile teams.</p>
63	We understand that alarms for 'disabled toilets' are often located in ticket offices. Is this case and, if so, where will these be fitted and how will they be responded to when there are no staff at the station	<p>In a number of cases the accessible toilet alarm is located in the ticket office, whilst others are located just outside the accessible toilet. GA is working with a supplier to install an alarm system in accessible toilets that has call routing functionality (subject to business case approval). This will operate in the same way as our current lift alarms. This will mean if there are no staff at the station, the alarm will call a location from which help can be provided. This help will either be from the closest station or from a member of our mobile team.</p> <p>However, after reviewing the initial feedback that you have sent, we have reviewed all our proposals, and made some significant amendments to the hours during which stations will have a permanent staff presence. Most stations will see no change in the staffing hours and any reductions that do remain are of a minor nature (i.e. less than an hour a day). Therefore staff will continue to be available to respond to an alarm for the same hours as today. Please refer to Appendix A which sets out individual station specific mitigations including an update to our proposed station staffing hours. There will also be support from our additional mobile teams.</p>
Issues relating to whether passengers feel safe at the station		
64	Have you assessed the impact of less staff at stations, particularly in the evenings with the removal of the dispatch function and related reduction in staff? This is in light of other reductions in staff due to the ticket office proposals.	Risk assessments currently exist for all stations covered by these proposals. Once final staffing and operational arrangements have been established, following the completion of both internal and external consultation processes, new assessments will be undertaken. These will cover, amongst other subjects, personal safety for both customers and staff. A specific set of Risk Assessments covering these issues has been developed by the British Transport Police and will be utilised as part of this process.
65	Have you liaised with the British Transport Police about the impact on staff and passenger security?	Safety and security is a key priority for GA. We have regular engagement with the British Transport Police to understand any safety and security trends on our network. In addition to this, the Department for Transport (DfT) and British Transport Police (BTP) have agreed that we should complete a Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment reflecting the change proposals. These will be completed once all of our discussions with Transport Focus and London TravelWatch are finalised and once all of our internal consultation has been concluded. This assessment will be completed for each station and will form part of the decision-making process before any ticket office is closed.
66	Are any mitigations planned?	Any proposed mitigations will be reviewed and implemented based on the outputs of the risk assessments. Therefore, the risk assessment process will need to conclude prior to agreeing any mitigations (should any be required).
67	Is CCTV coverage adequate, is it accessible 'live' from control and is there resource to monitor it remotely when required?	<p>GA currently has in excess of 3000 cameras across its station estate all of which all are in high definition.</p> <p>All station CCTV can be accessed from our control centre and can be monitored remotely if required.</p>
Other Issues		
Future Changes		

68	<p>What assurances can be provided that the level of station staffing outlined in the proposal is delivered and maintained in the future?</p>	<p>The levels of station staffing will be managed in the same way as they are today.</p> <p>With the removal of stations from Schedule 17 of the TSA, the regulation on Ticket Office staffing and services will be removed. The intention going forward would not be to replicate the historical regulation of station staffing hours but should protect those customers most in need of in-person support and assistance.</p> <p>To mitigate the concern that this will erode customer protections from future changes, it has been recommended that additional commitments on station staffing levels be linked to TOC policy on supporting accessible travel. The most appropriate mechanism to achieve this is via the Assisted Travel Policy (ATP) – should this be agreeable with ORR in light of its current ATP Guidelines (September 2020).</p> <p>The ATP already offers better provision for the protection of passenger access to necessary and reasonable support at the station than is contained under the TSA. Unlike the TSA, the ATP is formally regulated and enforceable by the ORR as part of an operator’s licence. It covers a range of scenarios to commit TOCs to providing support at stations and requires TOCs to have clear measures in place when considering changes to station staffing levels to ensure the continued provision of unbooked assistance (A1.2(f)). Changes to the ATP are controlled, with the agreement of any new ATP, or change to an existing ATP, to include the provision for involvement of stakeholders regarding the ATP provisions at a local station as follows:</p> <p>“At the time of submission, operators must confirm that they have sought and considered feedback from local groups such as their passenger panel, accessibility forum and local user groups, as appropriate.”</p> <p>The ORR guidance also states that should significant or material changes be made to a revised ATP, then ORR will formally consult with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), Transport Focus and (where relevant) London TravelWatch.</p>
69	<p>Can commitments be made that a fixed, advertised staff presence will not subsequently be removed without further passenger consultation?</p>	<p>At present, ticket office opening hours for individual stations are stipulated in Schedule 17 of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA). The TSA is an agreement between operators that is a condition of an operator’s service contract. This does not cover the hours of station staffing more widely.</p> <p>The TSA was brought into use in July 1995 following the introduction of train operator franchises. At that time the predominate retail channel for rail tickets was via in-person retail at stations – Ticket Offices. Since then, ticket retailing has seen a fundamental shift to digital ticketing and more automated retail, with industry figures now showing that only c. 12% of tickets are now bought in-person at a Ticket Office. The protection to customers’ ability to purchase tickets locally provided by the TSA is no longer as relevant, given that the majority of customer now purchase online, via an App or at ticket machines at stations. The expansion of Pay As You Go (PAYG) schemes including contactless and account-based payment will further erode the requirement for in-person ticket retailing options.</p> <p>However, a significant minority of customers, as highlighted by the initial feedback from the consultation exercise, do require assistance when travelling, either to access the services or to understand and purchase the right ticket for their journey. Addressing this issue represents a shift away from the broad Ticket Office sales provision originally intended to be protected by the TSA, to a more targeted support at stations for those who require assistance.</p> <p>Given that shift, the regulation required to protect the services should also be fit for purpose. With the removal of stations from Schedule 17 of the TSA, the regulation on Ticket Office staffing and services will be removed. Any future regulation should not replicate the historical Regulated Station approach of the TSA, but should protect those customers most in need of in-person support and assistance. Therefore, to mitigate the concern that this will erode customer protections from future changes, it is recommended that additional commitments on station staffing levels be linked to TOC policy on supporting accessible travel. The most appropriate mechanism to achieve this is via the Assisted Travel Policy (ATP). Please refer to our response to Question 68.</p>
70	<p>How would any new staffing arrangements be advertised to passengers (in a similar manner to the way ticket office opening times are advertised)?</p>	<p>The new staffing arrangements will be advertised in the same way in which the current ticket office opening hours are advertised. This would be via the GA website via the station information page, National Rail Enquiries via the station information page and the station welcome poster displayed at the station. We will also install signage (subject to business case approval) at stations to let customers know how assistance can be obtained (and at what times). This has been an outcome of our Equality Impact Assessments. In 2023, we installed signage at unstaffed stations served by services with on-board conductors to let customers know how to obtain assistance from conductors. These signs have worked well. Please see Evidence No 8, which shows an example of this signage. The signage was positively commented on by a customer, to one of our Service Quality Regime auditors stating “how helpful he thought the sign was which advised passengers how to obtain additional assistance if required”. Each train company has a Passenger’s Charter, which is a published guide to the level of service passengers can expect to receive when using their stations and train services. The charter is reviewed annually, including engagement with the Passenger Bodies (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) and includes a description of all aspects of the expected services a passenger should expect, including purchase of tickets and support at stations. The production of the charter is a requirement for each operator under their contract with the DfT. It should provide a simple and clear description of the expected services. The Charter ensures that each operator will continue to communicate the services and availability of those services at stations that are no longer Regulated Stations under Schedule 17, as it does today.</p>

71	How will compliance with any agreed new hours be monitored and reported?	<p>As per the answer to question 68 above, with the removal of stations from Schedule 17 of the TSA, the regulation on Ticket Office staffing and services will be removed. The intention going forward would not be to replicate the historical regulation of station staffing hours, but should protect those customers most in need of in-person support and assistance.</p> <p>To mitigate the concern that this will erode customer protections from future changes, it has been recommended that additional commitments on station staffing levels be linked to TOC policy on supporting accessible travel. The most appropriate mechanism to achieve this is via the Assisted Travel Policy (ATP) – should this be agreeable with ORR in light of its current ATP Guidelines (September 2020).</p> <p>The ATP already offers better provision for the protection of passenger access to necessary and reasonable support at the station than is contained under the TSA. Unlike the TSA, the ATP is formally regulated and enforceable by the ORR as part of an operator’s licence. It covers a range of scenarios to commit TOCs to providing support at stations, and requires TOCs to have clear measures in place when considering changes to station staffing levels to ensure the continued provision of unbooked assistance (A1.2(f)). Changes to the ATP are controlled, with the agreement of any new ATP, or change to an existing ATP, to include the provision for involvement of stakeholders regarding the ATP provisions at a local station as follows:</p> <p>“At the time of submission, operators must confirm that they have sought and considered feedback from local groups such as their passenger panel, accessibility forum and local user groups, as appropriate.”</p> <p>The ORR guidance also states that should significant or material changes be made to a revised ATP, then ORR will formally consult with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), Transport Focus and (where relevant) London TravelWatch.</p>
72	What arrangements have been made to provide staff cover for things like sickness and holiday?	There are sufficient staffing numbers within our proposals to provide cover for holidays and sickness as is the case today.
Timing of mitigations		
73	What guarantees can you offer that any mitigations proposed will be implemented before the implementation of a ticket office change?	<p>In many instances, we expect there will be two stages of mitigation. The “Day 1” mitigations (in place for the day a ticket office closes) may be an interim measure to manage the transition until a longer-term solution can be implemented. These longer-term solutions will have already been planned and approved/contracted, and we will just be waiting for delivery of equipment or completion of an upgrade. The intention is for the “Day 1” mitigations to act as a full mitigation to any specific issue, and therefore it is not seen as necessary to wait until a longer-term solution is in place before the ticket office closes. This approach would also allow for wider station changes and arrangements to be implemented, as soon as is practical, that will assist with modernisation and efficiencies to provide a better service for customers and better value for taxpayers.</p>
74	Is there any reason that Transport Focus should not object to the change until the mitigations have implemented and can be demonstrated to be adequate?	<p>There is no reason that Transport Focus should object to any of these proposals as prior to a longer term solution being implemented, there will be an appropriate Day 1 mitigation in place which will fully mitigate any issues.</p> <p>These short-term mitigations will allow for passengers to buy their tickets in a different way than they do today, either online or app, either at their origin station, during their journey or at their destination, in line with our pledge that passengers will never have to travel out of their way to buy tickets.</p>
75	Has any necessary funding / agreement been secured to implement any mitigations?	<p>The Rail Delivery Group has agreed in principle with the Department for Transport that funding support for the Retail Enhancements will be available, but the release of this funding will obviously be subject to the conclusion of the consultation process and the ticket office closure plan going ahead. In his letter to the Chair of the Transport Select Committee, dated 11 September 2023, the Minister of State for Transport, Huw Merriman MP, has confirmed that no final decisions will be made until after the consultations have been concluded. He states, “When authorising Operators to commence TSA consultations, the Department set out at range of parameters with which an Operator’s proposal must comply. Operators then took action to consult on ticket office changes in line with the rail industry’s Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA). The Department has not approved any proposal put forward by an Operator and will not do so until consultations are concluded.” The letter also clarifies the Minister’s expectations that Train Operating Companies will be refining their proposals as part of this consultation process without restarting the process. “Train operators have entered into discussions with the passenger bodies to take account of the feedback received through the consultation responses. We expect train operators to work collaboratively with the passenger bodies in the coming weeks, listen to the concerns raised and to refine their proposals accordingly.” “We expect to see operators develop and adapt their proposals where needed in response to points raised in the consultation.”</p>
Liaison with other operators		
76	What assessment has been made of the impact on services operated by other train companies? Have those operators agreed to the changes?	The impact of the proposals in respect of ticket office closures and alterations have been progressed with all other operators, as appropriate, and as required through the consultation process contained in the Secretary of State’s Guidance for Major Change Proposals. There have been no objections or adverse responses from any other operator.
77	In particular with GA’s plans to remove the dispatch function how will dispatch of other operator trains be carried out?	GA is discussing any changes to services it provides with other operators with them directly, in line with our normal arrangements and agreements. As is always the case with such proposals, an agreed timescale and process for changes to a new dispatch agreement is followed, in line with normal industry procedures.
78	Have any discussions been had with Network Rail about the impact at NR managed stations?	Discussion has taken place with Network Rail in respect of Liverpool Street which is their only managed station affected by the GA proposals.

<i>Additional questions in body of letter</i>		
NA	We understand that all GA ticket machines accept cash. Could this be verified please?	At least one of our ticket machines at every location accepts cash as a method of payment and is clearly signed to that effect.
NA	Can you verify that access to customer facilities will not change	Yes, GA can verify that access to customer facilities will not change