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27 September, 2023

Dear Nina,

Re: Ticket Office Clarifications

Thank you for your letter of 6 September 2023, summarising the clarifications required and issues raised in response to our station change proposals. I want to express my gratitude to all those who took the time to participate in this important process, including members of the public, their elected representatives, passenger organisations, and accessibility groups.

I am also thankful to the wider Transport Focus team for their diligent and focused work in reviewing our proposals, analysing the comments and information submitted, and providing valuable feedback.

Our proposals aim to improve services for customers by:

- Allowing colleagues to be closer to customers rather than in a fixed location, so that they can assist customers where they need help rather than being able to offer only limited help at the current fixed Ticket Office
- Increasing visibility of colleagues across the station, giving reassurance to customers and providing additional safety presence across platforms and concourses
- Delivering efficiencies by making better use of staff capacity, freed-up following the migration of customers from Ticket Offices, giving more help to a wider range of customers, offering our staff a more varied role and, in time, reducing cost to taxpayers.

We have always maintained that this initial period following the close of the public consultation would be central to ensuring that our proposals are the best possible. Therefore, we appreciate the time and effort dedicated to keeping us informed of significant themes and potential improvements coming from the public, which has allowed us to develop our proposals further.

The detailed answers to your questions and comments, alongside some examples to illustrate the changes in a range of station sizes and types, can be found in the appendices, but four principal clarifications to our approach are worth highlighting:

Current Hours Commitment – While we make clear in our proposals that we do not intend to de-staff stations, you have made clear that some concern around our intentions remains. We have revised our proposals to extend our station staffing commitment, which will now ensure retail-trained staff will be available at the same time a Ticket Office is open today.

This revision will be in place prior to any changes taking place. This means that in addition to staff being available across platforms and concourses, retail-trained staff will be available at the same times as they are today.

'Help at Hand' staff contact points will be introduced to address concerns from customers about our proposals making it difficult for customers to know where to go to ask for help.

We will review our existing Meeting Points and create new Welcome Points with a 'Help at Hand' facility, providing customers with a link to a retail-trained staff member in the station during current Ticket Office opening hours who can offer immediate advice or meet the customer to provide help in person.

The locations will be prominently marked at the station and included in Passenger Assist confirmation emails, on GWR.com, and on the online NRES station information system (as they are today). Familiarisation days will be held before the changes go live to ensure customers, assistance animals and carers can acclimatise to the new arrangements.

Digital First, not digital only – The transition to digital ticketing – online, via app, smartcard or CPAY – has seen 85% of Great Western Railway customers move away from buying from Ticket Offices without any advertising incentive.

We expect, and will encourage, customers to continue to migrate to digital options but our proposals do not rely on this. Our original submission outlined options at self-service ticket machines or on-board trains as alternatives for customers, and our modelling assumes all Ticket Office customers will switch to self-service ticket machines. This ensures that – even at maximum capacity – they could still cope with the additional demand.

Following your feedback, we have revised our plans to maintain the ability for customers at stations to buy every ticket currently available there today.

Customer choice remains key. Should a customer ask for help buying at a station, staff will initially offer to demonstrate the benefit and convenience of buying digitally via the app (or, where applicable, options such as pay as you go/CPAY), before moving to offering a self-service option. Staff will now also have the ability to directly sell the c.1% of tickets that may not be available through these channels. As a result, customers will retain the same access to the same range of tickets as they do today.

We will be updating our TVMs so they can provide a wider range of products than is currently the case – this will improve the customer proposition at all locations with TVMs. We will also switch on the cash facility on TVMs where that facility has been suppressed, so customers who wish to use cash can do so on these enabled machines.

Active Queue Management – Following our conversations around queuing concerns, we were reminded of the Transport Focus research in other areas of rail. This demonstrates that customer uncertainty and lack of confidence are significantly improved once they can be encouraged to experience the product.

As a result, multi-skilled staff will be trained to undertake active queue management at self-service ticket machines when queues are longer than a few minutes. This will serve a dual purpose of relieving waiting times while providing an opportunity to educate customers about the benefits of digital ticketing and build their confidence.

These commitments improve the passenger experience beyond our initial proposal, exceeding the current level of service we offer in several instances. By eliminating the demarcation restrictions that require staff to remain in the Ticket Office, even when there are no customers, we can focus on helping customers purchase tickets faster, offer an 'on demand' service that connects customers to station staff, and enable all staff to provide passenger assistance. These enhancements will ultimately benefit all our customers across the whole station, not just in one place.

It means instead of only being able to help the declining proportion of customers who visit a Ticket Office, we can also recognise and better react to the needs of all our customers, 85% of whom don't use them today.

We highly value the ongoing dialogue and collaboration with all stakeholders in this process. Your input has been instrumental in refining our proposals, and we are committed to maintaining open channels of communication as we move forward through this process.

I look forward to our continued collaboration and to seeing these positive changes come to fruition for the benefit of everyone.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Rowland
Customer Service and Operations Director
Great Western Railway

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Appendix A Responses to Questions

Appendix B Station Purchasing History Graphs

Appendix C Stations Information Sheet

Appendix D Stations Retailing Capacity Report

Appendix E Digitisation Promotional Flyer and Poster

Appendix F GWR EIA Summary

Appendix G Illustrative Station Examples

Annexe A

Transport Focus Questions

Section 1

Issues relating to whether passengers can easily buy the right ticket for the journey they want to make.

Adequacy of retail facilities:

What assumptions have you made about how many / what proportion of people will move to digital if ticket offices are closed?

There has already been a significant switch to digital purchase, particularly post Covid. We have included some graphs in a separate annexe, and a number of case studies, showing the very rapid and very significant levels of switching. While there are variations across our stations, on average sales at ticket offices have reduced from over 80% in 1996 to around 15% today. Our expectation is that this trend to digital and mobile ticketing will continue, and the use of paper tickets will reduce, particularly as smart ticketing and contactless payments spread further across our network.

We have, however, worked on the basis that we provide a retail capacity that meets today's demands, without making any further assumption of channel shift – albeit that this is what we expect.

Do you have any existing programmes designed to help people migrate to digital and if so, how effective have these been?

The current switch to digital purchase which has been rapid post Covid (as shown on the graphs included in a separate annexe) has happened without campaigning. Customers are choosing to use digital purchase, online and through our app, because it is more convenient and is part of the national switch to digital purchase.

We are now working on a new campaign that will be piloted shortly in a small number of GWR stations and we have added as an appendix a flyer and station poster showing the style of campaign we are currently working on.

Have you made an assessment of who will not / cannot move to digital and the effect on them of closing the ticket office?

Following the consultation, subject to DfT support for the additional spending, we now plan to have retail trained staff at all our stations for the same hours as we currently staff our ticket offices. Initially these staff will have access to existing ticket office sales equipment which can be used to “queue bust” and to retail tickets that are not yet available digitally or on our TVMs.

Following training and procurement we will replace access to the ticket office equipment with hand held tablets with a ticket retailing function, which our trained retail staff will again use for retailing tickets not available digitally/on the TVM and for queue busting when necessary.

Our approach will be to help customers move to digital. Our retail staff will be trained to do this and will work with customers to set up digital on their own devices. This face to face guidance will help to reassure customers and give them the confidence to buy tickets in advance of travel. We will also use the opportunity to encourage mobile ticketing to reduce the number of digitally purchased

tickets which are collected from TVMs. This will have the added advantage of reducing the potential for queues at TVMs.

Where digital purchase is not possible or desired, our retail staff will help customers to use the ticket vending machine. It should be noted that the vast majority of tickets we sell at ticket offices are available on the TVM, where they are not, we are retaining the equipment and the trained staff needed to be able to retail the full range of tickets. We will also be updating the TVMs to be able to retail a wider variety of tickets. Separate workstreams are underway to digitise those tickets which are not currently available in this form.

This dual approach of trained retail staff available to offer help and advice, along with access to ticket retailing equipment will mean we offer a continued high level of retail service to all our customers, while also offering an increased level of service to customers who need more help around the station.

The changes to our proposals mean we can now provide the same level of retail service to customers who will not/cannot move to digital. We are maintaining the current level of retail staffing capability and products will continue to be available for purchase at the station. There should, therefore, be no impact on this group of customers.

We will continue to encourage and support customers to move across to digital where they can, as it offers a more convenient service, purchased at home (or even en route) so customers can arrive at the station secure in the knowledge they have a valid ticket.

How accessible is your app and your website, especially for those with a disability?

Our website is certified to WCAG AA 2.1, and we have an ongoing programme of continuous review to ensure we maintain and improve. We are currently working to make our app accessible too, and we do also offer a telephone sales service as part of our accessibility service. However, we are not relying on these and will continue to provide the ticket office systems should they be required and ultimately handheld devices for colleagues.

Do you have any forecast of the impact on revenue – i.e. in how many people will no longer travel as a result or will now travel without paying?

We are not forecasting a drop in travel or revenue. Having listened to feedback and made changes to our original proposals we will now be able to offer customers both an improved customer service and an equivalent ticket sales service. Staff will be better able to respond and help customers outside the booking office, making our stations safer, more pleasant to use and services more reliable. We will also still have retail trained staff able to offer advice and guidance with access to ticket sales equipment if needed. We have included a number of graphs in a separate annexe showing the change in customer behaviour at a number of stations including Henley-on-Thames.

This station has not had a member of ticket office staff for some time, and the graph shows the changes that customers made to other channels without additional help from any member of station staff.

What reassurance/ evidence can you provide that retail arrangements at each station will have sufficient capacity for the ticket sales displaced from the ticket office, especially at peak hours and at those stations with a higher than average proportion of sales from the ticket office?

We have reviewed TVM capacity for all affected stations. This has shown where TVMs can already manage with ticket office sales transferring across (see separate annexe Stations Retailing Capacity

Report). Where capacity is tighter, at our larger, multi-window stations, as well as redeployed ticket office staff having access to retail equipment, we will be retaining ticket office windows for longer while monitoring TVM capacity as customers switch to digital or become more confident with TVM purchase.

We have also included in our annexe a number of graphs showing the change in ticket sales, including Henley-on-Thames station. This station has not had a member of ticket office staff for some time, and the graph shows the changes that customers made, without additional help from any member of station staff.

In addition to our retail trained staff having access to ticket sales equipment we plan to:

- add a TVM at Yeovil Pen Mill, the only station that does not currently have one, we will also review TVM usage across all our stations to ensure that we have the right number of machines in the right places, and we will add, if necessary, to the overall number of TVMs in operation
- close ticket office windows more gradually at larger stations to reflect the change in behaviour over time.

Our plan is for TVMs to be upgraded to offer a wider variety of tickets, those tickets which are only available by ticket office systems will be digitised and we will also continue to promote digital as the best option for customers. This will mean more customers will arrive at stations with their ticket already or, if not, the TVMs will be able to offer a wider variety of tickets which our colleagues will assist with purchasing where necessary.

Colleagues will always be there (within current retailing hours) to assist customers.

Has any assessment of the TVM capacity at each station has 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?

We have reviewed TVM capacity for all affected stations. This has shown where TVMs can already manage with ticket office sales transferring across (see separate annexe Station Retailing Capacity Report).

Where capacity is tighter, at our larger, multi-window stations, as well as redeployed ticket office staff having access to retail equipment, we will be retaining ticket office windows for longer while monitoring TVM capacity as customers switch to digital or become more confident with TVM purchase.

This assessment was made without the addition of the hand held sales equipment which add a further retail channel that can be used to queue bust, if needed. We will also maintain access to ticket office equipment, followed by the use of handheld devices.

What assessment have you made of the impact of seasonal peaks, especially at tourist destinations?

We recognise that GWR has significant leisure travel and many fantastic destinations. We have existing plans in place for increased customer flows in seasonal peaks where we employ seasonal colleagues to manage additional users of our stations. Where there are major events we have a long standing readiness process which incorporates ticketing capacity as necessary using our revenue team

Has any assessment of the location of TVMs been carried out – are they in the right place?

Once plans are approved and we know the final position for each of our stations we will conduct a full review of our TVM fleet to make best use of the machines we have. We are committed to increasing the number of TVMs overall (including the addition of a TVM at Yeovil Pen Mill) and we will also move machines around the network if it will benefit customers.

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?

Our updated proposal will introduce handheld ticket machines for colleagues who are redeployed from the ticket office, this will allow colleagues to queue bust where appropriate. We will keep the current ticket office equipment in place whilst this transition takes place.

How will the adequacy of retail arrangements at stations be monitored and reported (including to passengers)? What KPIs will be in place?

Details of ticket retailing arrangements, including the times when trained retail staff will be at the station, will be on both the national rail website and our own gwr.com and we will monitor against planned delivery.

What impact is there on impartial retail obligations – something that currently applies to ticket offices. Will similar obligations be put onto other channels?

These changes will have no impact on our requirement to retail travel tickets in an impartial manner, through whichever channel the customer selects.

Usability, functionality and accessibility of Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs)

TVMs are not capable of offering the same range of products and services as ticket offices. It appears that the following products/ services will no longer be available from the majority of stations:

The table below sets the availability of each product on a TVM, our decision to retain access to ticket office equipment for longer, along with the introduction of hand held ticket machines and the phased closure of ticket office windows at larger stations, and stations with increased ticket offices sales means that there will be continued access to all current products at each station currently with a Ticket Office. We are also working with the Rail Delivery Group and the industry on the development of TVM and digital products.

We are already making progress on this and GWR now offer GroupSave in all our TVMs. We were also pleased to work with the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership to create the first digital regional Railcard for Devon and Cornwall, which is showing excellent take up since its launch.

As we will now extend access to ticket office equipment, until we have staff at the station with handheld devices, we will be able to retail all standard products to customers. If a customer is not able to buy a ticket before travel because it is not available at the station of boarding National Rail Conditions of Travel – NRCOT Section 6.1 will apply allowing purchase at the first available opportunity without penalty.

Product	Available at stations
Advance Tickets and Reservations	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices and upgrade of TVMs is complete

Season tickets longer than weekly	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices and upgrade of TVMs is complete
Railcard Sales (National and Regional)	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices
Refunds	Yes - refunds will be possible through the existing ticket office equipment and we will configure the new hand held devices to process refunds as well
National concessions for disabled people (for wheelchair and visually impaired passengers plus a companion)	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices and upgrade of TVMs is complete
Boundary Zone add-ons	Yes – through use of the ticket office machines which will be maintained until the transition to hand held devices and upgrade of TVMs is complete
Staff Travel discount	Yes – through use of hand held devices
Buying tickets in advance rather than on the day of travel	Yes – our TVMs offer fares for future dates (tomorrow or the next day) and customers will also be able to buy tickets further in advance through our hand held devices.
Tickets for travel that do not involve the ‘host’ station (important for people wishing to use split-ticketing arrangements)	Yes - this is currently being added to our TVMs and will be available this Autumn.
Seat reservations	Yes – through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices – also available online
Changing a booking/tickets	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Use of Rail Vouchers	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Use of Rail Warrants	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Ranger and Rover tickets	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Car Parking	Yes – these will be available on our TVMs
Plus Bus tickets	Yes – available on TVMs
Ferry connections	Yes - through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices
Group Save	Yes – already available on our TVMs
Off-peak purchases before the off-peak begins (i.e. before 09.30)	Yes - TVMs can be adjusted by station to allow the purchase of off-peak purchase prior to the start of off peak.
Cycle Reservations	Yes – through use of ticket office equipment or hand held devices – these are also available on line
Photocards for Season Tickets	The industry has agreed the policy to remove the requirement for a Photocard when purchasing a Season Ticket. Where a form of ID is required for the purchase of a Season Ticket, any reasonable alternative form of ID shall be accepted. Subject to finalising the relevant funding agreements, these changes could be fully implemented by mid-2024. Until this time, it is the intention that customers with no photocard will be able to enter a generic number into retail systems.
Scholar Tickets	Our range of special scholar season tickets are retailed through or in collaboration with partner organisations including local authorities and education establishments. Whilst currently processed through the Ticket Office, we will transition the process to other parts of the organisation as part of this change.
Sleeper Bookings	Given the limited need across the industry sleeper booking are not currently being explored as part of the TVM changes. However, sleeper bookings will be possible at the station through our retail trained staff and their hand held devices
CIV tickets for connections with Eurostar international services	Yes, these will be available through our hand held devices

If many of these products are no longer readily available this would represent a significant reduction in retail capability at stations. Those passengers who do not have access to digital would face a significant reduction in what they can purchase and could end up paying more than they needed to as a result.

The motivation for these changes is to offer a better customer experience using the spare capacity and expertise of our retail colleagues by bringing them closer to customers. By amending our proposals, we can offer advice on using digital purchase, TVM purchase or when necessary (for instance where products are not yet available on the TVMs) we will retail products on hand held devices, or through extended access to ticket office equipment. This will keep products readily available.

We are also aware that there is an issue with connectivity at some stations when trying to pay for car parking via the car park ticket machine or via mobile phones. This could also push more people towards using the TVM.

We are adding car park tickets to our TVMs so that customers who currently purchase them at the ticket office can do so at the TVM. Our TVM capacity review has factored in these tickets being purchased through the TVM in future. Customers would of course be able to continue to use the ticket office during the phased closure of ticket office windows. Our car parks are managed through APCOA who also offer online payments and a telephone payment service which can be used where connectivity is poor, and is the current method used by customers when tickets offices are not open (or indeed at stations without ticket offices).

Are there any other tickets, not mentioned in the list above, that would not be sold by the TVM?

You have provided a very comprehensive list addressed in the earlier table and we believe this covers all but three areas – large groups over 10, extension of freedom passes and First Class upgrades.

While large group tickets are not available on the TVM, they are available online and on the phone where we can also discuss large group discounts. They will also be available through the handheld devices we are using, as will First Class upgrades and extension of freedom passes – these products will all still be available to purchase at all our stations.

Do you have any plans to upgrade TVM functionality and if so, what would this cover and when would it be complete?

Yes, and we have already begun the process by adding Group Save tickets to our TVMs. We are expecting to offer remote origin sales available in our TVMs later this year.

Most of the approaches for enhancements to TVMs require engagement with the TVM suppliers and development activity and we are working with the Rail Delivery Group and industry partners on this. Final plans will be dependent on funding agreements and supplier contracts. In some cases these changes are planned to be completed mid- to late-2024 with completion expected by March 2025.

In the interim, we will continue to retail all products through access to ticket office equipment and use of hand held tablets while the upgrades to the TVM capability take place.

Will staff be able to access the original ticket office machine or have a 'staff mode' option on a TVM) or be issued with handheld machines to sell tickets not available from the TVM?

Our revised plans would mean that staff would have access to ticket office machines until we had procured and trained them on the use of hand held sales devices. These would be used primarily for tickets not available digitally or in TVMs, but could also be used to queue bust.

We are also working with the Rail Delivery Group and industry partners on development activity for our TVM's including the potential for "staff mode".

How will passengers access these products and services in future?

The changes we have already made and are making to our TVMs will give customers the opportunity to buy more of these products through a TVM.

More products will also be available online which will improve the range of products offered to customers, the majority of whom, are already using digital channels, as well as offering a route for customers who currently use ticket offices.

In addition, our amended proposals mean we will also have access to ticket office equipment/handheld devices with trained retail staff at the station to help customers who are unable to purchase online or through the TVM.

How can passengers have confidence that this is not a precursor to withdrawing some of these products - for example, rover tickets.

Working with the Rail Delivery Group we are intending to simplify some process 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. This is not within the remit of this consultation or these proposals.

Nor would GWR, or any other train operator, be able to withdraw a product arbitrarily, this would be part of the Rail Delivery Group Fares and Ticketing Reform change programme.

What plans do you have to improve payment for car parking at stations?

We are adding car park tickets to our ticket vending machines, and we will have trained retail staff available (for the same hours as our ticket offices are operational) to help customers purchase tickets.

Our car parks are managed through APCOA who also offer online payments and a telephone payment service which can be used where connectivity is poor, and is the current method used by customers when ticket offices are not open (or indeed at stations without ticket offices). By adding car park tickets to TVMs we will also be helping customers in areas of low connectivity to buy car park tickets outside ticket office opening hours.

How will someone who cannot use a TVM, for example a disabled person, purchase a ticket?

The industry has set out its intention to ensure no passenger is left behind as a result of the proposed changes. Specific requirements vary by an individual's disability, and there will be some customers who will need additional help and support.

Stations that are changing will therefore have a clearly identified 'Welcome Point'. This would be an initial focal point that provides any customer who needs support and / or advice a place to start their journey. We already have meeting points that other station staff use to meet customers who have booked assistance, and in some cases we may use those existing points. Each station will be individually assessed, and an appropriate location agreed and this will form part of updated and detailed EIAs for each station. Our intention is that these 'Welcome Points' will be clearly accessible and visible from the station entrance and close to ticket retailing facilities where that is possible.

A retail trained member of staff will monitor the Welcome Point to offer advice and support during the hours that ticket offices are currently open for each station.

While the primary role of the staff member is to offer support and guidance to customers to either set up digital purchases or use TVMs they will also have access to a hand held sales device and can help with purchases if necessary.

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)?

As our retail trained staff will be multi skilled, they may also choose to assist customers to other areas of the station, or to help with other aspects of keeping the station safe and pleasant to use. Their primary role however, particularly during the early stages of change, will be to monitor the Welcome Point and the TVM.

Staff will have full training and will be proactive in intervening where they can see that help is needed. Following the consultation, we have also given some thought to how customers might contact staff if they are not in the immediate vicinity.

Our solution is to add a "Help at Hand" device (similar to a call button) to the Welcome Point that connects through to the retail trained staff at the station. This will allow customers needing help with retailing to speak directly to the person waiting, so that we can give reassurance and advice even while returning to help. All of our stations also have help-points on platforms which connect directly to the national rail contact centre should a customer reach the platform without a ticket. These are operational at all times and can offer customer reassurance such as boarding without a ticket and purchasing on board when they cannot do so at the station.

Is it proposed to upgrade TVMs to offer remote access/video help facilities?

Our TVMs do not offer audio or video remote access. This is something that is being considered elsewhere. We will monitor progress and have not ruled this out as something for the future, albeit that it is not in our current proposals.

We will have retail trained staff at the station monitoring TVM use with a hand held sales device, who will proactively step in to help, along with a clearly identified Welcome Point with a Help at Hand button that will link directly to a retail trained member of staff.

Have you assessed the accessibility of existing TVMs, both in terms of their location at the station and useability (I.e are passengers protected from the weather when queuing, are they hard to see in sunlight)? Do you have any plans to relocate TVMs?

All our TVMs are in accessible locations. We continually review their locations to make sure they are best placed for our customers and will move TVMs if necessary to help. This is part of our regular checks on customer experience and service quality. We will be reviewing usage to see if we need to move any TVMs around our estate, and we will have some new additions, where TVMs are installed or moved we will check the location is suitable and will include in our final updated station EIA.

We are aware that some groups of disabled passengers are more likely to use cash when purchasing tickets. Are 'cash TVMs' at accessible (step- free) locations in the station?

All our TVMs are in accessible locations and around 50% of the stations included in this proposal have TVMs that accept cash transactions. Almost all the remaining TVMs have a cash capability and we are reviewing these to consider if we should extend the option to use cash at more TVMs.

Our retail trained staff will also be able to accept cash for sales made through extending the availability of ticket office equipment and the use of hand held devices. This option will be available for the same hours each day as currently offered at the ticket office.

If for any reason the staff member is not available, or unable to accept cash, and the customer only has cash available for payment, they will be permitted to board their train and buy on board in cash without penalty as per Section 6.1 of the National Rail Conditions of Carriage.

What are the contractual SLAs for fixing out of order TVMs and have these been reviewed given the future importance of TVMs? For example, in relation to replenishing consumables, i.e. ticket stock and ink, and repairs to faults

We are confident that our service level agreement for fault repair is among the best, if not, the best in the industry. We use an availability SLA and measure supplier performance against availability of 99% per four week period. We manage replenishment of TVM ticket stock/ink etc ourselves and will continue to do so using the retail trained staff that we are retaining at every station.

Will there be standards for maximum queuing times at TVMs and how will queue lengths be monitored?

We do not propose to introduce maximum queuing times for TVMs, our review of TVM capacity has shown where TVMs can already manage with ticket office sales transferring across (see separate Station Retailing Capacity Report). Where capacity is tighter, at our larger, multi-window stations, as well as redeployed ticket office staff having access to retail equipment, we will be retaining ticket office windows for longer while monitoring TVM capacity as customers switch to digital or become more confident with TVM purchase.

Availability of staff to provide retail advice and help

Why are retail staffing hours being reduced at some stations?

Following the consultation and having listened to feedback from our customers and communities, we have reviewed this element of our original proposal and our updated proposal will now see all stations retain retail trained staff for the full period of current ticket retailing operating hours.

There remains no change to the wider station opening hours, and no change to access to any other station facilities.

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 to support this?

The primary focus of our multi skilled retail trained staff will be supporting customers with their ticket purchases. This focus along with the now proposed hand held ticketing equipment will ensure our colleagues can be agile and responsive to customer needs. We will also use a phased approach to the closure of ticket windows at larger stations and stations with higher levels of ticket office sales, so that we can be sure the combination of TVM(s) and queue busting hand held devices will work. We would expect the number of customers using TVMs to reduce as colleagues also assist in helping them transfer to digital.

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? Will this replicate the training given to existing ticket office staff?

It is our intention to redeploy existing trained retail staff from our ticket offices into the multi skilled role. When training new staff for the multi-skilled role, the competence level for ticket retailing will be at the same level and require the same training as it does today. Multi skilled staff who are using our hand held sales devices will therefore have the same training and competence levels as existing retail colleagues.

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? What will the queuing arrangements be when multiple passengers want help/advice?

We already have meeting points to meet customers who have booked assistance, and in some cases we may use those existing points. Each station will be individually assessed and an appropriate location agreed as a Welcome Point. Our intention is that these 'Welcome Points' will be clearly accessible and visible from the station entrance and close to any ticket retailing facilities where possible. A retail trained member of staff with a hand held retail device, will monitor the Welcome Point to offer advice and support during the hours that ticket offices are currently open. We would expect customers to queue naturally at the welcome point as they do now for the ticket office. In addition, the welcome point will be equipped with a Help at Hand button which will link them directly to the retail trained member of staff who can offer advice and reassurance to customers waiting.

What was the rationale behind choosing those stations due to close in Sep-Dec 2024. Why apply for closure now rather than in 2024? How will you brand these stations so that passengers understand their continued role as ticket offices? Why have staffing hours been cut at some of these stations?

The phasing programme in our original proposal was influenced by a number of factors including geographical location and ease of access for customers travelling from nearby stations to purchase tickets not available in TVMs. We also looked at the number of transactions.

We have applied for major change for all stations together to allow for a consistent approach and to be able to offer customer clarity on our approach, allowing us to bring staff out from behind the glass, to enhance customer service and to make more efficient use of our trained retail experts in supporting customers switch to digital.

Our updated proposals now mean that all stations will have access to ticket office equipment and hand held devices retailing products not available in TVMs. Depending on the updating of TVMs to provide a greater variety of tickets and the transfer to digital we would expect the full process to be complete by March 2025.

In our updated proposal, the duration of retail staffing hours will remain unchanged from what they are today.

What resilience / contingency have you built into staffing plans to ensure that stations will be staffed as advertised and that 'lost hours' are minimised in future?

When calculating staffing levels we have considered all elements of challenge such sickness, annual leave, training release. The additional opportunities offered by the wider role, and clarity over the future of retail trained staff should also make recruitment and retention easier

Paying by Cash

Do your TVMs accept cash? Have you made any specific assessment of the ability of TVMs to cope with the increase in cash, especially at stations where there is a higher than average use of cash to purchase tickets?

Around 50% of the stations included in this proposal already have TVMs that accept cash transactions. We will also switch on the cash facility on TVMs where that facility has been suppressed, so customers who wish to use cash can do so on these enabled machines. GWR retail staff manage the replenishment of the cash functions on the TVMs, this will continue, and we do not anticipate any issue from increased use of cash at the TVM.

Our retail trained staff will also be able to accept cash for sales made through extending the availability of ticket office equipment and the use of hand held devices. This option will be available for the same hours each day as currently offered at the ticket office. Staff will have access to secure facilities to deposit cash.

If a person cannot pay by cash what arrangements will exist to enable them to travel, particularly where there are Driver Only Operated services? And will there be clear signage at the station to inform passengers about this?

The combination of TVMs able to accept cash and our use of hand held ticket sales devices means that cash payments will remain possible at our stations. In the interim we will maintain our current ticket office retailing equipment to allow cash sales to take place if necessary.

The National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT) provide the conditions under which a passenger may travel without a ticket without incurring a penalty fare. Interim policy guidance and training will be issued to ensure that customers are able to travel under Section 6.1 NRCoT when necessary.

We have ticket examiners able to sell tickets on many of our Driver Only services, when they are not available, and customers have travelled without a ticket under Section 6.1 tickets should be purchased at the destination station.

How will passengers with cash be able to buy the products listed above in relation to TVMs (rows 16-39 above)?

The change in our proposals to include extended access to ticket office equipment followed by the deployment of handheld ticket machines will allow cash payments for the products listed.

Section 2

Issues relating to whether passengers requiring assistance to travel receive that assistance in a timely and reliable manner.

Accessibility:

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?

At GWR we provide more assistance for customers than any other Train Operator (excluding Network Rail). Within the last financial year, 1st of April 2022 to 31st March 2023, GWR delivered a total of 185,846 assistance requests, which included 42,223 “Turn up and Go” requests. The vast majority of these assistance requests are provided by dedicated assist teams and dispatchers. This is because currently any GWR colleague whose role is purely ticket office, does not have passenger assistance in their job description and are not able to help. This means once a passenger has bought their ticket from the ticket office ticket office staff are not able to give further assistance at the station. It is this demarcation issue that our proposals seek to address.

Once we redeploy colleagues from the ticket office, under the new multi-skill grading structure all colleagues will be able to complete passenger assistance duties. The level of support they can give in their new multi skilled role will therefore extend beyond the purchase of their ticket, potentially up to boarding of the train, and we will increase the pool of staff to help with assistance.

What assurances can you provide that staff will not be pulled away to other duties due to understaffing?

Passenger assistance is already and will continue to be a high priority task for both our station and on board colleagues. Where we have multi skilling in place, the change reinforces the current position. Where ticket office colleagues currently do not provide assistance the changes mean we

will be adding to the pool of staff who can help, as the new industry multi-skilling grading structure will see all station colleagues able to complete passenger assistance duties.

How will staff at the station know if passengers need help to board?

Our proposals will not change the current position. Customers will have either booked assistance through the industry wide passenger assistance app or may be a turn and go customer. If the customer has used the app, we will receive notification through the app (and an advice call from previous station if relevant) and we will meet the customer in the same way that we do today.

If the customer has not booked assistance, they will arrive at the Welcome Point and either our retail trained member of staff will be able to help them, or to call on other members of the station team (where these are available) to help. Customers will be able to use the Help at Hand call device to alert staff if they are not immediately met at the Welcome Point. Whether the assistance is booked or is “turn up and go” the passenger will receive priority focus. Our retail staff will match the current ticket office opening hours and will be able to offer enhanced assistance from being on the concourse and not behind the ticket office window.

Ticket Office staff who are not multi skilled have no current role in assistance and they are not able to help customers who need help to board. The flexibility of the new multi skilled role will mean that they may be able to deliver that help themselves, improving the experience for customers who need help.

When station staffing hours are reduced how will turn up and go assistance for disabled passengers be maintained?

Staffing hours are not reduced at any station as a result of our revised proposals.

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?

Not applicable – station staffing hours remain the same.

If services are operated as Driver Only Operation then how will assistance be provided?

There will be no change in how assistance is provided for station served by Driver Only Operation (DOO). We already have a Mobile Customer Care team (introduced in Nov 2019) to provide passenger assistance for DOO services, and this will continue.

Ticket office staff at our DOO served stations will add to our station assistance service when they have been redeployed into the new multi skilled role.

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)

No mitigation is required as the change to the ticket office will not impact our assistance service for DOO served stations. We are retaining staff at the stations for the same hours as now, and our existing mobile care team are highly regarded and will continue to provide services. There is potential for the change to offer improved customer service, with ticket office staff moving to multi skilled roles which could reduce waiting time for turn up and go customers needing assistance.

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?

No mitigation is required as we will have staff at the station matching the current ticket office opening hours, along with the use of our existing mobile care team for periods when the station is unstaffed (mirroring our current service)

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?

We will not be relying on on-board staff, we will have staff at the station matching the current ticket office opening hours, along with the use of our existing mobile care team for Driver Only services for periods when the station is unstaffed (mirroring our current service)

What monitoring regimes will be put in place to measure time taken and reliability?

Given that there is no change to our current assistance service, bar the potential for more staff help, we will maintain our existing monitoring including reviewing customer feedback.

How will people summon help if staff are not there?

Customers will be able to use our “Help at Hand” button during retailing hours which will be at our Welcome Meeting Points. This device will connect to our retail trained staff. Whether the assistance is booked or is “turn up and go” passenger assistance is a priority and this is an area that we expect to be able to improve with multi skilled staff.

Which of your stations do not 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? What additional mitigations can be taken to ensure the safety of visually impaired passengers?

We do not consider that there is increased risk from the changes we are proposing. We are retaining station staff to match the hours currently covered by our ticket offices and will have a Help at Hand button to alert staff if not immediately present at the Welcome Point. Our existing accessibility service is completely unchanged by the process.

However, as ticket office staff will not be restricted to the ticket office, they will be able to play a greater role in station safety, helping customers to the platform (something they cannot currently do). There is the potential therefore to reduce risk at stations which do not yet have tactile paving in place.

How will the focal point of the ticket office/ window be replicated?

The focal point will be our Welcome Point, we will review each station and agree the location, these will be close to the former ticket office, which is where the majority of designated 'meeting points' for assistance are currently at our stations. Our trained staff will regularly check these areas, largely basing themselves in these areas, where they will be available to customers, and also able to proactively approach customers who approach the no longer staffed ticket office. We also plan to have a “Help at Hand” device at these points which will connect to the retail staff member on duty.

Will induction loop facilities be provided elsewhere on the station/concourse?

We will review each station to agree the Welcome Point and will use this review to determine if our current induction loops need to be moved. This will be included in the updated, detailed, individual station EIAs.

What mechanisms will exist to monitor instances where assistance is not provided and to investigate why it happened?

We take our responsibilities for assistance very seriously, both for booked and turn up and go customers, and were the first train operator to achieve DfT Safeguarding Accreditation. As well as our mobile care team, we also have a team of Accessibility Mentors who run our Try a Train service, offering familiarisation trips, advice and help to groups or individual customers who need reassurance about using rail. We will use this model to offer groups, and individual station users including customers who use Guide Dogs and other animals for support, familiarisation opportunities to use the new Welcome Point and Help at Hand button, ensuring that they understand the new process. This will also be open to carers, and disability organisations.

We have rolled out BSL translation app to all our frontline staff and we understand the importance of regular review. We have existing monitoring in place for all our assistance and this will continue. This includes reviewing data from the passenger assistance app, and customer feedback about assistance and will always include an investigation if assistance is not provided, or if a customer makes a complaint or observation about the quality of our assistance.

Section 3

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

Customer Experience - journey planning:

How will ancillary information traditionally displayed in the ticket office be provided e.g. timetable leaflets, local travel information, local bus timetables etc?

Our stations will remain open. Ancillary information will continue to be available in a variety of places including waiting rooms and concourses. We will also have staff at the station who will be able to provide advice including providing printed journey information.

What devices will staff have – e.g. will they be able to print journey itineraries for passengers who ask for one?

The handheld devices that we are proposing to introduce will be able to retail tickets and also print journey itineraries.

Are help points at every station and are they in an accessible location?

All of our stations have accessible help-points which meet DfT Design Standards for Accessible Railways.

In addition to the help-points, which link to the National Rail Enquiry contact centre and are operational 24 hours a day, we have existing agreed meeting points for assistance and we will be reviewing each station to agree a Welcome Point with Help and Hand call button. These points will be monitored by retail trained staff who will be available to help for the

same period of time as the existing ticket office hours. We are making no changes to how we manage our current assistance, bar the additional support of ticket office staff having increased flexibility and the opportunity to help customers outside the confines of the ticket office.

Are there any plans to position help points in concourse areas near ticket offices to avoid people having to walk along platforms or over bridges to summon help?

We will not be moving our existing help-points. It is important that these are available for customers on the platform for use when the station is not staffed and advice is needed. We will be reviewing our existing Meeting Points, creating Welcome Points which will be monitored by station staff during retail hours and also equipped with Help at Hand buttons to alert staff if they are not in the immediate vicinity.

What are your existing processes and SLAs for monitoring that help points are working and the response time to faults? What future commitments can you give?

We do not envisage increased use of help-points following the changes, given our proposal to use Welcome Points with Help at Hand call buttons; particularly as we propose to maintain staffing hours.

Help-points are primarily in situ to provide remote support when the station is unstaffed. That said, help-points are regularly checked as part of our robust Planned General Inspections (PGIs) and by colleagues through the course of daily duties.

Help points are also measured / reported on as part of the recently introduced Service Quality programme which is audited by an external body on behalf of the DfT. We would introduce the same level of planned and daily checks for the Welcome Points and Help at Hand button and it is likely that the DfT would also include both in their Service Quality programme in future.

What are the standards for answering help points – i.e. within how many seconds?

All Help Point calls are routed to National Rail Enquiries (NRE) call centre, and they aim to answer 95% of all calls made. National Rail Enquiries monitor performance of any calls made to their service. This is shared with all train operators with any concerns raised with NRE directly.

What are the standards for monitoring how quickly you respond to passengers using the emergency button?

We have assumed that this refers to the emergency button on our platform help-points.

Calls on this button are routed to the emergency services switchboard, not within rail industry - essentially a 999 call. NRE do not monitor how quickly those calls are answered.

We believe our proposals will reduce risk, as colleagues will be more visible across the whole station.

How will you monitor/report time taken to answer help point calls / proportion not answered?

We do not consider that our proposals will increase the use of help-points on the platform, customers will be able to seek advice from retail trained staff in the station, meeting them at Welcome Points with a dedicated Help at Hand button. Use of the station help-points, including use of the emergency button will therefore continue as now. That said, these are an important customer resource and there is a national contract in place to monitor speed of reply and quality of response. We will manage our Help at Hand buttons through the retail trained staff retained at the station in multi skilled roles. We also envisage more station colleagues switching to the new multi

skilled role which will give greater coverage for the Help at Hand button (located at our Welcome Points).

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?

Customers will be able to seek advice from retail trained staff in the station, meeting them at Welcome Points with a dedicated Help at Hand button. We expect the level of use of the station help-points will therefore continue as now. We will manage our Help at Hand buttons through the retail trained staff retained at the station in multi skilled roles – we also envision more station colleagues switching to the multi skilled role which will give greater coverage for the Help at Hand button (located at our Welcome Points).

Is it clear how a disabled passenger would use the help-point when seeking assistance to board - e.g. would they press the information button or are they, as with some train companies, expected to press the emergency button to receive more immediate assistance?

Any customer seeking retail assistance will be able to use our Welcome Point, where there will either be met by the trained member of staff or will find a Help at Hand button to alert them that they are waiting, if there isn't a member of staff in the immediate vicinity. Our proposals retain staff at the station for the exact duration of the current ticket office opening hours. Operation of our existing accessibility service will continue as now, with no change, bar the potential for redeployed ticket office staff who are not currently multi skilled being able to help with wider assistance. As such there will be no change for customers against what they receive today.

Emergency buttons on our help-points will remain for emergencies, and we do not envisage the use of platform help-points for customers seeking retail assistance. If this does happen, customers would use the help button (not the emergency button) this is answered by staff at the NRE contact centre, who would be able to give advice on where the station Welcome Point is situated when the station is staffed so the customer can contact the colleague at the location.

Section 4

Issues relating to ensuring passengers are not penalised if they cannot buy the ticket they require from the station.

Customer Experience - Revenue Protection:

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?

Our revised proposals mean there will be retail trained colleagues with hand held ticket devices at the station for the same hours as the current ticket office is open. This will allow for retailing of tickets not in the TVM and queue busting when necessary. These handheld devices will be able to accept cash payments, and we will also switch on the cash facility on TVMs where that facility has been suppressed, so customers who wish to use cash can do so on these enabled machines. We plan a phased closure of our ticket office windows and a review of our TVM fleet locations to best meet demand (including installing some additional TVMs). This should mean customers will be able to buy tickets before boarding as they do now. The National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT) provide the conditions under which a passenger may travel without a ticket without incurring a penalty fare. This will remain in place and current customer guidance and information will not need to change.

We will issue reminders to staff and customers about Section 6.1 NRCoT (which refers to the conditions that allow current boarding without a ticket).

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?

We are currently working with the Rail Delivery Group and industry partners to develop a policy and an effective approach for facilitating Special Disabled Fares (SDF) The intention is to provide those passengers meeting the SDF eligibility criteria with a Disabled Persons Railcard (DPRC). This will mean they will be able to purchase discounted tickets from an increased number of retail channels and across a broader range of ticket types, for example, TVMs and online channels, making them much more accessible. This will require changes to policy, backend and retail systems. Subject to finalising the relevant funding agreements and assessments, these Rail Delivery Group consider changes could be fully implemented by mid-2024. Until then, passengers will be able to purchase their tickets at our stations through the retaining ticket office equipment for longer and the introduction of handheld ticket devices. Customers will also be able to continue to use our dedicated freephone assistance service which can also facilitate SDF.

How will you review signage to avoid sending inconsistent messages about revenue protection?

All our station signage, printed materials and online advice will be reviewed, and where necessary amended, to ensure we avoid any inconsistent messaging about revenue protection. Although as all tickets currently available for purchase will remain so we do not expect to need to make any changes.

Section 5

Issues relating to whether passengers can continue to use facilities at a station.

Customer Experience – Facilities:

Can you confirm that all station facilities that are currently provided during ticket office opening hours will remain open during those hours?

Yes, that is the case.

Have you liaised with the British Transport Police about the impact on staff and passenger security?

Safety and security is a key priority for GWR. We were the first train operator to achieve the DfT's Safeguarding accreditation and we work closely with both the DfT and British Transport Police (BTP) on Secure Station status. We included a specific feedback session with our local BTP team during the consultation in order to clarify and update them on our plans. We are now working with BTP on a Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment to be completed once discussions on our proposals are concluded with Transport Focus and London TravelWatch. The assessment was produced by DfT in collaboration with the BTP, and will be completed for each station, forming part of the decision-making process before any ticket office is closed.

Are any mitigations planned?

Once the Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment is completed, we will review and assess the need for mitigations and agree any changes to be made.

Is CCTV coverage adequate, is it accessible 'live' from control and is there resource to monitor it remotely when required?

We use various CCTV options including live, comprehensive coverage at larger and busier locations, which is fully resourced for monitoring. We regularly review coverage as part of our work on Secure Stations and Safeguarding and CCTV coverage will be considered in the Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment. There will also be no reduction in the number of hours that the station is staffed, and as ticket office staff who are not currently multi skilled, will in future be able to leave the ticket office, our staff presence will be more visible and available to help customers across the station.

Section 6 **Other Issues**

Future changes:

What assurances can be provided that the level of station staffing outlined in the proposal is delivered and maintained in the future?

Our proposals, including level of station staffing, have been carefully considered to deliver an improved level of service to our customers. We are confident we can deliver, and the changes will be incorporated into our operating model going forward. We have also revised our original plans in response to the public consultation. Whilst we will continue to review how it is best to serve our customers in the future we believe this model will be fit for the retailing that we see today.

Can commitments be made that a fixed, advertised staff presence will not subsequently be removed without further passenger consultation?

The current Schedule 17 requirement of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA) is very narrow in its scope and only looks at ticket office operation. It is now almost 30 years old and did not anticipate the switch to digital, smartcard and contactless payment. Any future requirement for consultation should therefore be part of a wider commitment to look at how customers are supported to use rail services, with the priority being customers most in need of in-person support and assistance. This is being considered by the wider rail industry and the Rail Delivery Group with a recommendation that commitments on staffing levels should be linked to train operators Assisted Travel Policy (ATP).

How would any new staffing arrangements be advertised to passengers (in a similar manner to the way ticket office opening times are advertised)?

We will state the hours that retail trained staff, with access to ticket sales equipment, are available on the National Rail website, on our own website, gwr.com, and on station welcome posters.

How will compliance with any agreed new hours be monitored and reported?

We will be able to monitor use of ticket sales equipment and colleague attendance as we do now and will use as part of our regular management monitoring.

What arrangements have been made to provide staff cover for things like sickness and holiday?

Our staffing resource headcount has been factored to provide coverage for sickness, annual leave and training release.

Timing of mitigations

What guarantees can you offer that any mitigations proposed will be implemented before the implementation of a ticket office change?

The mitigations we plan are for handheld ticket devices to be used. Until staff have been trained and these are available staff will continue to have access to ticket office equipment. We will also monitor TVM capacity and phase the closure of ticket office windows at larger and busier stations. Changes will not be made before the completion of our TVM fleet review, our Crime and Vulnerability Risk Assessment and individual station Equality Impact Assessments which will include the location and operation of Welcome Points and Help at Hand buttons.

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?

Following our changes following the consultation we believe the the proposal we have delivers a better customer service across our business. It utilises our colleagues fully and increases the opportunity to assist customers throughout their journey through the station. We will need approval from Transport Focus to move to the next stage but we have been clear that the ticketing options available today will remain but, over time, will be delivered in a different way through handheld machines, upgraded TVMs, greater digitalisation whilst ensuring we leave no one behind. Without approval we cannot give our customers or indeed our colleagues clarity about our plans. This will create further uncertainty about the future of our stations. We are committed to the mitigations that we have offered, to put them in place we need a firm, clear decision before we can progress their implementation.

Has any necessary funding / agreement been secured to implement any mitigations?

The Rail Delivery Group has agreed in principle with the Department for Transport that funding support for the Retail Enhancements will be available. The release of this funding is subject to the conclusion of the consultation process. In his letter to the Chair of the Transport Select Committee, dated 11 September 2023, the Minister of State for Transport, Huw Merriman MP confirmed that no final decisions will be made until after the consultations have been concluded. He stated *“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 would be modifying their proposals. We have also discussed this with our DfT contract team and they have indicated that our approach is in line with Ministerial pronouncements.

Liaison with other operators

What assessment has been made of the impact on services operated by other train companies? Have those operators agreed to the changes?

GWR Reply:

We are engaged with other operators both directly and through the Rail Delivery Group about including our revised plans to match current station opening hours and to use hand held retail equipment, Welcome Points and Help at Hand devices. We will explore any impact they identify on their operations. Given there is no change in hours of operation and all other station facilities are unaffected we do not expect there to be any major issues, and none have been currently identified.

Have any discussions been had with Network Rail about the impact at NR managed stations?

We are engaged with Network Rail about our proposals including our revised plans to match current station opening hours and to use hand held retail equipment, Welcome Points and Help at Hand

devices. We will explore any impact they identify on their operations. Given there is no change in hours of operation and all other station facilities are unaffected we do not expect there to be any major issues, and none have been currently identified.

Stations where a handheld ticket machine is used by ticket office staff

It remains unclear to us whether there will be any change to ticket office arrangements at these stations. Can GWR confirm whether retail staff will continue to serve passengers at these stations with handheld ticket machines at the same time as they currently do and if these stations remain part of the existing Schedule 17 regulation?

There will be no change to the operation of stations where we currently have handheld ticket machines and no ticket offices. Retail trained staff will continue to use the same handheld ticket machines, for the exact same hours, following the changes. Customers will see no change at all in the current service. The stations would also remain subject to any future requirements for consultation.

Stations where there have been ticket office closures due to vacancies or structural issues:

We note that there are also a number of stations where closures have meant that sales data has not been available for the standard period of time chosen for review. These include: Charlbury, Kemble, Henley and Stonehouse. We have recently been provided with data for different time periods which we are now reviewing. However, we are aware that sufficient data cannot be found for Kemble. Without this data it becomes hard to properly assess the proposal for Kemble and would probably result in an objection.

We understand the need for data and have been happy to supply as much information as we can. There are a small number of GWR stations where we have had periods of time without staff either through long term sickness, vacancies or building damage. In all but one case we have been able to provide six weeks data since February 2022. We have not been able to supply this data for Kemble station.

We would very much hope that data from sales at similar stations could be used to assess sales at Kemble. We believe that the best approach for our Kemble customers would be for the station to have the same opportunity for a multi skilled member of staff, with hand held sales device, to be recruited – rather than for recruitment to be for a member of staff who can only retail tickets from the ticket office. This will allow our Kemble customers to enjoy the extra staff presence on the station concourse and platform, along with the Welcome Point and Help at Hand button that will be used elsewhere. We would hope therefore that it would be possible to use comparator data from stations which have similar service levels/ticket sales to allow for a decision to be taken. If we are not able to proceed the continuing uncertainty about the future role will make recruitment more difficult and potentially leave Kemble without a trained retail staff member for longer.

