

Agenda Item 11.2 - TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Town Councillors were forwarded an email on 6 July 2023 with details of a public consultation currently being carried out by Southern Rail, with a deadline of 26 July 2023. Unfortunately the deadline falls before the meeting of Full Council on 31 July 2023 and councillors were asked to consider responding individually.

The consultation intends to change the way in which the station office is open and handles ticket enquiries/purchases.

They state:

The proposal aims to better support passengers by moving colleagues out from behind traditional ticket offices windows, which would close, onto station concourses where customers need them most, making them more visible and accessible.

The aspiration is that colleagues would move to roles that cover a broader range of customer needs in the future – from travel and fares advice to accessibility assistance – following engagement with both colleagues and the unions.

These potential plans support wider moves to modernise the railway, put customer service at its heart and would offer a more varied and interesting role for colleagues.

No final decisions have been made as the industry is currently at local public consultation stage.

No stations that have staff today will become unstaffed and station opening hours would remain the same.

For Uckfield this will mean the following:

Guide:
Columns B-D: Current ticket office hours at each station (when the ticket office window is open) as per Schedule 17.
Columns E-G: Proposal for when staff would be available in the main station area to help with ticket purchase and queries.
Column H: Presents when there are additional staff available for assistance at stations where there is step-free access to at least one platform. This support is not changing
Further information on your station today is available at: www.nationalrail.co.uk/find-a-station

Uckfield	Current Ticket office hours - Weekday 05:50 - 12:25	Current Ticket office hours - Saturday 06:25 - 13:00	Current Ticket office hours - Sunday Closed	Proposed Ticket assistance hours Weekday 05:50 - 12:25	Proposed Ticket assistance hours Saturday 06:25 - 13:00	Proposed Ticket assistance hours Sunday Closed	First to last assistance available
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A suggested response on behalf of Uckfield Town Council has been prepared by Councillor A. Smith in light of the consultation. Members are asked to consider this response, and consider whether they wish to support the submission of this response to the consultation:

Dear Transport Focus and London Travelwatch,

Uckfield Town Council is responding to the proposals to close the ticket office at Uckfield Station in East Sussex.

We strongly oppose this proposal. This facility is an essential part of our community's transport system; one that we consider irreplaceable.

It is our belief that, without a ticket office, many residents, especially the vulnerable and elderly, will struggle to use the railway. There are many persons who feel uncomfortable using automated technology and some cannot use it – for example, those with learning difficulties, or visual impairments. Others may feel they need assistance to ensure they have the right ticket, or to get help in making their journey.

It can also be tricky for any traveller to navigate the complicated fares system and our ticket office staff are invaluable in navigating this.

Uckfield Town Council does not believe these proposals are an improvement to the current in-person service provided at our ticket office. The quality of service will certainly be negatively impacted and this is likely to impact the numbers of travellers to and from our town.

Overall the planned ticket office closure will have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of our residents and the economy of our town.

In summary, Uckfield Town Council believes that any planned closure of our station ticket office in Uckfield will have a highly negative effect and we strongly oppose this.

Yours sincerely,

Recommendation: Members are asked to consider the update from Southern Rail, and the proposed response to the consultation and advise the Town Clerk if they wish to proceed with the sending of this response to Transport Focus and London Travelwatch before the deadline of 26 July 2023.

Background:

https://www.southernrailway.com/about-us/our-commitments/public-consultation?fbclid=IwAR0ljtqb9qJQ6dkOXGqvwxs_faiiNukxHDP3sD5bO-sGQF9l6ptoMsY36nU