

South Western Railway

Rt Hon Justine Greening MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

South Western Railway
Friars Bridge Court
41 – 45 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8NZ

19 DEC 2018

Our Reference: SWR-181128-ASZ
Your Reference: ZA53759

12 December 2018

Dear Ms Greening,

Thank you for your letter of 28 November 2018, and for bringing the concerns of your constituents, including [REDACTED] to my attention.

I appreciate the frustration and inconvenience caused to your constituents by the continuing industrial action. It's evident that the RMT union want to affect not only our company, but our customers too, given the further strike date which they have recently announced for 22 December.

This action is hugely disappointing, given the assurances which we have given in connection with the introduction of our new fleet of Class 701 suburban trains being introduced from late 2019. We've made it clear that we are guaranteeing jobs, salaries and the terms and conditions of Guards. In fact, we'll be needing more, not fewer, guards because we're increasing the number of services which we operate – in fact that'll mean 70 more guards in our employment by May 2019, compared to the number at the start of our franchise.

However, we want to be able to deal with service disruption more effectively, and although we'll always roster a guard, we want the flexibility to operate our new suburban trains if the guard or other suitable second person is unavailable at short notice. Even then it is our intent that a guard will join the train at the earliest opportunity. This flexibility will allow us to run trains rather than cancelling them or running them late, minimising disruption to our customers.

We have reiterated to RMT that the framework agreement that we tabled to them several months ago remains on the table. This would provide an opportunity to discuss with them how best to operate the new trains for the benefit of our customers without the threat of industrial action.

We have a team of contingency guards which we are continuing to increase in order that we can run as many trains as possible when RMT take industrial action. This has allowed us to run over two-thirds of normal services on weekday strikes as well as over half our normal services on Saturday strike days.

I'm sorry for the serious disruption your constituents experienced on 19 November due to overrunning engineering works in the Surbiton area. The work was planned for Sunday 18 November and over that night, but problems experienced in the early hours of Monday morning, meant that the Network Rail team of engineers couldn't finish by the intended time. All lines were closed between Surbiton and Waterloo, and unfortunately the estimate for re-opening slipped back several times during the course of the morning. It was therefore difficult to give

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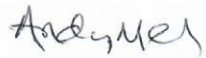
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customers an accurate time for restoration of service. The nature of the overrun caused significant displacement to rolling stock and traincrew and, despite the efforts of the team in the joint Network Rail / SWR Control Centre, there was still disruption into the evening peak from Waterloo. I know that Network Rail are undertaking an investigation into this overrun which significantly inconvenienced thousands of our customers.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Mellors
Managing Director