

West Sussex County Council response to consultation on proposed changes to ticket offices - July 2023

The County Council has made the following comments in response to proposals by the rail industry on proposed changes to rail station ticket offices. The proposals include closing traditional ticket offices and changing the way tickets are sold at stations, as well as changing the hours of staffing availability at some stations.

The key proposals are summarised on the Southern Railway website: [Public Consultation Launched](#).

The comments are in relation to Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR)/Southern operated stations across West Sussex but the consultation is one of a series of consultations being undertaken by train operating companies about national changes to the operation of ticket offices.

Principles of changes

The County Council has acknowledged that the aims of the project are to better support passengers by moving ticket office staff to where they are more visible and accessible. In recent years, there have been substantial changes to the way tickets are purchased. Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR)/Southern Railway say that 9 out of 10 tickets are purchased outside of traditional ticket offices across the GTR network.

Comments and questions about the proposals

The County Council has noted that many passengers are concerned about the potential impacts, particularly those who currently rely on traditional station ticket offices. The County Council has raised the following concerns, comments and questions in relation to the proposals which we have asked to be addressed:

- The County Council has asked that trials are undertaken at stations of different sizes before a widespread nationwide ticket office closure programme is implemented.
- The County Council consider that Southern Railway should publish information about the number of tickets sold at individual stations,

either online, at ticket vending machines or via the ticket office as some other train operating companies have already done.

- The County Council has queried whether or not there are enough ticket vending machines (TVMs) and members of staff on-hand to assist passengers, particularly at busy times, and also whether the changes will be monitored.
- The County Council has queried whether it will be clear to passengers where to find members of staff at the station.
- The County Council has said it is unclear why staff are only expected to assist passengers to use ticket vending machines, particularly those with more complicated ticket purchases.

Comments on staff assistance hours at stations in West Sussex

The County Council has made the following specific comments about stations in West Sussex:

- Longer ticket assistance hours, in particular later into the evening, are proposed for some stations; for example, Bognor Regis, Crawley, Hassocks, Haywards Heath, Horsham, Lancing, Littlehampton, Shoreham-by-Sea, Three Bridges and Worthing, which is welcome.
- Reduced weekday ticket assistance hours are proposed at a number of stations on the Arun Valley, specifically at Arundel, Billingshurst and Pulborough, which would no longer have ticket assistance after 13:30, which is of concern. The County Council has also noted concerns about later ticket assistance times at these stations on Saturdays, which are proposed to start from 9am.
- Additionally the County Council has expressed concerns that Ford will no longer have ticketing assistance on Saturdays, and that Chichester would no longer have assistance very early in the morning.
- The County Council has requested that information is provided about usage of ticket offices where significant changes are proposed.