

LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH

Response to Transport Focus on the

Ticket Office Closure Consultations

Issued by Northern Trains, East Midlands Railway, LNER and TransPennine Express

Submitted by email to
ticketoffice.Northern@transportfocus.org.uk, ticketoffice.emr@transportfocus.org.uk,
TicketOffice.TPE@transportfocus.org.uk and TicketOffice.LNER@transportfocus.org.uk

on 24th July 2023

Author: David Harby, Chair of Railfuture Lincolnshire branch david.harby@railfuture.org.uk

Introduction:

We have in principle no objection to bringing the staff out from behind a glass window provided adequate alternative provision is made which includes toilets and waiting rooms continuing to be available for the same hours as they are now. The current proposals differ greatly between our local operators with some clearly being well thought through and others being very vague as to what alternatives are proposed. The amount of data provided by local operators has also varied considerably with Northern providing detailed retail figures for every ticket office and EMR refusing to provide any. We are therefore trying to provide reasoned responses for each station whilst for some having next to no data on which to make those responses.

However it must be remembered that passengers enquiring at the ticket office are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. Adequate provision must be made for these passengers before the ticket office is closed.

We set out below specific comments for each individual station.

Boston (EMR)

We have in principle no objection to bringing the staff out from behind a glass window provided adequate alternative provision is made available including toilets and an enclosed waiting area. However passengers enquiring at the ticket office are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. All EMR is offering is daily visits by mobile staff with no commitment to when they will visit. We do not consider this to be adequate provision.

As a minimum toilets and waiting room must be open for the same hours as now and the mobile staff must visit at fixed times so anyone requiring advice know when they will be at the station.

Cleethorpes (TPE)

We note that the Ticket Office is to be closed but that platform staff will be multi skilled so as to provide customer service. However as staffed hours are going to be drastically reduced we are concerned about passengers who require help when the station is unstaffed. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. It must be remembered that passengers such as guide dog and white cane users are often taught to find the ticket office for assistance.

We are concerned to ensure that these passengers will not have to pay a Penalty Fare if they are unable to purchase a ticket from the TVM. The consultation information from TPE mentions that passengers who can only pay in cash will not have to pay a Penalty Fare if they join a train without a ticket and purchase their ticket on the train but implies that all other passengers will have to buy before joining the train. All passengers who are unable to buy from the TVM because of their disability, which must include those who simply find the TVM procedure too complicated for them to manage to use, must have the option to purchase on the train without a Penalty Fare. There must also be clear signage by the TVM which clearly explains this provision to passengers.

Passengers with a North East Lincs Council national concessionary bus pass cannot buy discounted tickets from the station TVM so they either have to buy from the ticket office or on the train. Ideally the TVM should be changed to enable this purchase but if they cannot then there must be clear notices telling passengers that they buy on the train without being charged a Penalty Fare.

We note that the waiting rooms and toilets opening hours will remain as they are now. However there is no commitment as to how long this provision will remain. There seems to be nothing to stop TPE deciding in six months time that it is too expensive to maintain these opening hours and instead only having them available when the station is staffed. Indeed there is no commitment as to how long the proposed staffing hours will continue.

Grantham (LNER)

We note that the Ticket Office is to be repurposed with a Customer Information Point. It is important that this is staffed at all times so passengers who require assistance have a fixed point to go to. It must be remembered that passengers such as guide dog and white cane users are often taught to find the ticket office for assistance.

The Customer Information Point will also be important for passengers who currently enquire at the ticket office as they are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet.

The proposals from LNER do seem to meet these requirements but we note that customers will not be able to obtain all products from the TVM. We find it difficult to understand why they will not be able to obtain Rovers and Rangers when TVM's from other operators can do this.

Grimsby Town (TPE)

We note that the Ticket Office is to be closed but that platform staff will be multi skilled so as to provide customer service. However as staffed hours are going to be drastically reduced we are concerned about passengers who require help when the station is unstaffed. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. It must be remembered that passengers such as guide dog and white cane users are often taught to find the ticket office for assistance.

We are concerned to ensure that these passengers will not have to pay a Penalty Fare if they are unable to purchase a ticket from the TVM. The consultation information from TPE mentions that passengers who can only pay in cash will not have to pay a Penalty Fare if they join a train without a ticket and purchase their ticket on the train but implies that all other passengers will have to buy before joining the train. All passengers who are unable to buy from the TVM because of their disability, which must include those who simply find the TVM procedure too complicated for them to manage to use, must have the option to purchase on the train without a Penalty Fare. There must also be clear signage by the TVM which clearly explains this provision to passengers.

Passengers with a North East Lincs Council national concessionary bus pass cannot buy discounted tickets from the station TVM so they either have to buy from the ticket office or on the train. Ideally the TVM should be

changed to enable this purchase but if they cannot then there must be clear notices telling passengers that they buy on the train without being charged a Penalty Fare.

We note that the waiting rooms and toilets opening hours will remain as they are now. However there is no commitment as to how long this provision will remain. There seems to be nothing to stop TPE deciding in six months time that it is too expensive to maintain these opening hours and instead only having them available when the station is staffed. Indeed there is no commitment as to how long the proposed staffing hours will continue.

Newark Castle (EMR)

Passengers enquiring at the ticket office are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. We do not consider this to be adequate provision.

All EMR is offering is daily visits by mobile staff with no commitment to when they will visit. As a minimum the mobile staff must visit at fixed times so anyone requiring advice know when they will be at the station.

Newark Northgate (LNER)

We note that the Ticket Office is to be repurposed to make it more accessible. There is however no mention of a Customer Information Point. This should be provided. It must be remembered that passengers such as guide dog and white cane users are often taught to find the ticket office for assistance.

The Customer Information Point will also be important for passengers who currently enquire at the ticket office as they are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet.

The proposals from LNER do seem to meet these requirements but we note that customers will not be able to obtain all products from the TVM. We find it difficult to understand why they will not be able to obtain Rovers and Rangers when TVM's from other operators can do this.

Retford (LNER)

We note that the Ticket Office is to be repurposed to make it more accessible with a Customer Service area. It is important that this is staffed at all times so passengers who require assistance have a fixed point to go to. It must be remembered that passengers such as guide dog and white cane users are often taught to find the ticket office for assistance.

The Customer Service area will also be important for passengers who currently enquire at the ticket office as they are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet.

Once the proposed changes are implemented, the ability to use cash may have gone. At present those customers who do not use smart phones or computer devices can still travel easily from Retford, and can still purchase both the ticket and a Railcard on the day even if they don't have a debit or credit card. These facilities will be lost once the changes are implemented unless cash handling TVMs are introduced.

We note that customers will not be able to obtain all products from the TVM. We find it difficult to understand why they will not be able to obtain Rovers and Rangers when TVM's from other operators can do this.

Scunthorpe (TPE)

We note that the Ticket Office is to be closed but that platform staff will be multi skilled so as to provide customer service. However as staffed hours are going to be drastically reduced we are concerned about passengers who require help when the station is unstaffed. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. It must be remembered that passengers such as guide dog and white cane users are often taught to find the ticket office for assistance.

We are concerned to ensure that these passengers will not have to pay a Penalty Fare if they are unable to purchase a ticket from the TVM. The consultation information from TPE mentions that passengers who can only pay in cash will not have to pay a Penalty Fare if they join a train without a ticket and purchase their ticket on the train but implies that all other passengers will have to buy before joining the train. All passengers who are unable to buy from the TVM because of their disability, which must include those who simply find the TVM procedure too complicated for them to manage to use, must have the option to purchase on the train without a Penalty Fare. There must also be clear signage by the TVM which clearly explains this provision to passengers.

Passengers with a North Lincs Council national concessionary bus pass cannot buy discounted tickets from the station TVM so they either have to buy from the ticket office or on the train. Ideally the TVM should be changed to enable this purchase but if they cannot then there must be clear notices telling passengers that they buy on the train without being charged a Penalty Fare.

We note that the waiting rooms and toilets opening hours will remain as they are now. However there is no commitment as to how long this provision will remain. There seems to be nothing to stop TPE deciding in six months time that it is too expensive to maintain these opening hours and instead only having them available when the station is staffed. Indeed there is no commitment as to how long the proposed staffing hours will continue.

Skegness (EMR)

We have in principle no objection to bringing the staff out from behind a glass window provided adequate alternative provision is made available including toilets and an enclosed waiting area. However passengers enquiring at the ticket office are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet.

All EMR has told us is that they are proposing to close the Ticket Office. Unlike other operators in our area they have said nothing about the hours in which the station will still be staffed. Will the other staff continue to work their existing hours? We have no idea on this so must resort to saying that we would oppose any reduction in the hours in which the station is staffed. The staff must also be trained to provide all the additional information, such as journey itineraries, that the ticket office staff do now.

As a minimum toilets and waiting room must be open for the same hours as now and the mobile staff must visit at fixed times so anyone requiring advice know when they will be at the station.

This is a seaside resort so there are times throughout the year when the station can be very busy. EMR are proposing to have additional staff available during the Summer Season. We consider this to be inadequate. There are events outside the Summer Season which attract large crowds so there must be provision for additional staff whenever large crowds are anticipated whatever the time of year.

Sleaford (EMR)

We have in principle no objection to bringing the staff out from behind a glass window provided adequate alternative provision is made available including toilets and an enclosed waiting area. However passengers enquiring at the ticket office are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight,

dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. All EMR is offering is weekly visits by mobile staff with no commitment to when they will visit. We do not consider this to be adequate provision.

The toilets are currently accessed by obtaining a key from the ticket office. EMR have given no indication how the toilet will be accessed when the ticket office is closed. As a minimum toilets and waiting room must be available for the same hours as now and the mobile staff must visit at fixed times so anyone requiring advice know when they will be at the station.

Spalding (EMR)

We have in principle no objection to bringing the staff out from behind a glass window provided adequate alternative provision is made available including toilets and an enclosed waiting area. However passengers enquiring at the ticket office are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. All EMR is offering is weekly visits by mobile staff with no commitment to when they will visit. We do not consider this to be adequate provision.

As a minimum toilets and waiting room must be open for the same hours as now and the mobile staff must visit at fixed times, more frequently than weekly, so anyone requiring advice know when they will be at the station.

Stamford (EMR)

We have in principle no objection to bringing the staff out from behind a glass window provided adequate alternative provision is made available including toilets and an enclosed waiting area. However passengers enquiring at the ticket office are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet. All EMR is offering is weekly visits by mobile staff with no commitment to when they will visit. We do not consider this to be adequate provision.

As a minimum toilets and waiting room must be open for the same hours as now and the mobile staff must visit at fixed times, more frequently than weekly, so anyone requiring advice know when they will be at the station.

Worksop (Northern)

We have in principle no objection to bringing the staff out from behind a glass window provided adequate alternative provision is made available including toilets and an enclosed waiting area. However passengers enquiring at the ticket office are often asking for additional information such as journey itineraries which are not available from the TVM on the station. These passengers will likely include those who don't have smartphones or internet access, those unable to use the internet or a TVM because of disabilities such as poor eyesight, dyslexia, learning disabilities and those who simply can't understand the options for a complicated journey even if they do have the internet.

Northern is proposing a Journey Maker being available at the station but there is no mention of those Journey Makers being able to give more advice than that available from the station TVM. With the Journey Maker roaming the station we are concerned about the loss of a central point of contact at the station. This is important for passengers such as guide dog and white cane users who are often taught to find the ticket office for assistance.

There is also no mention in the consultation documents from Northern as to how long the Waiting room and toilets will be open for. Staff presence at the station is reduced from 10 hours per day to 5. Currently the two waiting areas and the toilet facilities open only during staff hours. If this remains policy, we strongly object to these facilities not being available to customers, especially those disabled, beyond midday as the customer experience is denuded. Please bear in mind Worksop is an interchange station where current interchange times are about 30 mins.

Take the waiting rooms, once closed capacity is reduced from 23 to 9 seats per platform and all seats in a heated and enclosed area are removed. Afternoon loadings are in excess of 9 passengers per train and the real possibility exists of your passengers having to stand against their will waiting for a service to arrive. Moreover, because the station is Grade two listed additional platform seating will be difficult to install.

Another consideration is toilet access. They are currently accessed by pressing a button that alerts the ticket office clerk to then release the toilet lock. With the ticket office closure how will this toilet provision be retained even when the Journey Maker is present bearing in mind the demand button alerts someone in the ticket office?

We cannot but compare the reduced staffing at Worksop to that of nearby Retford. Retford will continue to have staff 'from first to last train', approximately 18 hours a day. It's correct to point out that Retford has around 230,000 journeys commencing to Worksop's 200,000 (Office for Rail and Road) but more of those Worksop tickets are currently purchased at the ticket office, 36,000 (Northern's 22/3 figures) than Retford's, 27,000. (LNER). We therefore suggest these figures suggest a comparable business for the two stations that is not reflected in the revised staffing levels, particularly if it's assumed that those who purchase at the station are less confident or knowledgeable of the rail experience.

Ticket office closures will most affect the already financially disadvantaged members of society. There is a strong correlation between the stations with the most cash transactions and social deprivation. This is evidenced by there being 3,200 tickets issued for cash at Worksop in the 3 months April to June 23 which is 36% of all tickets issued.

The consultation mentions that cctv is available at Worksop. We understand this is not monitored in real time and only part of the station is covered by the Local Councils CCTV scheme which is live-monitored. If staff are being removed, we would expect the station to have live monitored CCTV and the installation of help points and alarms