

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA
Switchboard: 020 7983 4000
Web: www.london.gov.uk

Our ref:
Your ref:
Date: 8th July 2016

Charles Horton
Chief Executive Officer
Govia Thameslink Railway

Dear Mr Horton,

I wish to express my extreme disappointment and huge frustration at the decision by Govia Thameslink Railway to cancel 341 trains daily from Monday 11th July as set out in your plans for a “temporary amended Southern and Gatwick Express timetable.”

By cancelling 341 services from a daily timetable of 2,250 services you are introducing a cut in services of more than one in seven trains, quite incredibly at a time when there is an increasing number of people travelling by train.

While I am aware of your argument that you face a reduction in the uptake of overtime and high levels of train crew sickness I think such claims cannot be a defence for Govia Thameslink Railway failing to be open and transparent as to your actual staffing levels. Despite repeatedly asking for the information I have so far not been provided with statistics for how many train drivers you currently have, how many you need to run your advertised timetable without relying on drivers working overtime, how many are in training and when will they be able to drive your trains. Detailed figures for how many train drivers you have employed over the last four years and in addition your current recruitment and training plans should now be placed in the public domain. This is something we have discussed in recent years and something I expected would be improving by now.

The level of service provided by Govia Thameslink Railway in recent months has been appalling, there is simply no other way to describe the service that I and so many other people have faced. Your service has led to an immense amount of inconvenience to thousands of people and families. Your service has also impacted and caused economic harm for many London businesses as well.

A decision to drastically reduce your train service on the grounds that it might potentially be a more reliable service is an act of desperation, which fails to address the underlying reasons as to why your current service cannot be maintained to a reasonable level. Many members of the public would also question whether such an action is simply the easiest option for you to adopt as a company especially in terms of

helping to avoid penalties and compensation claims, while the travelling public pay the real price for your lack of planning and capacity. A simple example is at my own station East Dulwich, where we will now have 3 trains from the start of the day until 9.30am, when we used to have 13 and that is a reduction compared to pre London Bridge works. Many parents will not be able to reach their childcare on time and will face penalties as a result and unnecessary stress.

I hope in the next few days you can confirm when your temporary reduced service will come to an end and any other improvements you can make for hard pressed passengers. I would also like to understand what you are doing to resolve your ongoing poor industrial relations.

I look forward to your prompt response.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Caroline Pidgeon AM
Liberal Democrat London Assembly Member