

Survey Comment Section – Response from Anne Milton MP

Towards the end of the survey, respondents were asked to give comments about their experience of taking trains from and into the Guildford constituency. Three common complaints arose in the comments section. They were: capacity, compensation, and provision of information. I thought I would consider each complaint separately, and let you know what information is already available and what I have asked for further details on.

Capacity

Many respondents felt that, in particular, trains running between Portsmouth and London Waterloo lacked capacity. Generally, respondents raised the concern that they rarely got a seat and had to stand for a journey of between 30 and 45 minutes.

Among the suggestions offered by respondents, the most common involved longer trains and longer platforms. Several said that an express service to Waterloo should begin in Guildford, rather than in Portsmouth. The ‘Waterloo & South West Upgrade’ works are designed to increase the capacity of the Wessex route that leads to London Waterloo. Part of this plan involves extending platforms at Waterloo allowing for longer trains and therefore more seats. I understand that this upgrade will increase capacity on the Wessex route by 30%.

I have written to South West Trains (SWT) to ask them for further information on how the ‘Waterloo & South West Upgrade’ works will affect Guildford in particular. I have also included suggestions by respondents to ask them to what extent they may be feasible. This includes suggestions such as the idea to begin an express service in Guildford rather than in Portsmouth.

Compensation

A common criticism raised by respondents was the difficulty of using the compensation system employed by SWT. Respondents did not feel that they could easily claim compensation for delays of 30 minutes and upwards.

The Office for Road and Rail (ORR), which regulates the service of rail providers, published a report on compensation in March 2016 in response to a ‘super-complaint’ submitted by Which? magazine. ORR published an update to this report in December 2016. The update showed that:

'...most train companies have worked well and made changes to websites, claim forms and claim processes; these are good, but progress on reaching a wide audience to help passengers claim is varied.'

Although the update commended rail providers for improvements to claiming compensation, it stated that the ORR wanted rail providers to:

'...increase the number of channels available for passengers to claim compensation. We want passengers to get a good service from the railways. If a train is late, then we want everyone on board to understand when and how they can claim compensation.'

Additionally, Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, announced on 13 October 2016 the 'Delay Repay 15' scheme. Through this scheme *'passengers will be able to claim 25% of the cost of the single fare for delays between 15 and 29 minutes. The existing compensation thresholds will apply for delays from 30 minutes with passengers able to apply for compensation through the train operating company.'*

You can find out more information about Delay Repay 15 via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-improved-compensation-scheme-for-rail-passengers>. I have also written to the Secretary of State for specific information on passengers travelling from Guildford and will share his response with respondents.

I have asked SWT to update me on how they are improving their compensation schemes.

Information

Respondents did not feel that the information provided by SWT was accurate enough nor given within enough time. Despite the new app offered by SWT that provides up-to-date information on delays to trains, customers did not feel it gave them enough information. Additionally, respondents did not think that display boards provided sufficient information in time to let them know that a train was cancelled or significantly delayed.

I have included these complaints in my letter to SWT to ask them to respond to respondents' concerns about information provision.

Notes:

You can access the original report *Office of Rail and Road super-complaint response report* (March 2016) here:

http://orr.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/21141/which-super-complaint-response-report.pdf

You can access the *Office of Rail and Road Rail compensation – update report* (December 2016) here: http://orr.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/23555/rail-compensation-update-report-december-2016.pdf

You can access a document by the ORR about how individual train operators have responded to their recommendations for making the claiming of compensation easier via the following link:

http://orr.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/23667/rail-compensation-table.pdf