

Wednesday 5 July 2023

Modernising customer service at stations

TransPennine Express
is proposing changes to
how it sells tickets and
provides customer service
at its staffed stations

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Today, we are launching a public consultation on our proposals to modernise the way we sell tickets and provide customer service at our staffed stations. Our plans respond to significantly reduced use of ticket offices over the past decade, as customers continue to move to alternative, more convenient ways of buying tickets.

We want our staff to be more accessible to customers during the hours our stations are staffed. We are, therefore, proposing the closure of most of our ticket offices, so that through redeployment and multi-skilling of our station staff, we will be able to bring our staff closer to customers, to help them purchase tickets and provide a greater level of assistance outside the ticket office.

With an average of only 8% of transactions for journeys to or from our staffed stations taking place at TPE Ticket Offices, we are proposing to make changes at all our 16 staffed stations as follows:

- Closure of ticket offices at 14 stations;
- Changes to ticket office opening times at Manchester Airport and Huddersfield; and
- Changes to station staffing times at nine of our staffed stations.

There will be no change to station opening times and all stations that are currently staffed will remain staffed.

Stations where ticket offices are proposed to close

Brough	Malton	Selby
Cleethorpes	Middlesbrough	Stalybridge
Dewsbury	Northallerton	Thirsk
Grimsby Town	Scarborough	Thornaby
Hull Paragon	Scunthorpe	

Stations where staffing times are proposed to change

Brough	Grimsby Town	Scunthorpe
Cleethorpes	Malton	Stalybridge
Dewsbury	Northallerton	Thornaby

Please see **Appendix 1** for station specific changes regarding ticket offices and station staffing times.

This document sets out further details on our proposals and demonstrates how:

- customers will still have widespread easy access to be able to purchase rail products either at the station or via other channels;
- customers will know when staff are scheduled to be at the station if they require staff assistance;
- customers will continue to be able to access other station facilities, such as waiting rooms and toilets, as currently provided;
- customers will continue to be able to use our stations confidently and safely to access the rail network; and
- customers with accessibility needs will continue to be supported to be able to access rail services in line with our Accessible Transport Policy.

Please refer to the end of this document for details of how you can provide your feedback on our proposals and how to request this documentation in alternative formats if required.

Please note the deadline for providing feedback is **Friday 1 September 2023**.

Changes to Ticket Office Consultation

MODERN AND EFFICIENT STATIONS

The way customers access information and purchase products has changed dramatically over the last couple of decades. TPE and the wider rail industry have responded to customer purchasing preferences by investing heavily in digital retail channels and providing self-service ticket machines at stations.

Nationally, ticket office sales now account for an average of only 12% of transactions and this downward trend is expected to continue. At TPE stations we have witnessed an even faster transition to digital channels, accelerated in recent years as a result of the Covid pandemic and the widespread introduction of digital tickets over the past four years. On average, in 2022/23 only 8% of transactions for journeys to or from a staffed TPE station were retailed by the TPE ticket office, where that journey started or ended, compared with 14% in 2019/20 and 16% in 2018/19.

This continued customer shift away from purchasing at the ticket office provides an opportunity to change the way we serve customers at stations; the kind of change which many other service industries have already made. Our proposals will mean staff are available outside the ticket office, where they can interact with more customers and provide a greater level of reassurance and customer assistance.

We also need to provide greater value for money for our customers, communities, and taxpayers. The rail industry received significant financial support during Covid and continues to be heavily subsidised as rail revenues remain well below pre-pandemic levels. Our proposals are therefore designed to provide an improved quality of service, with more accessible multi-skilled customer service staff at the busiest times of the day and deliver efficiencies to support a more financially sustainable and modern railway for the future.

Our stations will continue to be an important part of the communities we serve, providing a gateway for people to access work, education, and leisure destinations. We have invested in our stations to improve customers facilities, including refurbished toilets, new seating and enhanced information systems as well as improving accessibility through several schemes, including the installation of Changing Place facilities. We will continue to work with our communities and stakeholders to develop our stations, including looking at opportunities to repurpose former ticket offices, if this proposal is implemented, where they do not need to be retained for operational use.

DELIVERING IMPROVED CUSTOMER SERVICE AT OUR STATIONS

Our proposal to close most of our ticket offices does not mean our stations will be unstaffed. Station staff will continue to be available at all our currently staffed stations to provide great customer service, from outside the ticket office. They will provide a more visible staff presence to customers during the times they are on duty, and we will advertise the times station staff are scheduled to be at stations, so customers will know when they can get help from our colleagues.

Station staff who are not already multi-skilled will, as part of this proposal, receive the necessary training to allow them to deliver a wider range of customer service, including helping customers with buying tickets at self-service machines or online, providing customer information and passenger assistance. We will also provide staff with tablets that have access to a range of real-time information and services, including booked assistance and live train running times, so they can provide up to date information and great service to customers.

Changes to Ticket Office Consultation

Customers will continue to be able to use other facilities at the station as they do currently, with no changes proposed to the availability of amenities such as waiting rooms and toilets. Staff being out from behind ticket office windows will enable more regular checks of the availability and condition of customer facilities, allowing any issues to be identified and reported for rectification quicker. Increased staff visibility around the station will also be a deterrent for anti-social behaviour.

As part of our plans, we are proposing changes to staffing hours at nine locations, which are our less busy and step-free stations. Our proposed changes to staffing times will focus staff resource on the busiest times of the day, based on recent ticket office transaction data. In the hours where staff would no longer be available, the average number of ticket transactions per station across these nine locations is 4 transactions per hour, and the highest average at any one of these nine locations is 7 transactions per hour for the period when the station would become unstaffed.

In summary, our proposals will offer customers an improved quality of service by providing multi-skilled station staff who will be able to offer a greater level of information and assistance beyond ticket retailing. Staff will be more visible, outside the ticket office, to a greater number of customers during station staffed hours.

Please see **Appendix 1** for station specific changes regarding ticket offices and station staffing times.

BUYING TICKETS

Although we are proposing to close most ticket offices, customers will still be able to access the same products and services as they do today, either at the station's ticket vending machines (TVMs) or through a range of other retail channels including on-line or our app.

Our two busiest ticket offices at Manchester Airport and Huddersfield, which account for around 40% of all transactions at TPE ticket offices, will remain open, with proposed changes to ticket office opening times, focused on periods of highest customer demand. Multi-skilled station staff will additionally be available outside the ticket office at these locations to help customers use our TVMs. Given the continued consumer shift to digital channels, we anticipate Manchester Airport and Huddersfield ticket offices will also close in the future. However, any proposal to close these facilities, would be subject to a separate public consultation which we would not expect to launch until Spring 2024 at the earliest.

Digital channels already account for the majority (69%) of transactions made for journeys to or from TPE staffed stations. We will continue to promote these channels through our customer communications, and our staff at stations will also be able to help customers to purchase online. Currently an average of only 8% of transactions for journeys to or from TPE staffed stations are made at the ticket office, 3% at self-service TVMs at our stations, 3% on board, and the rest through other channels such as other train operator ticket offices and TVMs, telesales and travel agents.

We are currently rolling out new TVMs at all our stations which offer a wide range of tickets including the ability to obtain all railcard discounts and with planned development they will offer greater functionality in the future. All TPE stations have at least one TVM, with up to eight TVMs available at busier stations by the end of the current new TVM roll out.

As part of this TVM investment, we have also increased the number of TVMs at our staffed stations from 29 to 43 – a 50% increase – which will provide increased capacity if ticket offices close in line with our proposals. We have also provided TVMs that accept cash at our five busiest locations at Manchester Airport, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Scarborough, and Hull Paragon.

Changes to Ticket Office Consultation

67% of tickets sold at ticket offices are available on the new TVMs and this will increase to 97% when planned upgrades to include advance purchase and car parking tickets are delivered. This upgrade is scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2023.

Where a customer cannot purchase a product online or from a TVM at their TPE station, they will be able to purchase the product from either another station that has a ticket office, from train operator contact centres that offer telesales or on-board.

There are a very small number of rail products (around 0.3% of transactions) that can currently only be bought from a ticket office. These products will continue to be available to purchase from TPE and other train operator ticket offices. However, until such time as we can make these products more readily available via other channels, we will also retain a ticket office machine at all our staffed stations so we can provide these products during station staffed hours.

Around 35% of ticket transactions made at our ticket offices are made by cash; in overall terms this means on average around 3% of total transactions for journeys to or from a TPE staffed station are made by cash at the TPE ticket office where that journey starts or ends. Cash will still be accepted at stations with cash TVMs, at TPE and other train operator ticket offices or on-board.

Subject to the outcome of this consultation, comprehensive customer information would be provided ahead of any implementation, so our staff and customers will know exactly where and how particular products can be purchased, and our staff will be at stations to help guide and support customers through this change.

As outlined above, through TVMs, digital and other channels, customers will still have widespread easy access to rail products and services. If, however, customers do not have the ability to buy the specific ticket they need at the station or via other channels, in line with the National Rail Conditions of Travel, they will be able to buy on-board, at a ticket office if available enroute and if interchanging, or at their destination.

Penalty Fares

TransPennine Express operates a penalty fares scheme across our network (except in Scotland) which means customers must have a valid ticket for the journey they are making. Although most of our ticket offices are proposed to close under this consultation, all our stations have at least one TVM to give customers the opportunity to buy before travelling. However, not all our stations have a TVM that accepts cash, therefore if a customer can only pay with cash, they will be allowed to travel before buying a ticket.

However, at the earliest opportunity customers will need to buy a ticket from either the conductor, or on-board revenue protection staff, using cash. Customers attempting to pay for their ticket on-board a train using a credit/debit card would be subject to Section 6 of the National Rail Conditions of Travel and may be liable for a Penalty Fare. This method of work is already in operation as many customers currently travel from unstaffed stations and from staffed stations outside hours that our current ticket offices are open, and therefore there are no proposed changes to our penalty fares scheme.

Changes to Ticket Office Consultation

Supporting customers with accessibility needs

All customers with accessibility needs will continue to be supported to access rail services in line with our Accessible Transport Policy. We have carefully considered the impact of our proposed changes on customers and staff who have accessibility needs and/or other protected characteristics as part of an Equality Impact Assessment for each affected station, which has helped us shape our plans. We will continue to update these assessments through feedback from this consultation and our discussions with our accessibility panel and other stakeholders.

All TPE staffed stations, except for Selby and Thirsk, have a step free access route to each platform, which provides good levels of accessibility at all times of the day. We are not proposing any changes to staffing times at Selby and Thirsk, so colleagues will continue to be able to assist customers who cannot use the steps, to use the barrow crossing to access platforms.

Network Rail are installing lifts at Selby station which will provide step free access in the near future. The lifts are expected to be available for customer use in 2024. At Thirsk, a bid for Access for All funding has been made for lifts to enable step free access to be provided at this station. If funding is provided, Network Rail would seek to install lifts at Thirsk during their next funding period, between 2024 – 2029.

At times when our stations are unstaffed, there are a range of facilities available to assist customers with disabilities whilst at the station. All TPE stations have help points which allow customers to speak to a member of staff in our control centre for information and assistance. All our stations also have My Station View 3D tours and GoodMaps turn-by-turn directions support with wayfinding as well as live British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation. Several stations also have BSL departure boards, braille handrail wayfinding, and RNIB Maps for All.

TPE services all operate with a conductor who will continue to help customers get on and off the train safely if station staff are unavailable. All our station staff and train crew already receive disability and equality training, and this is regularly refreshed every two years.

If a customer specifically needs station staff assistance to access rail services, by providing help through the station, then outside station staffing times, alternative transport to the nearest accessible station or to their destination will be provided as per current arrangements in our Accessible Transport Policy. See link for further details:

<https://www.tpexpress.co.uk/help/accessibility/guides-and-policies>

We are aware some customers are not digitally enabled, may not wish to buy tickets online, and/or may wish to pay with cash. Customers travelling from stations without a ticket office will be able to get staff help to use self-service ticket machines or, if they prefer, use a customer contact centre that offers a telesales service. If a customer has not been provided with the opportunity to buy before they board, then they will be able to purchase a ticket from a conductor or revenue protection staff who can sell a wide range of tickets and accept cash payments.

Safe stations

Through more visible staffing, investment in our stations, staff training and equipment, alongside continued close working with British Transport Police (BTP), our stations will continue to be safe spaces for our customers and staff.

During staffed hours, our staff, who have body worn cameras, will be more visible around the station offering greater customer reassurance and acting as a deterrent for anti-social behaviour.

Thanks to continued investment to improve the station environment of both our staffed and unstaffed stations, all our stations and car parks have achieved Secure Stations Accreditation. This investment includes:

- CCTV at every station which our customer control centre has access to seven days a week, 24 hours a day;
- Help points positioned at every station which are linked to our control centre to allow customers to speak to a member of staff any time of the day;
- Station information boards which provide real-time updates on train times, including the stations at which they stop and highlight delays where applicable; and
- Free Wi-Fi at all our staffed stations to enable customers to have access to the internet through their mobile phone or other device.

We promote BTP contact details at all our stations through posters and automated announcements. At Hull Paragon Interchange we will soon be opening a new Policing Community Hub, which will be used by BTP and Humberside Police jointly, as well as other community agencies, to improve police visibility and contact for Interchange users.

TransPennine Express has also achieved safeguarding on rail accreditation, reflecting the company's commitment to delivery of safeguarding training for our staff and wider safeguarding measures as well as close working with BTP to provide safe and secure stations for our customers and staff.

How to provide feedback

This consultation forms part of a statutory consultation process known as a Schedule 17 Ticketing & Settlement Agreement Major Change proposal. For further details about the process, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/secretary-of-state-for-transport-ticketing-and-settlement-agreement-ticket-office-guidance>

If you would like to comment on these proposals please contact **Transport Focus**, the independent transport user watchdog, by **Friday 1 September 2023** using the details below:

Email: TicketOffice.TPE@transportfocus.org.uk

Freepost: RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ, Transport Focus, PO Box 5594, Southend on Sea, SS1 9PZ

For more information about how to have your say see www.transportfocus.org.uk

To request our consultation documents in alternative formats (braille, large print easy read, or audio) please contact our Passenger Assist Team on 0800 107 2149. Lines are open 24 hours. Customers who are deaf or hard of hearing can use the Text Relay service by adding the prefix 18001 in front of the number. Alternatively, please email tpe.passengerassistance@tpexpress.co.uk.

APPENDIX

TPE Appendix 1 - Changes to Ticket Office and Station Staffing Hours

TPE Station	Days	TICKET OFFICE HOURS		STAFFING HOURS	
		Current Ticket Office Hours	Proposed Ticket Office Hours	Current Staffed Hours	Proposed Staffed Hours
Huddersfield	Mon - Fri	0545 - 2000	08:00 - 15:00	0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359
	Saturday	0545 - 2000	09:00 - 16:00	0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359
	Sunday	0745 - 2000	09:00 - 16:00	0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359
Manchester Airport	Mon - Fri	0630 - 2230	08:00 - 15:00	0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359
	Saturday	0630 - 2230	08:00 - 15:00	0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359
	Sunday	0630 - 2230	09:00 - 16:00	0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359

NB; both locations will reduce to one ticket office window

TPE Station	Days	TICKET OFFICE HOURS		STAFFING HOURS	
		Current Ticket Office Hours	Proposed Ticket Office Hours	Current Staffed Hours	Proposed Staffed Hours
Brough	Mon - Fri	0515 - 1945	Closed	0500 - 2000	0800 - 1500
	Saturday	0515 - 1945		0500 - 2000	0900 - 1600
	Sunday	0900 - 1830		0830 - 1830	0900 - 1600
Cleethorpes	Mon - Fri	0645 - 1930	Closed	0430 - 2000	0600 - 2000
	Saturday	0645 - 1930		0430 - 2000	0600 - 2000
	Sunday	0900 - 1930		0800 - 2000	0800 - 2000
Dewsbury	Mon - Fri	0615 - 1930	Closed	0600 - 2000	0700 - 1900
	Saturday	0615 - 1930		0600 - 2000	0800 - 1500
	Sunday	0730 - 1930		0715 - 1945	0900 - 1600
Grimsby Town	Mon - Fri	0600 - 1930	Closed	0530 - 2000	0800 - 1500
	Saturday	0530 - 1930		0530 - 2000	0800 - 1500
	Sunday	0845 - 1945		0815 - 2000	0900 - 1600
Hull Paragon	Mon - Fri	0530 - 2000	Closed	0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359
	Saturday	0530 - 2000		0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359
	Sunday	0815 - 1900		0000 - 2359	0000 - 2359
Malton	Mon - Fri	0630 - 1930	Closed	0600 - 2000	0700 - 1400
	Saturday	0630 - 1930		0600 - 2000	0800 - 1500
	Sunday	0930 - 1730		0915 - 2000	0900 - 1600
Middlesbrough	Mon - Fri	0530 - 1930	Closed	0420 - 0100	0000 - 2359
	Saturday	0530 - 1930		0420 - 0100	0000 - 2359
	Sunday	0815 - 1900		0500 - 2359	0000 - 2359
Northallerton	Mon - Fri	0530 - 1830	Closed	0515 - 1845	0700 - 1400
	Saturday	0530 - 1830		0515 - 1845	0800 - 1500
	Sunday	0900 - 1830		0800 - 1845	0900 - 1600

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		Current Ticket Office Hours	Proposed Ticket Office Hours	Current Staffed Hours	Proposed Staffed Hours
Scarborough	Mon - Fri	0615 - 2000	Closed	0600 - 2100	0600 - 2100
	Saturday	0615 - 2000		0600 - 2100	0600 - 2100
	Sunday	0845 - 2000		0600 - 2100	0600 - 2100
Scunthorpe	Mon - Fri	0545 - 1930	Closed	0515 - 2015	0700 - 1400
	Saturday	0545 - 1930		0515 - 2015	0700 - 1400
	Sunday	0845 - 1930		0830 - 2030	0900 - 1600
Selby	Mon - Fri	0600 - 1945	Closed	0545 - 2000	0545 - 2000
	Saturday	0600 - 1945		0545 - 2000	0545 - 2000
	Sunday	0915 - 1900		0845 - 1915	0845 - 1915
Stalybridge	Mon - Fri	0700 - 1830	Closed	0545 - 2315	0600 - 1300
	Saturday	0700 - 1815		0545 - 2315	0900 - 1600
	Sunday	1030 - 1800		0635 - 2335	0900 - 1600
Thirsk	Mon - Fri	0600 - 1945	Closed	0545 - 2000	0545 - 2000
	Saturday	0600 - 1945		0545 - 2000	0545 - 2000
	Sunday	0845 - 1730		0830 - 2000	0830 - 1735
Thornaby	Mon - Fri	0700 - 1700	Closed	0530 - 1945	0700 - 1400
	Saturday	0930 - 1400		0530 - 1945	0800 - 1500
	Sunday	Closed		0900 - 1730	0900 - 1600