



Department
for Transport

Rt Hon Esther McVey MP
House of Commons
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From the Secretary of State
The Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling

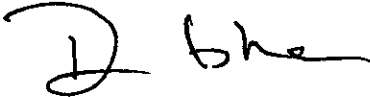
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Thank you for your letter of 18 January 2019 about rail services from Knutsford to Manchester.

Further to my previous correspondence, and your question to Andrew at Transport Questions on 10 January, I have now been advised by the Rail North Partnership that the proposal has been postponed, as both Northern and Network Rail feel the additional paths cannot be accommodated without adversely affecting the reliability of other services on the network.

I know this will be disappointing to you and to residents in Knutsford. When we awarded the franchise in 2016 we could not have predicted the disruption that the timetable recast of May 2018 would cause or indeed the delays to engineering works. As you know, my priority, following the disruption caused by the introduction of the May 2018 timetable, has been to stabilise the timetable and the services, and, following the recommendations of the review, by Stephen Glaister, future timetable changes being introduced incrementally.

The requirement for the second train per hour from the Mid-Cheshire line to Manchester remains part of the Train Service Requirements of the franchise agreement. However, Northern did not put in a bid to run this service in the May 2019 timetable as, until there are some more fundamental changes to all operators' services between Stockport and Manchester, the same delivery challenges remain.

I am pleased to say that throughout the lifetime of the franchise, passengers from Knutsford station will benefit from investment in rolling stock, including the removal of the outdated and unpopular Pacers by the end of 2019 and new and refurbished trains making journeys more comfortable. The station itself will also be refurbished with a new waiting shelter and new seating.

I have tasked Richard George, an independent industry expert, to assist with railway industry performance improvement in the region covered by Transport for the North. In the short to medium term, the objective is to re-establish a stable operational railway service across the region; this in itself will help rebuild public, political and industry confidence. In the medium to longer term the objective is to establish a platform for sound, sustainable railway operations whilst continuing to improve the infrastructure, grow the capacity, grow the capability and improve service levels in the region to the level that is planned and desired. It is intended that recommendations will be provided to the Department in Spring 2019.

We have experienced a difficult period for the railways in this country but please be assured that Government is working hard to ensure that the rail industry delivers the level of service that your constituents rightly expect.

Thank you again for raising your concerns with me and I hope you both find this reply helpful.

Will be useful



Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT