

Marcus Clements  
Head of Consumer Policy  
Office of Rail and Road  
One Kemble Street  
London, WC2B 4AN

10<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Dear Marcus

Thank you for your letter regarding the impact on our customers following the Wimbledon area engineering work overrun on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

As you rightly point out, this event severely impacted our ability to operate our morning peak service plan on 19<sup>th</sup> November, with all main suburban lines blocked from the start of service until approximately 0930.

From the point at which the lines were reopened, and continuing for the majority of the day, the service was in a state of recovery, with the vast majority of our stock and crew displaced across the network.

The majority of our customers were affected to varying degrees.

Whilst some reviews are still ongoing, initial assessments are complete, with the headline results below.

## 1 Customer communication

- 1.1 The decision to communicate a 'not to travel' message was correct, although the consensus is that this could have been decided and communicated earlier although the slippage of the estimates from Network Rail for the lines to re-open made this somewhat of a moving feast.
- 1.2 Main and Suburban line season ticket customers were proactively offered compensation to the value of a day. This was communicated via the call centre telephony system (introductory message), Twitter and the SWR website.
- 1.3 Customers on the Windsor lines were advised to claim as normal through the Delay Repay scheme, as all lines on this part of our network remained open and operational albeit with some disruption due to stock unable to leave some depots and crew displacement.
- 1.4 It has been confirmed that a review of our arrangements within our call centre is required in preparation for events of similar significance, to ensure customers travelling at that time are prioritised.
- 1.5 Whilst messages across our various channels were updated, the view is that this could have been sharper. As such, the review has determined that a greater focus is given to the speed and accuracy of message updates across all of our channels.
- 1.6 Similar to item 1.4, we have recognised that a number of processes within our information delivery chain (inclusive of decisions around ticket acceptance,

compensation etc) are strengthened, with a suggested output being a 'Code Black manual'.

- 1.7 Continual changes in the estimate of handing back the infrastructure to commence service did not help in the communication to our customers.
- 1.8 Web traffic on 19<sup>th</sup> November was the most that has been seen on the SWR site ( since the site launch). The website remained resilient to this extreme demand.

## 2 Station Operations

- 2.1 Raynes Park, Earlsfield and Surbiton were pro-actively closed, avoiding the inevitable overcrowding situation. This worked well and will be carried forward.
- 2.2 Crowd control measures were implemented at Clapham Junction, Wimbledon and Vauxhall in advance of the commencement of the morning peak.
- 2.3 As evidence of the success of point 2.1 and 2.2, no station was evacuated on concerns of safety and indeed, no station reported significant overcrowding.
- 2.4 Volunteers to assist the management of stations was exceptionally limited, although this would be expected to some degree as a result of there being no train service.

## 3 The Train Service

- 3.1 Train crew were asked to remain at their signing on for duty points, as well as leaving both stock and crew in depots to ensure that at the point of service commencement, we could begin without delay.
- 3.2 Some gaps in the resources within our control centre did not help in our ability to effectively communicate or respond to internal queries.

Our 'Voice of the Customer' programme, that analyses feedback through surveys completed by our customers, has confirmed a range of frustration, broadly covering the areas referenced above. In contrast, there are examples whereby the information provided by colleagues on the station and the train has been commended.

There is a variety of ongoing activities that will improve the quality and consistency of the information provided to our customers. They include:

- a. A wholesale upgrade to the operating system of our customer information system (CIS). 'Worldline' will deliver benefits that include:
  - i. Faster amendments (train service alterations) to the system
  - ii. CIS will be linked to Genius (railway train operations systems), enabling the number of carriages and other changes to take effect automatically
  - iii. Rail replacement bus departures and the departure points to be shown
  - iv. Information regarding possible future delays (on the line of route) announced on the station public address system
  - v. Details of the next fastest train announced over the public address system in the event of a delay or cancellation
- b. Mobile, digital information totems for Waterloo station. During disruption, information can be remotely loaded onto the information totems and positioned at locations for maximum impact.

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- c. A project to review and implement changes to the provision of information at Waterloo.
- d. The installation of a microphone on the customer information desk on the concourse at Waterloo, allowing our information desk colleagues to announce to our customers.
- e. Over recent months we have made a number of changes which have improved the performance of our website. Key amongst these are:
  - i. New agency appointed and providing 24/7 help, support and maintenance
  - ii. Improved server capacity – means far less chance of the site crashing or becoming unavailable due to high volumes of users
  - iii. Added website monitoring so awareness of potential issues are flagged before they arise so they can be fixed

Yours sincerely,



Alan Penlington  
Customer Experience Director