



Department  
for Transport

Rt Hon Nick Herbert CBE MP  
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From the Secretary of State  
**The Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling**

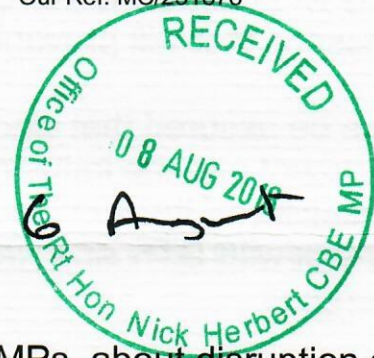
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Our Ref: MC/231878

*D. Nich*



Thank you for your letter of 2 July, signed by fellow MPs, about disruption and compensation for passengers travelling on Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR's) Great Northern and Thameslink networks.

I am grateful that you and several of the signatories to this letter were able to attend the GTR drop-in briefing on 11 July.

I continue to be deeply concerned to read of the delays and cancellations that you and your fellow MPs' constituents are experiencing on their journeys following the introduction of the new timetable. I fully appreciate how distressing this disruption must have been for commuters travelling from your constituencies.

I acknowledge that over the past weeks passengers on Great Northern and Thameslink services have faced totally unsatisfactory levels of service, and I apologise to passengers that have experienced and are experiencing disruption.

In regard to your point on compensation, I am pleased that a special compensation scheme for Thameslink and Great Northern passengers has been announced. The scheme has been designed to refund season ticket holders up to one month where they have suffered severe disruption and up to one week where disruption to services has been moderate.

Compensation will cover the period 20 May 2018 to 28 July 2018. The scheme will go live in two waves, with GTR contacting registered qualifying passengers by the end of August, before a web portal is opened for other passengers at a later date (this will be confirmed by GTR shortly).



Full details of eligible stations and more information can be found on the Thameslink<sup>1</sup> and Great Northern<sup>2</sup> websites. GTR have been asked to clearly communicate with passengers how they can make their claim and ensure the process is straightforward. Passengers are also encouraged to apply to GTR for Delay Repay compensation for affected journeys.

Both the Minister of State and I are continuing to monitor the situation very closely and my Department's overriding priority is to restore the reliability of service across the network. We are taking action to resolve the problems as quickly as possible, to compensate passengers appropriately, and to learn the lessons that will prevent this happening again in the future.

Please be assured that since the introduction of the May timetable, my Department and the industry have been working round the clock to restore the reliability of the service across the network. Hour by hour, my officials are in contact with GTR and Network Rail to work to improve the service to passengers.

I am deeply frustrated that what should have been a highly beneficial development for passengers, with the introduction of new services, new routes and expanded capacity, has had such a poor start.

This was the most significant timetable recast in a generation – designing a robust, well-integrated timetable that works for the majority of passengers is highly complex and timetabling practitioners have worked hard for more than a year on the challenges involved. We were aware that there may be some disruption in the early days of any new timetable change of this size, however, the scale of the problem has far outstripped any expectation. The Department is determined that this is not repeated in the future.

Network Rail was far too late in finalising planned timetable changes and this must not happen again. GTR was not sufficiently prepared to manage a timetable change of this scale either. The rail industry has collectively failed to deliver for the passengers it serves.

The process of introducing the new timetable was overseen for the last two years by an Industry Readiness Board, made up of Network Rail, independent rail regulator the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the train operating companies and an Independent Assurance Panel. Both of these groups have told me that they had been given no information to suggest that the new timetable should not be implemented as planned – albeit with some likely early issues as the timetable bedded down.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/industrycomp/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.greatnorthernrail.com/industrycomp/>



Indeed as few as three weeks before the timetable was to be implemented, GTR itself assured me personally that it was ready to implement the changes. Clearly this was wrong, and it is totally unacceptable.

In regard to driver numbers and training, I should explain that GTR does have enough drivers. However, the significant delay in Network Rail agreeing the timetable has directly impacted on GTR's ability to re-work train crew schedules and deliver driver training on the new routes and on new trains.

On 15 July GTR introduced an interim timetable across their network as the next step to improve reliability and performance for Thameslink and Great Northern passengers. Details of the new interim timetable were published on Friday 6 July. The aim is to allow GTR to slowly build up services to the new full timetable.

An inquiry by the ORR into the May timetable implementation is now underway. The inquiry will consider why the industry as a whole failed to produce and implement an effective timetable. Its findings will be shared as early as possible with me and the rail industry, so that lessons can be learnt in advance of future major timetable changes. The ORR aims to publish the final report by the end of the year.

In the future, the Department will insist on a gradual approach to timetable change wherever possible and not the significant changes that we have seen this past month.

I acknowledge that this is small comfort to your constituents when things are not working as they should, but please be assured that I will continue to do everything possible to ensure passengers get the service they expect.

With best wishes



**Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**