



HELEN WHATELY MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Chris Heaton-Harris MP
Minister of State
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London, SW1P 4DR

Sent by email only.

29 September 2021

Dear Chris

Re: Future of Southeastern rail franchise

Thank you for your letter earlier today on the future of the Southeastern rail franchise.

As you know, Southeastern runs the majority of train services in my constituency – including commuter services from Faversham and Maidstone, which many people depend on to get to work.

Local people are understandably concerned about what this announcement means for the future of rail services in Kent.

I welcome your commitment that there will be no change to fares, tickets, or services when the franchise is transferred to the Operator of Last Resort (OLR) on 17 October. This is crucial for giving commuters – and all rail users – confidence in our local train services.

People also want to know what the long-term plan is for the franchise – and crucially what is being done to make sure that the problems with Southeastern are not allowed to happen again.

The reforms announced earlier this year – with the creation of Great British Railways – will help to make rail travel easier and more affordable for people across the country. However, these reforms are not due to come into effect until 2023. There is a lot of work to do in the meantime to improve our local train services.

The introduction of flexible season tickets is a very welcome step in making the ticketing system fairer and more reflective of how people work and travel. I would be grateful if you could confirm that flexible season tickets will continue when Southeastern's contract comes to an end next month. More broadly, I hope you will do everything you can to make sure rail users in Faversham and Mid Kent have a reliable service and affordable fares while the franchise is being run by the OLR.

I've also been campaigning to make our trains and stations more accessible for disabled passengers and parents with pushchairs. There has been progress on this in recent years with new lifts at Faversham station, but other upgrade work at the station is needed. We also badly need lifts at Headcorn station. I hope we can make progress on this while the franchise is being run by the OLR.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to deliver better train services for people in Faversham and Mid Kent.

Helen Whately MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

Tel: 020 7219 6472 Email: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk www.helenwhately.org.uk

If you would like to find out more about what I am doing in Faversham and Mid Kent, please do sign up to my newsletter on my website.

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