



Department  
for Transport

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From the Minister of State  
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Dear Helen,

Thank you for your letter of 28 September about the future of the Southeastern rail franchise.

As the Minister responsible for rail, I share your desire to continue to improve the rail offering for passengers in Kent and South East London.

Under the new operator, the Department will prioritise the punctual, reliable services passengers deserve, rebuild trust in this network, and deliver the reforms set out in our Plan for Rail, which you refer to. As you rightly say, we need to deliver customer improvements prior to the reforms being fully in place and officials in my Department are already working on this.

All tickets, including the new flexible season ticket product, purchased prior to 17 October 2021 for travel after this date will remain valid. The flexible season tickets will continue to be available under the Operator of Last Resort (OLR) and we have already received much positive feedback about their introduction. Passengers can also be assured that timetables will remain unchanged at this time and the timetable change planned for December 2021 to bring a small uplift in services is still on track for implementation. Passengers can additionally expect a renewed focus on punctual, reliable, clean, and safe services. The OLR is committed to ensuring the highest possible level of operational performance on the network and will continue to deliver improvements in line with Department's accessibility for all policy.

The OLR will also continue to deliver tangible improvements across the network over the coming year, including:

- Completing the roll out of the new Class 707 (City Beam) trains onto Metro routes to provide more spacious, comfortable journeys. The

successful launch of the Class 707s took place on 24 September and passengers have responded well to the introduction of the new rolling stock.

- Investing in passenger improvements on the existing fleet of trains.
- Improving security across the network to make the network safer and more reliable.
- Work on incorporating early reforms from the Plan for Rail.

I share your desire to see improvements to accessibility across our rail network and I can assure you that the experienced managers at OLR are well aware of this.

Thank you again for your correspondence and I hope you find this response useful.

Yours sincerely,



**Chris Heaton-Harris MP**

**Minister of State for Transport**