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Railway Ticket Office Closures:

As constituents may know, a consultation – which was due to last just 21 days – was opened on 5 July. It proposes to close a large number of rail ticket offices, leaving ticket office facilities at just the busiest stations and interchanges. Due to the huge public outcry, this has now been extended until 1st September.

Given that one in nine tickets are still sold at physical ticket offices, I know this announcement is causing huge amounts of anxiety, especially to vulnerable and disabled passengers. The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) has said that the mass closure of rail ticket offices “would have a hugely detrimental impact on blind and partially sighted people’s ability to buy tickets, arrange assistance and, critically, travel independently”.

Despite this, the Government has not published equality impact assessments alongside the consultations. We need answers to questions about what will happen for passengers who struggle to use digital alternatives to ticket offices, as well as to when digital and pay-as-you-go ticketing technology will be available across existing networks.

I wrote to the Secretary of State on 13th July expressing my concerns about these plans, asking about what will be put in place instead to help passengers with disabilities? I urged the Minister to think again about the decision to close so many ticket offices in my constituency and across the whole country.

I am also aware that this announcement will be causing a great deal of worry to rail staff currently deployed in rail ticket offices. It is important that we know what will happen to them and what impact this will have on their job security.

I remain extremely concerned that this consultation is not about modernisation, but more cuts on our declining railways. Our rail services are already being run into the ground, with cancellations at record highs. I am deeply concerned that this process is simply a prelude to job losses that will mean far fewer staff to serve the travelling public, and the continued managed decline of our railways.

Thank you once again to those constituents who have contacted me about this issue. I assure constituents that I will continue to call for answers on this matter at every possible opportunity.

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