



Department  
for Transport

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Your Ref:

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Paul Bell

Dear Paul Bell

## **Southern rail services**

Thank you for your email of 7 June 2016 to Claire Perry MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport about Southern Rail, your email has been passed to me to respond.

I am sorry that the level of service being provided by Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) which operates Southern services is not meeting your expectations and for the inconvenience that this causes. The Department fully appreciates the impact the unreliable service is having on peoples' lives, career and family. It is inexcusable that passengers on this part of the rail network are not receiving the service they deserve.

We would only remove the franchise from GTR if we felt that the management team could not deliver. However, the Department think everything is being done to address the performance issues, the driver shortages and the roll-out of new rolling stock. Regardless of who runs this franchise, these challenges will exist. As the Minister recently stated; "*I don't think changing the name on the company's front door would do anything to solve the problems*".

We have chosen an operator after a careful competition to ensure they are the right partner to help us deliver for passengers through these essential works.

For the next 18 months there will be a difficult period of performance due to the Thameslink Programme which will transform the way in which people

travel across London. However, performance does not need to be as difficult as it has been, and we are doing all we can to ensure that the new December 2015 timetable delivers the sort of reliable service people want.

The Department knew how complex these works would be when we put this franchise up for competition. Although the works have proved harder than any of us expected, we are confident that GTR remain the best people to deal with them. It is the scale, not the nature, of the challenge that has changed. That said we are actively managing GTR, and ensuring that they are delivering the best service for passengers that circumstances permit.

I hope this reply clarifies our position.

Yours sincerely

Liz Meade