



COUNCIL MEETING

20 July 2023

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Gannon will move the following motion:

On the 5th July 2023, the Government unveiled plans via the Rail Delivery Group to axe over one thousand railway ticket offices. For the North East, this would mean total closures of the ticket offices at:

- Alnmouth
- Berwick upon Tweed
- Darlington
- Durham
- Eaglescliffe
- Hexham
- Malton
- Middlesbrough
- Morpeth
- Northallerton
- Redcar Central
- Scarborough
- Sunderland
- Thirsk
- Thornaby

This would only leave ticket offices open only at Newcastle, York and Hartlepool, all on reduced opening hours.

Whilst the consultation was announced to run for twenty-one days from 5th July, some ticket office staff have already been handed redundancy notices. It is also pertinent to note that despite the consultation itself being aimed at the general public, it has not been released in any kind of paper, easy-read, audio or BSL format, therefore excluding many of the people for whom ticket offices are essential from even having their say.

During the pandemic, the private train operators in the UK made more than £300 million between March 2020 and September 2022. This will rise to £400 million by September 2023. The majority of this funding was a government subsidy direct from the UK taxpayer.

In December 2021, the UK's largest train operator, First Group, handed £500 million to its shareholders for running South Western Railway and TransPennine Express services. As all in the North East will well be aware, this year alone 75% of

TransPennine Express services have been late or cancelled. The CEO of First Group was paid £840,000 during that time and received a 6% pay rise.

Reducing the human presence at our stations is not driven by austerity or government cuts: it is driven by profiteering of the private sector. It will make life more difficult for those who are disabled, have limited mobility, struggle with new technology, feel unsafe around unstaffed stations, and anyone who just needs extra help. The railway in this country is proven to be profitable. The people of this country should benefit from that with at least basic service levels.

This council resolves to ask that the Leader and Chief Executive:

- **Respond to the Rail Delivery Group consultation to object in the strongest terms in relation to the proposals for our region;**
- **Write to the Secretary of State for Transport to object to these proposals.**

Proposed by:	Councillor M Gannon
Supported by:	Councillor J Adams
	Councillor J Eagle
	Councillor J McElroy