



Department  
for Transport

From the Parliamentary  
Under Secretary of State  
**Paul Maynard MP**

Great Minster House  
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London  
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Crispin Blunt MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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**3 0 DEC 2016**

Dear Crispin,

Thank you for your letter of 28 November to Chris Grayling, on behalf of your constituents about Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR's) Southern rail services. I am replying as Minister responsible for rail issues.

I read your constituents letter with great concern. Understandably your constituents feel deeply frustrated with the unacceptable service on GTR's Southern network. Having read your constituent's story, plus many others from passengers and MPs alike, I am acutely aware of the impact this is having on families, work and businesses. We are working urgently to improve services for passengers on the Southern network.

I should start by explaining how this situation has come about. GTR is currently going through a major programme of change that is designed to significantly increase capacity by the end of this decade.

To do this, older trains are being replaced with a newer fleet which will include some of Britain's most state of the art, automated trains. For a long time, the majority of the trains on this network have been operated by the driver from the cab, normally without a guard on board. Rather than simply getting rid of the guard, though, the plan has been to create a new on-board supervisor role to provide better support for passengers. It is this change that the RMT, which represents the guards, has been fighting against. In fact, there will be more on-board supervisors available on more trains than today.

It is therefore extremely disappointing that the RMT and now ASLEF unions have decided to prioritise extending needless industrial action over the needs of the wider travelling public during the festive season.

The Secretary of State wrote to both ASLEF and RMT on 6 December offering to meet them for talks if they called off their planned strikes. However, neither have agreed to meet yet without preconditions.

There have also been too many failures of infrastructure by Network Rail and resolving this is a top priority for both the company and the department. We have made a start, but there is a long way to go. I will continue to ensure that the management of the train operating company is doing everything in its power to deliver reliable services. Passengers' interests must come first to help those, like your constituent, whose family and job have been significantly affected.

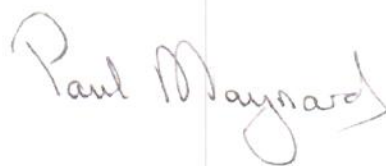
In the short-term, the most pressing need is to restore performance to acceptable levels. The department has been working very hard to improve services for passengers. Recently we announced a package of measures including a £20m fund and the appointment of Chris Gibb, one of Britain's most experienced rail industry figures, to lead a new GTR and Network Rail Project Board.

Some of those issues will be resolved by the work that Chris Gibb is doing to rapidly identify where the problems are and improve the way this railway runs. In addition, Chris is working to resolve some of the most regular causes of problems. Chris Gibb will report his final recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling MP, in the New Year.

It is also right that we compensate people who have not received the service they expect and deserve. From Sunday 11 December, commuters across the whole of GTR delayed between 15 and 29 minutes can claim back 25% of the cost of the single fare as part of an improved Delay Repay compensation scheme announced in October.

Southern's season ticket holders will also receive a one-off payment equivalent to a month's worth of travel paid directly into their bank account or by vouchers, and are also eligible for strike compensation on the days when industrial action makes travel challenging.<sup>1</sup> I would encourage your constituents to claim where possible.

Thank you for writing and sharing your constituent's story with me. I will continue to do everything I can to resolve things. In the meantime, I am truly sorry for the huge impact that this is having on both you and your constituents' lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Maynard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'P' and a long, horizontal tail on the 'd'.

**PAUL MAYNARD**