



CRISPIN BLUNT MP  
Member of Parliament for Reigate

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Andrew Jones MP  
Undersecretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 4DR

Our reference CB/GO

18 March 2019

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and Stephen Trigg from Reigate and Redhill District Rail Users Association (RRDRUA) on 13<sup>th</sup> March. In view of the complexity of the issues raised, I thought it would be useful to put down in writing the essence of our 'ask', realising that readjustments to a single line fare structure are part of a wider Department for Transport strategy to simplify and make more transparent regional rail fares and payment systems.

The underlying challenge that my rail-using constituents have faced in recent years is that, throughout a period of disruption and turmoil brought about by i) the London Bridge Upgrade Works, ii) the introduction of Driver Only Operated Trains and the subsequent industrial action, and iii) the disastrous introduction of the May 2018 GTR timetable, the Redhill line has seen an inequitable amount of disruption, delays, and cancellations, whilst at the same time having a fare structure higher than it should be due to the 'Redhill Hump' phenomena. This is set against a background of diminishing services from Redhill over recent years including the removal of all direct services to the south coast.

In short, whilst acknowledging rail users across the region have faced disruption, local rail users have been especially hard hit by poor service punctuality, cancellations and timetable hits, whilst at the same time having to pay a historic premium for their fares. As if to put another nail in the coffin, the Department for Transport refused to include Reigate station onto its compensation scheme for Thameslink passengers affected by the disruptive introduction of the 2018 GTR timetable, despite the facts that i) Reigate travellers to and from London Bridge have to use Thameslink services by changing at Redhill or East Croydon and ii) the GTR 2018 timetable removed all direct services from Reigate to London Bridge, so they have no alternative.

It was due to this litany of concerns that I raised a debate in the House of Commons last October, following many meetings with successive rail ministers during which the then Rail Minister, Jo Johnson, made public promises to address the Redhill Hump by 2021, starting with adjustments in January 2019.

Following this debate, I was able to pass on this encouraging news to my rail using constituents. It was, therefore, with a sense of disappointment and frustration that many realised, when the January 2019 fares structure was published, that most fares, including the most commonly used ones, would not see any downward adjustment at all. This apparent lack of action to redress the Redhill Hump was compounded by the fact that Thameslink service users to London Bridge had faced a 17% increase during the previous year as a result of the restructuring of Thameslink and Southern services and fares.



It is important to put this into context. The most used stations for Brighton line services in my constituency are Redhill and Reigate and it is fares and services from these stations that most affect my constituents. Feeder stations include Earlswood, Salfords and Merstham. Other local stations affected by the Redhill area fares structure are Horley, Nufield and Godstone, though these lie in the neighbouring constituency of East Surrey.

Over recent years, RRDRUA has worked tirelessly with GTR to try to mitigate the impact of local service cuts, cancellations and timetable changes. However, as the GTR franchise is based on the model that Department for Transport sets and collects fares, I have been actively seeking support from Government on the 'fares hump' issue.

In my letter to you, dated 1 February, I requested information about fares from various local stations in 2017, 2018 and 2019 in order to review the changes made to the Redhill line in January 2019 and assess how this has started to address the Redhill Hump, so that I can explain this to my constituents. To date, I have not received this information from your team.

I also requested for i) sight of the instructions that the Department for Transport gave to GTR to adjust Redhill line fares in view of the promise made by Jo Johnson in October 2018, and ii) details of the forecast cost to the Treasury of removing the Redhill Hump between 2019 and 2021. This information has not been received either.

Whilst realising that the Department for Transport is currently undertaking a consultation with a view to simplify the complex fare structure and payment systems across the network, it is unlikely that any new measures will be in place before 2021, and this must therefore not be seen as an alternative to the promise made to remove the Redhill Hump by 2021.

In order for me to be able to explain to my constituents details of the Department for Transport's plan to remove the Redhill Hump by 2021, including the exact nature of the adjustments made in January 2019, and those planned for 2020 and 2021, it would be most helpful if you could provide me with a clear statement outlining this plan and details of costings.

Without such a statement, it is hard for me to explain to them how the commitment to resolve this issue, made by The Department for Transport in 2018, has been and will be addressed.

I look forward to your reply.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Crispin*

Crispin Blunt