



CRISPIN BLUNT MP
Member of Parliament for Reigate

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Our reference CB/GO

18 December 2019

Dear Grant,

I am writing to you in connection with a long-standing historic anomaly in the pricing of rail tickets on the 'Redhill Line' in my constituency, colloquially known as 'The Redhill Hump.'

This is an issue I have brought to the attention of a number of successive Secretaries of State and Rail Ministers over recent years to little avail. Following a specific debate on the issue that I arranged on 12 January 2016, I then engaged in many private meetings with Ministers, officials, and rail service providers, too numerous to list.

However, following an adjournment debate that I called in the House of Commons on 18th October 2018, once again to discuss specifically problems on the Redhill Line, the then Rail Minister, Jo Johnson, made a public promise that the Redhill Hump anomaly would be resolved by the end of the current GTR franchise in 2021, with a reduction in local fares starting in January 2019. To quote from Hansard (vol 647 18/10/18):

"Today, I can make a commitment that we will see this issue resolved by the end of the current franchise in 2021, with a reduction in fares coming into effect from this coming January. I hope that my hon. Friend will welcome that news, which results directly from his tireless and effective campaign on behalf of all his constituents."

I was very disappointed at the minor tweaks that the Department for Transport, upon instruction to GTR, made to some fares in January 2019 to start addressing the Redhill Hump anomaly. These adjustments did not apply to the most used ticket types. This was particularly disappointing for Thameslink service rail users who had already suffered a 17% increase in fares due to the splitting of Southern and Thameslink fares in 2018.

You can, therefore, imagine my utter dismay when I discovered that no adjustments at all have been made to local fares to bring them more in line with other local stations in the 2020 annual rail fare hike. GTR has confirmed to my office that it has had no instruction from DfT to address the Redhill Hump this year. The instruction was simply to implement a



2.8% hike across the board. The explanation for this was that DfT is unwilling to implement any changes to fares that are not 'cost neutral'. In other words, the only way to address the Redhill Hump is to raise other local fares, rather than to lower those on the Redhill line, which they are not keen to do.

A clear interpretation of Jo Jonson's promise is not that other fares should increase to compensate to bring them in line with Redhill line fares, but that there would be a 'decrease' to bring them into line, as clearly quoted in his public response.

GTR even suggested to me that Redhill line season ticket holders should buy their tickets at Three Bridges (further out from London) in 2020 because it is still cheaper to do so!

As things stand, it looks as if the minor fare adjustments made last year were a one-off, and that the promise to bring Redhill line fares into line by 2021 has been renegeged upon.

I realise that specific local fare adjustments are complex and potentially not without cost to the Treasury. However, this was considered by DfT before the promise was made in 2018.

Whilst I welcome DfT's consultation paper on Pay as You Go fares, as a means of simplifying the regional fares structure in the future, it is unlikely that implementation of this will take place until after 2021, and it should therefore not be used as an excuse for not addressing the Redhill Hump beforehand.

I would very much welcome your comments on this matter, and suggest that we arrange an urgent meeting to discuss this matter further.

1/ |
drr
Ew
Chris

Cc: Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Minister of State for Railways