Kevin’s response to Paignton Consultation Proposals,

Dear Sirs\Madams

**Consultation on Closure of Paignton Ticket Office**

I write as the Member of Parliament whose constituency includes Paignton Station to give my comments on and object to the proposals to close the ticket office at this station.

Whilst noting the wider reasoning for the overall proposals is the fall in the use of ticket offices to under 15% of sales nationally, the situation at Paignton Station is very different. It has one of the highest percentages in the GWR region of passengers still using the ticket office and the level of tickets sold via the ticket office.

As the consultation document itself confirms, at Paignton 41.3% of tickets (75,595) were sold at the Ticket Office, compared to 48.2% online (88,341). Whilst I recognise the number buying via online methods is higher than those using the ticket office, the high percentage of passengers purchasing a ticket at the ticket office shows the demand and need for this service is still strong.

Paignton is a community with a higher than average number of people aged over 70 who may be unfamiliar with online booking methods and app-based ticketing options. Similarly, many visitors who are unfamiliar with the local rail network may use the ticket office for a purchase to ensure they get a ticket which is valid and to benefit from group save and railcard options which may be harder to input via a machine.

Given this I would raise the following points in response to the proposals for Paignton:

* Given the much higher percentage of passengers using the ticket office at Paignton than the national average or at other nearby stations, why is it included in the first wave of closures? ***The current usage indicates demand for this service is significantly above the national average, meaning it should be left open at least whilst this level of passenger demand continues. At the very least any closure should be delayed to allow consideration of the impact of ticket office closures at other stations, where the % of passenger demand is far lower, before any change is made here***.
* The current ticket machine at Paignton Station is outside the booking hall and not visible to staff inside the station or on the platform. What options are being looked at to move the ticket machine inside the station where it is visible to staff in order they may assist anyone struggling with it?
* The booking hall at Paignton Station is of a limited size, with most of its facilities dating back some decades. Will physical changes be made to the booking hall to create an area where staff could assist customers with queries and to buy tickets, or would this have to be done on the platform? This is especially relevant as virtually all other Intercity Stations in our region have ticket barriers and it is predictable they could be introduced at Paignton in future.
* What will the staffing numbers at Paignton Station be before and after the proposed changes during the hours it is manned?

I would be grateful for a response to the above points and for confirmation of receipt of this email.

Finally I have copied this email to Cllr John Fellows who is both a Paignton Councillor and a rail enthusiast.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Foster MP

Member of Parliament for Torbay

House of Commons

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