

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

CLOSURE OF RAILWAY STATION TICKET OFFICE

Report Reference ET-23-07
Meeting Date 24th July 2023
Agenda Item 13
Prepared by Town Clerk



1.0 BACKGROUND

Northern (and many other railway companies) has commenced a consultation on plans to close the majority of ticket offices on the railway network. Northern manages 467 stations of which 318 are unstaffed. The proposal is to close 131 ticket offices (including Knutsford) and leaving just 18 staffed offices. The staffed offices are the major stations on their network (e.g. Manchester Victoria, Leeds, Liverpool Lime Street etc). Other operators are undertaking similar extensive closures; all Avanti West Coast stations are closing and offices are being closes at Manchester Piccadilly, London Euston and Birmingham New Street. It is reported that only 12% of tickets are bought from ticket offices.

The consultation document from Northern has been circulated and provides more detailed information on the proposed changes.

2.0 IMPACT ON KNUTSFORD RAILWAY STATION

Knutsford ticket office is currently open 0630-2030 (Mon-Fri), 0700-1930 (Sat) and 1210-1940 (Sun). Under the proposals, the ticket office at Knutsford Railway Station will close completely. Tickets will be able to be purchased from the ticket machine(s) on platforms but no cash payments can be made on these. Cash users can obtain a 'promise to pay' ticket from the machine and purchase a ticket with cash from conductors or the destination ticket office. There are plans to introduce ticket sales at retail outlets within the next 12 months, although there is currently no information on how this will operate.

It should be noted that users without tickets are fined significantly if they do not have a ticket before boarding a train. There is a risk that issues with ticket machines or the ability to use machines will lead to an increase in fines for railway users.

Northern is proposing to introduce 'Journey Makers' who will be based at stations but not within ticket offices. They will support customers helping them to buy tickets, making announcements, keep stations tidy and provide customer information and assistance. These will only be for extremely limited hours, the proposed times for Knutsford are 0630-0830 (Mon-Fri) and 1130-1330 (Sat).

3.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should agree outline points to form a response to the consultation.

Subject to the committee's approval, a response could also be sent to Esther McVey MP as Northern is no longer franchised and is operated by the Department of Transport.