

Mark Prisk MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
15 December 2017

Dear Mark

Thank you for taking the time to meet with my colleague Larry Heyman and I at the MP information session held at Westminster on Wednesday 6 December, and for sharing the results of the recent rail survey of your constituents.

We have reviewed the feedback provided and thought it would be useful to provide further information about the steps we are jointly taking with Network Rail to improve reliability for Hertford North and other Great Northern passengers.

The current trains serving Hertford North are over 40 years old and one of the oldest train fleets in the country. We are investing in new trains for your constituents, as part of a programme to replace 75% of Great Northern's train fleet. The end of next year will see the new Class 717s introduced on Moorgate services from Hertford North and Welwyn Garden City - a metro version of the Class 700s, fully accessible, air-conditioned and featuring the latest passenger information systems providing updates on the status of London Underground. The new trains will be fixed length 6-carriages, providing much needed additional capacity on the Moorgate line.

While the existing trains continue to run in service we are still overhauling the Class 313s to improve the fleets' reliability. This includes power, brake and door equipment replacement, as well as interior improvements.

Once Crossrail opens in 2018, passengers using this line will be able to interchange at Moorgate, creating greater journey opportunities for both work and pleasure. Furthermore, drivers will only be required to complete a two/ three-day training conversion course for the new Class 717s due to the similarities to the Class 700s. This, compared to the current eight days, means a significant reduction in the impact of driver training on services.

We continue to run the UK's biggest driver training recruitment programme and new drivers continue to join the Great Northern team. We have introduced 141 more drivers since January 2015 and continue to recruit more - there are currently 65 trainees in the system.

Network Rail is delivering a £300 million programme of targeted work to make infrastructure more resilient on the Thameslink network. The Thameslink Resilience Programme will support improved train performance on commuter routes north and south of central London, including on the Hertford Loop and the southern section of the East Coast Main Line.

Network Rail is using detailed data to target the areas most affected by significant asset-related delays, turning hotspots into more resilient infrastructure and delivering a reduction in delay minutes for your constituents of up to 15% each year.

Thameslink Resilience is integrated in a way which brings together all necessary asset improvement works required on each section of railway and designed to minimise passenger disruption from the work.

The Programme includes the renewal of key sections of track and signalling, vegetation management, better drainage, and the shoring up of cuttings and embankments.

Additionally, work on improved security to prevent trespass and vandalism complements the Small Talk Saves Lives campaign which is jointly being delivered by Samaritans, British Transport Police (BTP) and Network Rail and the train operating companies.

This campaign aims to give passengers the confidence to act if they notice someone who may be at risk of suicide on or around the rail network. 16,000 rail staff and BTP officers have already been trained by Samaritans in suicide prevention, contributing to a reduced number of external incidents on the network.

The investment in new trains and infrastructure upgrades is essential to provide Great Northern passengers with a train service suitable for now and in the future. New journey opportunities to Gatwick and Kent and the ability to interchange at Moorgate and Farringdon with Crossrail will provide greater professional and leisure opportunities for passengers.

Yours sincerely



Katherine Cox

Stakeholder Manager