



Department  
for Transport

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From the Secretary of State  
**The Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling**

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Our Ref: MC/202598  
Your Ref:

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9 August, 2017

Dear Mick,

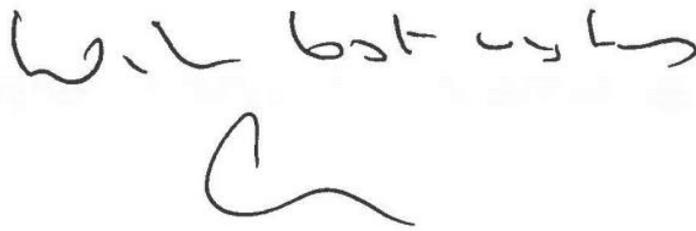
Thank you for coming in to see me last month. I am glad that we are both ambitious for the future of the railways. I am also pleased that we both agree on the importance of maintaining customer-facing staffing levels on the railways, and as I indicated, in terms of the most immediate issue, I am willing to give long term commitments about this on Southern, taking into account the next change of franchise.

I also agree with you about the importance of maintaining quality training for staff on trains. Your meaningful engagement with the industry in listening to each other and delivering change together will be essential. As you know the issue of training and competence remains with TOCs. However, I am happy for Ian Prosser and his organisation to review any new arrangements.

The area I would like you to particularly consider is driver only operation. We agreed that we did not want to see a reduction in staffing numbers. I also agreed that I did not want to reduce customer service on trains. But we have a network where many trains already have doors operated by the driver and where all new trains are designed to operate in this way. You indicated that it is your view that there are no circumstances whatsoever in which any of these new trains should ever run with just a driver on board, even in circumstances where the second member of staff was not available at very short notice, perhaps due to them being taken ill or delayed on a previous service.

Can I ask you to reconsider this position? I am happy to work with you to ensure that jobs and customer service are protected on Southern. But to apply a rule that says the new trains can never, in any situation, be operated without that second member of staff – even though it was custom and practice that this could happen in many places in the past – seems to me to be unjustifiable. We all want to put customers first, and I cannot see a reason for cancelling a train, or asking passengers to leave a train because of a rare localised problem when there is no actual operational need for them to do so.

I will look forward to seeing the results of the RMT's ongoing work with industry to modernise the railway.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.L. best" followed by a stylized flourish.

**Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**