

Tracey Crouch MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Charles Horton
Southeastern
Friars Bridge Court
41-45 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8PG

24 November 2010

Dear Charles

In recent weeks I have received various communications from constituents regarding the now confirmed train fare rises across the Southeastern franchise. Whilst they all feel aggrieved at the added cost to their travel, they are equally concerned at the level of service they can expect in return and as such, have raised with me a number of particular issues.

The punctuality of trains is a concern for all train users and I was interested to read in a recent Public Performance Measurement published by Network Rail in October that on average, 91.5% of trains across the country had arrived on time for that year. But as I read further, I was concerned to note that despite being subject to a more generous fare formula and Government subsidy than other Train Operating Companies, Southeastern finds itself operating below the national average at 88.9% and in the bottom 3 of the 19 TOCs. I am sure you can appreciate that this is not only a worrying statistic when viewed in conjunction with steep fare rises and the extra investment in the franchise over the past 5 years, but also a major concern for fare payers and local MPs alike.

I would like to stress that although, as you say, it is stated Government policy to shift the cost of rail travel from the taxpayer to the fare payer, it is then entirely in order for Southeastern's fare payers, as in any commercial transaction, to expect value for money.

Therefore I would be grateful for your assurances that the significant rail fare increases many will be expected to pay in the New Year, will be reflected in an improved service across the Southeastern franchise.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracey".

TRACEY CROUCH MP

Chatham & Aylesford

Tel: 020 7219 7203

BOGGIS, Theodore

Subject: FW: Southeastern fares and train performance

From: Gibson, Mike
Sent: 29 November 2010 15:41
To: CROUCH, Tracey
Subject: Southeastern fares and train performance

Tracey crouch MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

29 November 2010

Dear Ms. Crouch

Re: 2011 Fares Increase and Train Performance

Thank you for your letter of 24 November regarding train performance and the 2011 fares increase addressed to Charles Horton. Charles has asked me to respond on this behalf.

The reason for the above-average increase on Southeastern and the historical background to fare levels on our network was explained in some detail at our meeting earlier this year but I can put together a briefing note on this if you wish.

In terms of train performance over recent weeks, we are very aware that it has fallen short of what we and our passengers expect.

There have been two main reasons for this. First, poor railhead conditions caused by the familiar "leaves on the line" problem. While this is considered something of a joke by the popular press the combination of autumn leaf fall and wet weather produces a teflon like mulch on the tracks which is similar in its impact on services to black ice on the roads. For safety reasons drivers have to reduce speed considerably and this has a knock on impact on timekeeping. While Network Rail (which is responsible for keeping the tracks clear) do have a line side management programme, given the number of heavily wooded areas in Kent, progress on clearing trees is not as speedy as we might like.

Second there have also been a number of infrastructure related failures which have also badly affected train performance. For example, this morning there were power and signalling failures which had a major impact on services into London.

We are working closely with Network Rail to resolve these and Charles and his senior management team are in regular contact with their counterparts in NWR. For those delays which are within our area of responsibility we are focused on ensuring trains leave exactly on time, on stock discipline to ensure units are in the right place at the right time and on improving maintenance procedures to minimise the risk of unit failure. We are also making a number of timetable changes to avoid clashes with other services which we are confident will improve performance in the New Year.

We apologise to all passengers affected by the poor performance of recent weeks and please assure your constituents that we are working to improve the service we offer.

If you need to discuss further, please ask your office to give me a call.

Best wishes

Mike Gibson
Public Affairs Manager
Southeastern
Friars Bridge Court
41-45 Blackfriars Road