



Thatcham Town Council

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26th July 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached Thatcham Town Council's response to your consultation on proposed changes to ticket offices. The proposals were discussed at a meeting of Thatcham Town Council's Planning & Highways Committee 25th July 2023 and the Committee wishes you to take their response into consideration.

Please do not hesitate to contact Thatcham Town Council should you require any further clarification within this response.

Yours faithfully,

Trudy Blackney

Deputy Town Clerk





Thatcham Town Council

Thatcham Town Council response to GWR consultation on: 'Changing how we sell tickets at stations'

Thatcham Town Council disagrees with the proposal by GWR for Thatcham Station in the consultation document 'Changing how we sell tickets at stations'. This appears to be a 'blanket' change with standard wording, imposed on every station without considering its individual circumstances.

In the covering email, Mark Hopwood, Managing Director of GWR says that "there is a good case for bringing staff out of the ticket office and onto the concourse." The Cambridge Dictionary defines a 'concourse' as: "a large space or room in a public building such as a station or airport that people meet in or pass through". Thatcham station does not have a 'concourse': the only indoor space open to the public is the waiting room, which is also the location of the ticket window.

There is no other sheltered location that would be an appropriate location for a member of staff in all weathers. There is a narrow roof beside the ticket office, but the platform here is narrow, and a queue of passengers waiting to speak to them would force other passengers too close to the platform edge for safety. In any case, this roof does not provide adequate shelter.

The Council recognises that an increasing proportion of passengers purchase their tickets online or from machines. However, Councillors have witnessed the outstanding support that the regular ticket office staff at Thatcham Station give to passengers with complicated travel plans or special needs, or to advise on timetable changes (e.g. due to weekend or evening maintenance). We do not understand how the staff can do this in future with only a portable ticket machine, without access to a computer monitor.

The website for the consultation states:

"Our plans would move staff to a new role, based on the principles of the station multi-skilled role – in place at GWR since 2007. This would allow staff to help more customers with a wider range of issues, including helping them to buy tickets, wherever they are on the station."

However, there is no explanation of what this 'wider range of issues' might be, and therefore what the benefit would be to passengers. We note that many trains bound for Newbury arrive at Thatcham within a few minutes of trains bound for Reading, so a single member of staff would not be able to move to the 'Newbury' platform to be nearer to passengers for those trains.

Therefore, Thatcham Town Council believes that the only place where passengers at Thatcham Station can be appropriately supported by a member of staff is in the waiting room, and the most effective way to do this is from the ticket window.

The Council is concerned that this proposed change would make the staff at Thatcham Station less effective, and therefore become a precursor to the complete removal of staff from the station.