



Department
for Transport

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
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The current Southern Rail Dispute

We are investing billions of pounds in improving the railway for passengers in the South East and inevitably, the necessary engineering and upgrade works have caused disruption. We have all been working hard to minimise the impact of this and to get the service on this railway back to what passengers expect and we were pleased that the Public Performance Measure for Southern in April 2016 was the highest for six months (83.8%¹), prior to disputes arising.

It is therefore really disappointing that the rail unions, rather than joining us in working to make journeys better, have instead decided to hold a series of strikes and unofficial industrial actions that are creating mayhem for their customers on the railway. I am gravely concerned that the facts surrounding this dispute are not being reported properly and that the reasons for the unions' actions are unjustified.

First, in response to the growing number of passengers on this route, the Government has invested more than £2billion of taxpayers' money in new, longer, state of the art trains, the Class 700s. Those trains are ready for introduction on Southern Rail services. These trains are fully equipped with the latest technology

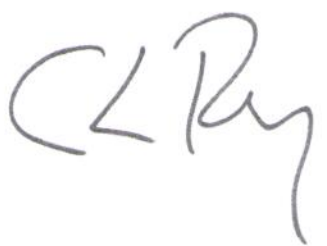
¹ Source: Network Rail

that allows drivers to safely operate the doors from the cab, as has been done on for almost 30 years on trains operating on more than a third of the UK rail network. Indeed, 40 per cent of trains currently operating on the Southern network are “doors operated by drivers”. Union bosses have chosen to dispute the introduction of this technology despite the fact that ASLEF members already drive “doors operated by drivers” trains on many other Southern Rail routes.

Second, the new trains mean that conductors, who currently have to operate the train doors, are freed up to spend all of their time on the train helping passengers as an on-board train supervisor. GTR has promised that this new role will be open to all conductors and will not result in any job losses or pay reduction, while the changes will clearly benefit those using the services. Importantly the vast majority of trains that currently have an on-board conductor will keep that staff member in a new role.

Again, to strike over these changes seems incomprehensible.

Knowing these facts, the official and unofficial actions by the unions involved seem completely unjustified and I urge their leaders and the Southern Rail management to sort out these issues for the sake of people using the railway as soon as possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CLPerry', with a small dot at the end of the final stroke.

CLAIRE PERRY