

Emily Yates

Association of British Commuters

www.abcommuters.com

By email only

From: Baroness Falkner
Chairwoman, EHRC

Our ref: 1172Yates

6 February 2023

Dear Emily,

Rail staffing and accessibility

Thank you for your letter of 17 August 2022 and subsequent emails highlighting the concerns of the Association of British Commuters about rail destaffing, the closure of ticket offices across the rail network, and the potential impact of these policies on the accessibility of the rail network for disabled people. I know that EHRC officials have been in contact with you, but I wanted to provide a formal written response myself too.

The Commission has a longstanding commitment to improving access to transport for disabled people. For many disabled people, public transport provides an essential and sometimes the only means of getting to school or work. Public transport therefore represents a gateway to opportunity.

We therefore share your concerns that changes to how some rail services operate are making rail travel more inaccessible. We have received other reports about changes in staffing arrangements at stations and on trains, and allegations that operators are unable to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled travelers, as required by the Equality Act 2010. We use various regulatory tools to respond to such concerns. In this case, we have written to

the Department for Transport and the Office of Rail and Road to remind them of their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. These include thinking about the equality implications of decisions, monitoring impact and taking action to ensure that rail services are accessible for everyone. We have asked for a meeting with them, and we will not hesitate to use our enforcement powers, if necessary, to ensure their compliance with the law.

The new Transport Bill provides an opportunity for the Government to renew its commitment to accessible travel. We are pleased that a Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee has been established to provide expert advice, and we are aware that they have raised concerns about accessibility investment and the need for deployment of staff to maximise meaningful accessibility for disabled rail users.

I am grateful to you for raising this with us, and for the research you sent us too. I will ensure that my team keep you informed of any further developments.

Yours sincerely,



Baroness Kishwer Falkner

Chairwoman

Equality and Human Rights Commission

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