



Department for
Transport

From the Minister of State

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Dear Mr Lawton,

Thank you for your letter of 6 February addressed to Geoff Hoon, regarding the London Midland franchise. I am replying as minister responsible for rail.

As part of the terms of its Franchise Agreement, London Midland must comply with a number of performance-related obligations that include targets for cancellations, delay minutes and capacity. Since the start of the franchise in November 2007, London Midland has achieved contractually specified performance levels. Should it fail to meet these standards across its franchise, then the department has a range of actions that it may take to secure improvement. My officials are continuing to monitor London Midland's operational performance levels and their compliance with the terms and conditions of the Franchise Agreement.

Services operated by London Midland at the south end of the West Coast main line have been disrupted recently for a number of reasons. On 14 December 2008, a commissioning timetable was put in place on the West Coast main line by Network Rail to allow a phased introduction of the new high frequency timetable. The commissioning timetable placed additional pressures on London Midland train crew. Resources were further stretched by late confirmation of the timetable from Network Rail and subsequent impact on train crew work schedules. These issues significantly stretched resources prior to Christmas. There were very high levels of sickness and very low levels of staff volunteering for overtime in the run up to Christmas. The cumulative effect of the above was unfortunately a number of cancellations prior to Christmas.

In the first full working week of the New Year there were a number of infrastructure failures and incidents which, unfortunately, significantly disrupted services.

The level of disruption that customers travelling from Milton Keynes have experienced recently has been unacceptable. I would encourage those people who have been delayed to claim compensation through London Midland's Delay Repay scheme. The commissioning timetable has now ended and my officials and I will be closely monitoring performance of services on the West Coast main line. The Department continues to push both London Midland and Network Rail strongly to improve their performance.

London Midland has confirmed that they displayed timetable information in the form of A – Z departure sheets at their stations, including Milton Keynes and Bletchley from the 14 December for the new timetable. Further timetable information was displayed once Network Rail advised London Midland of short notice changes to the timetable to allow engineering work to be completed. My officials have made it clear to London Midland that providing timely information to customers in the event of engineering works is very important. I have asked my officials to discuss the points you have made in your letter with London Midland.

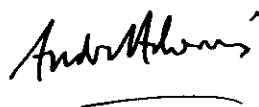
Some of the engineering work on the West Coast main line required bus replacement services. During times of bus replacement, London Midland continued to operate its normal fare structure; it is allowed to do this.

London Midland is required to deliver the specified services we have agreed in their current Service Level Commitment. London Midland is currently reviewing the operation of the new timetable to improve its operational robustness and to respond to comments expressed by user groups, passengers and other stakeholders.

I am copying this letter to Phyllis Starkey MP who has also recently raised London Midland performance issues with me.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours



ANDREW ADONIS