

Railfuture Scotland Response to Consultation on Closure of the Ticket Office at Glasgow Central Station

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Railfuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a bigger and better railway network for passenger and freight users. This response draws together the views of the Railfuture Scotland branch as authorised by Railfuture's national Board of Directors.

Proposed Station to be Affected by the Closure:

Glasgow Central

Scotland's busiest station, with up to 32 million users annually, the station serves a huge population across the whole of western Scotland, including the City of Glasgow. Train companies operating out of Glasgow Central include Avanti West Coast, Scotrail, TransPennine Express and Cross Country and serve destinations all over the UK and the large suburban area of Glasgow. In addition, inclusive tickets to ferries linking rail services are obtainable here: essential for the large number of passengers that travel to the 26 islands off Scotland's West Coast.

Passenger traffic increases exponentially in the summer months, and brings many tourists to Glasgow. Most of these tourists will be unfamiliar with Scottish geography and require assistance to book tickets to destinations within Scotland: many of them will not have English as a first language and will need a great deal of assistance. Such assistance cannot be obtained from a ticket machine, as travellers will need advice on ticket types, conditions of travel, and in such a large station where some platforms are on a lower level, where to find platforms, leave luggage and other matters. A machine, or a sole person trying to deal with hundreds such queries in a day, cannot possibly cope with this: dedicated staff in an identified location are an invaluable asset.

It is hard to imagine how a newcomer to the country, perhaps not able to read English, could manage a ticket machine without prior knowledge of the exact route his journey should take: it may be extremely unlikely that they can do this.

Travellers who are sight impaired, have reduced dexterity or have learning disabilities will have extreme difficulty trying to use a ticket machine and it will be unreasonable to expect that a member of staff will be on hand to attend to everyone trying to use these. Infrequent users attempting to buy multiple tickets for their journeys will be discouraged from travelling, which surely cannot be the aim of this exercise. In addition, infrequent users of these machines take much longer to obtain tickets than those familiar with them, and queues are sure to build up while people attempt to use them.

In summary, we believe this to be a cost cutting move to save on staff, but one which will hinder the travelling public, discourage infrequent users from using the train and hinder the large number of overseas visitors coming to Glasgow and Scotland.

Allison Cosgrove

Chair, Railfuture Scotland