

please reply to:
Neil Middleton
Director, Railfuture
(Address)

Minister of State for Rail:
The Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE

Copied to:

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Transport, responsible for aviation, maritime, and security: Keir Mather MP

Member of Parliament for Croydon East: Natasha Irons MP

Member of Parliament for Crawley: Peter Lamb MP

Member of Parliament for Dorking and Horley: Chris Coghlan MP

Member of Parliament for Reigate: Rebecca Paul MP

Gatwick Airport: Hannah Godfrey, Senior Surface Access Manager

Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee (Gatcom)

The (Gatwick) The Airline Operators Committee / Airport Consultative Committee:

Airlines UK

Govia Thameslink Railway: Angie Doll, Chief Executive Officer

Govia Thameslink Railway: Phil Hutchinson, Head of Strategic Planning

Great Western Railway: Thomas Lydon, Public Affairs Manager

Network Rail: Alex Hellier Head of Strategic Planning - Kent & Sussex

Network Rail: Paul Best, Senior Strategic Planner

Network Rail: James Craig, Lead Strategic Planner

Transport for the South East: Mark Valleley, Head of Strategy

22 October 2025

Dear Lord Hendy,

**Gatwick Airport Expansion - Capacity Issues on the Brighton Main Line
Absorption of Gatwick Express into current services and fare rationalisation**

I refer to the announcement on 22 September 2025 made by the Secretary of State for Transport relating to the granting of consent for the second runway at Gatwick Airport, noting in particular the stated obligation to ensure that at least 54% of future surface access to the Airport is made by means of public transport – by the late 2030s this could be over 110,000 passengers on a typical day. That is before adding on use by those who work at the airport, crew on the planes using the airport and non-airport passengers.

In recent years, the rail offer for Gatwick Airport travellers has been delivered using train calling patterns that seek to meet the combined needs of air and other travellers – for instance “Gatwick Express” is also the service to/from London Victoria for Haywards Heath and Brighton passengers. In practice, premium fares for Gatwick Express mean that the regular advice to passengers from guide books, travel websites, etc. is actually to avoid the two expensive Gatwick Express services per hour and instead use one of the six one or two stop Southern services to/from Victoria – or the four one stop Thameslink services to/from London Bridge.

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www.railwatch.org.uk

Gatwick Express is an important brand that we think needs to continue, but rather than being, as it is at the present, a virtual Train Operator, the name should be applied to every fast service between Victoria and Gatwick (8 per hour). This message is already part of the airport's marketing – I passed through Gatwick at the start of the month and as I approached passport control, the advertising referred to the train every 4 minutes, not the two train per hour Gatwick Express.

Linked to this change from an “operator” to a “brand”, fare choices should be rationalised. For example, for a journey from Gatwick to Euston we identified 14 fare choices – unnecessary complexity of this nature is unjustifiable, confuses passengers and may even deter some from using the service.

In our enclosed paper we:

- Explain why we think dedicated Gatwick Express trains should instead be integrated into the Southern service with airport services branded Gatwick Express, where there are just stops at Clapham Junction and/or East Croydon between the airport and central London, and that this should happen ‘now’. As part of this, we believe the current Gatwick Express services should stop at Clapham Junction to improve connectivity between there (and the 200+ stations served from there) and Brighton.
- Detail the fares confusion and urge rationalisation, to also happen ‘now’.

These are not permanent solutions to capacity issues on the line bearing in mind the huge increase in passengers envisaged as a consequence of airport expansion but will provide some respite and some opportunities whilst the necessary longer term solutions are considered and implemented.

If you have any queries in respect of the report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Neil Middleton

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