

**22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023**

Halewood Town Council strongly objects to proposals to close the ticket office at Halewood Train Station, we also wish to object to closures of other ticket offices at neighbouring stations in the wider Merseyside Region and Halton at train stations managed by Northern Rail, Avanti West Coast, Transpennine Express and other Train operating companies across the railway network.

We object on the grounds that it will make the station and its services inaccessible to disabled and vulnerable passengers. The ticket office is one of the most vital accessibility features of this station; it impacts everything from passengers' ability to buy tickets, receive assistance, access site facilities, navigate the station, plan routes, and feel confident in making journeys.

This represents a deterioration in the quality of service received by disabled people and would violate both the Equality Act (2010) and the Secretary of State for Transport's Ticketing and Settlement Agreement ticket office guidance.

Ticket office staff are the first point of contact when passengers arrive at the station. Having staff at a designated place means passengers know where to go if they need assistance, information, advice, or the unlocking of a facility such as a toilet or waiting room. If staffing levels are reduced or existing ticket staff redeployed to 'multifunctional roles', they would lose this crucial point of contact.

Having visible staff at a designated ticket office is also important for my safety and security, as they are the location where staff can offer immediate help in an emergency. Disabled and/or vulnerable people are at a higher risk of having a health-related emergency. Disabled and vulnerable people are also at higher risk of hate crime. Between 2021-2022, hate crimes in England and Wales have increased by 26%, with disability related hate crimes increasing by 43%. Therefore, vulnerable and disabled people need to know that they can quickly find and identify a member of staff. Closing the ticket office would make the services here less safe and less accessible. Proposing that vulnerable and disabled people rely on Help Points to reach staff assistance in an emergency is not a viable option. As well as the inaccessibility of these Help Points, and their abysmal success rate, passengers cannot expect an

These proposals violate the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (2023) on the following grounds:

- It would limit “access to emergency contacts” and increase response time for “emergency response to incidents”. It would also remove the only “identifiable location for getting help and visible staff presence that provides perceived and real safety and security benefits”, with no sufficient alternative. (5.3)
- It would be a lapse in the operator’s duty to “safeguard the interests of passengers”, particularly disabled passengers. (16-8.3.iii, vii).
- It would limit my ability to use the rail network from this station. (16-8.3.iii)

Halewood Town Council calls on Transport Focus to reject these proposals and to ensure the long-term provision of staffed ticket offices for use by Passengers and residents. Further, in the spirit of the successful levelling up bid by Knowsley Borough Council in which transport links form a substantial part, this proposal contradicts the funding provided.

This objection was formally and unanimously agreed by Halewood Town Councillors at the council meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

Gerry Allen,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Gerry Allen', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Town Manager,  
Halewood Town Council