



Department
for Transport

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill
Minister of State for Rail

Chris Coghlan MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

28 April 2026

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your letter of 26 January, to the Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP, Secretary of State, on behalf of your constituents, about the roll-out of contactless ticketing across National Rail stations. I am replying as the Minister for Rail, and I sincerely apologise for the long delay in my response.

I am sorry to hear about the difficulties your constituents have been having with the expansion of Pay As You Go (PAYG) with contactless to Dorking, Box Hill and Westhumble stations.

As part of introducing PAYG, a new simplified fares structure needed to be put in place, similar to the one already successfully implemented in London. This means having one peak and one off-peak price, with some fares changing and others being removed. Most tickets have been adjusted so that the price of a single is roughly half of a return ticket. This may mean that some passengers pay more, but get more flexibility in return, but some passengers will also see a reduction in their ticket price.

On the different fares structure between Dorking and Dorking Deepdene, where we have reformed fares, it has created a boundary between the new and old systems. I am aware that, at certain times of the day, this can create new anomalies, for example, where peak times differ, and unfortunately this is difficult to avoid in the short term. This has occurred where a PAYG boundary lies next to an unreformed system due to legacy pricing structures. As we progress further fares reforms across the country, we will be looking to resolve these peculiarities.

Each Travelcard within the PAYG area had to be linked to a route within the Transport for London system to allow passengers paying with their bank cards to be correctly capped for their daily and weekly journeys. From Dorking, this was routed via Epsom.

However, we have noted your point regarding the confusion this could cause for your constituents who wish to purchase Travelcards. We will work with the industry to consider options for resolving this. In the meantime, Travelcards from Dorking Deepdene and Dorking West still permit passengers to travel to or from Dorking station.

You asked why the recent expansion of PAYG did not include the Transport for London (TfL) Oyster technology. Oyster card is a 20-year-old technology that was designed to facilitate travel in London. Therefore, there are limitations within the Oyster technology that complicate expanding it outside London. As such our more recent expansions of PAYG have involved contactless bankcard. Whilst initial delivery does not include the ability to link railcards to contactless bankcards, I would like to assure you that our commitment to improving ticketing for passengers will continue.

Passengers will continue to be able to use railcard discounts on the equivalent barcode, smartcard, and magstripe fares which are equivalent in many cases to the PAYG price. For travel entirely on South Western Railways (SWR) services, you may wish to consider the SWR Tap2Go Touch Smartcard, which can also be linked to a Railcard to provide Railcard discounts. Please note, that the SWR Tap2Go Smartcard cannot be used on TfL services, due to the limitations mentioned earlier.

I am sorry that some of your constituents have not been able to fully benefit from the simplification provided by PAYG technology. Over the past thirty years, train operators have been owned by different private companies which based their pricing decisions on their own commercial interest. I recognise that fare differences, such as those caused by split ticketing, can exacerbate the sense of unfairness passengers experience on the railway. However, addressing the failures of the past three decades of privatisation will take time.

Finally, following the launch of phase one stations last year, evaluation of PAYG with contactless is underway. Once evaluation is complete, we will make the final reports public.

Thank you again for your letter and for raising your constituents' concerns with us. I hope you find this reply helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill

MINISTER OF STATE FOR RAIL