



Colonel The Rt Hon Bob Stewart DSO MP

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Mr Chris Heaton-Harris M.P  
Minister for Rail  
Department of Transport  
Great Minster House,  
33 Horseferry Rd,  
London  
SW1P 4DR

15 July 2021

*Dear Chris,*

Future of the Beckenham Junction to Blackfriars Service

At the start of the pandemic many rail operators across the country had to reduce their services, both to save costs and survive as a business and then as part of the Governments stay at home message. With the Prime Minister this week confirming that guidance is now being lifted and people can start returning to work from the office I am sure you will agree that it is time for rail operators to start letting commuters know what services will be returning.

In my own Beckenham Constituency, Southeastern Railways took the decision to suspend the rush hour only Beckenham Junction to London Blackfriars service (which also serves Kent House, Penge East, Sydenham Hill, and West Dulwich). This service provides my constituents with a direct connection to the City of London and is a well-used service. However, despite attempts by both the Copers Cope Residents Association and the local Conservatives, South-eastern have not shed



any light on when, or indeed if at all, the service will be reinstated. Causing some considerable concern from local commuters as they seek to plan their return to work.

If the line is permanently axed by Southeastern commuters in Beckenham will have to travel to Herne Hill, using the often-crowded Victoria Line trains and swap at Herne Hill to board a Blackfriars service from there, if use of the service returns to pre-pandemic levels, then these trains will continue to be full to capacity by the time they arrive at Herne Hill. As such I am sure you will agree with me that we cannot afford to risk this kind of overcrowding on the network as the country emerges from the pandemic.

As such, I am writing to ask if, as Rail Minister, to review the details of Southeastern's franchise to firstly confirm if this service is protected by the franchise and therefore the operator should re-instate the line as soon as possible, and secondly, to raise this matter with rail operators across the country to ensure that pre-pandemic routes are re-instated promptly to ensure that all those seeking to return to the office can do so safely and in confidence.

Can you please look at this situation and let me know your thoughts as to how you might help to keep the service?

With best wishes,

Yours age,

Bsh



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Mr David Statham  
Managing Director  
Southeastern  
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London  
SE1 2AU

15 July 2021

*Dear Mr Statham,*

Future of the Beckenham Junction to Blackfriars Service

I am writing to you regarding the future of the rush-hour Beckenham junction to London Blackfriars service (also serving Kent House, Penge East, Sydenham Hill, West Dulwich). I have been contacted by a number of local people who are concerned that this service may not be reinstated as we emerge from the pandemic.

I would be very concerned if the line was to be scrapped permanently, not least because it provides my constituents with a vital direct connection to the City of London, but also because scrapping the service would mean more people having to use the crowded Victoria services and changing at Herne Hill onto an over-crowded service to Blackfriars. Based on pre-pandemic numbers, it was near impossible to get onto the Blackfriars trains from Herne Hill so I strongly encourage Southeastern to reinstate this service as soon as possible.

Whilst I fully appreciate that we cannot forecast exactly the numbers of commuters who will return, or indeed, when they will return, but argue that



it is much safer, and will give commuters greater confidence as they return to offices, to have the line reinstated and the extra capacity it will offer than to not.

I am also aware of, and in full support of the petition run by the Copers Cope Residents' Association, signed by 1,657 people calling on this line to be re-instated. This was submitted to Southeastern on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Stewart

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