



Department
for Transport

From the Parliamentary
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Dear Southeastern Rail Passengers,

Today, my Department has announced that London & South Eastern Railway Limited (LSER, trading as Southeastern), a subsidiary of Govia, will continue to provide services in the South Eastern rail franchise area until June 2018. I am writing to you to explain why we have granted this contract and, crucially, what benefits I want this to deliver for you and your fellow passengers.

In granting this extension, I am very aware that the performance of trains on the LSER network has not always been what you expect and deserve. Part of this stems from the huge amount of engineering work that is going on – part of a commitment made by this Government to invest in the infrastructure of our rail network with better lines, new signalling and improved stations after years of under-investment. This work does have an impact on train services and passengers. Many of you will have recently been asked to re-route your journeys due to a nine- day blockade of London Bridge station for example, which is part of a drastic engineering programme to unblock north to south trains across London, providing many more through-London services for those living outside the capital and a station that will be one of the best in London with a concourse the size of the pitch at Wembley stadium.

Given the scale of the engineering works happening on these routes to

unblock lines and improve train running, my first priority in making this award was to ensure that the chosen operator understands the network well enough to manage the impact these works will have and work to minimise disruption for your journeys at a time of great change. LSER who have run these services since 2006 and have dealt well with service changes arising from the Olympics, clearly meet that criteria and I did not feel that bringing in a new operator, with no experience of the route, would give you the reliability that you need.

However, I am also clear that LSER have, at times, failed to meet expectations and satisfy you as passengers, and before letting this award my team has done a huge amount of work with passengers into where LSER needs to change. We have also totally changed the contract terms to make sure they deliver on their promises. In fact, this is a completely new contract.

Over the next few months and years, you will therefore see the following improvements which in total require more than £70 million of investment from LSER.

Better services:

- improved connections between London, North Kent and East Kent from a new hourly high speed service via Gillingham, Ramsgate, Dover and Ashford;
- high speed services calling at Snodland, Martin Hill and Walmer for the first time;
- additional high speed services for Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate;
- a peak-time Hastings Business Express service, providing faster journeys into London;
- new direct services between Maidstone East and Blackfriars, and between Sheerness-on-Sea and London Victoria;

- extra evening and weekend services between Dartford and London Victoria;
- changes to train formation so that in the event of a failure the train can still power itself out of trouble and remote monitoring to improve reliability;
- spending of over £10 million on improving the train fleet with better toilets and cleaner trains;
- new financial penalties for train delays of up to £4million

Better stations:

- new digital display screens at key stations by April 2015, and improved customer information systems by the end of December 2015;
- more than 100 new staff dedicated to helping customers at stations across the franchise by January 2015, all of whom will be given new customer service training;
- staff provided with tablets by July 2015 to allow them to access the latest service updates and give up-to-the-minute advice to passengers

Easier ticketing:

- Oyster card acceptance extended to Dartford, Swanley and Stratford International by December 2016

With a new Managing Director in place to lead the company forward; a commitment to building a long term relationship with you, their customers based on trust; financial penalties payable to the Department for poor performance; and a very clear, frequent and transparent level of reporting on how much progress is being made; I am confident that the improvements you need will be delivered.

It is also worth noting that, unlike the current franchise agreement that was let

in 2006, this contract contains significantly reduced subsidies paid by all of us as taxpayers, while in addition, the rail fare increases of RPI plus 3% that were allowed for several years under the old contract have rightly been scrapped, with you now benefiting, like passengers across the country, from a real-term freeze on regulated fares for this year and next.

I would welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have about this award and encourage you to get in touch with me at claire.perry@dft.gsi.gov.uk or at [claire4devizes](#) on Twitter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CP', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

CLAIRE PERRY