

Judicial review sought over ticket office closures

Two disabled rail passengers have applied for a judicial review of a consultation on controversial plans to close nearly all ticket offices in England.

Sarah Leadbetter from [Leicestershire](#), who is registered blind, and Doug Paulley, a wheelchair user from [West Yorkshire](#) who has hearing loss, say the consultation was unfair as it did not give people the opportunity to meaningfully respond to the proposals.

The consultation was originally opened in July for 21 days but was extended to September 1 after a huge response from the public.

Ms Leadbetter and Mr Paulley claimed the consultation had “multiple, serious flaws” including failure to provide disabled people with enough information about how the changes will affect them and to provide accessible consultation documents.

Train Operating Companies deny that the consultation was inadequate and argue that they did provide consultation material in accessible formats.

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The consultation is a fig leaf for predetermined decisions to cut staff by bypassing normal processes

Ms Leadbetter said: “[People](#) with visual impairments regularly need ticket office staff to help us navigate stations, work out which platform to go to, and get on the right train.

“My guide dog is even trained to take me to the station ticket office where I can get assistance from staff. To hold a consultation on taking away this help that fails to hear from those who need it most is totally unfair.”

Mr Paulley said: “The consultation is a fig leaf for predetermined decisions to cut staff by bypassing normal processes. Even when extended due to the outcry from disabled communities and others, it was not long enough, inaccessible to many disabled people and not fit for purpose. If it goes unchallenged, disabled and older travellers will be harmed, and will be less able to travel.”

Kate Egerton, of law firm Leigh Day, said: “The plans to close railway ticket offices could leave many disabled passengers unable to travel by train. The rail operators’ consultation process has clearly excluded the very people who rely on ticket office staff the most.

“That’s why our clients are calling for the consultation to be declared unlawful and any decision to close ticket offices based on its results to be quashed.”

The [Government](#) maintains the proposals are industry-led, and stressed that the consultation was extended for almost six weeks to give people the opportunity to respond.

The Government will not pre-empt the outcome of the consultation.