

Ticket office closure plans spark fresh safety concerns from rail unions

Rail unions have raised fresh safety concerns over the closure of ticket offices ahead of a protest on the eve of the final day of consultation on the controversial plans.

All three main rail unions are stepping up campaigning against closures amid a huge response from more than 460,000 people to the proposals.

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) is holding the demonstration opposite Downing Street on Thursday evening.

The union said the plans to close up to 1,000 ticket offices will threaten 2,300 station staff job losses.

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The [Transport Salaried Staffs Association](#) (TSSA) said an incident at a [London](#) station last week when a drunk man attempted to spit at a female ticket office worker highlighted safety concerns of staff.

TSSA president Melissa Heywood, said: "We will not accept a

situation in which our members are put at risk because of the Conservative Government's cost cutting measures.

"It is clear from the incidents of abuse against station staff that have been reported to us that ticket offices help make our members safer."

These plans lock in age and disability discrimination

The leader of the train drivers union [Aslef](#) has written to the train operators asking them for an assessment of the risks to drivers' health and safety under the plans to close ticket offices.

Mick Whelan wrote: "As you will be aware, employers are legally required to consult on the introduction of any measure at work which may substantially affect the health and safety of employees.

"Employers must also make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to their employees' health and safety whilst they are at work, and must review it when there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid; or where there has been a significant change in the matters to which it relates.

"Any proposed changes must be risk assessed and consulted upon in advance.

"The planned closure of ticket offices represent a significant change to the work environment and current working practices, including for drivers who interact with ticket office staff to carry out their duties, and who will also under the planned changes, find themselves in new lone working situations."

[RMT](#) general secretary [Mick Lynch](#) said: "The public response to the Government wanting to shut every ticket office in Britain has been very encouraging.

"People from different walks of life recognise the value of ticket offices and the station staff that support passengers

on their journeys.

“Rail companies and their masters in government do not care one jot about disabled people, vulnerable passengers and those travelling alone who welcome a human presence on our railways.

“These plans lock in age and disability discrimination and if they are carried out, it will mean many vulnerable passengers will not feel safe using the network.

“We will be lobbying MPs, several of whom from across the political spectrum have been supportive of our campaign, and RMT will increase the pressure on the Government to abandon its increasingly unpopular policy.”

London TravelWatch and Transport Focus will assess the response to the consultation after it ends on Friday.

Michael Roberts, chief executive of London TravelWatch, said: “With more than 460,000 responses received already, it’s clear that there are strong views on the future of ticket offices.”

The watchdogs said they will be considering issues such as whether stations will continue to be staffed, accessibility, the alternative options for buying tickets and whether passengers will continue to be able to access facilities like lifts, waiting rooms and toilets.

Rail unions and passenger groups are warning the closures would particularly affect disabled and elderly passengers.

Rail companies say many offices sell few tickets because of increasing online sales, and argue that moving staff from ticket offices onto station concourses will offer more help for passengers.