



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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I write to seek an explanation for the poor performance that has affected a considerable number of my constituents travelling on the Orpington-Charing Cross line this week.

As you will know, over the past four days there have been a series of cancellations and delays during the morning rush hour. At its worst yesterday, passengers, who are wholly reliant on Southeastern to get to and from work, were left waiting over 90 minutes for a train following the cancellation of the 07.57 departure from Orpington, and then, quite extraordinarily, the 08.21 departure travelling on the wrong track. You will be aware that similar problems reoccurred again this morning.

To make things worse, your customers have also had to put up with a number of short formed trains on the same line during the morning and evening rush hours – this fact often announced to them with little or no explanation. This has led to severely overcrowded services in some instances, so much so that a number of departures have been impossible to board. It is episodes like this that leave passengers with no confidence in the competence of the franchise.

I fully understand and appreciate that a portion of these problems, especially with regards to signalling, fall within the remit of Network Rail, but this breakdown in communication, at times when it is most needed, must be improved. Too often my constituents complain to me about a lack of staff presence at stations during disruption, and a quick look through Southeastern's twitter feed shows a page littered with apologies for train faults. I know in the past we have spoken at length about the resources Southeastern has invested to improve its lines of communication, both online and at stations, but this counts for very little if passengers are still being left in the dark waiting on platforms.

I would be grateful if you could personally explain:

- Why there have been so many train faults across the network recently? As you know, these frequently lead to short formed trains, and on many occasions, a 50 per cent reduction in the number of carriages.
- Why so many trains on the Orpington line are being cancelled? This metro route seems to be disproportionately impacted when things go wrong, especially compared to other mainline services.



- What measures Southeastern proposes to implement to improve communication with its passengers, particularly when there are delays.

This spate of poor performance is especially displeasing given that passengers have recently found out that fares will be increasing again in the new year.

I would be very grateful for your thoughts on these matters, and will be sending a copy of this letter to John Halsall, Network Rail's Route Managing Director for the South East.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bob Neill'.

Bob Neill MP