



News Release

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For immediate use

Growth Track 360 joins chorus of organisations opposing closure of rail station booking offices in England

Business and local authority leaders from North Wales, the Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester in the Growth Track 360 partnership have joined the chorus of organisations, stakeholders and rail users opposing the drastic reductions in staffed booking office provision proposed by train operators in England under the control of the UK Department for Transport (DfT).

Growth Track 360 has registered its objection under the 'national' provision of the consultation being run by consumer watchdog Transport Focus.

Local operators covered by the present consultation are primarily Avanti West Coast and Northern but the Growth Track 360 area is also affected by proposals from London Northwestern Railway and TransPennine Express. Neither Transport for Wales Rail Services (ultimately controlled by the Welsh Government) or Merseyrail (ultimately controlled by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) are seeking changes to booking offices within their respective stations.

Growth Track 360 Vice Chair and Leader of Flintshire Council, Councillor Ian Roberts, said:

"The loss of customer convenience and amenity through the proposed decimation of staffed booking offices in DfT-controlled operators flies directly in the face of our objectives and is in graphic contrast to the positions of the Devolved Administrations of Wales and Liverpool. If implemented, the proposals would leave inequality of provision across our geography along with confusion for customers – especially tourists - believing themselves to be using a GB-wide system with generally consistent retailing and customer service approaches."

Growth Track 360 Board Member and Deputy Leader of Wrexham Council, Councillor David Bithell, said:

"We agree with the many organisations, stakeholders and individuals arguing that staffed booking office provision provides confidence and reassurance to rail users with a wide range of disabilities as well as older customers less familiar with online retailing systems. We reject the comparison between the national rail ticketing system with its many thousands of different fares and restrictions and the Transport for London model where the norm of simple, zonal tickets was used as justification for booking offices to be removed."

Ashley Rogers, GT360 Business Representative, Chief Executive, North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council, said:

“Growth Track 360 seeks investment in improving cross-border rail to accelerate growth in the existing regional powerhouse economy. We wish to draw in business investment through enhanced public transport and similarly boost the attractiveness of world class tourism destinations in North Wales, Cheshire and Liverpool City Region. Closing staffed, rail booking offices fundamentally weakens the quality of service for the leisure and business user. When we need to be encouraging users back to rail after Covid and reducing our carbon emissions, this programme of closures does exactly the opposite.”

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Notes for Editors:

1. Growth Track 360 is a public-private partnership established in 2016 uniting North Wales, the Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester. Its goal is improving cross-border transport connectivity with specific emphasis on rail.
2. Growth Track 360 works closely with key stakeholders, their policies and objectives including the Welsh Government, Transport for the North, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Mersey Dee Alliance, Ambition North Wales, Transport for Wales, the West and Wales Transport Forum and the private sector.
3. The aims of Growth Track 360 are described in a YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2FokJJDIZA> taken from an event held in the Houses of Parliament on 20 February 2023.
4. Growth Track 360's letter to Transport Focus may be viewed here: <https://cogitamus.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/010923-Growth-Track-360-Transport-Focus-Booking-Offices.pdf>

Contacts

- Councillor Louise Gittins, Chair GT360, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council: Telephone: 01244 972216 Email: pressoffice@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- Councillor Ian Roberts, Vice Chair of Growth Track 360, Leader of Flintshire Council, Telephone 01352 702115, Email communication@flintshire.gov.uk
- Ashley Rogers, GT360 Business Representative, Commercial Director, North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council: Telephone: 0797 047 6599 Email: jarogers@nwmdbusinesscouncil.org