

Government will review services and adjust where appropriate, says minister

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Transport minister Kevin Foster has said that all services are kept under review and, where appropriate, are being adjusted to reflect fluctuations in demand by changing the frequency or length of trains.

Foster was replying to a Commons written question from Helen Hayes, the Labour MP for Dulwich and West Norwood, who had asked the Secretary of State for Transport: “In the context of the proposed reduction in rail service frequency and carriage numbers in London, what estimate his Department has made of the potential impact of that proposal on rail (a) passenger numbers and (b) revenue?”

In recent months Southern, part of the Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) operation, has withdrawn 46 four-car Class 455 electric multiple units, and these have all been scrapped. In recent days, three three-car Class 170 diesel multiple units have left Southern for a new career with East Midlands Railway.

Foster replied: “The Department has issued all operators with a demand forecast model to track returning demand against forecasts to better match train services to demand.

“GTR, who introduced its latest timetable change on 4 September, has used this model to ensure demand is best met given the funding available for services across its network.

“At present, GTR’s operating costs are outstripping revenue. Across the GTR network, demand for services is between 60 to 75 per cent of pre-Covid 19 levels resulting in a significant deficit in the operators’ cost base of several hundred million pounds each year at the current level of service provision.

“All services are kept under review, and, where appropriate, adjusted to reflect fluctuations in demand by changing the frequency of services or length of trains. The Department will work with GTR to consider what further action is needed where evidence supports the (re)introduction of services or longer trains.”