

Thank you Chair, esteemed council members.

I want to address a pressing concern affecting not only our ward's residents but also our entire community. It is a matter of great importance that demands our immediate attention and collective action. I am referring to the recent decision made by the Great Western Railway (GWR) operating company to start a consultation on closing the ticket offices in our area.

This proposal, justified by the increasing popularity of digital ticketing, raises serious concerns about the accessibility and inclusivity of our transportation services. While digital ticketing offers convenience to many, we must recognize that a significant portion of our community still relies on staffed ticket offices. The data indicate that approximately 12% of our residents prefer and depend on the assistance provided at these ticket offices. The 12% figure refers to those purchasing tickets, the staffed ticket offices are far more than just an alternate way to transact a purchase.

We must consider the impact on various vulnerable groups within our community. Our elderly residents, persons with disabilities, individuals with limited literacy and IT skills, and those with visual impairments heavily depend on the support and guidance of staffed offices. By closing these ticket offices, we essentially deny them their right to access transportation services, hindering their independence and participation in our society.

Moreover, let us remember that Bath is a renowned tourist destination, attracting visitors from around the globe. The ticket offices are vital in welcoming and assisting tourists, ensuring their seamless travel experience. If we allow these ticket offices to close, we not only inconvenience our visitors but also risk damaging our local economy and the prosperity of our businesses.

In light of these grave concerns, I call upon council members of BANES to take action. We must make our voices heard and actively engage in the ongoing consultation process until the 25th of July 2023. Let us reach out to the broader sections of our wards, mobilize our communities, and ensure that every resident can express their concerns regarding the closure of Ticket offices by responding to the consultation.

Additionally, I request the council to write in to the consultation expressing our objection.

Closing staffed train ticket offices without adequate alternatives is not a step forward but a step backwards in our journey towards an inclusive society.

Let us champion the cause of accessibility, inclusivity, and equal opportunity for all.

Thank you for your attention, and let us work together to protect and enhance the services that our residents deserve.