HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lawrence Bowman
Managing Director
South Western Railway

Our reference: BS44018

15 October 2026

Dear Lawrence Bowman,

**RE: Timetable review survey**

*Keeping Runnymede and Weybridge Moving!* is one of my key priorities for my Runnymede and Weybridge constituency.

Ensuring that rail services meet the needs of passengers is vital. Many of my constituents rely on the rail network daily, using it to get to school or work, as well as to visit family and friends. However, it is evident from concerns raised with me by constituents that many do not believe that the current services meet the needs of those who use them so often.

**Runnymede and Weybridge needs a Regular, Reliable, and Resilient Railway.**

The SWR timetable review presents a great opportunity to help address some of the issues we face. Since the review was first discussed, I have engaged with SWR regarding the project and sought to provide insight and information on key areas that need to be addressed as part of the timetable review consultation.

In addition to engaging with local schools, several of which face significant challenges as a result of issues with the railway and timetabling, I ran a public survey this summer to obtain further views on key priorities across the area. The survey received over 600 responses from across the constituency. I have shared a summary of the feedback received, which I hope will assist SWR in preparing for this project. The survey remains open, and I will continue to gather feedback from my constituents and report it to you as more responses come in.

Yours Sincerely,

Ben

**The overwhelming majority of respondents are dissatisfied with SWR's performance**

In response to a question asking customers to rate their satisfaction with the current standard of local rail services, over 80% of respondents reported being either 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'. This is perhaps not surprising given the recent performance statistics published showing over one third of all SWR services did not arrive on time (May 2026), plus recent reporting of issues with short carriages reducing capacity, and repeated issues of overcrowding, especially on commuter services. It is vital that these issues are addressed in any review and proposals for change, while maintaining service levels and value for money, so that the standard of service can meet the needs of passengers.

**Many rely on interchanges to complete their journeys**

This is particularly the case for those travelling from stations on the branch line, who often have to change at Weybridge or Virginia Water to connect with the main line for a quicker journey into London Waterloo or to other destinations.

However, many respondents have expressed that the interchanges between rail services, both at Weybridge and Virginia Water, are not reliable enough. When rating customer satisfaction with interchanges and connectivity on a scale from 1 to 10 – the survey found that the majority of respondents rated them 5 or below, with over 20% rating satisfaction with interchanges at a 1, the lowest possible score.

Current connection times are frequently just a few minutes, which means that delays to services can result in passengers waiting 30 minutes for their connections. This has a huge impact on overall journey times, and addressing it should be a priority in the upcoming timetable review. The quotation below, from one of the respondents, explains how detrimental these short connection times can be when services are delayed:

*"Unreliable timetable. Sometimes I have to head to Canary Wharf for work, missing the connecting train at Weybridge means it can take almost 3 hours to and from London. Bonkers when it's so close!"*

In addition to the above, some respondents also experienced difficulties with connectivity between the rail network and other forms of public transport. Respondents noted that poorly coordinated bus and rail services can make public transport journeys significantly less convenient, particularly during evenings and weekends.

Reflecting this point, one respondent commented:

*"The 436 in Weybridge only runs once an hour and arrives at the station at the time the train leaves meaning you always then have to wait half an hour until the next one."*

These responses show that there is a clear desire from constituents for not only more effective interchange arrangements between rail services, but also greater co-ordination between transport providers to ensure that constituents are able to pass from one form of public transport to the other, without experiencing unnecessary delays and disruption.

**Overall journey times are a key priority for local passengers**

In recent years several journey times appear to have increased, and since the pandemic several services have been removed from local timetables, resulting in fewer options and longer travel or waiting times for passengers.

As you will be aware, recent engineering works on the Staines main line have resulted in trains travelling from Virginia Water along the Chertsey branch line and continuing to Waterloo without the need for an interchange at Weybridge. This is evidence that it would be possible to run a loop service to and from Waterloo via the branch line, improving connectivity and reducing waiting times and overall journey times.

The survey asked respondents to indicate whether they supported this proposal. Of the 71% who replied to this question, 93% supported the proposal.

**Recent service performance has fallen significantly below acceptable standards**

Many respondents expressed the view that, due to frequent delays and disruption, the prices they are paying are not reflected in the standard of service they receive. On a scale where 1 was the lowest score and 10 was the highest, the majority of respondents rated value for money between 1 and 5, with over 20% giving it a rating of 1, the lowest possible score.

Reviewing SWR services and performance, it is clear that this should be addressed through improved management of resources, including stock and staffing, rather than any further reduction in services.

The 2022 post-COVID review saw a significant reduction in services, with trains calling at fewer stations and reducing access to rail services for many passengers. The rationale for these changes was the drop in passenger numbers due to the pandemic and funding constraints. Passenger numbers have increased significantly since the pandemic, yet very few of these services have been restored. It can therefore be concluded that the main motivation for maintaining this reduced service is financial.

This is further supported by the fact that season ticket prices have risen by an average of 16% during this period, despite service reductions. When considered alongside the current poor service levels, this represents very poor value for money.

Given the current context, it is essential that no further reductions in services, stops or capacity are proposed as a result of the upcoming timetable review unless there is an equitable reduction in season ticket prices.

**Scope for improvements: service frequency and capacity**

Following from these concerns regarding service provision, passengers responding to the survey made clear they wish to see increased frequency of services, particularly during peak commuting periods. When asked to rank potential improvements to the network, more frequent commuter services emerged as the single highest priority overall.

Many passengers commented that just one delayed or cancelled service can result in a wait of 30 minutes or more even on mainline services, compounding the impact of even minor disruption.

Respondents also highlighted concerns regarding train capacity, particularly during busy periods. Passengers reported routinely standing for substantial portions of their journeys, particularly on peak services into and out of London. Several respondents also noted that overcrowding had worsened following service reductions and the operation of shorter trains during busy periods. Respondents called for the scheduled use of 10- or 12-carriage trains during peak times, rather than the shorter trains that are frequently used.

This was indicated many times in respondents' comments:

*"4 carriage trains at peak hours is just wrong."*

*"During the rush hour, there are very frequent occasions when the train has been reduced from 12 to 8 carriages on what are already overcrowded."*

*"Trains are always full and reducing the service will mean overcrowding or worse, not being able to board."*

To summarise, key priorities for passengers are more frequent services and increased service capacity, both of which should be included as part of any future timetable review.

**Improvements cannot come at the cost of increased level crossing downtimes**

While the timetable review will understandably aim to address the needs of rail passengers, it must also consider the impact on wider communities. This is particularly important in areas affected by multiple level crossings. Many respondents highlighted concerns regarding the impact of level crossings on local road networks and businesses. These concerns specifically relate to services on the Egham–Weybridge branch line, with the Addlestone and Egham areas being most affected.

I note this priority is likely to come into direct conflict with calls for increased frequency of services. One way to address this would be to ensure increased frequency for mainline services, combined with better connectivity at interchanges, so those travelling to and from branch line stations can benefit from service improvements even if service frequency cannot increase.

**Summary**

I would be grateful if you could confirm that these findings will be carefully considered and incorporated into planning for your upcoming timetable review and consultation. I would also be grateful if you could outline the timetable for further opportunities for passengers, local communities and stakeholders to contribute as proposals are developed.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Ben Spencer MP**
**Runnymede and Weybridge**