I write regarding the Bolton to Southport train service

Although the 'old' timetable wasn't perfect we had **regular** direct trains from Bolton to Southport and back most of which ran on time, there were usually spare seats to sit on (four coaches) from Bolton onwards as so many passengers got off in Bolton not least at peak times.

Since the "new" timetable came into effect (current called the 'emergency' timetable) it has been an utter disaster and caused untold misery and suffering not least to the elderly and the disabled

That the 'new' timetable was introduced shows the people who decided to do so have never ever been anywhere near Bolton, Wigan and Southport stations

If you take tomorrow (Tuesday 10 July) as an example - the **only** direct trains from Bolton to Southport are at 1740 1840 and 2147

**So not a single direct train from, Bolton to Southport before 1740 !!!**

Previously we had more or less a direct train every hour (and more at peak times)

So now (apart from the three trains above) you have to change at Hindley (a small station with few facilities) or in some instances Wigan Wallgate instead.

**If the Bolton train to Hindley is SIX minutes late you have to wait another HOUR for the next one**

The train that goes through Hindley in a lot of cases seems to starts at Blackburn (via and including Burnley, Rochdale, Manchester Victoria, Wigan Wallgate) and then the rest of the stations to Southport

As far as I am aware there was NEVER a train that went from Blackburn to Southport. The trains went from Blackburn to Bolton via and including Burnley, Todmorden Rochdale, Manchester Victoria etc and which was a very good service

If I now want to go to Todmorden I have to change at Salford Crescent or Manchester Victoria. We no longer have direct trains from Bolton to Todmorden

Back to Bolton to Southport

I have got on the 1740 numerous times (I cannot risk being stranded at Hindley) and usually is a **two carriage train at RUSH HOUR from Manchester which defies belief**
Sometimes the trains to Southport are the antiquated Pacer [bus carriage] trains

When the train gets to Bolton people are usually standing in the guards area at the back or in the toilets (if there is a toilet). I am told by people who get on in Manchester it is already standing room only when they depart

I usually have to stand up all the way to Wigan Wallgate (passengers are usually standing down the whole train with it being so full) before I can get a seat

I am 67 years old and I can manage to stand for the journey but anybody who is disabled hasn't a chance of getting on the train most days. If the number of people standing like 'sardines' isn't a health and safety matter I don't know what is

For the return journey from Southport to Bolton

Prior to the 'new' timetable virtually all journeys went through Wigan Wallgate. Occasionally you had to change trains there but Wigan Wallgate has a good waiting room, toilets and shelter from the wind and rain

Now, the ONLY direct trains from Southport to Bolton are at 0617 0634 0717 1619 and 2018

That's TWO direct trains from Bolton to Southport after 0717 !!!

For ALL the other trains (which are roughly hourly apart from a few extra trains in the rush hour) you have to get off at Wigan Wallgate and WALK to Wigan North Western station. For people in wheelchairs it is causing absolute misery

The Wigan North West platform is usually number 1 (sometimes number 2)

There is a tiny waiting room. Both platforms are completely exposed to the elements with not a roof in sight. The front carriage of the train can be up to over 80 yards away

How anybody can change the 'old' Bolton to Southport timetable to the 'new' one is beyond my comprehension

It seems tiny stations are getting many direct trains to Southport (i.e. Walkden, Atherton, Daily Hill, Hindley) where few passengers get on are more important than Bolton which has one of the biggest users of train passengers in the north west because so many people work in Manchester

It is bad enough having two carriage trains but having virtually no direct trains any more and having to change trains at Wigan is an absolute scandal
I hope you will ask Northern Rail who is responsible and when we will have direct trains again as we had under the 'old' timetable

The people responsible for the above disgraceful state of affairs should be sacked - starting with Mr Grayling, Transport Secretary (who has proved himself to be completely incapable of the doing the job) and has the temerity to say the trains are not his responsibility - along with the current head of Northern Rail whose services were a disgrace even before the current shambles brought about by the new timetable

July 2018