Written evidence submitted by Mr Mark Young (RTC0016)

I am a monthly ticket holder in my fifties and I commute from Knebworth station. My feelings prior to the timetable change was that of a basic service with average customer service and a high price at £300 per month. The impact of the timetable changes were devastating. In the following ways:

Unreliability: Prior to the change the Great Northern phone app gave an indicative state of the train service. Following the change it became useless. Trains were shown as “on time” when I left home only to be cancelled or disappear from the app when I got to the station. After the first week it became clear that there was no real timetable. You showed up and if a train came then you tried to get on it but sometimes, due to overcrowding, this was not possible. Problems like this meant that I was unable to schedule any type of activity in the morning. My work suffered and the anticipation of this type of stress has had a considerable adverse effect on my health. Getting home was difficult too. Trains would disappear and reappear from the notice board or there would be a, semi audible, announcement to the effect that staff shortages meant cancellations. On top of this the new trains seem to suffer from a disproportionate failure rate. On various journeys I was subjected to three train failures all on the new trains.

Overcrowding: I understand that sometimes trains are busy but there is no doubt these levels are dangerous. People are forcing themselves onto a carriage when there is no room. This leads to arguments. If there were a derailment the consequences would be catastrophic. With this in mind I wonder why it took fifteen days to decide to declassify First Class. First Class doesn’t work on a third world service. The fact is there is no First Class!!! On Great Northern rail.

Staff Training: The staff are completely overwhelmed and were obviously unprepared for the storm that awaited them. Bad tempered office staff with no formal ability to deal with these problems causes difficulties that are unfair on them and the people they serve. I have seen no visibility from management on the front line but I do have an experience of an issue;

On one particular day a staff member wearing a Network Rail high vis jacket risked trying to board a train. As per the above the train was crammed and he physically couldn’t get on. Clearly shocked I watched as he rang up his superiors and said; “Look I’m going to be late….yes it was totally full and you can’t expect me to get on with the cattle.” So in a nutshell there we have it. If it’s not good enough for the Network Rail staff why would it be good enough for me?

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