



The pandemic and the restrictions placed on working and travel have had a lasting effect on the way people work, with many people now permanently working from home and others commuting to their offices on far fewer days than before. As a result, public transport is busier midweek, with fewer people travelling on Monday and Friday. However, there are still many workers in the education, health, transport and leisure sectors who need to travel throughout the week, and figures show in that by July of this year, the number of passengers using rail services were reaching 93% of pre-Covid levels, although this does vary from line to line and even station to station. Passenger numbers at Coulsdon South on the Redhill line have returned to near pre-Covid levels, and a full service has been restored. However, on the Tattenham Corner line, the number of people using Coulsdon Town, Woodmansterne and Chipstead are still down.

A contract agreed by the Department for Transport with Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) earlier this year required GTR to cut costs by reducing service levels and withdrawing the 40 year old Class 455 trains from service. And this they have done. Of the 46 Class 455 trains that were running at the beginning of the year, 42 have now been scrapped with the remaining four put into storage, and the service for Coulsdon reduced to the worst level since the Second World War. The all stations service from Caterham to London Bridge via Streatham, gone. The all stations service from Coulsdon Town to London Bridge, gone. The

Tattenham Corner line is down to two trains per hour into London during the week and on Sundays it gets worse, with just a shuttle service to Purley running once an hour. It would be bad enough if we were in some obscure rural location, but for a town on the edge of London, it's unacceptable.

At a recent meeting of the East Surrey Transport Committee (ESTC), we challenged GTR over this position. We acknowledged that use of the Tattenham Corner line is still lower than before the pandemic, but not at half the old level, and certainly not low enough to justify such draconian cuts. But GTR merely stated that there wasn't the funding within the new DfL contract to allow them to restore the services, and besides, with the Class 455s gone, they just didn't have the trains.

The ESTC is campaigning to have at least the peak hours Tattenham Corner/Caterham to London Victoria service restored, and we are asking you, the public, to support them.

Please, when you have a moment, email GTR at gtrpublicaffairs@gtrailway.com to voice your unhappiness with the current position and demand that the service be brought back, along with the two trains an hour to London Sunday service. And copy in our new Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Chris Philp MP chris.philp.mp@parliament.uk or if you live in Hooley or Chipstead, Crispin Blunt MP crispin.blunt.mp@parliament.uk.

On the bright side, after much lobbying from the ESTC, the semi-fast Tattenham Corner service to London Bridge now calls at Norwood Junction, allowing for a connection to the London Overground. And on the buses, there are no changes planned locally. Sadly, we are still waiting for our new smart bus shelters. Valo Smart City, the shelters' providers, are now claiming supply issues stemming from the war in Ukraine, but as they were supposed to be being rolled out 18 months ago, that excuse doesn't really stand up. Which means we have to.

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