**Objections sustained for now**

The National Pensioners’ Convention (NPC) welcomed the decision by travel watchdogs Transport Focus and London TravelWatch to object to the closure of hundreds of UK rail ticket offices and the subsequent news this week that Transport Secretary Mark Harper told rail companies to withdraw their plans.

The watchdogs received 750,000 responses to their consultation this summer on train company proposals to close ticket offices and change staffing levels at stations. Indeed, 99% of responses sent to London TravelWatch were objections.

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: “NPC welcomes London TravelWatch and Transport Focus objections to the closures of ticket offices and changes to station staff. We thank them for listening to the detailed concerns expressed by us, and so many, many other individuals and organisations who would be badly impacted by the plans. It is now time for a passenger-led focus on the best delivery of rail services not a government-led dictat to rail companies. Concerns around access for older passengers and those with a variety of disabilities were at the heart of our objections to the rail company plans."

Jan added: “Although rail companies may appeal the decision, we hope that common sense prevails and results in a better understanding of passenger needs and how these can be met. Equality of access has to be at the heart of any programme of change, and clearly this was not the case with these plans. We need to move forward now with a consensus from passengers, dedicated staff and rail providers, that will make rail travel an experience to be enjoyed rather than a stressful search for ticket options, digital exclusion and lack of accessibility.”

Christopher Brooks, Chair,

Suffolk & Anglia Region

Pensioners Associations (NPC)