

Update from South Western Railway

I have received this update from South Western Railway:

Dear Sir John,

I am conscious that many of you have been contacted by constituents concerned that they have not received refunds on their season tickets. I thought it would therefore be useful to give you an update on where we are, the challenges we face and what we are doing to ensure customers receive their refunds as quickly as possible.

We value all our customers and understand the ongoing uncertainty that COVID-19 is creating for many families whose personal circumstances may have changed dramatically in recent weeks. We understand how important it is for people to receive their refund, but we also need to ensure the safety of our colleagues by following the Government's guidelines on social distancing.

As you can imagine, we have received an exceptionally high number of requests for refunds – around 26,000 so far. In order to process these refunds, we have opened a dedicated refund processing centre, where our team is working from 6am to 10pm every day of the week, including on bank holidays. We are processing every single request as quickly as possible, however every refund is different, and calculating and processing these payments takes time.

We have recently expanded the refund processing centre by opening a second space to allow more members of the team to come in, and by allowing other colleagues to work remotely. This has enabled us to move from processing around 500 refunds a day, to around 700 a day last week. We expect a further increase in the daily total this week.

The refund requests are being dealt with in order of application date, but with season tickets being prioritised due to the higher values involved. Currently, we have around 16,500 refunds outstanding, with the average time for a claim to be processed standing at around 33 days (five days longer than the usual 28 days).

I know some of your constituents are also waiting for the promised December strike compensation. I want to reassure you that they will get the money to which they are entitled. It is just taking longer than we had hoped, as we have had to prioritise season ticket refunds, because we know how important it is to customers whose circumstances may have changed in recent weeks.

These are unprecedented times and we at SWR are doing everything we can to meet the joint challenge of keeping key workers moving, while also getting refunds back to customers who are no longer travelling, and instead are staying home and saving lives.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at should you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely

Mark Hopwood
Managing Director
South Western Railway