

**Network Rail
40 Melton Street
London
NW1 2EE**

**Dr. David Kirkby,
Stokes Hall Lodge,
Burnham Rd,
Althorne,
Essex,
CM3 6DT.**

7/8/2004.

Access to the Southminster Branch Line for maintenance purposes.

Dear sir/madam

I am a regular commuter on the single-track Southminster Branch Line, between Wickford and Southminster. Myself, and many other commuters to/from London are unhappy about the departure times of the last trains for Southminster. During the week it is necessary to be at Liverpool St. by 2200 pm to board a Southend Victoria train, to allow one to board the last Southminster train leaving Wickford. This precludes participation in many social events in London. At weekends, the last trains are even earlier – 8:52 on a Sunday.

I, as well as many others, have written to the train operator 'one' to request later trains, with limited success. Christine Drew, another unhappy commuter, received a reply from the train operator 'one' saying there were no plans for later trains, but citing **Network Rail** as at least part of the reason for this. The relevant paragraph in the letter sent to her says:

“Although the possibility of timetabling later trains has been discussed, there are no plans to do so at present. Network rail are reluctant to allow later evening trains on branch lines as they require access to the track for overnight maintenance work, and the number of passengers using the service is unlikely to be economically viable.”

I dispute the comments about passenger numbers, as this seems to bother more commuters than any other issue, on a line which has poor service due to the fact it is single track.

I would like clarification from yourselves as to whether Network Rail are reluctant to allow later trains to run, or perhaps this is just a rather poor excuse used by 'one', to shift the blame to another organisation. Given that trains run nearly 3 hours later during the week on the main line to Southend Victoria, I feel the maintenance issue should not be a major issue on this branch line.

I have enclosed a complete copy of the letter sent to Christine Drew.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. David Kirkby.

Enc. Letter from one to Christine Drew, dated 22nd July 2004.