



Rail operator seeks to reassure London commuters Free 291224

Description



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A rail operator has sought to reassure commuters to London as its rival operator is due to axe its services.

LNER blamed a lack of passenger numbers for its decision to axe the Sunderland route, which will call at the city for the last time on 13 December.

The move has been described as a “devastating blow” by councillors.

Meanwhile Grand Central, which runs up to six services per week day, has said it “intends on continuing to serve” the city.

The LNER service departs Sunderland at 05:39 and returns to the city at 23:22.

It calls at Newcastle, Durham, Darlington, York and Peterborough before arriving in London.

LNER said it “remained committed to operating a sustainable and reliable service for all its customers across its 900-mile route with customers in Sunderland still able to connect to East Coast Main Line services using other, existing transport networks servicing the city”.

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Wearside Liberal Democrats leader, Paul Edgeworth, said: “We need more LNER from Sunderland, not fewer. To have none at all is really devastating.

“This wouldn’t be happening in Newcastle or Durham.

“The government already runs LNER and they are in the process of nationalising the railways.

“So if the government won’t or can’t step in, what is the point?”

The Department for Transport (DfT) said it was “carrying out the biggest overhaul to the railways in a generation to put passengers first, and deliver more punctual and higher quality services”.

“We’re committed to transforming rail connectivity across the North.

“Grand Central trains already run to London five times a day on week days and four on weekends, and will run an extra service to replace LNER’s withdrawn service,” a spokesperson added.

Councillor Lyndsey Leonard, environment, transport and net zero portfolio holder at the city council, said: “We do have to be realistic in that LNER is a commercial venture.

“So we don’t really have much pressure to apply on a commercial venture like that.”

Grand Central’s operations director, Chris Brandon, said: “We’ve done an awful lot of work investing in the fleet – the class 180 trains – and we’ve certainly seen a steep change in their reliability and improvement throughout 2024.

“It’s certainly our intention to continue those services and we intend on continuing to serve Sunderland.”

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