# Southeastern sparks outrage by blocking natural light on Waterloo footbridge



Southeastern railway has sparked outrage among commuters after covering the windows of the bustling footbridge connecting London’s Waterloo and Waterloo East stations with vinyl wrappers. This decision, described by frustrated passengers as akin to "daylight robbery," blocked crucial natural light from flooding the busy thoroughfare relied upon by tens of thousands daily.

The coverings were reportedly installed as a cost-cutting measure, a claim supported by disillusioned station staff who indicated management had opted for this route as cleaning the panes would have been too expensive. One employee lamented the darkness, stating, “It’s so depressing. We came into work one day and they had taken away all the daylight.” Many have expressed concern over blocking sunlight, which not only brightens the environment but also enhances the overall mood of commuters.

However, Southeastern has denied these assertions, claiming the coverings were the result of an "incorrect installation" by their suppliers and that the issue was promptly rectified. David Wornham, passenger services director at Southeastern, stated, “We want our stations to be accessible, safe and welcoming places for our customers.” He reassured the public that the intention was never to obscure light but to beautify the walkway with new artwork, an aim that went awry.

This incident aligns with a pattern of controversial statements made by Southeastern over the years. In 2016, the operator faced mockery after attributing delays to “strong sunlight,” asserting that the glare hampered drivers’ visibility, which resulted in difficulties with train dispatching. Commuters reacted with disbelief, with many deriding the reasoning on social media, reflecting a growing frustration over the rail operator’s public communication.

Despite past grievances, Southeastern insists that improvements are underway. The company recently concluded a £2 million refurbishment initiative aimed at revitalising 116 stations, which included deep cleans and necessary repairs. Critics, however, question whether such investments are sufficient in addressing the broader issues affecting daily travellers.

The situation illuminates deeper concerns about the management strategies of Southeastern. Since the government took control of the company in October 2021 due to financial irregularities that led to a breach of franchise, there has been a spotlight on its operational choices. This history of mismanagement raises questions regarding whether the actions of the company truly prioritise customer satisfaction or merely serve to mitigate preceding mistakes.

As Southeastern strives to enhance its image, the incident with the footbridge serves as a stark reminder that the relationship between service providers and their patrons is delicate. The need for coherent communication and genuine care for customer experience has never been more crucial in the railway sector, especially as operators adapt to changing travel habits post-pandemic.

In the wake of this controversy, Southeastern has promised transparency and improved communication in future projects to avoid missteps. Their swift removal of the window coverings, intended to be a corrective measure, illustrates an evolving understanding of customer feedback. However, as more commuters voice their opinions, it remains to be seen whether such promises will translate into lasting changes in practice and perception.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/southeastern-waterloo-footbridge-sunlight-block-apology-b2755036.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/southeastern-waterloo-footbridge-sunlight-block-apology-b2755036.html> - Southeastern Railway faced criticism after covering the windows of a footbridge connecting London’s Waterloo and Waterloo East stations with vinyl wrappers, blocking natural light. Commuters expressed frustration, with one describing it as 'daylight robbery.' Station staff claimed the coverings were due to the high cost of cleaning the windows. Southeastern denied these claims, stating the coverings were the result of an incorrect installation by their suppliers, which was promptly removed. They apologized for the inconvenience caused.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-35293133> - In January 2016, Southeastern Railway apologized after train services were delayed due to 'strong sunlight' in Lewisham, London. The operator explained that the glare made it difficult for drivers to see the full length of their trains in mirrors, leading to dispatching issues. Passengers expressed disbelief over the explanation, with some mocking the excuse on social media. Southeastern acknowledged the problem and apologized for the disruptions caused.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/train-firm-southeastern-blames-rush-hour-delays-on-too-much-sun-a3154236.html> - In January 2016, Southeastern Railway faced ridicule after blaming 'strong sunlight' for causing rush hour delays. The operator stated that the sun's rays were affecting train dispatching at Lewisham station. Passengers criticized the explanation, with some expressing disbelief and others mocking the excuse on social media. Southeastern apologized for the delays and acknowledged the impact on commuters.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/12/wrong-kind-of-sunlight-delays-southeastern-trains-london> - In January 2016, Southeastern Railway apologized after train services were delayed due to 'strong sunlight' in Lewisham, London. The operator explained that the angle of the sun prevented drivers from seeing the full length of their trains in mirrors, leading to dispatching issues. Passengers expressed anger and disbelief over the explanation, with some mocking the excuse on social media. Southeastern acknowledged the problem and apologized for the disruptions caused.
6. <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/bafflement-as-london-rail-company-blames-train-delay-on-strong-sunlight> - In January 2016, Southeastern Railway faced criticism after blaming 'strong sunlight' for train delays in London. The operator explained that the glare made it difficult for drivers to see the full length of their trains in mirrors, leading to dispatching issues. Passengers expressed disbelief over the explanation, with some mocking the excuse on social media. Southeastern apologized for the delays and acknowledged the impact on commuters.
7. <https://www.upi.com/Odd_News/2016/01/12/Strong-sunlight-causes-train-delays-in-Britain/5251452611301/> - In January 2016, Southeastern Railway apologized after train services were delayed due to 'strong sunlight' in Lewisham, London. The operator explained that the glare made it impossible for some drivers to see the full length of their trains in mirrors, leading to dispatching issues. Passengers expressed disbelief over the explanation, with some mocking the excuse on social media. Southeastern acknowledged the problem and apologized for the disruptions caused.