



PENINSULA RAIL TASK FORCE

Cllr Andea Davis
PRTF Chair
c/o Plymouth City Council
Communications
Ballard House
Plymouth PL1 3BJ

E Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk

30 August 2024

Dear Peter

Firstly, may I start by congratulating you on your appointment as Minister of State for Rail within the new government. I write to you as the newly appointed Chair of the Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF), which reports to the Peninsula Transport Sub-national Transport Body. As you are aware, PRTF brought together the local authorities of Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Somerset to coordinate a response following the severe storms that damaged rail lines across the South West in 2013 and subsequently saw the sea wall breached at Dawlish in 2014.

Since then, the PRTF, has worked to ensure the Government continues to commit the resources required by Network Rail to deliver the resilience measures, known as the South West Rail Resilience Package at Dawlish. This has seen four out of the proposed five phases delivered. The work of the PRTF has extended beyond that to bring together the rail industry, local authorities and business to facilitate the delivery of a range of rail improvements which have included major depot renewals at Penzance and Exeter; new station opening at Marsh Barton; new line opening at Okehampton; and upgrade of mainline signalling through Cornwall.

The cumulative impacts of these improvements, together with the introduction of the new Intercity Express Trains, has seen sustained passenger growth over the period since PRTF's creation, culminating in current passenger levels higher in the region than prior to the Covid pandemic. The region has a strong record of working constructively with the rail industry and the Department for Transport to deliver improvements for passengers.

As the new chair of the PRTF, I am keen that we do not lose this momentum developed with the industry, and the focus that the local authorities have on playing their role in delivering further rail improvements including:

- **Improved local rail services** - the introduction of additional rolling stock to improve the reliability of local train services and address overcrowding on some of our branch lines.
- **Increased accessibility to the rail network** - the delivery of new stations at Wellington, Cullompton and Edginswell.
- **Improved passenger experience** – the provision of improved mobile connectivity along the network in the southwest to significantly enhance the on-train experience for business and leisure users, improve trackside communications, as well as providing enhanced connectivity for local communities and businesses.

- **Improved station infrastructure** – the redevelopment of Plymouth Station to reflect its role as a key strategic transport interchange and gateway to the city.
- **Resilience** – continuation of funding for the design work being undertaken by Network Rail to identify the measures required to complete delivery of the works at Dawlish when funding becomes available.
- **Peninsula Metro Rail projects** – building on the success of the Devon Metro network (the Dartmoor Line has experienced passenger levels far in excess of those predicted in the first two years of opening and Marsh Barton Station has seen sustained passenger growth in its first year), the completion of the Mid Cornwall Metro project and further development and delivery of the Plymouth Metro system to improve access to the new job opportunities within city.

Delivering this rail programme will support the housing development and the delivery of economic growth across the peninsula region.

The next period will see a number of further challenges which we are keen to work with the department to develop solutions:

- **Delivery of HS2** – PRTF would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the mitigation plan associated with the construction of Old Oak Common Station. It is important that representatives from across the Great Western Mainline region are involved in developing the mitigation plan for impacts of the station construction on services to the west.
- **Rail Reform** – PRTF are keen to use the rail reform process to identify tangible improvements for users. Peninsula Transport are working with local transport authorities and local bus operators to roll out integrated ticketing and interoperable ticketing across the region. This approach would not initially require franchising and the peninsula would like to be a pilot area for this, expanding this to include rail services. This would achieve a truly customer-focused approach to integrated transport in the region.
- **Decarbonisation of the network** – our branch lines are ideally suited for pilot testing of battery-operated services to electrify the network.

I look forward to working with you and your officials to continue to deliver rail improvements which will ensure continued patronage and revenue growth over the next five years. I was hoping that we would have the opportunity to discuss these priorities further during your planned visit to Cornwall but understand this needed to be cancelled. I would therefore be grateful if we could arrange to meet with you at the earliest opportunity either in London (I am due to be in London on 3rd & 4th September) or when you next visit the peninsula.

Yours sincerely



Andrea Davis
Chair of Peninsula Rail Task Force