



# West of England Partnership

Bath & North East  
Somerset Council



North  
Somerset  
Council

South Gloucestershire  
Council

Lord Adonis  
Minister of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Sreet  
London SW1P 4DR

Your Ref: letterAdonis070409  
E mail: terry.wagstaff@westofengland.org  
Date: 7 April 2009

Dear Minister

## **WEST OF ENGLAND RAIL ISSUES**

I am writing to you on behalf of the four Executive Members for Transport and the Chair of the Joint Scrutiny Committee concerning rail issues in our West of England sub-region.

With your predecessor, Tom Harris, we enjoyed constructive discussions including a visit to see him on 2 April 2008. We hope to continue this good working relationship with you.

We have two key areas of interest regarding rail, which we wish to raise with you:

### **1,300 New Carriages**

Like other local authorities across the country we welcomed the Government's announcement in January 2008 of 1,300 new carriages and in November 2008 the delivery of 200 new carriages earlier than originally expected.

In the West of England overcrowding, short formed trains and a doubling of passenger numbers in the last ten years all point to the need for additional carriages. Hence we would greatly appreciate an early indication as to when the new carriages will arrive in our sub-region.

### **First Great Western's Bid for New Trains on the Cardiff to Portsmouth Route**

We would be grateful for an update on First Great Western negotiations with the Department for Transport on the bid for 11 new four carriage trains for the Cardiff to Portsmouth (via Bristol and Bath) route. We understand there would have been news on this bid by now.

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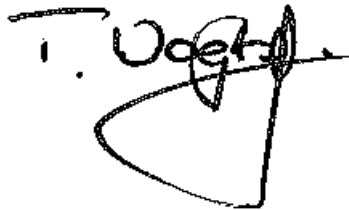
As you will appreciate these new trains will add significant capacity, improve the quality and performance of services and be a major step towards delivering a network of half hourly cross Bristol services. Furthermore the new trains will allow existing Class 158 units to cascade down for use on other local services.

You will understand that our sub-region is both a gateway to and vital to strengthening the economy of the South West. It is the main focus for shopping, cultural activities, education and tourism in the South West, with Bath designated as a World Heritage site. With the Regional Spatial Strategy bringing further major growth in population, housing and economic activity over the coming years we need to continue to invest in our public transport network to ensure people have sustainable choices.

Our Joint Local Transport Plan contains a Rail Action Plan targeted at improving local rail services. Working in partnership with Network Rail and First Great Western and the Severnside Community Rail Partnership much has been achieved and we intend to build upon this success with the Regional Funding Allocation schemes for reopening the Portishead line and the Greater Bristol Metro bid for enhanced ½ hourly cross Bristol train services.

We remain, however, concerned over rolling stock issues and would value clarification on the two rail issues raised above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Wagstaff', with a large, stylized flourish below it.

Terry Wagstaff  
Chief Executive  
West of England Partnership

Signed on behalf of

Cllr Charles Gerrish  
Bath and North East Somerset Council

Cllr Jon Rogers  
Bristol City Council

Cllr Elfan AP Rees  
North Somerset Council

Cllr Brian Allinson  
South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr Barbara Lewis  
Chair of Joint Scrutiny Committee