



West of England Partnership

Bath & North East
Somerset Council



North
Somerset
COUNCIL

South Gloucestershire
Council

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

Your Ref: letterAdonis jan 10 final
E mail: terry.wagstaff@westofengland.org
Date: 29 January 2010

Dear Secretary of State

WEST OF ENGLAND RAIL ISSUES

The four Executive Members for Transport have asked that I write again, as a follow up to my previous letter of 7 April 2009, regarding our concerns over the lack of clarity on the provision of sufficient rolling stock to cater for passengers using train services in the West of England. Thank your for your reply of 28 April 2009 to our previous letter.

Local rail services in the West of England continue to be beset with problems of inadequate capacity. Short forming of trains on both local services at peak times and on the Cardiff-Bristol-Portsmouth service is still a problem. We very much welcomed the announcement that the Bristol to London route is to be electrified, and that as a result of a rolling stock cascade, there may be electric trains for some West of England local services. However this is in the longer term and brings a number of challenges, in particular how the continued growth in passengers and overcrowding on local and regional routes is to be tackled until electric services are provided after 2017.

The West of England Partnership undertakes an annual survey of rail passengers using local stations. The November 2009 survey shows a growth in station footfall of 16% over the previous year and a 44% growth over the last five years.

Figures from the Office of Rail Regulation, based on ticket sales, for all stations in the West of England area show a 25.3% increase in passengers over the period 2004/05 to 2007/08. These figures predate the three trains every two hours service introduced on the Severn Beach line in May 2008.

The Ministry of Defence's Defence and Equipment Support site at Filton Abbey Wood is set to expand by 2,500 posts by 2012 further increasing the use and pressure on the adjacent railway station and train services.

In the light of all these figures more, and more reliable, rolling stock is an urgent requirement.

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The proposed new trains for the Cardiff to Bristol to Portsmouth route would have brought much needed additional capacity. There was much disappointment when this order was cancelled.

We understand that some of the current local trains used in the West of England will be returned to their former operators in May 2010 and that First Great Western will instead receive trains cascaded from other Franchises. I would be grateful if you could confirm how many replacement trains will be provided, and how much additional capacity this will provide over the present train allocation in the West of England. Will these trains be fully refurbished before they enter service?

We wish to add our strong support to First Great Western's negotiations for additional rolling stock.

Can you confirm the timescale for implementation of the proposals made in the Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS): Draft for Consultation (September 2009) for additional trains for the greater Bristol area? The RUS proposes nine additional vehicles (over and above the High Level Output Specification proposal of 12 vehicles) for services into and out of Bristol Temple Meads to address problems of overcrowding. We would be grateful for clarification of the future rolling stock strategy for the West of England sub-region.

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 draft Regional Spatial Strategy, if approved, 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.

Working in partnership with Network Rail, First Great Western and the Severnside Community Rail Partnership much has been achieved on rail in the West of England and we intend to build upon this success with our Multi Area Agreement's Memorandum of Understanding with the rail industry and the Regional Funding Allocation schemes for reopening the Portishead line and the Greater Bristol Metro project for enhanced ½ hourly cross Bristol train services.

In view of the serious concerns we have over rolling stock issues, we would request an urgent meeting with you to discuss these concerns in more detail and to try to identify possible solutions.

Yours sincerely

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

Terry Wagstaff
Chief Executive
West of England Partnership

Signed on behalf of

Cllr Charles Gerrish
Bath and North East Somerset Council

Cllr Elfan Ap Rees
North Somerset Council

Cllr Jon Rogers
Bristol City Council

Cllr Brian Allinson
South Gloucestershire Council