

Letter to PM: Parliamentary cross-party agreed text

## The 3-Point Plan for a Great South West Peninsula Railway

Dear Prime Minister,

As Members of Parliament representing constituencies from Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay, we strongly support the campaign to build a great railway for the South West Peninsula, a railway fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; one that is resilient and reliable, that provides faster services with sufficient seats and comfort for all.

The whole rail system of the Peninsula is the UK's Cinderella network. It is long overdue for a big, decisive capital investment by Government that will be a catalyst for economic growth and attract private sector inward investment.

The speedy restoration of the coastal mainline at Dawlish and your recent announcements of new investments in the sleeper service and signalling are welcome steps in the right direction. We also welcome the Secretary of State for Transport's positive comments that the Government is committed to delivering a world-class transport infrastructure in the South West.

As you know from your visits, the South West Peninsula is already in the UK's extreme weather front-line and the Met Office predicts that the flooding and coastal damage that has afflicted our communities and economy will occur with increasing frequency. You have seen with your own eyes the distress that is caused and will know the damage that is done to business confidence.

It is no surprise that our LEPs say significantly improving the Peninsula's strategic connectivity is the big priority. The case for the whole route improvement of the A303/A30/A358, increased investment in superfast broadband and a stronger, faster rail network is compelling.

Rail passenger growth across the Peninsula is already out-stripping the UK average and Network Rail forecasts a further 41% growth up to 2019. The Peninsula population is set to grow by 20% by 2026, again out-stripping the UK average.

The South West Peninsula is a bigger economy than South Wales, Merseyside, Leeds and Sheffield. The South West Peninsula population is bigger than Tyne and Wear, bigger than Glasgow City Region.

But every rail closure costs our economy at least £8 million a day and undermines business confidence. Productivity is low and we have some of the lowest wages in the UK. Our economy needs strong, fast connectivity to flourish and provide people with good jobs and opportunities.

The Peninsula Rail Task Force says providing additional resilience to the coastal mainline at Dawlish should not be considered in isolation from action required elsewhere on the network to improve journey times, increase resilience, enhance connectivity and meet growth in the Peninsula. Improvements in speed and reliability must be matched by improvements in connectivity so that every area will benefit from improved journey times, extra capacity, future electrification, high resilience and new train services.

The Task Force, representing LEPs and local authorities across the Peninsula, has produced an excellent 3-Point Plan for a great South West Peninsula Railway, one that is:

- **resilient and reliable**
- **with faster journey times, and better connectivity**
- **and sufficient capacity and comfort.**

A copy of the Plan and a detailed programme for improvement accompanies this letter. It will greatly assist Network Rail's forthcoming Western Route Study.

We urge you to join with us in backing the 3-Point Plan and commit the Government to working with the Task Force to deliver these vital improvements for the benefit of the people of the South West Peninsula.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Newton, Truro and Falmouth  
Steve Gilbert, St Austell and Newquay  
Jeremy Browne, Taunton Deane  
Ian Liddell-Grainger, Bridgwater and West Somerset  
Alison Seabeck, Plymouth Moor View  
Ben Bradshaw, Exeter  
Gary Streeter, South West Devon  
Anne Marie Morris, Newton Abbot  
Neil Parish, Tiverton and Honiton  
Adrian Sanders, Torbay  
Sarah Wollaston, Totnes