



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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Our Ref: SB/OMBC01002/01150549

18 September 2015

Dear Carolyn

**Re: Oldham Council Resolution – Electrification Work on Transpennine Route**

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the above resolution passed at Full Council on the 9 September. You can be assured I am in full support of the motion and will continue to pursue why a delay is necessary.

I raised the decision to 'pause' the financing to the upgrade and electrification of the Transpennine route with the Secretary of State Patrick McLoughlin on the 30 June. I asked how this was justified when prior to the election the talk was all about a "revolution in the way we govern England." The Tory election manifesto promised to electrify the main northern routes as part of a £13 billion master plan to modernise the region's transport, which now appears to me to have been nothing more than a gimmick.

I received the attached response from the Secretary of State on the 28 July. The reply attempts to justify the need for a 'pause' but I think it is unreasonable to make an announcement of a delay 7 weeks after the election, particularly after boasting of the biggest investment in the railways since Victorian times. It really does beggar belief.

You can be assured I will continue to pursue this and will pass on any further responses I receive.

Yours sincerely

The Rt Hon Michael Meacher MP  
Oldham West & Royton  
Including Chadderton & Hollinwood

Encl.



Department  
for Transport

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28 JUL 2015

Dear Mr Meacher,

Thank you for your letter of 30 June about Northern Rail electrification.

Whilst I appreciate your concerns regarding the pausing of Northern Rail routes electrification, we are investing in the North of England Infrastructure Programme, which includes the Northern Hub and a continuous programme of electrification – which is already delivering – in the North West. This suite of enhancements includes investment right across the North and will provide: more capacity for passengers now and in the future; faster and more frequent inter-regional services, with direct links between the cities of the North; better commuter services, and more space for freight.

We have already electrified 45 miles of railway since 2010, bringing the benefits of faster, greener electric trains to passengers in the North West. We have increased the size of Northern's fleet by 10% in the last 12 months, relieving overcrowding on some of the North's busiest routes. And we are almost finished with completely refurbishing Manchester Victoria, turning it into a station that the North can be proud of and which will improve connections right across the North, from Newcastle to Liverpool.

The new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises, which start in April 2016, will bring the enhanced passenger services that will take advantage of this new infrastructure. Our specifications for these franchises will require at least 200 new train services to operate every weekday and 300 every Sunday. The Department for Transport is currently evaluating the bids it has received and will announce a winning bidder later this year. While it will ultimately be up to bidders to decide how best to take advantage of the new infrastructure, the Department has specified a raft of improvements, which the new franchisee must put in place.

Crucially, this will include:

- A transformational increase in capacity into the major Northern cities, enabling more passengers to travel in greater comfort – by 2019, capacity on routes into key Northern cities will be increased by at least 36%.
- A step change in the quality of the Northern train fleet. We are requiring the successful Northern bidder to completely replace Pacers, which are well overdue being withdrawn. We are also requiring a major overhaul of other existing fleets so that, by 2019, all trains on the franchise will have been refurbished to “as new” condition.
- A greatly improved off-peak service on many lines, including earlier first trains and later last trains and an increase in frequency on many routes on Sundays.
- Services operating on new routes, creating new journey opportunities.

We are also challenging bidders for the new franchises to exceed our specifications, for example by proposing further frequency enhancements, even more capacity, new direct links and shorter journey times based on the committed North West electrification schemes, additional track and platform capacity and the various line speed improvements that will be delivered by the Northern Hub across multiple routes.

The opening of the Ordsall Chord, along with the revitalisation of Manchester Victoria, will see rail services substantially improved. The work we are undertaking at Farnworth, using a tunnel boring machine bigger than that on Crossrail and built in Oldham, will allow us to speed up and electrify this important route between Manchester and Preston. Longer, faster and greener electric trains will tackle the overcrowding on peak trains through Bolton. We have already introduced electric trains between Manchester Airport and Liverpool and Manchester Airport and Scotland, bringing faster, quieter journeys and allowing us to use the diesel trains to increase services elsewhere, including on TransPennine Express.

By 2017, additional trains will be running on routes all around Manchester, with a doubling of off-peak frequency between Manchester and Macclesfield and on the mid-Cheshire line between Manchester and Northwich. New Northern services will operate between Manchester and Chester via Warrington. Our specification also provides opportunities to enhance journey times, for example between Manchester and Buxton.

And by 2019 more new services will be operating, with more services between Bradford and Manchester, and a new direct link between Manchester Airport and Bradford via Halifax and the Calder Valley, thanks to the significant investment in track, line speed and platform infrastructure and additional depot and stabling facilities. There will also be better cross-Manchester connectivity, with at least two trains per hour between Bolton and Stockport for the first time. And there will be more carriages on peak services into Manchester – additional capacity for nearly 20,000 more passengers in each morning peak.

All of these improvements will be delivered independently from electrification of the North TransPennine route. The over £1 billion investment in the Northern Hub and Northwest Electrification unlocks these significant capacity and connectivity improvements and enables a step change in services.

The next franchise for the TransPennine route between Leeds and Manchester will bring modern trains and additional capacity. Current work on electrification will be paused, because we need to be much more ambitious for this route, building a powerhouse for the north with a fast, high capacity TransPennine electric route. We are working with businesses and cities in the north to make that happen.

Further announcements on a revised timetable for electrification on this route will be made in due course. Please note that the timing of TransPennine electrification does not affect the provision of future capacity on the TransPennine route.

Whilst much of Network Rail's work has been excellent (the repair work at Dawlish and the new station at Reading, for example), much of it has not. As I said on 25 June, I do not pretend everything is perfect, because it isn't.

Since joining Network Rail in 2014 the Chief Executive Mark Carne has reviewed the organisation's structure, performance and accountability. Unfortunately important aspects of Network Rail's investment programme are costing more and taking longer.

Therefore, I have announced that none of Network Rail's Executive Directors will receive a bonus for the past year and that the current Chairman, Mr Richard Parry-Jones, is stepping down, and being replaced by the former Transport Commissioner in London Sir Peter Hendy. I have called on the new chair to review the company's programme of rail investment and report back to me in the autumn.

As I said to the House, passengers want a railway that is better, faster and more reliable than today, that is powered by a huge increase in investment and ambition right across the country.

And that is what they will get.

PP. Approved by the  
Secretary of State and signed  
in his absence.

**THE RT. HON. PATRICK McLOUGHLIN**