



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Our Ref: KHM/PARK02002/02152338

07 October 2015

Dear Dr Wilkins

Thank you for your recent letters, received 17<sup>th</sup> September, regarding resolutions passed at Oldham Council on 9<sup>th</sup> September regarding the proposed closure of Oldham County Court and Oldham Magistrates Court and electrification work on the Transpennine rail route.

I share the Council's concern about the Government's proposals to close Oldham's Magistrates' and County Court and the impact this will have on local people's ability to access justice.

I have previously voiced my concerns about the Government's cuts to legal aid and these court closure proposals will lead to justice deserts in many areas, especially more outlying communities like Saddleworth and Shaw, who will face even longer journeys to access justice.

If they go ahead, the closures would mean it will be more difficult for victims, witnesses, claimants and defendants to attend courts and engage with the justice system. I have written to Ministers to make them aware of my objections, which are shared by local solicitors who have contacted me as well as the Council.

You may be aware that last month Labour announced that Lord Willy Bach will lead a review into legal aid and the impact cuts have had on access to justice.

With regard to electrification work on the Transpennine route, you will be aware that on 30<sup>th</sup> September the Transport Secretary asked Network Rail to "un-pause" the electrification plans and I enclose a copy of the letter he sent, for your information.


I am pleased that Ministers have been forced to change course after an outcry from passengers across the North and pressure from MPs, Councils and other key stakeholders. I am concerned that as my colleague Lilian Greenwood, the Shadow Transport Secretary says, "these delays have led to a damaging hiatus, which had seen construction job losses and resources shifted to other projects".

Debbie Abrahams MP is proud to represent the people of  
Alexandra, Lees, Saddleworth, Shaw & Crompton, St Mary's, St James' and Waterhead

Website: [www.debbieabrahams.org.uk](http://www.debbieabrahams.org.uk) Twitter: @debbie\_abrahams

The delays have also severely undermined the Government's "Northern Powerhouse" mantra, letting down local rail users. Please be assured that I will continue to press the Government on both their court closure proposals and to tackle the inequality in regional investment in transport.

Yours sincerely



DEBBIE ABRAHAMS MP  
Oldham East and Saddleworth

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30 September 2015

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to confirm that work to electrify TransPennine and Midland Mainline railways will resume under plans announced today as part of Sir Peter Hendy's work to reset Network Rail's upgrade programme.

Sir Peter Hendy, the Chair of Network Rail, has outlined to me how work could continue. I have replied to him asking Network Rail to un-pause this work.

Network Rail will work with the Department for Transport (DFT) and Rail North to develop a new plan for electrification of the TransPennine line between Stalybridge and Leeds and on to York and Selby to focus on delivering key passenger benefits as quickly as possible. This is an improvement on the previous plan which only changed the power supply of the trains.

The new plan will deliver faster journey times and significantly more capacity between Manchester, Leeds and York. The upgrade is expected to provide capacity for six fast or semi-fast trains per hour, take up to 15 minutes off today's journey time between Manchester and York and be complete by 2022. When the work is finished, the whole route from Liverpool to Newcastle (via Manchester, Leeds and York) will be fully electrified and journey times will be significantly reduced compared to today's railway.

Network Rail will also recommence work to electrify Midland Mainline, the vital long-distance corridor which serves the UK's industrial heartland. Sir Peter Hendy is proposing that line speed and capacity improvement works already in hand are added to, with electrification of the line north of Bedford to Kettering and Corby by 2019 and the line North of Kettering to Leicester, Derby/Nottingham and Sheffield by 2023.

New Northern and TransPennine rail franchise awards will be announced before the end of the year. The new franchises will deliver new train carriages and remove out-dated Pacer trains; introduce free WiFi on trains; and offer a one-third increase in capacity with 200 additional services on weekdays and Saturdays and 300 more train services on Sundays.

Connecting up the great cities of the North is at the heart of our plan to build a Northern Powerhouse. The total programme of rail electrification and upgrades will completely transform the railways for passengers in the North and Midlands and help ensure that every part of Britain benefits from a growing economy.

Attach addendum – Northern Powerhouse transport current delivery.

y-  
Patrick

**THE RT. HON. PATRICK McLOUGHLIN**

## **Northern Powerhouse – transport - current delivery**

### **Rail investment and projects being delivered in the North of England**

- Capacity increased in 2014 on Trans Pennine Express services between Leeds and Manchester from four to five trains per hour.
- Electrified track between Liverpool and Manchester, replacing two-coach diesel trains with four-coach electric trains since March 2015.
- Electrified track between Liverpool and Wigan, introducing electric trains in April 2015 with almost all trains operating with four carriages from October.
- Redeveloped, upgraded and restored Manchester Victoria Station which will be formally opened in October 2015.
- Increasing the Northern Rail train fleet in the year from December 2014 with 87 additional carriages provided in the North West.
- Introduced longer trains on the Cumbrian Coast in May 2015, offering more seats on trains between Carlisle, Sellafield and Barrow-in-Furness.
- Opened the new Doncaster Chord in 2015 creating capacity for additional services by removing a bottleneck in South Yorkshire
- Installing new real-time customer information screens at 140 stations in 2015.
- Completing the rebuilding of Allerton Depot to provide capacity for electric trains will be formally opened in October 2015.
- Investing in a new southern entrance to Leeds Station to help regenerate the southern quarter of the city centre
- Opening brand new stations at Kirkstall Forge and Apperley Bridge
- Currently undertaking work to widen Farnworth tunnel between Manchester and Bolton, to enable electric trains to operate in the future.
- Running brand new Hitachi Intercity Express trains on the East Coast Main Line from 2018, built in Britain as part of a £5.7bn total investment. The trains will deliver more seats, more services, reduced journey times and improved reliability.
- New franchises for Northern and TPE, in place from 2016, which will deliver by 2020:
  - 120 new-build carriages for use on non-electrified lines on the Northern network;
  - the removal of all Pacer trains
  - full modernisation of existing diesel and electric Northern trains to make them 'as new'
  - over one-third increase in capacity into the major cities of the North
  - around 200 more train services on weekdays and Saturdays, both at peak and off-peak times, providing increased frequencies on many routes.
  - around 300 more train services on Sundays, providing earlier train services and increased frequencies on many routes
  - a £30 million Stations Investment Fund for the Northern franchise
  - free Wi-Fi on trains
- Working to enable operators in the future to offer faster rail journeys and better services between Sheffield and London.

## **Roads investment being delivered in the North of England**

- Investing in over 40 major road schemes in Yorkshire, the North-East and the North West in the period to 2020/21, schemes ultimately worth £4.8bn.
- Upgrading the last sections of the A1 in Yorkshire to motorway. The Leeming to Barton section will open by 2017, completing a motorway standard route, via the M1 and A1(M), from London to Newcastle for the first time. The government will look into the case for renaming the A1(M) north of Leeds as the M1.
- Dualling the A1 north of Newcastle as far as Ellingham, and improving access to the Port of Immingham with upgrades to the A160/A180.
- Delivering the first increase in Trans Pennine motorway capacity since 1971 by upgrading the M62 to smart motorway
- Upgrading the A628 which runs between Manchester and South Yorkshire
- Dualling the A61 in Yorkshire
- Upgrading the A19 from Yorkshire to Newcastle to Expressway

## **Devolving powers to the North of England**

- Devolving far reaching powers over transport to the North's Mayor-led city regions to deliver fully integrated public transport systems.
- Through Rail North, working in partnership with authorities in the North to manage and develop the new TPE and Northern rail franchises
- Publishing an update on the Northern Transport Strategy by Budget 2016 -working with TfN to advance the introduction of Oyster-style smart and integrated ticketing across bus, tram, metro and rail services throughout the region.
- On 8 July in his Budget, the Chancellor announced the Government's intention to put TfN on a statutory footing with statutory duties, appoint a Chair by the end of 2015 and a CEO by Autumn and additional funding of £30m to ensure TfN has a clear direction and permanency and is equipped to deliver.
- Working with TfN to push forward plans to transform east-west rail and road connections via Trans North and options for a new Trans Pennine Tunnel, with a prioritised list of scheme options to be produced by Budget 2016, and an interim report in time for the Spending Review later in 2015.