



Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street

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() February 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Your announcement today that the HS2 project will proceed confirms an unprecedented investment in rail services in England. This will continue a pattern of rail investment that has systematically neglected Wales. In accordance with your plan to level up economic growth across the UK, I urge you to take action to remedy this.

Over the past 25 years, the railway in Wales has been starved of investment. Wales has 11% of GB's track miles, 5% of the population and since 2010 has received only 2% of GB's rail enhancement spend. Not surprisingly therefore, Wales has the UK's lowest level of rail ridership, and the highest percentage of journeys made by private car. To address climate change, improve air quality, and relieve congestion we have to provide viable alternatives to the private car. To achieve this, the Welsh Government is investing in buses and active travel, but at the same time, substantial investment to upgrade rail services in Wales is urgently needed.

When the UK Government cancelled electrification to Swansea in 2017, it was acknowledged that a programme of enhancements across the network in Wales was required in its place. To date, no such schemes have been delivered.

One of the root causes of the current position is the Department of Transport's funding model which gives priority to areas with higher levels of rail use, itself reflecting higher levels of historic investment. Research by the Rail Delivery Group demonstrates that this model consistently overestimates growth for rail journeys connected to London, while underestimating growth elsewhere. This discriminates against investment in Wales. For example, the Ebbw branch line, whose re-opening we funded, is carrying 450% more passengers than the Department for Transport modelling predicted. This system bias undermines confidence in Wales that future decision-making will meet our needs.

We have mitigated this under-investment through funding from our block grant, diverting money from our devolved responsibilities for roads, health and education. We have reopened lines, opened new stations, and delivered additional capacity to operate more

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

services. This has been supported by funding from the European Union: it is imperative that the replacement for structural funds continues to support such investment.

The decision to proceed with HS2 underlines the lack of investment in Wales. The scheme is predicted by HS2 Ltd to have a negative impact of £150m every year on the Welsh economy. Action to mitigate this must include extending HS2 services into Wales, with electrification of the line between Crewe and Holyhead between now and 2027. This would enable HS2 services to reach more areas in North Wales and the North of England, and enhance our vital links with Ireland. There must also be investment in schemes on the core Trans-European Transport Network routes through Wales to Milford Haven and to Holyhead by 2030, estimated to cost approximately £1 billion (£500m in Wales) – around 1% of the latest HS2 cost estimate

Your plans to spend 3% of GDP on infrastructure in this Parliament are very welcome – Wales's share of this will amount to some £3.7 billion. If we receive this, and a fair share of the HS2 spend over the next 10 years, we will be in a position to deliver our plans to transform services and connectivity in Wales and across the border.

These plans include three integrated Metro schemes (for North Wales, South East Wales and Swansea Bay) which will generate employment and enhance productivity in some of the poorest parts of the UK.

These schemes are vital to cross-border collaboration, including the Great Western Cities Partnership. Ken Skates, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, will be writing to you jointly with Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, about investment in the Borderlands railway.

As well as tackling under-investment, we need to ensure that decision-making on rail in Wales is fully integrated with regional planning and complementary investment in infrastructure and services. As I've said, historically, Wales has been low on the list of priorities in decision-making on the UK rail network. Rail devolution will enable us to put this right, building on the recent devolution of franchising powers and transfer of infrastructure ownership, which are already delivering results.

Keith Williams' root and branch review of Britain's railways presents an opportunity to reform the railways and create the fully integrated public transport network which Wales needs. We look to the Rail White Paper to grasp this opportunity.

To conclude, I am calling on your government to remedy the historic under investment in Wales' rail infrastructure through your budget next month, and thus ensure delivery of the improvements needed to improve connectivity across Wales.

I am copying this letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Transport, the Secretary of State for Wales and the Chair of the National Assembly for Wales' Economy, Infrastructure and Skills committee.

Best wishes,
Mark

MARK DRAKEFORD