

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

27 April 2009

*Dear Andrew,*

### **Meeting with the West Anglia Routes Group**

Thank you on behalf of the West Anglia Routes Group, for meeting with us on 02 April to discuss this key rail corridor, which I think you will agree is a national priority for investment.

Overall, we feel the meeting was positive, particularly since it closely followed an announcement by the Secretary of State that your Department on the procurement of 120 new carriages for replacement and lengthening of services to Stansted Airport by 2011.

Whilst we welcome this and investment in longer platforms and station improvements, there are still concerns about cascaded rolling stock not being immediately fit for purpose. However, we were reassured by comments from DfT colleagues about plans to refresh cascaded stock in the short term.

It is also positive that in the mid term (by 2018/19 at the latest), as one of a range of measures to enhance capacity, DfT have assumed that the existing fleet will be replaced, with new high capacity stock on inner suburban routes.

This brings me onto our discussion around the future strategy for the West Anglia Routes. I am pleased you made it clear that the West Anglia Routes are very high priority, and that your Department's objective is to achieve the greatest possible improvements in capacity and reliability, while offering value for money.

It also seems sensible that delivering these improvements will require a range of measures, including faster and longer trains, junction upgrades, replacing level crossings and additional track.

However, it is difficult for stakeholders to frame a considered response to the work contained in the West Anglia Main Line Progress Report at short notice, and without having sight of the details underpinning it. Therefore, I welcome your offer to provide further details on the underlying assumptions and costs, including indicative track formations and proposals for level crossings.

We would also like to understand the approach adopted to the business case appraisals, and the way in which the incremental costs of four-tracking have been allocated across the various capacity challenges; we would like to be reassured that the options have been given a level playing field.

Our initial view is that whilst we welcome the proposed benefits to outer suburban and airport services, the Report does not appear to recognise the potential regeneration benefits of an enhanced service to the inner suburban stations, or to regard the development of this national Growth Corridor and the Upper Lee Valley, as being firm objectives of the route upgrade.

Since the routes are key to the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Corridor, which will deliver tens of thousands of new homes and jobs in the coming decades, I have copied this into Iain Wright MP, who has been very supportive of our work to promote it.

The West Anglia Routes Group will meet in May and we very much hope that DfT officials will be able to attend. This meeting will provide an opportunity for the 30 organisations we represent to provide feedback on the West Anglia Main Line Progress Report. Following this we will look to submit a formal WARG response.

Looking slightly further ahead, it was helpful to know that, over the next few months, DfT colleagues will be working up the specification for Network Rail's work to look at options for delivering capacity increases to 2018/19. I would like to reiterate that the West Anglia Routes Group supports the consideration of a full range of options and the DfT funding of Network Rail to undertake this work. We are a little concerned that the WAML Progress Report has begun to close down these options, and believe it is too early to do so if we are to deliver the long term regeneration and growth potential of this corridor.

As for the other items discussed, your interest in currently under-utilised stations on the Lea Valley line was helpful and, from personal experience, I feel that station improvements are key. In the longer term, higher service frequencies will contribute to unlocking the regeneration potential of this area.

I would also again urge your Department to work with key partners to bring forward plans for improvements at key interchanges, to relieve congestion and ensure DDA compliance, so that they are in place by 2012.

Finally, to continue our positive engagement, as discussed when we met, I would very much welcome your presence at the West Anglia Routes Group Politicians' Meeting in July and we will be in touch with your office to arrange a suitable date.

I look forward to working closely with you on delivering the improvements to this nationally important line.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Claire Kober', written in dark ink.

**Councillor Claire Kober**  
**Leader of the Council**

*cc: Iain Wright MP, Department for Communities and Local Government*