



Department  
for Transport

Councillor Evan Selwyn Griffiths  
Chairman of the Council  
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From the Minister of State  
The Rt. Hon. Simon Burns MP

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*Dear Cllr Selwyn Griffiths*

14 JAN 2013

Thank you for your letter of 18 December 2012, received on 8 January 2013, copying me a notice of motion about rail investment in the North Wales sub-regional network.

The national rail investment strategy for 2014-19 we published in July 2012 took account of and provided for the rail investment priorities of the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government had identified significant potential in the electrification of the wider Valleys network and had worked with Network Rail and the Department to satisfy itself the scheme was good value. The Welsh Government is bearing much of the cost of the scheme through the higher track access charges that the local train services will pay upon electrification, although the efficiency of electrification on the intensive pattern of services means that overall there will be a cost reduction.

I anticipate the next rail investment strategy for 2019-24 will take similar account of Welsh Government priorities. You will be pleased to know that the Welsh Government has identified modernisation of the North Wales main line between Chester and Holyhead as a scheme it wishes to explore. Officials have been in discussion with the Department to determine how we can best take forward a review of the cost and benefits in conjunction with Network Rail, the train operating companies and key stakeholders.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Wales, whom you also wrote to, and to Carl Sargeant AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities, Welsh Government, whose officials are developing the rail strategy within Wales.

*Simon Burns*

THE RT. HON. SIMON BURNS

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22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2012

Gwyn Parry Williams  
Member Support and Scrutiny Officer  
Democratic Service  
Gwynedd Council  
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A/56

Dear Gwyn Parry Williams,

Thank you for the copy of the motion that was passed by Gwynedd Council regarding the importance of upgrading the North Wales railway network. I agree 100% and I have been campaigning for this upgrading to be implemented for years.

I have asked questions of the Prime Minister and of the Minister for Transport on the matter, and have raised the matter in the Business and Economy Committee. This is specifically a matter for Westminster, and David Jones, Secretary of State, has recently awoken to this shortcoming and is making positive sounds. I am also aware that several Councils in the north have voiced their concerns and are supportive of seeing the railway network being electrified.

One fundamental problem is that the railway line along the north and down to London is not considered a part of the cross-European network, although the A55 is considered a part of this network which connects Ireland, London, Paris and Brussels. Officially, the railway which connects Ireland and London and the continent is the railway line along the southern route. This makes no sense at all as there is no ferry travelling from Swansea and beyond, and the railway line is a rural line which is slower than the Northern railway. And the connection with Rosslare and Cork takes much longer than crossing from Holyhead to Dublin. The problem with regard to recognising the importance of the

Northern railway is that very little commercial goods are carried along it and transferred on the ferry to Dublin. The trade all occurs along the A55 and the lorries which then downgrades the railway in respect of the market, whilst the oil coming in to Milford Haven means that the southern railways are recognised as an important connection despite the fact that very little commercial goods are carried along that railway from Ireland over to the continent.

You may rest assured that I will do my best to promote this campaign for electrification of the Northern railway and to make it suitable for the twenty first century.

Yours sincerely,

Alun Ffred Jones  
Assembly Member for Arfon