

The Rt. Hon. Teresa Villiers MP  
Minister of State for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

18<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Dear Mrs Villiers

### **The New Great Western Franchise**

It was a pleasure to have had the opportunity to meet you at Truro Station, and later at the CUC Tremough Campus, during your recent trip to Cornwall.

However, it is now extremely disappointing to hear that your department is considering cutting three of the nine daily trains between London and Penzance. As the Chairman of the Cornwall Business Partnership, the leading business organisation which has acted as the main private sector voice into the Objective One for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and the current Convergence European Funding programmes, I know that I am writing, on behalf of all my members, to express their horror that this might be the case.

Our economy is already under pressure, as is acknowledged by the continued investment of European and central government funding into the County. In our opinion, there is no logic in taking such a decision that will work against the benefits gained from this investment and the efforts and motivation of so many.

Such people have worked long and hard to overcome the historic perception that the far South West is peripheral, a fact which has not always encouraged companies to consider it as a place to do business. This reduction of rail services in Cornwall would do much to set back the clock on all the success which has been so far achieved in this respect. It is absolutely essential for our economy that we have good transport links to London and beyond.

Connectivity and regular train times are vital if our businesses are to realise their aspirations to overcome the challenges of the current economic climate and to safeguard and create the quality jobs that we so desperately need here.

I have had a considerable amount of feedback from our members to the effect that any cut in the current service would seriously impact on their manner of doing business. Significant, iconic businesses such as the Eden Project, have personnel who are required to travel on a weekly basis to London and have various visitors and partners who use the train to get to them. Any reduction in the number of trains would have a detrimental impact on that business alone. Similarly, we have people who commute to London on a regular basis who would have to reconsider their ability to remain living in Cornwall. We cannot afford to lose such a tremendous resource out of the County.

In addition the tourism industry here would be dreadfully affected if holiday makers are obliged to transfer into smaller and more crowded trains in Plymouth or Exeter. Cornwall is one of the major tourist destinations in the whole Country. It just does not make sense to jeopardise it by these cuts to the service.

With the proposed huge investment in the rail network in other parts of the Country, we, in Cornwall, would consider that cuts of this kind would be completely untenable; we simply cannot afford them and would urge you, in your capacity as the Minister of Transport, to maintain the current services to Cornwall including that of the sleeper.

Yours sincerely

Thelma Sorensen OBE  
Chairman