



Department  
for Transport

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From the Secretary of State  
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Dear Iain,

Congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Transport Select Committee. I look forward to working with you and continuing the collaborative relationship between my Department and the Committee.

I am writing to provide you with the additional information that my predecessor committed to following the recent Committee session on the 19 October. This material is attached.

I also want to correct the record regarding the discussion on the UK ship register and Smart Motorways during the session. These are also attached

Yours ever,

**Rt Hon Mark Harper MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**

## **Further information for the Transport Select Committee following the session on the Work of the Secretary of State for Transport, 19 October 2022**

During the evidence session, further detail was promised in relation to the following topics:

1. Enforcement of train timetables and National Rail Contracts management
2. East West Rail traction options
3. DfT response to the Pavement Parking consultation
4. Bus emergency funding levels
5. Feedback for unsuccessful BSIP funding applications
6. Sustainable Aviation Fuels
7. Provision of E5 petrol
8. Timing of the Road Safety Strategic Framework
9. Request to support the installation of speed cameras on the A19

Clarifications:

1. UK Ship Register
2. Smart Motorways

The material below sets out this information.

### **1. Enforcement of train timetables and National Rail Contracts management**

Timetable development and delivery is a matter for train operators and Network Rail with regulatory oversight provided by the Office of Rail and Road. With regard to services from Waterloo to Sherborne, journey times have been extended recently as a result of infrastructure issues caused by the hot weather in summer 2022. For safety reasons, Network Rail imposed temporary speed restrictions which, in combination with timetabling complications associated with the single-line sections along the route towards Exeter meant that South Western Railway was required to operate a temporary timetable with extended journey times. The normal timetable will be restored from Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

The National Rail Contracts include a range of financial incentives to ensure operators are focussed on delivering a high quality service to passengers. The performance-based fee structure includes a requirement for operators to meet challenging targets for operational performance across a basket of whole-industry and operator-only measures. Operators are assessed on their ability to operate trains that arrive at stations within three minutes and within fifteen minutes of the scheduled arrival time. Operators are also assessed on the number of delay minutes they incur and the number of trains they short-form or cancel (including skip-stopping).

Details of management and performance fees payable have been published on the Department's website since May 2021. The last update was in October 2021. A further update to the publication will be issued shortly.

## **2. East-West Rail traction options**

The Department's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, published in 2021, commits to the rail network being net zero by 2050 and includes the ambition to remove all diesel-only trains from the network by 2040. East West Rail Company (EWR Co) also set out its aim to be a net zero railway in its public consultation last year.

For East West Rail (EWR), diesel rolling stock will be used for the start of services for Connection Stage 1, (Oxford to Bletchley and Milton Keynes) which is currently in construction. Passive provision is being made for electrification and has been built into the scheme's specification. This means, for instance, building new bridges with sufficient clearance for overhead electrification. We believe this is the right interim solution which will allow the earliest possible start of services between Oxford and Milton Keynes whilst a decision on decarbonisation options for the full route are taken, enabling the adoption of alternative traction modes in the future.

EWR Co continues to review traction options for the railway, including full electrification along the whole route and various options for partial electrification, using battery / electric hybrid rolling stock and other sustainable rolling stock options.

## **3. DfT response to the Pavement Parking consultation**

The Pavement Parking consultation ran from 31 August 2020 to 22 November 2020 and sought views on some options to help local authorities tackle this problem. All of the options on which we consulted have challenges in respect of efficacy and deliverability including, amongst other things: the need for primary legislation in some cases, the speed with which they could be implemented by local authorities and the ambiguity of the possible new civil offence of "unnecessary obstruction of the pavement". We want to take the right step for future policy and are working through the options and the possible legislative opportunities for delivering them and as soon as those matters are certain we will publish our formal response.

## **4. Bus emergency funding**

The Government has made available nearly £2 billion of support to date through emergency and recovery grants since March 2020 to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on bus services. We recently announced a further £130 million six-month extension to the Bus Recovery Grant to continue supporting bus services until March 2023. As a condition of receiving recovery funding, bus operators are required to maintain a minimum service floor of 80% compared to pre-Covid service levels to prevent significant service reductions. In exceptional circumstances, local authorities and bus operators can agree to alter bus services that would take the floor to lower than 80% temporarily. However overall bus service levels in England outside London are currently slightly above the 80% floor. This is despite the additional operating costs that bus operators are experiencing due to inflationary pressures, such as rising fuel costs.

## **5. Feedback for unsuccessful Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) funding applications**

The Department has provided written feedback directly to all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) on their Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). From late September, my officials have been offering one-off surgeries on Enhanced Partnerships (EPs) and BSIPs to any LTA who has not received a funding allocation for its BSIP where they request one. These surgeries offer feedback on BSIPs along with a strategic overview of the BSIP and EP process going forward. LTAs have been allocated a named Relationship Manager who will be able to support them with the development and implementation of their EP.

## **6. Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF)**

The aim to have 5 commercial-scale SAF plants in construction by 2025 is an ambition to emphasise our commitment to the domestic sector and to measure progress. We have not specified where these plants will be located or who will build them and intend to let the market decide.

The Net Zero Strategy committed £180m to support the development of a domestic sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry. The £165m Advanced Fuels Fund forms the majority of this funding and was launched in July 2022. We are currently in the assessment phase of the competition and expect to announce the funding awards in December this year.

## **7. Provision of E5 petrol**

The regulations that introduced E10 (petrol blended with up to 10% ethanol) as standard grade petrol also require that E5 remain available in the 'Premium' grade at filling stations that sell over 1 million litres of fuel (petrol and diesel combined). E5 petrol is available at the majority of filling stations across the UK. The regulations also allow small and specialist filling stations to sell 'Premium' grade E5 if it's available via local supply chains.

Over 95% of petrol-powered vehicles on the road are compatible with E10 petrol. This figure is increasing all the time as older vehicles are replaced with newer vehicles, and with all vehicles manufactured since 2011 compatible with E10. Less than 1% of cars currently on the road are everyday household vehicles that cannot use E10.

## **8. Publication of the Road Safety Strategic Framework**

The Department is working on the Road Safety Strategic Framework and is aiming towards a publication this financial year. This will be based on a Safe System approach and as part of this we are considering what might be appropriate as supporting indicators on casualty reduction. The key principle of a Safe System is recognising people make mistakes and things go wrong. This approach accepts responsibility is shared, and collisions are the result of a combination of factors which can be mitigated. The Road Safety Strategic Framework provides the structure needed to deliver Safe System effectively and efficiently. This approach is proven and accepted in many other sectors including Health and Safety and Public

Health. It is already adopted as best practice in other countries, which have subsequently gone on to make significant reductions in road deaths and casualties.

## **9. Request to support the installation of speed cameras on the A19**

The safety of our roads is of paramount importance to the Department, and to National Highways for the roads that they are responsible for.

Speed cameras, in the right place, can help manage safety risks by encouraging drivers to conform to the speed limit. However, they are not the only, or always the best, way to improve road safety. Authorities, including National Highways should target their funding to those measures addressing the underlying safety problems.

They should be located where speeding is likely to lead to a risk of collisions and casualties. It is up to the traffic authority and the police to decide whether to use cameras and how they wish to operate them. The Department issues non-mandatory guidance for English authorities on the deployment, visibility, and signing of speed cameras.

### Clarifications

#### **1. UK Ship Register**

During the session the Committee was advised that the UK Ship Register saw an increase in recent years. I would like to clarify the record.

*The Department commonly uses the gross tonnage of vessels, rather than the number of vessels, as the primary indicator of the status of the UK Ship Register. The UK Ship Register has seen a period of relative stability since 2019, with official data from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency showing that for all merchant (non-fishing) vessels over 100 gross tonnes, gross tonnage on the UK Ship Register increased in 2021 for the first time since 2017, rising by 2.12% to 10.2 million gross tonnes from December 2020 to December 2021. Since then, the UK Ship Register declined from December 2021 to September 2022 (to 9.9 million gross tonnes), a normal cyclical fluctuation that takes the level back to the position of August 2020.*

#### **2. Smart Motorways**

In Q408 Karl M<sup>c</sup>Cartney MP stated that:

*“National Highways has missed its revised September targets for 10-minute response times for live lane stops on all-lane running motorways, otherwise known as smart motorways”*

This is inaccurate. National Highways have since confirmed they have met the September target for traffic officer response times, attending in an average time of 9 minutes and 49 seconds, representing a significant improvement from a response time of over 17 minutes in 2020. National Highways have also delivered their accelerated September target to complete the roll out of stopped vehicle detection technology on more than 200 miles of All Lane Running motorways. This technology is able to directly detect stopped vehicles and automatically alert National Highways regional control rooms so that further action can be taken.