



Department for Transport

From the Minister of State
Huw Merriman MP

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Iain Stewart MP
Chair, Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

20 February 2023

Dear Iain,

I am writing to update you on next steps for minimum services levels for rail. The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill is currently in the Lords, and due for second reading on 21 February. As part of the process to determine minimum service levels in rail, the Department is today launching a consultation for passenger rail, including light rail, that will run for 12 weeks from 20 February to 15 May.

For many years our railways have played an important role in connecting communities across all three nations to places of work and key public services.

In recent years passengers have been subject to severe disruption on the railways due to sustained industrial action. It has had nationwide impact and has stopped people going to work and schools and in some cases accessing essential services such as hospital care.

This Government believes that the ability to strike is an important part of industrial relations in the UK. However, recent industrial action has demonstrated that too often strikes disproportionately impact the hardest working and disrupt the essential service they require. The Bill, which is currently before Parliament, establishes a clear framework for setting MSLs, recognising the importance of ensuring workers are able to take strike action, while balancing the needs of the public to go to work, schools and access essential services.

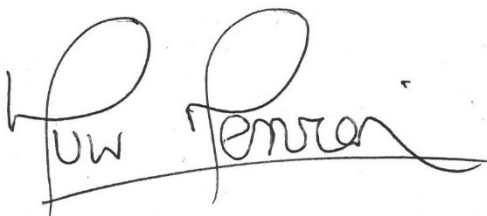
The Department is seeking the views of the public and key stakeholders from the rail sector, trade unions and wider industries to develop a more detailed understanding of the impact of strike activity and how minimum service levels might be applied for passenger rail to reduce the disproportionate disruptions caused by strikes. Subject to the outcome of consultation, and the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill receiving Royal Assent, minimum service levels for passenger rail would then be provided for in regulations.

The Department welcomes the inquiry into Minimum Service Levels for rail that your Committee has recently launched and the Department will respond with written evidence.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss the consultation. Please contact huw.merriman_mp@dft.gov.uk should you wish to do so. I look forward to engaging with you.

I am copying this letter to Kevin Hollinrake MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Business and Trade, and Darren Jones MP, Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Merriman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Huw Merriman MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT