



Department
for Transport

Iain Stewart MP
Chair
Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
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From the Secretary of State
The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP

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20 February 2024

Dear Iain,

PUBLICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON RAIL REFORM LEGISLATION AND THE DRAFT RAIL REFORM BILL

I am pleased to inform you that we have published both the Government response to the consultation on rail reform legislation, and the draft Rail Reform Bill ahead of the pre-legislative scrutiny that the Transport Select Committee have agreed to carry out.

The consultation sought the views of industry and stakeholders on the primary legislative changes required to establish Great British Railways (GBR), which will be a new commercially-driven, customer-focussed arm's length body that is accountable for the railways. It received nearly 2,500 responses from across the sector and government has carefully considered these responses in creating the draft Bill, to ensure the reform of our railways is in the best interest of customers and the taxpayer whilst securing benefits for the industry and its workforce.

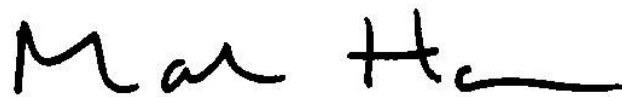
The draft Rail Reform Bill sets in motion the plan to deliver a bold vision for future rail customers – of punctual and reliable services, simpler tickets and a modern and innovative railway that meets the needs of passengers. It will see the creation of a commercially-focused GBR that will leverage private sector innovation to help deliver a better offer for customers. It will be adaptable to changing customer needs, working in close partnership with the private sector (including train operating companies, freight operators, suppliers and innovators) to deliver a more efficient, modern rail system underpinned by better collaboration and aligned incentives, generating value and savings that will have benefits for passengers and taxpayers.

Given the scale and complexity of the changes being made to the sector, it is right that the draft Bill undergoes pre-legislative scrutiny to provide your committee, other Parliamentarians and experts across industry the opportunity to review and test the legislation in draft.

Ahead of legislation, and given the challenges facing the railway today, government and industry are working together to focus on delivering improvements for customers and taxpayers. We are also encouraging cross-sector collaboration to start to bring together operations, infrastructure and the oversight of whole industry finance within the current accountability framework, while building the culture we want for our rail sector.

The Rail Minister, Huw Merriman, will be responsible for the draft Bill, and my officials will work closely with you throughout the scrutiny process. I look forward to receiving the scrutiny report and ultimately securing a robust Bill to drive forward vital reforms.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark Harper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT