



## Transport Committee

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE  
Minister for Rail  
Department for Transport

By email

12 March 2025

Dear Lord Hendy,

### **A railway fit for Britain's future**

Thank you for your two recent appearances before the Committee in your role as Minister for Rail. We found these sessions very useful and we look forward to working with you during this vital period of change for Britain's railways.

The Department's recently launched consultation, 'A railway fit for Britain's future', marks the latest step toward establishing Great British Railways (GBR)—a powerful new body that will combine track and train and take on day-to-day management of the railway. I am sure you will agree that it is vital that your Department gets it right in setting up GBR and we welcome the consultation as part of this process and look forward to seeing the outcome, and legislation, in due course.

We note that at paragraphs 1.21 and 1.22 of the consultation document, it is stated that GBR will

be subject to a substantively streamlined and simplified licence, reflecting its unique position as the network's preeminent operator of both infrastructure and passenger services. [...]

We propose a guiding principle that GBR's licence should be specific and focused on the minimum viable set of conditions that are required for safety, performance (i.e. reliability and cancellations), efficiency, and passenger experience. It should be drafted in a way that enables GBR to focus on delivering for passengers and other users of the railway. We believe this would provide transparency, consistency, and fairness across the system, while substantially reducing the regulatory burden on GBR. The new licence will be subject to consultation as normal.

The draft Rail Reform Bill published by the previous Government in February 2024 included clauses that would have required that GBR's licence include requirements for that body to

- Make appropriate provision for services for the carriage of goods by railway;
- Have regard to the accessibility requirements of persons who are disabled;
- Have regard to the effect on the environment of activities connected with the provision of railway services; and
- Maximise, so far as practicable, the social and economic benefits resulting from the operation of the railway network.

Without wishing to prejudice the outcome of the consultation process that is underway, we are keen to understand whether similar statutory duties on consideration for freight, accessibility, the environment and the wider social and economic benefits for the railway form part of the Government's plans for GBR's licence. If not, we would be keen to hear whether the Government has in mind other mechanisms for ensuring that Great British Railways promotes these specific ends.

We are sure that you share a commitment to ensuring GBR acts strongly in the public interest and that there will be robust conditions which hold it to account in this regard.

We also note that the consultation period runs for only eight weeks. While we understand and share the Government's wish to implement rail reform quickly, we ask for reassurance that all necessary steps have been taken to ensure that disabled people and disabled people's organisations in particular have been given adequate time, opportunities and support to engage fully in the consultation process.

The Committee would welcome clarity on these points as soon as possible. We look forward to further engagement with you and your officials as you work to deliver a better railway for all.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Cadbury". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Ruth Cadbury MP**  
**Chair, Transport Committee**