

P-06-1288 Deliver Magor and Undy Walkway Station, part of the Burns Delivery Programme, as a quick win - Petitioner to the Committee, 04 July 2025

Good morning, Kayleigh,

Thank you for enquiring whether there was an update on the meeting with Ken Skates (Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales).

The meeting did take place but was, in my opinion, somewhat disappointing for a number of reasons.

The face-to-face meeting had been kindly brokered by John Griffiths MS and his staff. Two of our members travelled to the Senedd, while two others (including myself) were happy to 'Teams in'. At some point prior to the meeting, we were informed that Ken Skates would not be at the Senedd but would also join virtually as he was travelling. The meeting started at the scheduled time but without our two members and John Griffiths MS (that were actually at the Senedd) not being in attendance. The meeting was scheduled for 30 minutes but the first thing Ken said was that he wouldn't be able to stay to the end and that the pre-submitted questions would have to be picked up with his support staff. Not a great start!

As our main representatives weren't in the meeting, I thought I would open by reminding Ken that when he visited the MAGOR group, some 8 years ago, and he had then said that there were 46 new stations planned for Wales and 12 of them were priority (including Magor & Undy Walkway – which had a strong business case) but here we are now with no clear indication of if and when the station would be built! He made the point that there had been no money coming from the previous UK government for new stations and that as rail isn't 'devolved' it wasn't his responsibility. However, he did claim that he had now secured funding for a range of rail projects in Wales. [Incidentally, some 19 new stations have been opened on the UK rail network since 2018. Some may argue that the lack of funding for stations in Wales has perhaps been down to not enough proactive and collaborative working with the UK government]. At this point, some 10 minutes in, John Griffiths MS and the two MAGOR members (Ted Hand and Laurence Hando), appeared on Teams so I stopped talking to allow Ted and Laurence to contribute. Similar points were reiterated but the main issue was there is still no clarity of what stations are going to be built and when. Ken made the point that the business case was dependent on the relief lines being upgraded and that all 5 stations are part of the project. Unfortunately, the cost of upgrading the relief lines and building all 5 stations (and a few other rail projects in Wales) significantly exceeds the £460m 'secured' by the Welsh government and, worryingly, the upgrade has not been mentioned in the Spring Spending review. So, in that case it is difficult to understand how the stations can be built.

Ted and Laurence made the point, as has been made numerous times, that 'Magor' does not require any changes to the current rail and signalling arrangements, or the relief line upgrade, and could be built 'today' for around £10m – so would be a 'quick win' for

WG. This point seems to fall on deaf ears and, as the whole infrastructure plans are under DfT and Network Rail, Ken repeatedly reminded us that it wasn't his responsibility. This attitude was disappointing and uninspiring. The 'all or nothing' mantra also appeared to be supported by Catrin Mayby (MCC's cabinet member with responsibility for rail).

As the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales claims to be unable to help, in my opinion, MAGOR's best approach from here on is to deal with UK Government directly, via Catherine Fookes MP (who, like her predecessor Jessica Morden MP has been very proactive in the matter), and Lord Hendy (Minister of State for Transport). Perhaps that might result in a stronger degree of direction coming from the UK government. My personal opinion is that, if that doesn't happen, WG will simply spend the allocated sum on planning and reviewing (with little doing)!

I hope this helps inform the Petitions Committee.

(This response has been reviewed by 4 other members of the MAGOR group)

Kind regards,

Paul Turner

MAGOR group