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Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-416
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/05708/14

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

10 November 2014

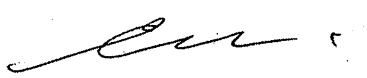
Dear William,

Thank you for your letter regarding the North-South Rail Services petition which I received on 29 October.

My officials continue to work with the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Merseytravel on the reinstatement of the Halton Curve and detailed proposals are expected to be available early next year. Subject to agreement of the detail, the UK Government has indicated that the scheme will be delivered in 2016/17 and operational in December 2017.

Under the current arrangement, the Secretary of State for Transport is the responsible franchising authority for the Wales and Borders Franchise. Discussions between the Welsh Government and the Department for Transport to explore the potential for transferring responsibility of the franchise are ongoing. Irrespective of our role in awarding the next franchise, we want to ensure that it delivers improved services and value for money. In terms of service levels, under the timetable for procurement of the franchise, the Department for Transport will determine these between Autumn 2015 and Spring 2017. Thereafter, the procurement process is scheduled to start. It is expected that the franchise will be awarded the following Spring so that the new franchise can start in October 2018.

The current North-South Premier Service is schedule for renewal in May 2015. I am currently considering options regarding the North South Express and will make an announcement in due course.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. M.', located below the text.