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Mr William Graham, AM,  
Chairman,  
Enterprise and Business Committee,  
National Assembly for Wales,  
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By e-mail

Dear Mr Graham,

Since giving evidence to the Committee at Wrexham on 28 January it has been drawn to my attention that I inadvertently misled the Committee over the issue of the Loading Gauge that will apply to the Severn Tunnel after electrification of the South Wales Main Line.

The Transcript, Page 29, Paragraph 123, correctly records that I said

“...the electrification of the South Wales Main Line is going to bring with it what’s called the W10 loading gauge...”

which is what I believed to be the case.

In my written evidence, Paragraph 11 included the caveat

“However, while electrification works are usually accompanied by an increase in “Loading Gauge” to the “W10” Gauge needed for 9ft6ins high containers to move on conventional wagons, there are some structures which can accommodate the overhead wiring without alteration but at a lower Gauge.”

Generally, alterations to these latter structures have therefore been funded through the Strategic Freight Network Fund that I also referred to in both my written evidence and in my oral evidence at Wrexham, and this was to be the case for the Severn Tunnel. However, you will recall that at Wrexham I also drew attention to the reduction of the Strategic Freight Network Fund as part of the recent Hendy Review.

It now transpires that one casualty of the reduced funding available was to be the Severn Tunnel works and this was indeed the case at the time I spoke to the Committee. However,

the situation remains under review and more recent indications are that the work may be deferred into CP6 (2019-24) or could possibly even be reinstated for CP5.

Rail freight industry representatives on the Strategic Freight Network Steering Group are obviously pushing for a successful outcome to these further deliberations and any support the Committee may feel able to provide on this issue will be extremely welcome.

Yours sincerely,

*Robin C Smith*

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