

Ken Skates AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a  
Thrafnidiaeth  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref KS/02272/18

David John Rowlands AM  
Chair - Petitions committee.

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

31 August 2018

Dear David,

Thank you for your further letter of 18 July regarding Petition P-05-820 Don't take Neath off the main railway-line.

Rail infrastructure is reserved to the UK Government and it is therefore the Department for Transport that decides on how money is invested in the rail network.

However, I wish to make very clear, as I have done many times in the National Assembly for Wales when asked about this issue over the last few months, that the Welsh Government has never put forward or supported any proposal to close Neath station or to reduce services running into and out of the town. I should also make clear that neither would we support such a proposal in future – we wish to see Neath station and services from there enhanced, not reduced.

When the Secretary of State announced in July last year that he was cancelling the scheme to electrify the railway between Cardiff and Swansea, he said that he had asked Network Rail to develop options for improving journeys for passengers in Wales. Possible schemes to improve journey times between Bristol and Swansea and to improve station facilities in Swansea were specifically mentioned.

Transport for Wales has been commissioned to develop Programme Strategic Outline Cases to justify the investment that we are calling on the UK Government to make in our rail network across Wales, including improvements in and around Swansea.

The development of the Business Case involves identifying a long list of options for improving journey times by rail for commuters and long-distance travellers in south Wales and we will be working with stakeholders to identify which of these improvements are appropriate for further consideration.

These will include exploring how the infrastructure can be enhanced to ensure that the new Inter-City Express Trains performance and capabilities can be used to best effect. For example, because of the capability of the track, the maximum allowable speed of the trains is seldom reached on the journey between London and south Wales, and never in Wales.

The focus must be on ensuring that all passengers, including those who use Neath station, can benefit from improvements in connectivity and journey times.

It is important that we explore all options and opportunities for improving frequencies and reducing journey times for commuters and long-distance travellers and develop the ones that best meet our objectives so that we can, with the support of our stakeholders, put forward the best possible case to the UK Government for funding much-needed improvements in Neath and the wider region.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Skates', written in a cursive style.

**Ken Skates AC/AM**

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Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport