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for Transport

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Loe Alex

Thank you for attending the tea room surgery I held on the 27 May, and I was interested to hear your thoughts on Cheltenham station, and train services between Cheltenham and Swindon. I thought that I should write to you to set out in full the current position and future plans for the station.

A multi-billion pound programme of national rail investment by Network Rail has already seen more than £5 billion pumped into projects benefitting passengers on the Great Western network. These include Crossrail, the electrification of more than 200 miles of track on the Great Western line, and the upgrade of Reading Station. The Great Western Main Line is also set to benefit from 57 state-of-the-art intercity express trains as part of the government's £5.8 billion Intercity Express Programme (IEP) from 2017.

There are already a number of direct services between Swindon and Cheltenham, and we currently expect these new IEP trains to provide an hourly Swindon – Cheltenham service from the December 2018 timetable change date. In addition, the recently published consultation draft of the western route study identified extending Swindon – Gloucester services to Worcester via Cheltenham as a possible way of meeting growing demand for Worcester services; we are working hard with Network Rail and First Great Western to evaluate the business case for this. We would certainly encourage the local authority to continue working with First Great Western to monitor the usage in order to assess demand.

In terms of Cheltenham station itself, we are aware that passenger numbers have more than doubled in recent years but is constrained by the station

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/franchising-deal-to-boost-services-on-great-western-main-line>

²<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/franchise-announcement>

building, which is largely Victorian, and facilities which struggle to cope with today's level of demand.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that a significant programme of investment and improvement worth approximately £10m is planned. This includes level access to the platforms via new lifts, additional passenger capacity, more retail space and a better interchange with other transport modes. Funding is being provided by the Department for Transport's Access for All, and Cycle-Rail funds as well as Gloucester Local Transport Board, and First Great Western. I trust that you and your constituents will welcome these planned improvements.

Thank you once again for your enquiry. I am sure you will join me in recognising that Great Britain's railways are a great success story. Our railway is the busiest it has been since the 1920s, we have some of the safest and most punctual rail services in Europe and we are carrying out the biggest programme of railway modernisation in a generation. Network Rail will spend over £38 billion on the railways over the next five years, allowing it to continue maintaining and enhancing the railway, not counting the massive investment in the new HS2 rail link. It really is an exciting time for railway users and it is part of this Government's commitment to reinvest the proceeds of economic recovery in world-class British infrastructure.

Yours,



CLAIRE PERRY

I am sure your constituents are delighted that you have picked up their rail concerns & guided.