



Department
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
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14 APR 2014

Dear Mr Tigwell

Thank you for your letter of 7 March to Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP, stating Dartmoor Forest Parish Council's support for reinstating the old Southern Railway line to link Exeter to Plymouth via Okehampton and Tavistock. I am replying as Minister responsible for this issue.

As announced by the Secretary of State for Transport, Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP on 7 February:

"The most immediate concern is to get the line at Dawlish back up and running as soon as possible. I have seen the site first hand and discussed with Network Rail how this work will get underway...as well as tackling the current problems...I have said that I want to look at the longer term resilience of the south-west's rail links"

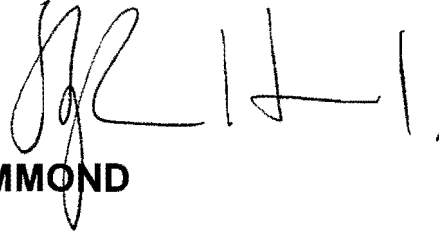
The Government has commissioned Network Rail to undertake a study to identify options for providing a resilient rail route west of Exeter and rail access to the coastal communities in the Torbay area. We have also asked Network Rail to implement schemes already identified to resolve weather related problems in the Thames Valley and West of England. However, the immediate priority is to restore rail services on this route as soon as possible.

In mid-February, Network Rail announced that they would be working round the clock to accelerate the programme of repairs. As a result of this work, Network Rail was able to reopen the line on 4 April, two weeks ahead of schedule.

Network Rail has now published their remit with regard to the South West rail resilience, and it can be seen at: www.networkrail.co.uk/Long-Term-Planning-Process/ (the PDF entitled *West of Exeter route resilience study remit*) and the three key interlinked scenarios they are investigating.

I do appreciate the concern about the rail link to Devon and Cornwall and I hope that, later in the year, you will hear news about what long-term measures will be taken to improve the route's resilience to bad weather.

Yours ever

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

STEPHEN HAMMOND