

27th February 2018

**RE: Transport Select Committee - Rail infrastructure investment**

Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF) Chair, Councillor Geoff Brown spoke to Westminster this week as he reiterated the Task Force's ambition to have a fit for purpose rail network in the South West.

Giving evidence at the Transport Select Committee on rail infrastructure investment, Councillor Brown discussed how a long-term strategic view is needed when it comes to investment in South West rail network. The PRTF already have a 20 Year Plan, 'Closing the Gap', which sets out this long-term view.

The PRTF understand that the Government is planning to produce a proposal, which is expected in next 24 hours to meet the promise of a response by end of February. Whilst the Task Force is looking forward to making progress, any plans must reflect our three priorities for the line; resilience and reliability, journey times and comfort and capacity.

Councillor Brown, said: "In the South West we are speaking with one voice. Our business case reflects the needs of our region, our businesses and our communities. We have been waiting for far too long, and now with less than 24 hours, we expect the government to deliver on its promise to transform our rail network."

The collapse at Dawlish and flooding on the Somerset Levels in 2014 cost the South West economy an estimated £1.2billion.

"We cannot afford any more hits on our economy. We presented a very strong case in the South West for what is needed to improve resilience and reliability for the passengers and to provide faster journey times and capacity and comfort. These are small asks when compared to the investment going to other areas of the country."

Councillor Brown added: "15 months since presenting the 'Closing the Gap' report to the minister and we are still waiting for a response but we're assured we'll get one by the end of the month."

**ENDS**