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Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau  
Minister for Local Government and Communities



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-345  
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/07188/11

William Powell AM  
Chair Petition's committee  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
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I am replying to your letter of 28 November to John Griffiths AM, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, on behalf of the Petitions Committee, as the subject matter is part of my portfolio. I note that the Committee has collected a 556 signature petition calling on the Welsh Government to restore and/or improve rail and bus links between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth.

The Welsh Government committed to prioritise the interventions of the existing National Transport Plan (NTP). This has now been completed and published (7 December). The prioritisation of the NTP has brought forward investment that will make the transport system in Wales work better to help tackle poverty, increase well-being and assist economic growth.

The NTP prioritisation process has focused solely on rescheduling the delivery of the existing interventions within the Plan, rather than making significant amendments. The interventions in the 2010 Plan were assessed using statements drawn from my strategic objectives and the Government's vision for transport.

Prioritisation has redistributed the available budget for transport to give priority to interventions with the best fit to my priorities and our Programme for Government. We had a commitment to prioritise the objectives in the Plan to ensure existing transport funding is used effectively and that future investment decisions are made against our overarching strategic priorities, at a time of growing public finance constraint.

The prioritisation process was not intended to add new schemes to the 2010 Plan. As the NTP did not include any plans to reopen the former railway between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth, I have no plans to consider this scheme in the foreseeable future. The Welsh Government and Network Rail previously looked at the footprint of the former railway line and concluded that it would be an expensive project to bring the infrastructure back into use as most of the line no longer exists, and some of the land has been subject to development. At the time, we did not estimate a cost although it is likely to be very large.

There is already a good local bus service between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth, with thirteen return journeys per day between these locations as well as very good connections with other local bus services and the Bwcabus network.

The prioritisation of the NTP includes plans to deliver improvements to bus services and the introduction of Quality Bus Partnerships where appropriate. The Welsh Government is working with its delivery partners, Carmarthenshire County Council and Ceredigion shire County Council, to improve the quality of the local bus network between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth and we are currently consulting with the bus operators on the introduction of a Quality Bus Partnership on this corridor. I will be able to update the Committee on the outcome of this when the consultation closes.

In summary, I believe that there are good bus links between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth and that the cost of reintroducing rail links would be prohibitively expensive in these times of financial constraint.



**Carl Sargeant AC / AM**

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