



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

4th March 2020

Dear Chancellor of the Exchequer,

Congratulations on your recent appointment. We write as members of the All Party Parliamentary Group on the East Coast Main Line (ECML) and we look forward to working with you as Chancellor, and as an MP whose constituency lies on the East Coast route.

Our group has a shared interest in promoting and campaigning for investment in one of the UK's most strategic rail routes. A third of the UK population lives within 20 minutes of an ECML station and together they produce 41 per cent of the UK's GDP, according to Network Rail's 2018 ECML Route Study. It is therefore a strategic rail route for the UK economy.

Unfortunately, the ECML can no longer cope with the demands placed upon it and, rather than helping to fuel economic growth, it now holds back the communities it serves. The route has suffered from declining reliability and punctuality over the last ten years, is increasingly vulnerable to major disruptions and does not have sufficient capacity for current passenger and freight traffic, let alone predicted future growth. In 2018 there were 12 major incidents on the line, forcing long-distance users to abandon trips and costing the UK economy an estimated £46.28 million. Each major incident equates to a full loss of service per day.

In June 2018, the Government made a very welcome commitment to invest £780 million in the ECML in Control Period 6 (2019-2024) to reduce journey times on key flows and providing new direct links to some cities and town. However, even with these upgrades the ECML will be unable to deliver its full potential due to reliability and punctuality issues along the route, and the fact that in key parts the line will remain full and at capacity.

We believe significant upgrades to the ECML are long overdue, given that the last major investment in the route took place three decades ago. We therefore call upon the Government and Network Rail to work together to produce credible, timely and properly funded plans to upgrade the East Coast Main Line to tackle urgent capacity, performance and resilience issues on the line in the short term, and to ensure that in the long term, the line is HS2 and NPR ready so that the communities served by the line can fully benefit from the introduction of high-speed rail. In particular we believe there is a strong case for:

- Funding Network Rail to invest in the ECML reliability improvements outlined in its Draft Strategic Plan 2019 to 2024;
- New investment in the congested two-track section north of York to improve reliability along the line and support both HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail services;



- New measures to address similar severe bottlenecks on the line such as at Doncaster, Huntingdon and Peterborough, Newark, and Welwyn.
- Grasping the opportunity of released capacity from HS2 to redefine the role of the ECML south of York.

Given that the members of our APPG represent constituencies along the length of the line and belong to several different political parties, there is clearly strong cross-party and cross-country interest in this issue.

We need to work together to ensure the route receives sustained investment where it is most required. We therefore look forward to hearing from you on these pressing issues and hope that you will work with the APPG to secure the improvements this vital route urgently needs.

Yours sincerely,

- Catherine McKinnell MP (Chair)
Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
Philip Davies MP
Julie Elliott MP
Richard Fuller MP
Peter Gibson MP
Sharon Hodgson MP
Dame Diana Johnson MP
Emma Lewell-Buck MP
Rachael Maskell MP
Jason McCartney MP
Grahame Morris MP
Ian Murray MP
Bridget Phillipson MP
Alex Sobel MP
Rt Hon Dame Rosie Winterton MP
Rt Hon Lord Beith

cc. The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport
Andrew Haines, Chief Executive, Network Rail