

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-429
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/07670/12

William Powell AM
Chair Petition's committee
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19 December 2012

Thank you for your letter of 13 November, on behalf of the Petitions Committee. I note that the Committee has received a 1191 signature petition calling on the Welsh Government to re-open the railway line from Carmarthen to Aberystwyth.

Your letter asks if there has been a change in my position since I wrote to you about a similar petition in December 2011. I can confirm that my position remains the same for the reasons outlined below.

As you are aware, I published my prioritised National Transport Plan (NTP) last December detailing the Welsh Government's core funding priorities for transport until 2015. The prioritisation process did not consider including additional projects to the existing Plan. As the reopening of the line between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth was not included in the original NTP it was therefore not prioritised for delivery in the period to 2015.

The Welsh Government has a strong record of reopening railway lines having successfully reinstated the Vale of Glamorgan line in 2005 and the Ebbw Vale line in 2008.

In considering potential lines for reopening, a key factor is the amount and condition of the original trackbed that remains, as this is a major determinant of the overall project cost. The Welsh Government has undertaken a preliminary site visit of the former Carmarthen to Aberystwyth railway. This found that a significant portion of the trackbed has been built on, while other sections are no longer visible. This indicates that ensuring the trackbed is suitable for modern rail operations would be prohibitively expensive in these times of financial constraint.

I note that this conclusion is in line with that of both of the regional transport consortia with an interest in the proposed route, SWWITCH and TraCC, in their respective submissions to the similar petition last year.

It is also important to note that since 2004 the Welsh Government has been instrumental in delivering a package of measures to improve transport links on the Aberystwyth, Lampeter to Carmarthen corridor. This has included the introduction of an hourly bus service on weekdays and, better connections between bus and trains at Aberystwyth and Carmarthen and through ticketing on the route.

In March 2010, Welsh Ministers announced proposals to further improve bus services on this key route, including the introduction of faster journey times between key centres.

Arriva Buses Wales have subsequently introduced a new commercial bus service on this route, without any public subsidy from either the Welsh Government or the local authorities. The Welsh Government will continue to work closely with Arriva Buses Wales and the local authorities to further improve this new commercial bus service, as part of a Quality Bus Partnership Scheme.

I trust that this answers your query.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Sargeant', followed by a vertical line.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM

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