



Department  
for Transport

Westminster Hall Debate Attendees  
House of Commons  
London  
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**'Performance of Southern' Westminster Hall Debate  
8<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

Dear all,

I would like to thank all those who sought a Westminster Hall debate on the performance of Southern railway, and to once again congratulate Nick Herbert for securing one. As many of you will know this issue is a priority for me and I was grateful for the opportunity to discuss it with all those who attended the debate on Wednesday 8 July.

I am grateful, too, to all of you who have met with me, written to me, or forwarded on letters from your constituents, about Southern's performance. The debate provided the opportunity for me to set out the work I have been doing with Network Rail, Transport Focus and the operators. To ensure you are all fully up to date with the progress we are making I have also covered these points below.

However, more importantly the debate allowed MPs from the Southern Franchise route to raise the issues of concern to them. Unfortunately I was unable to fully address all of the points raised in the allotted time but I did promise I would write out to all attendees giving answers to those questions, which you will find in the annex.

I have said on numerous occasions that the performance on Southern Railway has not been good enough. For example there has been a clear

decline on the Brighton Main Line for over three years. I have therefore made it my priority to oversee improvements on this franchise.

I have been working closely with Mark Carne, the Chief Executive of Network Rail. His senior team have conducted a deep dive into the underlying causes of service problems including in the Southern franchise which is feeding into our decisions.

An enhanced performance improvement programme is now being introduced across the Southern franchise in conjunction with the operators to complement existing improvement activities and to further support, strengthen and accelerate improvements for passengers.

A new industry structure has also been put in place to ensure this happens. The industry is united, and absolutely committed to see improvements in these services and, crucially, to make sure that rail customers see the benefits of these improvements.

I have been chairing weekly meetings with senior members of Network Rail to ensure the plans are coming together. Representatives of Southern, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and Transport Focus attend these meetings, the aim of which is to monitor and co-ordinate improvement works in both performance and passenger experience.

Working collaboratively, Network Rail, GTR, and Southern have all taken steps to improve performance and we are already starting to see an improvement to the stability and reliability of services for passengers.

However, we are all determined that this is not enough and we still have a way to go. This will take some time, but Network Rail have invested heavily in improving the experience of the passenger through various customer based initiatives such as improved technology, an increase in staff numbers and the establishment of better communications between the company and passengers, especially during disruptions.

I am also closely monitoring the Network Rail, Southern and GTR 'Joint Improvement Plan' for the Brighton Main Line, published in February.

This plan set out immediate improvements and also set longer term actions to help improve reliability and performance on the railway in the future. Monthly updates on progress against the plan is published by operators each month.

I would like for you all to see for yourself all the work that is taking place and to review the plan for delivering a better service for rail customers on Southern routes travelling into London Bridge, Victoria, Cannon Street and Charing Cross Stations. As such I am hosting two events to give you an opportunity for you to see the detailed work and ask questions on behalf of your Constituents.

I was pleased with the strong attendance of Southern and GTR Thameslink South Route MPs at the first London Bridge event today with Network Rail, Southern, GTR and Transport Focus. This event focused on the Southern and GTR Thameslink South Route and was preceded by a short tour of works at London Bridge station. This event I believe was a success; a separate Southeastern Franchise Route event following the same format is planned for 10<sup>th</sup> September. Invitations will be sent to Southeastern Route MPs shortly.

I hope that this provides some insight on the approach the industry and I are taking to improve performance on the Southern franchise - I do hope you and your constituents start seeing the benefit of this work as we make progress.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CLPerry', with a long vertical stroke extending downwards from the end.

**CLAIRE PERRY**