

Annex A

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Rd
London
SW1P 4DR

Dear Secretary of State,

BRIGHTON MAIN LINE – DRIVING THE SOUTHERN ECONOMY

We are writing on behalf of the business community and residents along the Brighton Mainline to set out our thoughts on the long-term development of work on train services from the South Coast into London.

Knowing that Government continues to work hard with the train operator and other partners to resolve issues around the line, we want to stress the importance of this railway service to our regional economy. We underline the importance of long-term work with Government and Network Rail to ensure that railway can continue to support economic growth in Brighton and Hove, in Crawley and Gatwick and in Croydon; and the many businesses and employers across our region who rely on reliable and effective railway services to help drive our economy.

With a political debate that has recently been heavily focused on the North of England, we are concerned that Ministers overlook the importance of our region to the national economy.

As part of the highly successful South East region, the Coast to Capital area contains 1.9 million residents and contributes £48.5 billion to national GVA. We have exports of £9.1 billion and tourist income of £3.6 billion. 976,000 people are employed in over 84,000 local businesses, as well as making commuter journeys to and from our three main economic areas of London, Gatwick and Brighton and Hove. Recent figures show us to be one of the most successful areas of the country in attracting foreign investment, with 47 separate investments in our region last year.

Efficient and reliable railway services are a critical part of maintaining our regional competitiveness. We are concerned that the current industrial action and poor performance is eroding confidence in our region. Our main line rail service ought to be a high quality link which draws people to the region.

Instead, it is all too often seen as unreliable, overcrowded and not fit for purpose. Only 35% of passengers in our region believe that the service represents value for money. Only 36% of commuters are satisfied with the punctuality and reliability of the service. This risks putting our region at a tipping point where business investment and economic patterns are permanently disrupted by the performance of the railway.

We recognise that Government is working hard with the different parties to resolve current performance issues on the line and we welcome the creation of the [Chris Gibb committee] and the

[£20m initiative] in place to try and do this. Along with other non-railway partners in the region, we would be very pleased to engage with and support this work in any way that we can. But separately, we would also like to engage Ministers on other issues that are critical to maintain confidence in the railway and support the growth of our region.

First, we look for swift confirmation that Government acknowledges the long-term issue of overcrowding and limited capacity on the route and is prepared to commit to investment through the Network Rail investment programme to mitigate this. The Local Enterprise Partnership, and our partners, believe that upgrading the Brighton Main Line Upgrade is one of the most important single interventions which can provide a step-change boost to our economy economy. We urge you to confirm that Ministers share this view, and to release the study on alternatives to the Brighton Main Line Upgrade which was commissioned last year.

Second, we encourage you to focus attention and resourcing on developing a cost effective way of increasing capacity on our line through upgrade proposals which Network Rail are developing. The Brighton Main Line Upgrade is needed to cope with existing levels of usage, and would become more urgent should the Government decide to increase the capacity of Gatwick Airport. We are engaging and working hard with Network Rail on the development of these ideas and we would welcome confirmation that Government also sees the value in them.

Third, we would strongly welcome a positive announcement on the delivery of the Upgrade scheme at the earliest possible opportunity. This would provide welcome encouragement for transport in our area and it would show that Government is committed to keeping our area open for business and is committed to maximising capacity on the line. We are also keen to engage with the Department on issues around station capacity. This includes maintaining your commitment to expanding the station at Gatwick by [20??], in spite of cost overruns from Network Rail; and to addressing capacity issues at other stations including Norwood Junction, East Croydon and Brighton.

Fourth, we would like commitment from Government, Network Rail and the train operator that proper measures will be put in place to ensure the smooth introduction of the new [name] rolling stock, and moves to support the new timetable on the Southern network in 2018. Especially because of disruption over recent months, our region cannot afford to be the victim of further poor introduction of new services as this new fleet is rolled out.

As always, we are willing to do our part to help with this scheme and to coordinate local support for an ambitious package for investment in transport in our region, in order to support the continued development of the economy of the Coast to Capital region.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that this region can receive the railway investment necessary to maintain our contribution to the national economy.