



House of Commons

Dear North Devon Railway Alliance

I would like to begin by offering my apologies for not being able to join you today. I want to pass on my appreciation for the important work that you all do.

In March, last time this group was convened, the sustained frequency of storms and their impacts on the railways were on the agenda, including the closure of the Dawlish Line, the line between Taunton and Exeter St Davids, and the Barnstaple line. The following week, alongside colleagues, I met with the Secretary of State for Transport to discuss long term resilience for the railway in the South West. In this, we continued to push for a combined Strategic Rail Plan, the need for which we felt was well understood by the Transport Secretary. Since the convention in March, after I wrote to the Minister for Rail, Lord Hendy, he visited the Dawlish line to see the work taking place.

Devon has very recently felt the effects of heatwaves, with more to come. I know the effect this will have on the railways - particularly on the banks on the Waterloo line - and those who work to maintain them.

I greatly value the work to date on making the case for the North Devon line improvements and look forward to hearing the outcome of today's discussions.

In Westminster, I've continued to work with other South West Members of Parliament, including Fred Thomas, Luke Pollard, and Cornish colleagues, to press for further action from central government. In June, I questioned the Transport Secretary in the Commons about investment in our local and regional railways, as well as the need for our existing railway to be more frequent, reliable and resilient.

Finally, I'd like to commend you for your ongoing commitment and cooperation in tackling our shared challenges. I will continue to convene colleagues and push for the South West to get its fair share of funding and strategic focus.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Race'.

Steve Race
Member of Parliament for Exeter