

Mark Langman
Western Route Managing Director
Network Rail
1 Eversholt Street
London NW1 2DN

My Ref: AM0252.OT

29 January 2020

Dear Mark,

Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth Resilience Project

I write to you again regarding the resilience works at Parson's tunnel. This is following on from our recent meeting in Westminster and also after meeting many of my constituents who have expressed genuine concerns regarding the works.

I think it essential to make it clear from the outset, as I have done previously, that the many objections both I and my constituents have raised have been in the spirit of achieving the very best possible outcome for the resilience works. I am keen to express that this is not an 'anti' rail campaign.

We must ensure that all avenues and proposals have been explored as a part of the consultation process. This is an historic, iconic and much-loved part of my constituency and as such any proposals need to be given thorough consideration before a final decision is made.

Consultation

Many of my constituents have expressed concerns in relation to the current consultation. Of concern to many is the lack of clarity they have been encountering at these events, and also the confusion over the scale model that has been viewed. I am advised that the model itself does not give a correct representation of the actual planned works, and is not to scale.

Many have stated that it is unclear as to where the old line as it was, and therefore it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much beach is to be lost. Also, whilst it may be the case that less beach is going to be lost than in previous proposals, the model only gives an indication of the beach at mean low water. Many have clearly stated to me that they believe this to be deliberately misleading.

There is also confusion as to exactly how far these proposed works will impact upon the beach itself. I have been informed that the new sea wall will not in fact move any further out than the current boundary of Sprey Point. However, when one looks at the model, whilst the physical 'wall' may stay within those boundaries the revetments actually extend far further than this.

More clarity is needed as to the exact extent of the beach loss from Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth. At this stage of the consultation I would have expected more granular detail.

Alternatives to the Current Proposal

As I have previously stated, *all* alternative suggestions need to be explored. The overriding sense of frustration I have encountered with individual constituents and groups is the lack of consideration being given to any alternatives to those being considered under the consultation process. The public perception is that Network Rail have only considered the current proposal as it is the most cost-effective option. Clearly cost, and expense to the public purse is hugely significant and widely acknowledged.

All of those that have approached me on the subject have expressed a view that whilst this essential work needs to be carried to ensure our line is resilient and future proofed, there is a real opportunity to create something of value not only in terms of aesthetics, but also amenity use, safety, environmental impact and as far as is possible to maintain and enhance this historic stretch of railway and to preserve as much of the much loved beach as is possible.

I have spoken to representatives from community groups who are extremely concerned in relation to the current proposals. An alternative has been presented to me by highly qualified and knowledgeable engineers who have extensive experience in this field. There is genuine concern that the current proposals will not protect the line from the sea, and also that the methods that are being considered may well be extremely detrimental to the wider area which may include scouring, significant sand loss and irreparable damage to the local environment and wildlife.

I have little doubt you will have been approached by many of my constituents who have suggested alternatives to your current proposals. As stated above, I have met with representatives of Save the Teignmouth & Holcombe Beach and they have presented to me their detailed alternative suggestions. I felt it important to bring these to your attention and have therefore attached them to this correspondence for you to consider. These are of course the views of the group who have substantial support.

Environmental Impact Assessment

I do have concerns in relation to the EIA. There is confusion as to exactly where the process is. Clearly, the EIA is one of the most important and underpinning parts of the consultation. However, my constituents advise me that when they have raised this very issue at the consultation events, they have been given conflicting advice. Most I have spoken to advise me that the EIA is in fact under way, but is in its very early stages. Further, I am advised that it envisaged that the EIA will not be completed until at least October and will then be submitted as part of the

Planned Works application. It is notable this is post consultation.

Of concern to my constituents is that this process is not as open and as transparent as it should be. Serious consideration needs to be given to the impact upon the local area itself and also the proliferation of sea life, flora and fauna in the area some of which may well have protected status. I would therefore seek assurances from you that all statutory agencies will be consulted in greater detail on the potential impacts of these works, that this part of the consultation (as with all others) is open and transparent and that the various statutory agencies will fully exercise their duties. Clearly, all of the concerns raised by my constituents should be considered especially given that some have significant professional experience in such matters.

Economic Impact

Many I have spoken to have expressed serious concerns with regard to the economic impact on the area as a whole should the proposed works go ahead in their current form.

It is estimated that the visitor economy to Teignbridge is worth an estimated £185m a year. There are serious concerns that works proposed will cause such aesthetic damage that visitor numbers are likely to be affected. Also, the loss of the beach will have a huge impact upon the area.

Generations have used this beach and many who have relocated to the area say that a large part of that decision was due to the access to the beach. Clearly holidaymakers will feel the same. Furthermore, any negative publicity surrounding the works will have an impact as will any environmental impact such as we saw with the silt dumping most recently at Sprey Point.

My constituents advise me that they have seen little evidence to suggest that the economic impact of the works has been given full consideration. It is appreciated fully that the economic loss to the area in not completing the resilience works is hugely significant, however it is felt that this should not detract from making this project the best it can possibly be.

Amenity Use

Following on from the above, there has been great concern expressed to me regarding the currently proposed amenity use. Many have told me that the current proposals are cold and featureless and lack any appreciation or acknowledgement of the heritage of the area. This is an iconic section of Brunel's line. Sprey Point has been in existence for many, generation and is part of the fabric and history of the area. The significant loss of the beach and the proposed narrow and featureless walkway has done little to persuade my constituents that the area will continue to maintain its historical and cultural importance.

Conclusion

It is without doubt that both myself, and the community at large welcome the upgrading and resilience works. Our rail line needs to be preserved and maintained for the future. There is no objection or doubt that essential work needs to be undertaken, and that as in every such scenario compromises will have to be made.

However, this is a real opportunity to not only complete these works, but also to make the very best of what we have whilst bearing in mind safety, cost and what is realistically achievable.

Assurances are needed that all proposals will be given sufficient weight during the consultation process in order to achieve the very best for our beautiful coast and beaches, whilst ensuring the long term viability of our heritage and iconic rail line.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[[signature]]

Anne Marie Morris MP
Newton Abbot