

## Plans Submitted for Improving the Rail Network in the South-West of England

SCHEMES to improve the railway network in the south west of England costing a total of less than £1.2 billion are set out in a plan which has been sent to ministers. The authors of the report, Lord Berkeley and Michael Byng, say the costing methods are in accordance with the new industry standard, 'giving new confidence for funders and promoters.'

One of the report's authors, Tony Berkeley, added: "Government's commitment to rebalancing the economy from the South East to the Midlands and North, most recently by the reported creation of a Northern Transport Acceleration Council with £6 billion funding, must also be applied to the South West, where a contribution of less than 1% of the cost of HS2 would bring massive benefits to this region which sometimes feels much forgotten."

The report also points out the Government's commitment to zero carbon by 2050. It continues: 'The improved rail services in Cornwall have shown very significant increases in patronage, particularly on shorter commuter journeys, and this must surely be the focus of future enhancements alongside resilience.'

The proposals build on upgrades in recent years, which have included the introduction of half-hourly services on the Cornish main line between Plymouth and Penzance, and also on the branch from Truro to Falmouth Docks, with a crossing place being restored at Penryn.

The new proposals, however, include reopening the former Southern main line between Exeter, Okehampton and Plymouth, redoubling the Southern route between Salisbury and Exeter and restoring passenger services to Minehead, Padstow and Fowey. A new link would be created across central Cornwall between Newquay, St Austell and Truro, with some trains continuing to Falmouth. The standard of service on the Tarka Line between Exeter and Barnstaple would also be improved by the Exeter-Okehampton-Plymouth scheme.

Two schemes for the Newquay area have already been shortlisted by the Department for Transport as candidates for development funding.