

Councillor Max Wilkinson
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Mark Hopwood
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RE: Cheltenham Spa station works – Honeybourne Line extension

Dear Mark

Much of the focus on the works at Cheltenham Spa station will be on the lengthened timescale of the car park works. This will undoubtedly cause frustration. However, as Cheltenham Borough Council's walking and cycling member champion I would like to press the case for your company to proceed with investment in active travel links to the site.

You will be aware that local people have been campaigning for the extension to the Honeybourne Line for more than 30 years (almost as long as I have been alive). Lengthening the cycleway and footpath to the junction of Lansdown Road and Shelburne Road will certainly remove barriers to active transport, particularly cycling, created by busy roads in the area of the station. The news that this aspect of the station upgrade works has been delayed indefinitely is a huge frustration to Cheltenham people.

I understand that GWR is a private enterprise and is driven by the franchise agreement with DfT, as well as the profit motive. But equally the company must abide by the commitments it makes to the communities it serves. Indeed, the GWR website has a page titled *Delivering a sustainable future*. The page states that the company puts 'sustainability and stakeholders at the heart' of everything we do. It adds that GWR's strategic approach allows it to respond to 'social, economic and environmental risks, while continuing to build strong partnerships with our customers and communities'. Furthermore, your website states that you will:

'help customers make more sustainable, door-to-door, travel choices, but identifying opportunities to enhance our 'green travel' and integrated transport options'

I understand that you will be seeking to get best value for your franchise deal from the government. However, a failure to commit to the existing policies you publish on your website will place in question the promises you may make in any future franchise bid. As the local councillor charged with promoting walking and cycling as a mode of transport, I must urge you to find the money which will enable you to fulfil the commitments to the values your company claims to uphold. The most recent financial statements available on its website show that First Group, which owns GWR, made £332million profit – a figure in excess of expectations.

As an operator of a key public service, your responsibilities exceed simple profit and the financial bottom line. I hope to read more on your plan as soon as possible and would be happy to meet with you or your team at your convenience.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Max Wilkinson
Cheltenham Borough Council
Walking and cycling member champion