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for Transport

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From the Minister of State  
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*Dear Richard,*

Thank you for your letter of 7 February to the Prime Minister, enclosing correspondence from 12 Parish Councils about East West Rail. Your letter has been passed to this Department and I am replying as the Minister responsible for this issue.

I recognise the strength of local feeling towards East West Rail, and the importance of engaging in the right way, at the right time, with the communities which would be affected by the scheme.

I am aware that the Department for Transport, and my predecessor, have received a number of representations from BFARe setting out the points detailed in Mike Barlow's letter of 2 February, and the Department has previously responded on those points. I would make the following additional observations.

It is inevitable that, with a project as complex as East West Rail, that the quality and depth of information available to East West Rail Company (EWR Co.), as promoters of the scheme, will change over time, as development work is undertaken. This may mean that information which formed the basis of, for example, a public consultation will, in the fullness of time, be proved to be incorrect or incomplete. Scheme costs will change over time as more information becomes available to the project. This does not mean that the important task of public engagement has been undertaken in bad faith, but it does mean that EWR Co. should revisit original assumptions on which decisions have been made, to ensure that they remain accurate in the light of new information – including information received as part of public consultation. This would include (but not necessarily be limited to) information on scheme costs and environmental impacts.

In that vein, it is absolutely right that EWR Co. continues to review the business case for the railway in light of external factors such as demand levels. The Department for Transport does not routinely publish business cases, so it would not be correct to say that the business case is absent. EWR Co. is currently undertaking an exercise to review the strategic and economic case for the railway and to consider mode options, routes and funding constraints in that light. I am expecting to review its findings at the end of May, and would be pleased to discuss them with you at this point.

*Yours ever,*

*Wendy*

**WENDY MORTON MP**

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT**