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for Transport

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06 MAY 2016

Many thanks for your letter of 5 April in respect of the Westminster Hall debate on 16 March and the rail industry's accountability for poor performance.

Network Rail are held accountable for their performance through the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). As you may be aware, the ORR imposed a £2m penalty upon Network Rail last autumn for poor performance in the South East. In response, Network Rail have agreed with ORR a reparation fund of £4.1m to cover a range of performance improvement schemes including more station management and incident response staff, improved incident management and better customer management during disruption.

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) are held to account through their Franchise Agreement with the Department for Transport. GTR failed to meet their benchmarks for the number of cancellations they are responsible for, which has triggered a financial penalty under the terms of their franchise agreement as well as additional remedial action which includes contracting a minimum amount of drivers, rolling stock reliability and better customer information.

In order to bring focus to these activities, I instigated the monthly South East Quadrant taskforce last year which involves representatives from Network Rail, GTR, Southeastern and Transport Focus. This group is committed to ensuring that passengers see the benefits of these improvements. However, it should also be noted that we are currently in the second year of a four year plan. By 2018 the full benefits of the transformational Thameslink work will be seen. We will return the network to the performance that all passengers deserve, through increased capacity, a new station at London Bridge and robust, durable infrastructure. We need to allow time for the plan to be delivered and for the subsequent improvement to performance to be realised.

Once again, thank you for your involvement in the debate and your interest in this matter. I can assure you that the Government and industry are working hard to improve passenger journeys.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

CLAIRE PERRY