

Mick Whitley MP
Birkenhead

04 October 2022

Rt. Hon. Anne-Marie Trevelyan,
Secretary of State for Transport.
Great Minster House,
Horseferry Road, London,
SW1P 2AA.

Dear Secretary of State

Re: Avanti West Coast.

During the summer, Avanti West Coast announced cuts to the frequency of its train services and suspended ticket sales at short notice. These cuts to services have led to a weekly loss of 220,000 seats between major towns and cities in the North West of England and North Wales, chaos for passengers and businesses, and enormous damage to the regional and cross-border economies. The cost to the public purse is vast.

Outrageously, Avanti and the former Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, have sought to blame the disruption on unofficial strike action, which has been decisively exposed as false by the train drivers' union ASLEF.

To blame drivers for Avanti's failure to operate the services it has committed to running is unacceptable. In truth, the responsibility lies with Avanti, which has failed to honour its contractual obligation to train new drivers.

Despite all this, the government has handed tens of millions of pounds to Avanti in performance and management fees, including a £4 million bonus for 'customer performance'.

As senior Councillors, Members of Parliament and the Senedd representing constituencies and communities across the North West and North Wales, we are calling on the Government to ensure that Avanti urgently delivers a credible plan to restore the timetable and commit to recouping any taxpayer's money back for services that haven't run. It is simply not sustainable or reasonable for the operator to rely on the goodwill of drivers working on their days off.

It is our view that Avanti's demonstrable failure to provide the services which our constituents deserve has shown that its franchise agreement should not be renewed when it expires on October 16th and that the service should instead be returned to public ownership.

We also believe that the experience of recent months has highlighted serious issues with rail connectivity in the Mersey-Dee cross-border region. We therefore fully

Mick Whitley MP
The Lauries Centre, 142 Cloughton Road Birkenhead, Wirral CH41 6EY
Telephone: 0151 650 5494 Email: mick.whitley.mp@parliament.uk

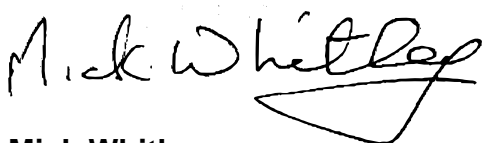
 Mick Whitley MP  @MickWhitleyMP

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support Growth Track 360, a campaign led by a cross-border alliance of business, political and public sector leaders to secure £1bn of rail investment across the region, in its calls for:

- Avanti to provide each-way services to Chester and North Wales (Wrexham and the North Wales Coast Main Line Stations to Holyhead) from London in the emergency timetable;
- Avanti to honour its pledge to restore and improve direct services to Chester and North Wales in the December 2022 timetable to equal or exceed the volume in place prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Yours Sincerely,



Mick Whitley
Member of Parliament for Birkenhead

and:

Debbie Abrahams MP Oldham East and Saddleworth	Dan Carden MP Liverpool Walton	Peter Dowd MP Bootle
Sir Mark Hendrick MP Preston	Sir George Howarth MP Knowsley	Mike Amesbury MP Weaver Vale
Rosie Cooper MP West Lancashire	Andrew Gwynne MP Denton and Reddish	Kate Hollern MP Blackburn
Kim Johnson MP Liverpool Riverside	Afzal Khan Manchester Gorton	Rebecca Long-Bailey MP Salford and Eccles
Chris Matheson MP City of Chester	Charlotte Nichols MP Warrington North	Yasmin Qureshi MP Bolton South East
Tony Lloyd MP Rochdale	Marie Rimmer MP St Helen's South and Whiston	Derek Twigg MP Halton

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Paula Barker MP Liverpool Wavertree	Mark Tami MP Alyn and Deeside	Margaret Greenwood MP Wirral West
Mike Kane MP Wythenshawe and Sale East	Ken Skates MS Clwyd South	Lesley Griffiths MS Wrexham and Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales
Jack Sargeant MS Alyn and Deeside	Cllr Janette Williamson Leader, Wirral Council	Cllr Louise Gittens Leader, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Cllr Ian B Roberts Leader, Flintshire County Council	Cllr Liam Robinson Portfolio Holder for Transport and Air Quality, Liverpool City Region	Lord Barry Jones President of the Mersey-Dee Alliance and The Deeside Business Forum

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