

## **STATEMENT TO COUNCIL FROM CLLR ROGERS SYMONDS ABOUT ELECTRIFICATION OF THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY**

Brunel's GWR - God's Wonderful Railway as it sometimes known is in need of modernisation, yet the Core strategy does not mention Rail – see 6F – “Well Connected” - a dreadful omission. Journey times from Bath to Paddington have lengthened, yet the contribution that the railway makes to life in Bath has increased with more people willing to travel both ways.

It is surely time that the line from Paddington to Penzance/Swansea was electrified, yet the Government has delayed a decision about whether and how far the electrification of the GWR should go. The welcome investment in our railways cannot be complete until this electrification is done.

Cardiff, Bristol and Swindon have formed an alliance to lobby Govt for new High speed Trains and for electification. The problem here is that even if this powerful grouping is successful there is no guarantee that Bath will be included, as the electrification could bypass Bath and get to Bristol via the northern loop from Swindon. If this happens it is probably unnecessary to point out that it is possible that direct trains from Bath to Paddington could be discontinued.

At a time when rail passengers are increasing in this area the Bath – London route is vital for economic and cultural development in Bath and North East Somerset. We must fight hard to be included in any electrification scheme.

I hope the cabinet can agree that this issue is of vital importance to Bath and North East Somerset and indeed to the rest of the West Country. Therefore I request that the Cabinet contacts this Bristol/Cardiff/Swindon alliance, in order to join them in their efforts to upgrade the GWR and contacts our two local Members of Parliament to lobby the Govt about this issue on our behalf.

Cllr Roger Symonds