



## Department for Transport

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From the Minister of State  
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13 August 2021

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your letter of 6 August about the Western Rail Link to Heathrow (WRLtH) scheme.

Your continued support for the scheme on behalf of the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce is welcome and I share your enthusiasm regarding WRLtH's potential to contribute to improving connectivity, to the levelling-up agenda, and its positive impacts towards UK carbon emission targets.

I am pleased that you welcome the Department's commitment to include WRLtH within our 2021 Spending Review bid. As I have stated recently, the scheme must be fair and viable for taxpayers, and so its progression is still subject to a satisfactory business case and agreement of an acceptable financial contribution with Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL).

Of course, the greater the financial contribution from HAL, the more credible the business case and the more favourably the scheme will be viewed by HM Treasury within Spending Review negotiations.

The Department continues to engage in discussions with HAL and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regarding the timeline and future of the scheme, while appreciating the significant financial difficulties induced by the pandemic on the aviation industry. This includes discussions of the scheme in both a two and three runway scenario to ensure compliance with the CAA's surface access policy.

I appreciate the collaborative intentions of your request to access the WRLtH Business Case, however the Department maintains its position that disclosure of this information cannot be granted presently.

This is due to the ongoing development of the scheme which exempts disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Section 35(1)(a) – Formulation of Government Policy, and Section 43(2) – Prejudice to Commercial Interests. While frustrating, this is necessary to allow us to develop and refine the scheme to ensure the best possible case can be made.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your ongoing support for the scheme and I hope that our progress can continue towards the delivery of a Western Rail Link to Heathrow.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

**Chris Heaton-Harris MP**

**Minister of State for Transport**