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Cornwall Chamber of Commerce

The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP

18th May 2026

Dear Minister,

Re: The Case for Funding High-Speed Wi-Fi on Great Western Railway Services to Cornwall
I am writing as Cornwall Chamber of Commerce on behalf of Cornish businesses to strongly support the case for prioritising Government funding for high-speed Wi-Fi on Great Western Railway (GWR) services to Cornwall, particularly at a time when other regions are also being considered for this investment.

Cornwall faces long-standing and well-documented challenges in terms of physical and digital connectivity. These challenges have been compounded by the loss of its direct London air service, further increasing reliance on long-distance rail travel as the primary means of accessing national markets, government, and investment opportunities. As a result, rail connectivity is not simply a convenience for Cornwall; it is a critical economic lifeline.

While Wi-Fi is already available on many trains, the existing service on GWR routes is frequently intermittent. This is largely due to Devon and Cornwall's challenging landscape and topology, which disrupts conventional mobile-signal-based connectivity. These geographic challenges do most rail routes in England to the same extent, where flatter terrain enables more consistent mobile coverage and better baseline performance from standard onboard Wi-Fi systems.

I have personally experienced the trial high-speed Wi-Fi service now under consideration. Its satellite and 5G based technology delivers a reliable, high-quality connection even through Devon and Cornwall's most challenging terrain. The difference is substantial and transformational, turning previously unproductive journeys into usable working time.
For Cornwall-based businesses, this improvement is particularly significant. Journey times to London and other major centres regularly range between five and seven hours. Without a robust internet connection, this time is effectively lost to productivity. In contrast, regions with shorter travel times are less severely affected by limitations in onboard connectivity, as the window of disruption to the working day is far smaller.

A lot of business travellers drive to Exeter or Taunton saving over 1 hour on train journey time. In that 1 hour in the office or home they can get more work done than they can in the 2-3hrs on the train whilst struggling to access their emails or cloud file storage.

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High-speed Wi-Fi on GWR services would therefore deliver a disproportionate benefit to Cornwall's economy compared with regions already better served by infrastructure and shorter journey times. It would enable business owners, professionals, and remote workers to remain connected, responsive, and competitive while travelling, helping to offset the structural disadvantages created by geography and distance.

Investment in this technology would represent a practical, targeted intervention to support regional equality, economic resilience, and productivity in one of the UK's most peripheral regions. It would demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring that Cornwall is not left further behind as digital connectivity becomes ever more central to business and public life.

I respectfully urge you to give serious consideration to prioritising Cornwall and GWR services when decisions on funding for high-speed onboard Wi-Fi are made.

Yours sincerely,

Toby Parkins
Interim CEO
Cornwall Chamber of Commerce