

Ken Skates AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport



Rt Hon Chris Grayling
Secretary of State for Transport
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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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I am writing to you with regard to the Hitachi Class 800 trains purchased under your £5.7bn Intercity Express Programme to serve First Group's Great Western Railway service, which includes south and west Wales.

It has been brought to my attention that this new fleet of trains does not include any bilingual signage, and the onboard electronic signage does not function bilingually in English and Welsh. I am disappointed to learn of this and believe that a failure to provide such basic services in Welsh does not reflect the fact that the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 makes Welsh an official language in Wales. The Welsh Government is committed to promoting bilingualism and increasing the use of the Welsh language, and wishes to ensure that its status as an official language is reflected across Wales.

Technological developments make it easier to provide information in more than one language and providing services and information in more than one language is a norm in many European countries (Belgian railways being one example). You have made a commitment in your own statutory Welsh Language Scheme not to prevent or hinder the use of the Welsh language: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/welsh-language-scheme>.

I would be grateful to understand how this statutory scheme was considered in the drafting of the contract requirements for the Intercity Express Programme, and why Welsh language considerations were omitted. Regardless of the reason for the omission, I would request that the contract is amended immediately and that Welsh language considerations are fully implemented in the new fleet.

I am also aware that [REDACTED] of GWR wrote to my colleague, the Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning in January 2018 noting that GWR had been working with the Welsh Language Commissioner with a view to increasing Welsh language provision on board train services. I would be grateful if you would contact [REDACTED] to ascertain what exact measures need to be put into place to allow GWR to increase their use of the Welsh language within the current (and any future) contract.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

