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Dear Kate

### **Torbay Railway Improvement Work**

Thank you for your email on behalf of the Leader of the Council, Steve Darling, about our planned improvement works in Torbay. I'm grateful to you for getting in touch and I'm determined we do everything possible to minimise disruption for rail passengers, road users, local businesses and communities in Torbay.

To support this, we plan to demolish the existing bridge while the line is already closed for planned rail upgrade work on the weekends 8-10 January and 15-17 January 2022. The construction of the new bridge will then take place over five Saturday nights, when trains aren't running, at the end of January and beginning of February. This will allow us to deliver our work more quickly – reducing the impact on the road and rail network.

We will be replacing the existing bridge with a modern structure, designed to cope with 21<sup>st</sup> century traffic and with a 125-year lifespan. We did look at whether we could repair and strengthen the existing structure to help further reduce disruption for local people. However, surveys found that the bridge was in poor condition and that replacing it was the only realistic option. We also want to avoid imposing a weight restriction over the bridge.

Given the strength of evidence towards replacing the bridge, the option selection process undertaken at GRIP stage 3 found there were no viable alternatives. I can also confirm there is very little room for slippage in the programme so we are absolutely committed to delivering this work within the timeframe agreed with you for the road closure.

Of course, given the complexity of the work required, which also includes diverting utility services, there is always a risk that issues may arise that impact on the programme of work. However, my communications team will continue to work jointly with you on messaging to local people, so that we are doing everything possible to reduce the impact on their day-to-day lives.

I gather that further discussions between our respective teams have continued since your email and a joint communications plan is being developed. I've also asked our Industry Programme Director, Christian Irwin, to reach out to you to provide additional support. Thanks again for raising this issue, if I can be of any further assistance, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Handforth'.

**Michelle Handforth**  
Wales and Western managing director