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### **Network Rail Cuts:**

I want to see a safe, efficient, integrated, accessible and affordable transport system that protects and creates good jobs, reduces carbon emissions and drives economic growth across our country. However, I worry that instead, our railways are in a state of continued managed decline.

I am aware that last April, leaked Network Rail documents were seen by The Independent newspaper. These revealed that current funding would not let Network Rail operate, maintain and renew its tracks, bridges and earthworks infrastructure. It said there will be fewer repairs over the next five years, and there could be more obstructions that cause delays and accidents due to an inability to clear them. At a time of record cancellations and delays, as well as rising fares, that is the last thing that passengers deserve to hear.

I worry that a lack of reliability is driving people away from the railways when we should be encouraging their use instead. In my opinion, the approach the Government is taking is shortsighted and will lead to higher costs in the long run, harming our public finances and leaving taxpayers to foot the bill.

The 2023 King's Speech included a commitment by the Government to introduce a Draft Rail Reform Bill which is required to implement many of the Government's proposed rail reforms, including the establishment of a new body to oversee rail transport. However, this legislation has not yet been allocated any parliamentary time and it is not clear if it will ever become law.

More widely, I support an approach to the railways that would bring contracts into public ownership as they expire or are broken through a failure to deliver, consistent with set fiscal rules. I believe we need to ensure a rolling programme of electrification to improve services and decarbonise our transport system.

As you may be aware, the Opposition recently launched an expert review of UK rail and transport infrastructure. It will be chaired by the former chief executive of Siemens UK and will look at how transport network delivery can be better managed. I will be following developments with interest.

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