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Direct Line: 01267 224647 Date: 28/1/14

This matter is being dealt with by:  
Trafodir y mater hwn gan: Mr Richard  
Workman, Director of Technical Services  
Carmarthenshire County Council

Dear Minister

### **Transport Arrangements in Swansea Bay City Region**

Thank you for your letter of 17th January setting out your intentions with regard to transport arrangements and transport funding from April 2014.

As you know, the four local authorities making up the city region are fully supportive of the City Region approach, and we are all keen to work with the City Region Board and with you as Minister to make real progress in developing the region and supporting economic growth through a variety of measures, including improvements to transport infrastructure.

Indeed the four authorities have been considering priorities for future investment in transport infrastructure and have determined that the key criterion for prioritisation is that projects must support business and encourage economic growth. I note that you will be asking the City Region Board to advise on transport priorities. The Swansea Bay City Region Board has already given some high level consideration to strategic priorities for transport investment. In addition it is proposed that the City Region Board considers the draft delivery plan for 2014/15 and subsequent years at its meeting at the end of the month.

The four authorities are keen to support this process, and to support the Board in its deliberations. I understand that the Board has not yet made provision for advice on transport issues, and recognising the importance of this and the need for it to happen quickly, the four authorities are prepared to fund this for the first year. This will enable options to be discussed, priorities to be determined, bids developed and programmes to be drawn up.

As you know SWWITCH currently undertakes a number of roles, some strategic and others more operational. Some of the work of SWWITCH is concerned with funding, claims and preparation of accounts for audit and although the financial year ends on 31st March, the closure of accounts, payment of invoices, submission of final claims etc would normally be undertaken in the following few months (April - June). It would be helpful to discuss how best this work can be handled in order to avoid issues for local authorities and for the Welsh Government in meeting grant administration and audit requirements.

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Redundancy notices will now be issued to SWWITCH staff, as their posts are no longer funded. However most of the staff are entitled to three months notice, which means that they will not leave until the new financial year. Since these posts and functions have been funded by Welsh Government, I ask that salary and redundancy costs incurred (including those incurred early in the new financial year) are covered by the Welsh Government.

I note that you are considering the future and funding of Travel Plan Coordinators. These staff will be issued with redundancy notices, though these can of course be withdrawn if it becomes clear that there will be funding available or if the posts transfer elsewhere. It would of course be helpful to understand how this will be handled as soon as you are in a position to let me know.

Finally, the four South West Wales authorities recognise the benefits of working as a region, and the need to support business in the way that we work. Bus funding, including payment to bus operators in respect of kilometres operated, have been managed at a regional level this year, and this has provided consistency for private bus operating companies in the region. Our initial thoughts are that this element would best be managed regionally in the future, to avoid a multiplicity of quality standards and reimbursement rates to operators and to avoid operators having to submit four claims instead of the current one claim. We may therefore pool an element of bus funding that will now go to individual authorities. This demonstrates our awareness of the needs of business and willingness to work collaboratively at a regional level.

I hope these comments are helpful. I look forward to working with you and the City Region Board to establish the most appropriate mechanisms to support the City Region, and would be delighted to meet with you to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

**Councillor Colin Evans**  
**Chair of SWWITCH**