

DATE

Dear

Many thanks for visiting Saltash Town Council and meeting with our members last week. We hope these meetings can happen regularly and are useful to both parties. Amongst the number of issues discussed, the works to the Saltash Tunnel are obviously very important and we seek some urgent assistance in seeing additional rail services added at Saltash in the December 2025 timetable.

The text below forms the basis of a letter we are sending to key stakeholders in order to try and influence these additional calls.

Saltash Town Council have been made aware of extensive and significantly disruptive work that is due to take place to the Saltash Tunnel and the associated key section of the A38 for an entire 12-month period.

National Highways have outlined the extent of the work which will impact users of the A38, Saltash Tunnel and Tamar Bridge for a 12-month period from October 2024 through until Autumn 2025. The impact on the town of Saltash which is completely constrained by the A38 route will be significant and is likely to go beyond the 45–60-minute delays that National Highways modelling is predicting during the most impactful works which run for 5/6 months from January 2025.

In the past, works of this nature, albeit for a shorter period have caused traffic chaos, not only at the junction points with the A38, but throughout the town and town centre which is one of the key routes to the A38 itself. We are therefore expecting significant periods of traffic gridlock impacting both residents and local businesses. We actually expect the delays to exceed the projected 60 minutes at times

We are planning to work with National Highways to ensure they communicate well with anyone who might be impacted, the list is almost endless.

Saltash, by its convenient position close to Plymouth via the A38 and Tamar Bridge has the highest proportion of residents that make regular journeys into Plymouth for a number of purposes that range from work and education to leisure and healthcare provision.

Having carefully examined mitigating measures it is clear that the only way to significantly reduce the impact of the projected delays is to try to get as many people as possible out of their cars.

A coordinated promotional campaign may get people to use busses where they can, but as busses will be caught in the disruption too, this may have less impact. Cycling may increase, but given the work is taking place through the winter months it is likely that only a small proportion may take this option on a regular basis.

Rail travel, to and from Saltash Station is likely to be a very popular option, especially for those whose destination is close to a train station. It is expected that those bound for Plymouth City Centre will find that rail will provide the best option, and we expect usage to surge.

There are however still some barriers to access to rail travel at Saltash. There is little parking at Saltash Station, however a long stay Cornwall Council car park is just a few minutes walk where users can park all day for £2 (if they load the JustPark app). This could be widely promoted.

In addition, Saltash Station is within a 20-30 minute walking time of most of Saltash, so around 20,000 people will have reasonably easy access.

The biggest barrier to travel is the significant gaps in service at Saltash. Whilst there may be a half hour service on the mainline, many services still do not stop at Saltash, creating significant gaps of an hour or more at times.

We seek your support in trying to get those services that pass through Saltash without stopping to be added to the Saltash timetable as soon as possible to enable a better service at Saltash Station.

By way of some background. Saltash is the largest town in South East Cornwall, significantly larger than Liskeard which already receives all rail services. Station footfall is also growing strongly at Saltash anyway, and likely justifies additional service calls already. Whilst we acknowledge that any additional station calls will have an impact on the overall timetable, a Saltash call should have less impact due to the exceptionally slow line speed through the station of just 15mph due to the speed restriction in place over the Royal Albert Bridge.

We strongly believe that boosting the rail service provided at Saltash can significantly help with the impact of the Saltash Tunnel works, as well as bringing about long term sustained Modal Shift to rail, helping climate goals, reducing traffic volumes and helping people lead a more active life.

We would ask that you carefully consider the above and help us bring this move about by asking Train operators (Great Western Railway and Cross Country trains), as well as Network Rail and the Department for Transport, who will both have to agree these changes.

We intend to send this to Cornwall Council, Plymouth City Council, Peninsular Transport and other organisations or Individuals who may be able to assist.

We strongly believe that the DFT are the key for this change, and I hope this is an area you can assist in most. We do not have direct contact with them and hope that through the Minister you can get to the right person or team. Likewise, there will be contacts at Network rail who will need to work closely with the two Train Operating Companies to agree any timetable changes and we ask for your support in speaking with them to minimise barriers to achieving these extra calls.

At GWR (Great Western Railway) we will be writing to:

Mark Hopwood – Managing Director

mark.hopwoodGWR-MD@gwr.com

David Whiteway – Regional Development Manager

David.Whiteway@gwr.com

Jane Jones – Head of Public Affairs

Jane.Jones@gwr.com

At Cross Country Trains we will be writing to:

Richard Gibson – Stakeholder Manager

Richard.Gibson@crosscountrytrains.co.uk

If possible it would be useful if you could make an approach asking for all trains that pass through Saltash to stop from the December 2025 timetable to provide some mitigation for the significant disruption being caused for a 12-month period by National Highways due to the works on the Saltash Tunnel.

I hope the above is clear, and that you can help influence this to happen. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Sinead Burrows

Town Clerk / Responsible Finance Officer

CC: