

There is a light for city commuters

There is light at the end of the tunnel for Milton Keynes commuters.

That is according to the Secretary of State for Transport who was quizzed by city MP Mark Lancaster today (Thursday).

Mr Lancaster told Philip Hammond that despite investment in the West Coast Main Line (WCML) in MK, this had only benefited long-distance travellers.

"Is there any light at the end of the tunnel for Milton Keynes commuters?" the Milton Keynes North MP asked.

Mr Hammond replied that 106 new Virgin Pendolino carriages will come into service by 2012.

The proposed High Speed 2 line will alleviate pressure on the WCML in the longer term, he added, freeing up capacity for short-distance trains from Milton Keynes to Euston.

A recent Network Rail consultation describes as the 'acute' the overcrowding blighting MK's commuters. It predicts that there will be a need for 1,500 extra peak-time seats by 2024, but most trains are already at their maximum length.

There is also a suggestion to link the Â£15 billion London Crossrail line to the city, from Paddington along the West Coast Main Line.

After the debate Mr Lancaster said: "I am pleased that the Government has both short-term and longer-term solutions for the overcrowding and delays suffered by many of my constituents. I will continue lobbying to make sure these promises become a reality. More needs to be done, however. Therefore I am interested in proposals to link Milton Keynes places like the West End and Canary Wharf, and am still campaigning for the reopening of the East West Rail line via Milton Keynes."