

WELSH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ENTERPRISE AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT: RUGBY WORLD CUP TRANSPORT PLANNING

Wales has an outstanding reputation for hosting successful major events. We were therefore very concerned to ensure a positive response from the lead stakeholders to the issues faced by customers who travelled to Wales for the early matches in the prestigious Rugby World Cup last September. Senior Officials attended a number of meetings to ensure improved plans were put in place for customers following the delays experienced at those early events. The meetings included representatives of the train operating companies, Network Rail, the Rugby World Cup organising committee and British Transport Police. A number of improvements were introduced including the provision of additional train and coach services along with more effective queuing and passenger management arrangements. These actions led to a much improved customer experience and we will be working with all our transport service providers to learn the lessons from the Rugby World Cup taking account of our responses below to the report recommendations. This will ensure visitors to Wales for all future major events will continue to enjoy a fantastic experience.

Recommendation 1

All stakeholders should urgently review the travel plan for major events in Cardiff. This should include steps to ensure there is a single, integrated command structure.

Response: Accept

We shared the concerns raised about the issues passengers experienced during some of the early games of the Rugby World Cup (RWC) tournament, and worked immediately with the transport organiser and the rail industry to ensure enhanced arrangements were in place by the end of the tournament resulting in a significantly improved experience for passengers. We are continuing to work with event organisers and the transport companies on travel planning for major events in Cardiff.

Recommendation 2

This process should include consideration of what is an acceptable period of waiting following a game. The RWC has shown that flow can be improved. Lessons learned on the need for better queue management and improved movement of passengers through the station must be applied.

Response: Accept

We support efforts to reduce queuing times at Cardiff Central after major events and to provide clear information to passengers about what to expect when using public transport to attend them. We will continue to work with the relevant organisations to

achieve these aims. However, queuing times are likely to continue to vary from event to event due a range of factors including the size of the crowd, finish time of the event, the day of the week and the travel pattern of people attending.

Recommendation 3

Communication is key - greater efforts must be made by event organisers and transport companies to ensure fans are better informed of the options available and their expectations regarding queuing managed.

Response: Accept

We recognise the importance of the provision of accurate information to fans to enable them to make well informed decisions prior to and following major events.

Recommendation 4

Coach travel should have a greater role in travel planning, particularly while constraints at Cardiff Central Station remain. This should include use of coaches both as a main mode of travel but also as a contingency to relieve pressure at the station.

Response: Accept

Coaches were successfully used to transport significant numbers of passengers following the Rugby World Cup. Many of the coaches used were funded by the event organiser. Individual events have different requirements but where appropriate, we will press for the future use of coaches to ensure that passengers can travel home safely as swiftly as possible following major events. However, some event organisers may not wish to provide the required funding for this.

Recommendation 5

The planning group needs to work with those involved in the redevelopment of Central Square to ensure that the impact of works outside the station on major event transport is minimised, and the maximum amount of space is available and used as effectively as possible

Response: Accept

We understand the importance of ensuring that the area immediately outside Cardiff Central station is fully utilised to help support major events.

Recommendation 6

Welsh Government should work with Network Rail and the UK Department for Transport to ensure that the significance and serious impact of the capacity constraints at Cardiff Central are understood and further capacity improvement work undertaken as a matter of urgency in rail Control Period 6 (2019-24).

Response: Accept in Principle

We fully support the need for an enhanced Cardiff Central station. We have already begun discussions with both Network Rail and the Department for Transport on this subject in relation to potential Control Period 6 investment and we have emphasised the need for any such project to address the current capacity constraints. While we will continue to emphasise the need for these improvements, rail infrastructure remains a non-devolved function.

Recommendation 7

Network Rail must ensure Cardiff area signalling improvements are delivered as swiftly as possible.

Response: Accept

The Cardiff Area Signalling Renewal scheme is a major project for the Wales rail network and we continue to push Network Rail to deliver it as soon as possible.

Recommendation 8

Welsh Government should work with Network Rail and Department for Transport to consider how the network can be upgraded to ensure that non-event passenger services and freight can be accommodated during stadium events. We believe this could be considered during delivery of electrification programmes and might include use of Cardiff Queen Street Station.

Response: Accept

The report highlights the key importance of rail infrastructure, which is non-devolved, in properly catering for major events in Cardiff and delivering a positive passenger experience. It is essential that Network Rail and the UK Government ensure that major projects, such as the Great Western Main Line Electrification, the Cardiff Area Signalling Renewal scheme and the proposed upgrade of Cardiff Central station, deliver the necessary improvements, to time and to budget.

Recommendation 9

In the meantime, those responsible for major event planning should discuss with train operating companies, freight operators and their customers whether the re-scheduling of freight and provision of additional trains is needed and/or desirable for future major events at the Millennium Stadium.

Response: Accept

We will continue to work with event organisers, transport companies and the freight operators on planning for major events in Cardiff.