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Russell George AM
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03 May 2019

TfW Response to Autumn Rail Disruption report by the EIS committee

Dear Committee

Thank you for sharing with us the EIS Committee's report into the Autumn Rail Disruption. We welcome the report and thank the committee for their work.

We are now just over six months into running the Wales and Borders Franchise and we oversaw a very difficult period due to Storm Callum and the Autumn. I have previously stated that as many as 36 trains were out of service for essential repairs, and whilst I recognised the impact of that service disruption on our customers and your constituents, I made no excuses as this was not the service that our customers deserve or expected from us as their train operator.

We recognise how important it is to give our customers the best experience as soon as possible, which is why we are investing £40 million in our current fleet, and this year we will be introducing some new refurbished trains. This investment will see us fitting Wheel Slide Protection to improve future service levels as well as fund additional services to enhance our customer experience and accessibility improvements.

As the report and recommendations focus on the operations during Autumn, I am responding on behalf of the Welsh Government. I am therefore pleased to accept the committee's recommendations. It is also fair to say that our Autumn planning will never stop, and as we move forward we will make sure we do everything within our power to run a service that our customers deserve.

Recommendation 1. TfW should publish the findings of its final full investigation report into the causes of the rail disruption as soon as possible, along with an action plan setting out how it is responding to the findings and full details of its preparedness plans for Autumn 2019.

Response: Accept

We will publish the findings and latest progress report from the Autumn Investigation report on the website under 'Openness and Transparent'. For openness we're sharing with you the English version of this report and we are in the process of translating this document to put on our website.



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A Joint Autumn Task Force Inaugural meeting was held on Wednesday 27 February, with the purpose to set up a joint investigation to find root causes and identify measures to minimise risk of wheel flats in 2019. The investigation team includes Transport for Wales, Network Rail and an independent wheel/rail interface consultant to ensure that issues are addressed by all stakeholders. The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) will also be involved to mediate discussion if necessary and ensure that findings are representative of (or can help inform) industry best practice. The scope of the working group is guided by this report's findings and updated iteratively as actions are completed.

19 recommendations have been identified thus far, aimed at mitigating efforts where the biggest gains will be seen for autumn 2019. Outputs of this task force will feed directly in to the Joint Route Autumn Plan, that is a comprehensive, holistic plan to mitigate and reduce the impact of Autumn on the railway network for travelling passengers.

Recommendation 2. The Welsh Government, TfW and Network Rail should work together to ensure that a) the findings of the investigation report into the autumn 2018 disruption and b) further investigative work with on-board cameras, are used to inform Network Rail's planning and prioritisation of its operations, maintenance and renewal expenditure. The Committee will seek further details of how this has been done prior to autumn 2019.

Response: Accept

As mentioned above, the investigation team will include TfW, Network Rail and an independent wheel/rail interface consultant to ensure that issues are addressed by all stakeholders. The RSSB will also be involved to mediate discussion if necessary and ensure that findings are representative of (or can help inform) industry best practice.

The Joint Adhesion Investigation report details the findings from the wheel-rail interface cameras findings during Autumn 2018. To conclude, the video recording showed several potential wheel-rail interface issues:

- Wheel slide occurring when braking on a sharp curve;
- Grease or water on the railhead;
- Some vegetation near the line;
- Dust being expelled from the interface, particularly during flange contact.

Recommendation 3. TfW should report back to the Committee at the end of 2019 on its new performance standards and plan for communicating the full range of standards and performance data to the travelling public in a transparent manner, and one which allows meaningful comparison with previous service levels to measure progress over time. As far as possible these indicators should be published at a level which is meaningful to passengers, i.e. at the level of individual route and service.

Response: Accept

We currently publish a performance report on TfW's website, showing statistics by line of route and comparing the latest period against the previous year and previous period. This can be found on the tfw.gov.wales website under the tab 'Openness and Transparency'; link:

<https://tfw.gov.wales/performance> . By being open and transparent with the travelling public, TfW hope that it will strengthen the relationships with travelling public and stakeholders and raise awareness of how we work with local communities and businesses to improve transport services in Wales.

This performance report will evolve over the coming weeks to adapt to the new passenger-centred performance regime started on the 1st of April, which will include a description and initial results of the new metrics; Passenger Time Lost (PTL) and Short Formations.

TfW will also provide an honest update on rail performance in the next edition of the Customer Report on their website. This will be published every six months and presented as a summary to provide more customer-focused metrics than today, including progress against targets.

Recommendation 4. TfW should work with passenger groups including Transport Focus to explore ways to provide additional compensation without incurring significant cost where there is severe disruption to services, as in autumn 2018. The severe impact on passengers must be recognised regardless of the nature of the financial settlement for rail in Wales. Should disruption on this scale occur again we expect additional compensation measures to be applied.

Response: Accept

We recognise passengers want a reliable train service and to be able to be compensated fairly when things go wrong due to no fault of their own. We are committed to our passengers and in January this year we introduced 'Delay Repay 15'. This is a major step in the right direction and with this introduction, passengers are now able to claim 25% of the cost of the single fare for delays between 15 and 29 minutes on top of existing compensation thresholds for delays from 30 minutes and over.

With the introduction of the new performance regime as mentioned in recommendation 3, we will be able to measure the impact to travelling public in a much more effective manner using metrics such as PTL and short formations to ensure punctuality and capacity levels are at an acceptable level. We will be using these passenger-focused measures to compare against the autumn disruption in 2018 and publishing this on our website for openness and transparent manner.

We will also work more closely with our interested passenger groups such as Transport Focus to identify and explore additional methods of compensating passengers during severe disruption to services without incurring significant costs.

Recommendation 5. TfW to respond to the specific concerns raised by stakeholders when consulted on the new rail franchise and Metro, and highlighted in this report, to assure the Committee that capacity issues will be properly addressed by planned service enhancements and that capacity planning will take full account of all factors that may affect future demand.

Response: Accept

We appreciate that many train services across Wales and Borders are crowded; plans are in place to rectify this. In the short term we have ordered additional refurbished fleet which will be entering the network in 2019.

Looking ahead, there is substantial increase in capacity planned across the entire Wales and Borders rail network in the coming years. By 2023, 95% of journeys will be on new trains, with more carriages, and we will run an extra 285 services every weekday. We've modelled the demand for services through to 2033 and are increasing frequency and buying enough trains of sufficient length to cope with that demand.

We recognise that large parts of Wales either remain unconnected by rail or have infrastructure constraints (i.e. single line track). The responsibility for and funding of rail infrastructure is not devolved, and rests with the UK government. However, in recent years, the Welsh Government has invested in a programme of rail infrastructure improvements and is continuing to look at options for expanding and enhancing the existing network.

Under instruction from Welsh Government, TfW is supporting the development of such options through its feasibility work; including investigating the increase in frequency of services on the Ebbw Vale and Maesteg lines.

Maesteg and Ebbw Vale have unique constraints that mean we couldn't add them to the Central Metro at this stage, but a subset of important feasibility work is underway, and we hope to invest in both routes in the future.

Via our Corporate and Consultancy Projects team, we have the capacity and capability to undertake feasibility work for aspirational/potential multi-modal transport schemes. Within this team, an analytical unit is being built upon, aiming to increase the quality and consistency of the evidence based underpinning transport decision-making and investment in Wales. The Analytical Unit is also responsible for the Welsh Government's regional transport models – the South East Wales Transport Model already exists while the models for South West and Mid and North Wales are soon to be developed. The regional models will help with Welsh Government, TfW and local authorities to forecast the future needs of the transport network across all modes of transport.

Welsh Government will continue to press for rail powers to be devolved so that it – alongside TfW - can decide how best to invest in the enhancement of the rail network in Wales in a way that meets the needs of our communities and stakeholders.

The plans to which we are committed are designed to be flexible and extendible so our plans will never hinder further transport development. We will continue working closely with Welsh Government and our stakeholders, including those highlighted in the report.

Recommendation 6. Past experience highlights the need for a clear approach to identifying and robustly managing rolling stock risks in future. The Committee and the travelling public must be given public assurances that TfW has made a full assessment of the risks attached to its plans for procuring and introducing new rolling stock on to the network, and how these will

be mitigated, whether this published document is described as a “rolling stock strategy” or by another name.

Response: Accept

TfW is currently in the process of developing our rolling stock Risk Management Plan (RMP), and it is hoped that this document will be completed over the coming weeks.

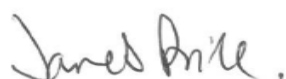
The RMP will outline our approach to managing all risks on our new rolling stock projects, so that our requirements and business objectives are fully satisfied. The aim of the document will be to identify and mitigate at the earliest opportunity all risks which could affect the successful delivery of all of our new trains projects. Fundamental to this approach will be a full understanding of all stakeholders’ commercial and technical requirements, timescales and constraints.

An approach of progressive risk management will be used throughout each stage of the project lifecycle and ultimately to ensure that our new fleets will be delivered on time, to the required standards, and that they will achieve and continue to meet the contracted reliability and availability levels. The RMP will ensure, that in the event of delay to the programmed delivery dates of new units, that suitable mitigations will be implemented to ensure existing (or alternative) rolling stock is retained on the network to ensure continued delivery of the passenger timetable.

With regards to the phasing out of existing rolling stock, this will be incorporated into each detailed new rolling stock introduction plan and will be linked to the actual delivery of each new unit being introduced onto the network. Within our processes, dialogue with Rolling Stock Lease companies will be continued to ensure we have the option of retaining existing units on lease until the new replacement fleets are successfully in passenger service.

When completed, we would gladly share a copy of the RMP with the EIS committee. This is likely to be a live document that is updated regularly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "James Price," with a comma at the end. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James Price