



To All Assembly Members

02 October 2017

Dear Member,

On Thursday I announced that final tenders have been invited for the next Wales and Borders Rail Service.

Alongside this, the Welsh Government has also had positive and constructive discussions with rail unions, begun by Wales TUC. We want to hold up the Welsh rail network as an example of where a government can work in effective social partnership with trade unions to deliver a world class railway for commuters, our economy and our communities. This also builds on the recommendation from the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's recommendation for robust passenger and stakeholder engagement.

We have made the following commitments that mean we can move ahead with confidence on our plans for the future Wales & Borders Rail Service:

- As a result of significantly increased service patterns in response to demand growth experienced in Wales, the expectation is that there will be more staff not less employed on the franchise. There are rapid changes in railway technology which can improve service and efficiency, but the Welsh Government recognises that passengers value personal service and want this technology to complement staff and not replace them.
- The Welsh Government wishes to improve safety, security, service and also accessibility for passengers who require assistance. The Welsh Government therefore commit to keep a safety critical conductor (guard) on all of the Wales & Borders trains and services including heavy rail Metro services and the trains will require this second person to operate. This commitment builds on a clear public response in our consultations, where over 90% of respondents said that a second member of staff was either quite important or essential in the Wales and Borders region, something Age Cymru said was 'essential'. Disability Wales estimates that disabled people make up more than 20% of the population in Wales.
- Heavy rail infrastructure for the Wales & Borders franchise outside of core valleys will remain with Network Rail.

- The exception to this will be the Core Valley lines where responsibility would transfer to the Welsh Government through Transport for Wales (TFW) subject to an agreed evaluation of the assets between Network Rail and the Welsh Government.
- Therefore the railway infrastructure will remain in public ownership and effected employees will also remain in the public sector with Network Rail or TFW. In the event of any transfer to TFW pensions will be protected and there will be no changes to conditions without the agreement of the trade unions.
- Any new Rolling stock will be maintained by skilled railway people with the maximum number of staff employed in Wales.
- The Welsh Government recognise the unions desire to maximise job security and conditions of employment of catering and cleaning staff and TFW will enter into constructive dialogue with the unions to explore how these can be met.
- The Welsh Government also commit to work constructively with the unions around unions aspirations for ticket office and station staff.
- There will be a no compulsory redundancy guarantee throughout the franchise and in respect of direct sub-contractors.
- There will be continued trade union recognition and the government will also work to ensure this also applies through the sub-contractor supply chain.
- There will be trade union representation on the Transport for Wales Board.
- If future legislation allows the Welsh Governments preference is for the heavy rail ownership and operation of the Wales & Borders services to be part of a UK national integrated railway under public ownership with responsibility and powers for passenger services and infrastructure to be sustainably and comprehensively devolved to the Welsh Government.

I will keep members informed of future developments.

Yours sincerely,



Ken Skates AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure