



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: **Second Fast North-South Rail Link**

Date: **9 March 2011**

By: **Ieuan Wyn Jones, Deputy First Minister and Minister for the
Economy and Transport**

In 2008 I funded the introduction of Y Gerallt Gymro express Holyhead to Cardiff service.

This flagship service is key to delivering our “One Wales” commitment to reduce journey times between North and South Wales. It has proven to be very popular and has strengthened economic links between the north and south of the country.

I have now decided to introduce a second express train service, from May 2011, Monday – Friday, initially using a Class 175 train. This service will compliment the existing Y Gerallt Gymro service and has competitive journey times considering the current infrastructure constraints. The train will depart from Holyhead at 07:51 and arrives in Cardiff at 12:08. The return journey will leave Cardiff at 18:18 and arrives in Holyhead at 22:34.

I am aware that, as we have been preparing these proposals, that some Members, and Council Leaders, have expressed concern to me that the service would not call at stations on the North Wales Coast, or at Wrexham.

I am now able to confirm that the train will be able to stop at Wrexham in both directions. The morning train will call at Holyhead, Bangor, Llandudno Junction, Colwyn Bay, Rhyl, Chester, Wrexham, Ruabon, Chirk, Gobowen, Shrewsbury, Newport and Cardiff. The evening train after departure from Cardiff will stop at Newport, Abergavenny, Hereford, Shrewsbury, Gobowen, Ruabon, Wrexham, Chester, Rhyl, Colwyn Bay, Llandudno Junction, Bangor

and Holyhead. This is the optimum journey pattern that is achievable within the overall target of journey times between Holyhead and Cardiff, via Wrexham, of some 4 hours and 17 minutes.

In order for the second express service to be able to call at Wrexham General Station in the morning I have asked Arriva Trains Wales to reroute the 07:15 Holyhead – Birmingham International service via Crewe instead of Wrexham. It would otherwise not be possible for the second express service to call at Wrexham due to the infrastructure constraints of the single track between Wrexham and Chester. This means that the 07:15 Holyhead – Birmingham International service can no longer call at Ruabon, Chirk and Gobowen. Therefore the new express service will call at these stations in order to avoid what would otherwise be a two hour gap in the mornings. Passengers for Birmingham joining from these stations will be able to complete their journey by changing and connecting into the 07:15 Holyhead – Birmingham service at Shrewsbury.

The Class 175 service will have an enhanced at seat trolley service including some hot food.

From the timetable changes in December 2011, the Class 175 train will be replaced by a Class 67 locomotive with carriages similar to those used on Y Gerallt Gymro. This service will be able to have a first class carriage and dining facilities similar to those currently available on Y Gerallt Gymro. I am funding a substantial refurbishment before these carriages are brought into service.

I remain committed to pathing the original Y Gerallt Gymro service via Wrexham rather than Crewe. The study I am funding Network Rail to undertake, to improve the railway infrastructure between Holyhead and Cardiff, will be completed by the end of April. It will include consideration of options for capacity enhancements on the line between Chester and Wrexham with the objective of both a step change reduction in journey times for all services and of routing the express return service via Wrexham. I expect construction work to commence next year.

As this term of Government ends, I believe that I have taken firm steps to improve transport provision between North and South Wales. This is important for the economy of our country and improving journey times for passengers.