

**National Assembly for Wales**  
Enterprise and Learning Committee

Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales

January 2010



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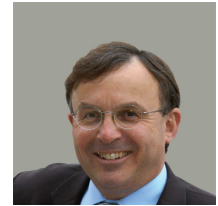
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## **Enterprise and Learning Committee Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales**

### **Aim of the inquiry**

1. Over 1,100 trains run in Wales every day and 15 per cent of the UK's freight tonnage is generated along the South Wales Main Line.<sup>1</sup> Yet with demand for both freight and passenger rail transport forecast to grow, there is a major challenge to increase capacity,<sup>2</sup> reduce congestion and reduce overcrowding on the country's railways so that they are fit for purpose for the future.
2. The purpose of this inquiry was for the National Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee to influence the priorities and mechanisms for future railway infrastructure planning in Wales over the next 20 to 30 years. Our inquiry's terms of reference were to consider:
  - the case for high speed rail links between London and Wales (in addition to the announcement in July 2009 that the existing Great Western Mainline is to be electrified);
  - the case for electrification of other railway lines in Wales, including the Valleys Lines, the Severn Tunnel diversionary route via Gloucester and the North Wales Mainline;
  - the state of the Severn Tunnel and the need for a second Severn rail tunnel/crossing;
  - the case for an improved North-South line;
  - the need for speed upgrades and capacity improvements across the network in Wales (looking beyond 2009-2014);
  - the case for new stations and new/re-opened lines;
  - further use of light rail in urban areas;
  - how to increase use of the railways for freight, including freight transfer facilities;
  - the role of the Welsh Government, regional transport consortia and Regional Transport Plans in future railway planning;
  - whether or not the Welsh Government should be seeking additional powers and associated funding that would allow it to directly fund railway infrastructure in Wales, in the same way as the Scottish Government does in Scotland.
3. We have focused on questions around rail investment in the longer term because we were aware that the current five-year funding period for Network Rail will continue until 2014, and that the Wales

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<sup>1</sup> Network Rail written evidence, Annex B para 8

<sup>2</sup> Passenger Focus defines capacity as running sufficient services and getting a seat

Route Utilisation Strategy<sup>3</sup> will cover a ten-year period until 2019. We also wanted to build on our report on “Planning for future railway provision”, published on 21 November 2007, which made recommendations about rail provision in the shorter term.

4. The Deputy First Minister’s Rail Forward Programme,<sup>4</sup> which identifies the schemes that the Welsh Government will be funding over the ten-year period of the Route Utilisation Strategy, was published in December 2008. Those schemes are also included in the Government’s five-year National Transport Plan.<sup>5</sup> Railway planning therefore needs to take a long-term perspective and we wanted to ensure our conclusions and recommendations could be built into planning for Control Period 5 (2014-19) and beyond.
5. Our inquiry was made up of five oral evidence sessions, held from 21 October to 23 November 2009, including a meeting with Members of the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee as part of that committee’s follow-up inquiry on cross-border transport.<sup>6</sup> The transcripts of our meetings are included in Annex A. We wish to thank all the individuals and organisations who submitted written and/or oral evidence; they are listed in Annex B. We were disappointed, however, that Virgin Trains did not respond to our invitation to submit oral and written evidence.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

6. The respective roles and responsibilities of the main organisations that run the railways in Wales are described in Appendix 1. Briefly, since the Railways Act 2005, the Welsh Government has been responsible for the Wales and Borders (Arriva Trains Wales) franchise and has received a budget transfer from the UK Government to fund it. The Welsh Government can also fund railway infrastructure improvements but responsibility for specifying the outputs required from Network Rail (which owns and maintains the track, signalling and stations) has not been devolved and remains with the UK’s Department for Transport. Planning for future railway infrastructure in Wales other than for schemes funded by the Welsh Government therefore depends on influencing the High Level Output Specification prepared by the Department for

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<sup>3</sup> Route Utilisation Strategies are 10-year planning statements which identify gaps and pinch-points in rail infrastructure and services and recommend solutions to meet future growth in demand

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, Rail Forward Programme, December 2008

<sup>5</sup> The Wales Transport Strategy, Connecting the Nation, sets out the Welsh Government’s long-term vision for a modern and sustainable transport network; the National Transport Plan sets out how this vision will be delivered over the next five years

<sup>6</sup> The House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee, Cross-border provision of public services for Wales: Transport, HC 58, Session 2008-09, 17 July 2009

Transport or on influencing Network Rail's use of its limited discretionary funding.

7. In Scotland, the Railways Act 2005 devolved responsibility for specifying the outputs required from Network Rail to the Scottish Government, which also received a transfer of funding from the Department for Transport to support the specification. The amounts transferred were £338 million in both 2006-07 and 2007-08 and £324 million in 2008-09 (11.7 per cent of the Great Britain total), which covered Network Rail's operation, maintenance and renewal activities. A total of £17 million a year was also transferred from the Department for Transport to the Scottish Government to fund enhancements in Scotland, an amount that will increase in proportion with future increases in expenditure on enhancements in England and Wales determined at Government Spending Reviews and based on the Barnett formula. Scottish Ministers are also able to provide non-binding advice on the specification of cross-border passenger services, particularly on the frequency and quality of those services.<sup>7</sup>

### **Integrated transport policy**

8. It is important that investment in the future railway infrastructure in Wales should be considered within the context of an integrated and sustainable transport policy, which itself relates to other aspects of economic and social development. In Scotland, for example, the Government's Economic Strategy sets out the strategic priorities and objectives that are critical to the country's success, and investment in its railways, through Transport Scotland, is directed at those priorities.<sup>8</sup> We heard that Scotland is taking a long-term sustainable view by having a 20-year strategy for rail projects to 2020 and beyond, which has been coordinated from the start with Network Rail's own Route Utilisation Strategy for Scotland.<sup>9</sup>
9. The first witness to our inquiry, Professor Stuart Cole of the Wales Transport Strategy Group,<sup>10</sup> argued that integration should be across four different dimensions: within and between different types of transport; with the environment; with the land use planning system (to reduce the need for travel in the first place); and with wider strategic objectives in the areas of social welfare,

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<sup>7</sup> Transport Scotland written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>8</sup> Transport Scotland written evidence, Annex B p1

<sup>9</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 6 and 31, 18 November 2009

<sup>10</sup> The Wales Transport Strategy Group is comprised of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK) Cymru-Wales, the Institution of Highways and Transportation, and the Institution of Civil Engineers Wales Cymru

education, health and wealth creation.<sup>11</sup> These points were echoed by Railfuture, the voluntary campaigning not-for-profit company.<sup>12</sup>

10. Accessibility, affordability and sustainability should be the watchwords for rail travel in the future, although given Wales's difficult geography and population densities, the potential for transferring more journeys to public transport is always going to be a challenge.
11. We heard, for example, that there is currently insufficient enforcement on developers to provide public transport for new developments, particularly those built out of town – whether business, retail or housing.<sup>13</sup> The Welsh Government has recently consulted on strengthening national planning guidance to encourage the production of Transport Assessments to accompany proposals for new development. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should make the preparation of Transport Assessments a statutory requirement as part of the planning process for new development.**

## Electrification

12. The usual rail travel time from Cardiff to London Paddington currently takes 2 hours 5 minutes, which is 25 minutes longer than 20 years ago. Rail journey times to London from South Wales have increased over recent years as a result of additional station stops.
13. There is currently no electrified rail track in Wales. We therefore wish to congratulate the Deputy First Minister, his officials and other partners for the months of negotiations and discussions that took place with the Department for Transport to effect the announcement on 23 July 2009 that the Great Western Main Line between Paddington and Swansea will be electrified. The work is expected to be completed within eight years, and will result in minimum journey times between London and Swansea being reduced by 19 minutes and an increased capacity of at least 15 per cent on intercity services during the morning peak hour.<sup>14</sup>
14. Professor Stuart Cole informed us that the Great Western Main Line between London Paddington and South Wales will be operating the new Inter City Express Programme electric trains by 2017, a year later than the service to Bristol.<sup>15</sup> These trains will cut 15 minutes off the current journey time and will be capable of diesel and electric traction as part of the electrification programme. Professor

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<sup>11</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, p1

<sup>12</sup> Record of Proceedings para 76, 21 October 2009

<sup>13</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 63 and 70, 21 October 2009

<sup>14</sup> Department for Transport written evidence, Annex B p4

<sup>15</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, p2

Cole later told us that with electrification, journey times could be further reduced to 1 hour 25 minutes if stations such as Swindon were missed out.<sup>16</sup>

15. The Deputy First Minister's written evidence stated that he believed that all diversionary lines for the Great Western Main Line should be electrified simultaneously and there should be a further rolling programme to electrify all rail lines into and within Wales once this is complete, with the Valleys network into Cardiff being a high priority.<sup>17</sup> Arriva Trains Wales itself expressed the view that the Valleys Lines and Local Services passenger network is, "reasonably self-contained and could therefore benefit from electrification and appropriate rolling stock."<sup>18</sup>
16. Railfuture wanted to see the progressive electrification of the railways in Wales in ten stages.<sup>19</sup> Passenger Focus considered all or even part of the North Wales Main Line, the Wrexham to Bidston line and the Cardiff Valleys network as suitable candidates for electrification, adding that matching fleet replacement with electrification could considerably enhance the benefit-cost ratio of any scheme.<sup>20</sup> Rail Freight Group<sup>21</sup> also perceived benefits to the freight industry from electrification.<sup>22</sup> Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, sounded a note of caution in emphasising that the electricity for powering a policy of rail electrification should be generated appropriately,<sup>23</sup> as did T N D Anderson<sup>24</sup> and Wales Environment Link.<sup>25</sup>
17. During the course of our inquiry, Network Rail published its final Electrification Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS).<sup>26</sup> This identifies one scheme serving Wales (the Great Western Main Line) as currently of sufficient economic benefit to justify electrification, with the business case for Severn Tunnel junction to Gloucester (the Severn Tunnel Diversionary Route) being subject to further examination. The Route Utilisation Strategy includes 16 separate electrification

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<sup>16</sup> Record of Proceedings para 42, 21 October 2009

<sup>17</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence, Annex B para 17

<sup>18</sup> Arriva Trains Wales written evidence, Annex B para 2.1

<sup>19</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p3

<sup>20</sup> Passenger Focus written evidence, Annex B p5

<sup>21</sup> Rail Freight Group is the representative body for the UK rail freight industry

<sup>22</sup> Rail Freight Group written evidence, Annex B paras 10-13

<sup>23</sup> Record of Proceedings para 134, 11 November 2009

<sup>24</sup> T N D Anderson written evidence, Annex B para 1

<sup>25</sup> Wales Environment Link written evidence, Annex B p3. Wales Environment Link includes the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales, Campaign for National Parks, Keep Wales Tidy, Sustrans, Wildlife Trusts Wales and Youth Hostels Association

<sup>26</sup> Electrification Final Route Utilisation Strategy, Network Rail, October 2009

schemes in Scotland, although as we found out, 23 per cent of the Scottish rail network was already electrified before rail devolution.<sup>27</sup>

18. We heard from First Great Western how important it was, from a logistical point of view, that the diversionary route around the Severn Tunnel be electrified, otherwise the rolling stock for South Wales will have to be suitable for both electrified and non-electrified track.<sup>28</sup> We were more encouraged to hear from the Department for Transport that they expected the Cardiff area network (including the Valleys Lines) to be one of those examined for potential electrification.<sup>29</sup> We believe this would have significant benefits for passengers in terms of faster, quieter and smoother rail travel, and we were pleased to hear that Arriva Trains Wales would support any investment in electrification of its network.<sup>30</sup>
19. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should continue to lobby for the electrification of the railway network serving Wales. As well as the Great Western Mainline as far as Swansea, the first priorities should be the diversionary lines between South Wales and London, the Cardiff area network - including the Valleys Lines - and the North Wales Mainline. We also recommend that Network Rail ensure that sufficient gauge clearance is provided on any electrified track to take freight as well as passenger traffic, and that the best technology be used to minimise disruption to rail services while electrification work is being carried out.**
20. We heard from First Great Western that the long-term aspiration and challenge for the rail industry is to have an express train service from London to South Wales, and for a separate service for Reading, Didcot and Swindon. There is currently no capacity to provide for that, however.<sup>31</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government work with First Great Western to achieve speed improvements on targeted services between South Wales and London by omitting station stops such as Swindon, Didcot and Reading.**

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<sup>27</sup> Record of Proceedings para 36, 18 November 2009

<sup>28</sup> Record of Proceedings para 106, 23 November 2009

<sup>29</sup> Record of Proceedings para 115, 18 November 2009

<sup>30</sup> Record of Proceedings para 84, 23 November 2009

<sup>31</sup> Record of Proceedings para 55, 23 November 2009

## High Speed Rail

21. Electrification is a pre-requisite for operating a high speed rail line.<sup>32</sup>
22. The usual speed for high speed trains in Europe is at least 155mph.<sup>33</sup> The Deputy First Minister's written evidence stated that he would be making the case for the UK Government to invest in high speed rail from South Wales and North Wales to Heathrow and London.<sup>34</sup> Professor Stuart Cole informed us<sup>35</sup> that the Cardiff/Bristol conurbations and the South Wales industrial belt meet both the population (3.5 million) and distance criteria for high speed rail developments as set down in 2006 by the Commission for Integrated Transport.
23. Professor Cole also stressed the importance of reducing travel time between London and Wales in order to bring major benefits to the tourism industry of North Wales, to industry in South Wales, and to enable Cardiff to compete for new jobs with English cities – not just Bristol, but also Leeds and Newcastle. Professor Cole cited examples of regeneration following rail investment, such as the depressed mining area of Lille in Northern France following the TGV Nord arrival (French high-speed train) and the £10 billion of economic benefits injected into areas in Kent as a result of the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.
24. Professor Cole further explained that overcrowding on the existing strategic rail routes will necessitate the construction of a parallel high speed line to provide increased capacity for inter city passenger traffic and freight. The route would be expected to include new track from Slough westwards and an interchange with the M4 and existing train services at junctions 44 (Swansea), 34 (Cardiff) and the Severn Bridge toll (Newport) as taking these trains into the existing city centre stations would only increase journey times and require extensive infrastructure expenditure. He also argued that the construction of the proposed High Speed 2 (HS2) Line from London to the North West and Scotland was an opportunity to run high speed trains along the North Wales Mainline.<sup>36</sup> T N D Anderson argued that the Welsh Government should support a western rail link directly to Heathrow.<sup>37</sup>
25. Passenger Focus was also in favour of the expansion of the high speed rail network to include Wales and other parts of the UK

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<sup>32</sup> Record of Proceedings para 44, 21 October 2009

<sup>33</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B, p1

<sup>34</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence, Annex B

<sup>35</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, p3

<sup>36</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, p3

<sup>37</sup> T N D Anderson written evidence, Annex B para 1

because of the additional capacity such a project would bring – not only in its own right but also in terms of reorganising services on existing lines. The organisation was concerned, however, that high speed rail should not divert funds from improving the existing railway.<sup>38</sup> We heard from Transport Scotland that the Scottish Government’s vision for the future is very much of a high speed rail line connecting Scotland with London and beyond, primarily to reduce domestic aviation between those areas.<sup>39</sup>

26. The regional transport consortia were all supportive of the case for high speed lines. SWWITCH (South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium) believed it would be a vital part of securing and maintaining inward investment, and wanted to see the link reach as far as Swansea – as long as investment in the existing rail infrastructure was unaffected.<sup>40</sup> Taith, the regional transport consortium for North Wales, argued that the high speed line to the North of England and Scotland should link with the North Wales Main Line and in the longer term wanted to see a high speed line from London to Holyhead as part of the development of the European High Speed network to serve Dublin.<sup>41</sup>
27. In contrast, Sustrans seriously questioned the implementation of high speed rail,<sup>42</sup> as did Wales Environment Link.<sup>43</sup> Wales Environment Link believed that a detailed study should be undertaken into the carbon costs of a high speed rail link, both in terms of the construction of the line and the running of services along it. Sustrans’s argument was that building a high speed network would simply encourage more long distance journeys and could replicate the “predict and provide” approach taken towards road building with a similar process for rail. T N D Anderson also warned against a programme of “les grand projets...to meet apparently pressing needs.”<sup>44</sup>
28. Railfuture also argued that the case for a new high speed rail line has not been made and that significant reductions in journey time could instead be achieved by upgrading and electrifying the existing line between Cardiff and London.<sup>45</sup> Railfuture made the interesting point that it is the total rail journey time that is important, so that if one section of a journey is speeded up yet connectional times are extended for other parts of the journey,

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<sup>38</sup> Passenger Focus written evidence, Annex B p4

<sup>39</sup> Record of Proceedings para 53, 18 November 2009

<sup>40</sup> SWWITCH written evidence, Annex B para 2.3.1

<sup>41</sup> Taith written evidence, Annex B p4; Record of Proceedings para 206, 23 November 2009

<sup>42</sup> Sustrans written evidence, Annex B p4

<sup>43</sup> Wales Environment Link written evidence, Annex B pp2-3

<sup>44</sup> T N D Anderson written evidence, Annex B para 10

<sup>45</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p2



then the high speed section has no overall benefit.<sup>46</sup> It was also concerned about the adverse impact high speed rail could have on traditional services (such as experienced in rural France), on necessitating longer journeys to central hubs on the route, and potentially on a reduced frequency of services between London and South Wales.<sup>47</sup>

29. As regards the relationship between high speed rail and freight, there appeared to be a divergence of views: Rail Freight Group argued that any new line into South Wales would not meet the needs of freight customers unless there were links to HS1 and HS2,<sup>48</sup> while the Freight Transport Association<sup>49</sup> argued that a high speed line into Wales is not a requirement for freight,<sup>50</sup> although it could potentially free up capacity on existing lines.<sup>51</sup>
30. Professor Cole informed us that North Wales could benefit from linking into TGV-style trains on the Manchester-Liverpool axis as it is technically possible to divert high-speed trains along the North Wales main line.<sup>52</sup>
31. **We recommend that to ensure that Wales will not be left on the slow train but will benefit from high speed rail links to the rest of England, Scotland and on to Europe, the Welsh Government should develop a strong case and lobby jointly with other interested partners for a new High Speed Line from London to South Wales, and for the North Wales Mainline to be directly connected to the proposed High Speed 2 Line from London to North West and Scotland. We further recommend that any high speed rail provision should not detract from existing services along classic lines.**

## Severn Tunnel

32. The Severn Tunnel was opened in December 1886.<sup>53</sup> Despite the current need for speed limitations through the Severn Tunnel (70mph compared with 90mph on the English side and 75mph on the Welsh side), the tunnel structure is, according to Network Rail, in good condition and adaptable for electric trains as there is space within the tunnel headroom for the overhead wiring. This view was shared by The Severn Tunnel Action Group, who considered the

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<sup>46</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>47</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 82-83, 21 October 2009

<sup>48</sup> Rail Freight Group written evidence, Annex B para 6

<sup>49</sup> The Freight Transport Association represents over 14,000 companies engaged in the transport of freight domestically within the UK and/or internationally

<sup>50</sup> Freight Transport Association written evidence, Annex B para 15

<sup>51</sup> Record of Proceedings para 77, 11 November 2009

<sup>52</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, p3

<sup>53</sup> The Severn Tunnel Action Group written evidence, Annex B p1

Tunnel could continue to be used “for the foreseeable future.”<sup>54</sup> Network Rail later told us, however, that the Tunnel is not large enough to accommodate the size of high speed trains.<sup>55</sup>

33. The House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee concluded in its report on cross-border transport that in the longer term there is a need for a second Severn rail crossing.<sup>56</sup> Yet the Department for Transport’s evidence stated that existing rail links have the capacity to meet the forecast increase in demand over the next two decades. In addition, the Department argued that a road or rail link on a barrage across the Severn Estuary would “not necessarily be a cost effective solution as it would need to be elevated to provide adequate clearance for vessels to pass through locks.”<sup>57</sup> The Severn Tunnel Action Group believed that a new rail crossing would achieve only a two minute saving on the current journey time through the Tunnel, a saving which could be lost if any new crossing involved “doglegs” on each approach.<sup>58</sup>
34. Railfuture also argued that a second Severn crossing would be unlikely to save more than two minutes of journey time. Instead, it supported the increased use of the Severn Tunnel to provide improved cross-border services, but commented that a waterproof coating would have to be injected through the existing brickwork to prevent electrical flashovers, which in itself would lead to a drier tunnel, reducing the need for maintenance closures.<sup>59</sup> **We recommend that the Severn Tunnel should be adapted for electrification. We also recommend that Network Rail should be commissioned to consider options for renewing the Tunnel in the longer term, linked to the business case for a new High Speed Line from London to South Wales.**

### North-South Wales rail link

35. It is important that Wales not only considers how the orientation of the rail network can provide a better service for existing passengers and freight, but also how different parts of Wales itself can be better connected in future.
36. The rail service between Holyhead and Cardiff currently runs every two hours, with the fastest journey time of 3h 56m on the Gerallt Cymro limited stop service. Yet Railfuture pointed out that the journey time from North to South Wales has increased in recent

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<sup>54</sup> The Severn Tunnel Action Group written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>55</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 64-70, 4 November 2009

<sup>56</sup> House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee, Cross-border provision of public services for Wales: Transport, HC 58, Session 2008-09, July 2009

<sup>57</sup> Department for Transport written evidence, Annex B p5

<sup>58</sup> The Severn Tunnel Action Group written evidence, Annex B p24

<sup>59</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p4

years, and that the Manchester to Cardiff flyers which used to complete the journey in under three hours, have been removed.<sup>60</sup>

37. We were interested in witnesses' views as to whether the frequency of trains should be increased; whether the journey time should be reduced; whether there is a commercial or economic justification for new lines to be built to achieve a North-South service wholly within Wales; and whether there were alternatives to re-opening disused railway lines.
38. Professor Stuart Cole's written evidence argued that it would be possible to achieve 100mph speeds and a journey time of 3 hours 15 minutes from Bangor to Cardiff with an investment of £120 million in line speed improvements.<sup>61</sup> Another option would be to reduce the journey time to 3h 40m but with no further major rail infrastructure investment above the £47m planned doubling of track between Wrexham and Chester.<sup>62</sup>
39. Railfuture argued that there were two options: either to build a new line within Wales, or (its preferred option) to upgrade the existing Marches line from Newport to Chester. In addition, it suggested reinstating the lines between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth and Afonwen to Bangor to give a West Coast corridor line to provide for limited-stop, through services from Swansea to Bangor.<sup>63</sup> Railfuture also suggested providing services for local commuter stations along the North-South route so that the number of station stops could be reduced in order to speed up longer-distance services on that route.<sup>64</sup>
40. From its research of the route, Passenger Focus believed that there was strong passenger preference for a faster North-South service than for trains that called at all stations. Arriva Trains Wales confirmed that from an operational and customer service point of view, "we strongly feel that improvements in line speeds on the Marches line should be pursued as soon as possible."<sup>65</sup> The company later told us that it was working with the Welsh Government on planned improvements, although the work could take some years to complete.<sup>66</sup>
41. In the longer term, the regional transport consortium, TRaCC (Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru), called for the examination of two

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<sup>60</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>61</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, p6

<sup>62</sup> The doubling of track has been funded through the Strategic Capital Investment Framework

<sup>63</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>64</sup> Record of Proceedings para 93, 21 October 2009

<sup>65</sup> Arriva Trains Wales written evidence, Annex B para 2.2

<sup>66</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 88-93, 23 November 2009

options – a “Western option” down the west side of Wales using parts of the former Aberystwyth to Carmarthen line; and an “Eastern option” from Caersws to Builth Road connecting the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines.<sup>67</sup> Sewta (South East Wales Transport Alliance) acknowledged the benefits of reducing journey times and increasing frequency of services between North and South Wales but was strongly of the view that other communities along the North and West route should not be adversely affected.<sup>68</sup>

42. **We recommend that the Welsh Government, Network Rail and the regional transport consortia work together on options to improve the existing North-South Wales rail line and services, including a programme of line speed improvements, additional faster services and a limited stop service on alternate hours during peak periods.**

### **Speed upgrades/capacity improvements**

43. Railfuture argued that a considerable number of infrastructure and capacity improvements could be made without speed upgrades, e.g. signalling improvements, electric trains with faster acceleration and stopping capabilities, and shorter dwell times in stations. Railfuture also considered that the provision of integrated services with good connections was equally as important.<sup>69</sup>
44. Professor Cole’s written evidence lists several key routes on the rail network along which capacity increases should be considered as well as journey time reductions and line speed increases, both within and outwith the Rail Financial Control Period 4 (2009-2014).<sup>70</sup> The list is included as Appendix 2 to this report. **We recommend that the Welsh Government, in consultation with Network Rail, should respond individually to the list of recommended rail speed and capacity improvements listed in Appendix 2 of this report, and update its 2008 Rail Forward Programme accordingly.**

### **Rolling stock**

45. Another capacity issue to concern us was the poor state of the rolling stock on Welsh railways, as we heard outlined by Railfuture<sup>71</sup> and the overcrowding on certain routes at busy times. Although the Welsh Government has funded Network Rail to deliver extensions to platform lengths across the network to accommodate longer (six-carriage) trains, we were concerned to hear from Network Rail that

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<sup>67</sup> TRaCC written evidence, Annex B pp2-3

<sup>68</sup> Sewta written evidence, Annex B p4

<sup>69</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p3

<sup>70</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, pp6-7

<sup>71</sup> Record of Proceedings para 92, 21 October 2009

those extra carriages have not yet been installed.<sup>72</sup> Passenger Focus expressed disappointment that the Department for Transport's High Level Output Specification commitment to provide 1,300 new carriages did not apply to Wales.<sup>73</sup> T N D Anderson recommended that the Welsh Government should consider taking an equity stake in any new rail development or rolling stock purpose.<sup>74</sup>

46. The Deputy First Minister acknowledged that this was a difficult issue and told us that the Welsh Government was prepared to consider purchasing or leasing rolling stock in order to avoid, "a constant revenue stream for extra carriages."<sup>75</sup> Railfuture told us that the Welsh Government needs to use the end of the Arriva Trains Wales franchise in 2018 as the catalyst for replacing older stock.
47. In our 2007 report on railway planning, we recommended that the Welsh Government should produce a rolling stock plan for Wales, alongside the plan to be published by the Department for Transport, to set out in detail how new or refurbished rolling stock would be used to deliver increased capacity and how this would link to the UK Government's plans. We are very disappointed that despite the Minister accepting our recommendation, a rolling stock deployment plan has yet to be produced.
48. **The planning of railway infrastructure needs to be better integrated with the provision of more appropriate rolling stock. We recommend that the Welsh Government should agree with the Department for Transport and Arriva Trains Wales how exactly it will deliver its commitment to provide more rolling stock, including longer trains on the Valleys Lines, and that it should publish this in a rolling stock plan for Wales, as we previously recommended. We also recommend that rolling stock provision and replacement should be integrated with plans for electrification of lines in order to achieve synergies and savings.**
49. Finally in this section, we were made aware from TRaCC that the impact of climate change upon the rail network in Wales needed to be addressed – the "future-proofing" of the infrastructure, such as raising or diverting track beds.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 10 and 15, 4 November 2009

<sup>73</sup> Passenger Focus written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>74</sup> T N D Anderson written evidence, Annex B para 9

<sup>75</sup> Record of Proceedings para 175, 21 October 2009

<sup>76</sup> TRaCC written evidence, Annex B p4

## New/re-opened stations and lines

50. “If we build it, they will come,” we were told by the regional transport consortium Sewta, who pointed to the Ebbw valley railway, the first new railway in the UK for 40 years,<sup>77</sup> which has already carried its millionth passenger.
51. The Deputy First Minister’s evidence stated that the Welsh Government was, “exploring the opportunity of re-opening old/disused railway lines where track bed still exists,”<sup>78</sup> which would be looked at “sustainably and holistically.” He also informed us that he was commissioning a feasibility study from Network Rail to look at the re-opening of a number of disused railway lines, including lines between Bangor and Llangefni and between Aberdare and Hirwaun.<sup>79</sup> We later heard that a report was expected on this next year.<sup>80</sup>
52. Tony Burton’s evidence highlighted the lack of rail provision for several towns in Mid and North Wales with populations of around 10,000, including Brecon, Caernarfon and Denbigh.<sup>81</sup> Professor Cole’s written evidence lists examples of new or re-opened stations and lines that should be considered in order to better access key strategic centres and to provide Park and Ride facilities that would reduce traffic flows on congested lengths of road into urban or tourist centres.<sup>82</sup> Railfuture also proposed the introduction of passenger services over new lines and the opening of new stations. The list of both of these is included as Appendix 3 to this report.
53. We recognise the environmental benefits of opening new stations and new and redundant railway lines – not only in terms of reducing road traffic and therefore road infrastructure improvements but also in supporting remoter communities in areas not currently served by rail. We were very interested to hear, for example, that the West Highlands line in Scotland has a vital role in carrying tourists during the summer months, but is also recognised by Transport Scotland as an integral part of the rail network because of its important social value in connecting settlements along the route.<sup>83</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government and Network Rail take account of the socio-economic as well as the business case for new or re-opened stations. We also recommend that the Welsh Government, in consultation with Network Rail, should respond individually to the list of recommended schemes for**

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<sup>77</sup> Record of Proceedings para 136, 23 November 2009

<sup>78</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence, Annex B para 11

<sup>79</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence, Annex B para 22

<sup>80</sup> Record of Proceedings para 132, 21 October 2009

<sup>81</sup> Tony Burton written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>82</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, pp7-8

<sup>83</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 26-28, 18 November 2009

**new or re-opened stations and lines listed in Appendix 3 of this report, and update its 2008 Rail Forward Programme accordingly.**

54. We were told that because of low population densities and because of new building on top of the old route, it would not be economic, at an estimated cost of £400 million, to re-open the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth rail line.<sup>84</sup> Network Rail also told us that the original service probably did not make a penny from the day it opened.<sup>85</sup> It was therefore suggested to us that the alternative to re-opening railway lines where construction costs might be prohibitive is the further development of the franchised Traws Cambria bus/coach network as provided for in the Transport (Wales) Act 2006 – as long as there is a seamless journey for passengers.<sup>86</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government carry out a cost-benefit analysis of providing new or enhanced Traws Cambria services both to complement existing rail services and to fill in gaps in the rail network, such as between Carmarthen-Aberystwyth, Moat Lane junction-Merthyr, Caernarfon-North Wales Main Line and North Wales Main Line-Ruthin-Corwen, linked to the Heart of Wales Line.**

#### **Additional trains to Fishguard petition**

55. This Committee has a track record of taking up issues on behalf of petitioners. For example, we were pleased to hear during this inquiry that the regional transport consortium for Mid-Wales has responded positively to the campaign by Carno Station Action Group to complete the Welsh Transport Assessment Guidance<sup>87</sup> Stage One appraisal for re-opening the previously closed railway station at Carno in Powys. This piece of work will assist the Welsh Government in deciding whether the proposal will be taken forward in its Rail Forward Programme.<sup>88</sup>
56. Towards the end of our inquiry, we were made aware of a petition submitted to the National Assembly's Petitions Committee by two 15-year-olds, and supported by over 1,300 people.<sup>89</sup> The petition called on the Welsh Government to fund additional train services to Fishguard, stating that no new infrastructure would be required.

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<sup>84</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 29-31, 21 October 2009

<sup>85</sup> Record of Proceedings para 86, 4 November 2009

<sup>86</sup> Record of Proceedings para 186, 23 November 2009

<sup>87</sup> WeITAG assesses the impact of a transport project

<sup>88</sup> TRaCC written evidence, Annex B p4

<sup>89</sup> Petition P-03-256 on Additional Trains to Fishguard was considered by the Petitions Committee on 24 November 2009. The petition collected 10 signatures and an associated petition collected 1,317 signatures.

57. We raised this issue with SWWITCH, the regional transport consortium for South and West Wales, which had already identified the need to improve rail services west of Swansea, including the provision of five trains a day to Fishguard Harbour.<sup>90</sup> SWWITCH told us the business case for the additional services was “robust” because they would increase commuting and the wider use of rail, as well benefiting connectivity across the network.<sup>91</sup>
58. Professor Cole told us that it would be possible to increase the frequency of services from Carmarthen to the west without redoubling the track by using shuttle services, although the doubling of the track at Llanelli would enable more trains to go through and also increase the reliability of those trains as there would be no need to wait for late-running trains in the opposite direction.<sup>92</sup> Any improvement to services to South West Wales would, however, require platform improvements at Carmarthen station, and the development of Whitland station as a “hub” for buses, trains and park and ride.<sup>93</sup>
59. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should agree to fund the proposal, supported by the regional transport consortium SWWITCH and petitioners to the National Assembly, for providing additional trains to Fishguard.**

## Station improvements

60. Passenger Focus informed us that the latest National Passenger Survey<sup>94</sup> reveals that passenger satisfaction with stations in Wales continues to lag badly behind the average for the rest of the rail network in Britain.<sup>95</sup>
61. The Deputy First Minister’s written evidence details the National Stations Improvement Programme funded by the Department for Transport and delivered by Network Rail, which will invest £1 million a year over the next three years. In addition, station accessibility improvements in Wales are being delivered as part of the Department for Transport’s Small Schemes Access for All programme, such as the new lift being installed at Platform Zero in Cardiff Central station.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> SWWITCH written evidence, Annex B p1

<sup>91</sup> Record of Proceedings para 171, 23 November 2009

<sup>92</sup> Record of Proceedings para 67, 21 October 2009

<sup>93</sup> Record of Proceedings para 36, 21 October 2009

<sup>94</sup> The National Passenger survey of 50,000 people (2,000 in Wales) is carried out by Passenger Focus twice a year

<sup>95</sup> Passenger Focus written evidence, Annex B p3

<sup>96</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence, Annex B paras 23-27



62. Welsh Government officials later told us that because Access for All funding is predicated on footfall, Wales has not always been successful in bidding for projects. The Welsh Government was therefore using European funding to lever in additional investment to Wales in order to make accessibility improvements to other stations, such as bridging gaps between new trains and old platforms.<sup>97</sup>
63. We are aware of stations such as Ystrad Mynach near Caerphilly where wheel-chair passengers are unable to access trains to Cardiff. Yet because footfall is the qualifying criterion for Disability Discrimination Act-compliant infrastructure, the station will never be improved because the demand will never manifest itself - people with disabilities know they have to join the train at other stations.<sup>98</sup>
64. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association expressed concern about the extent of un-staffed stations (220 in Wales). Blind or partially sighted people cannot alight at those stations unless they are sure of their route from the platform to the exit and onward transport to their destination.<sup>99</sup>
65. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association also raised concerns about the lack of safety in rail stations for blind and partially sighted people: the danger of falling off platforms onto the track is a reason frequently used by those people for not travelling by train; and many stations have no safe route for them to navigate from the station entrance to the ticket barrier. The Association also stressed the need for rail stations to be properly integrated with other forms of public transport because rail travel is so vital to the independent safe mobility of blind and partially sighted people. The Association therefore called for the provision of guidance paths within and outside rail stations in order to ensure an accessible and easily negotiable environment.<sup>100</sup>
66. We raised the above issues with officials from the Department for Transport and were told that the Department has commissioned research into the impact of the Access for All funding in order to inform what happens to the programme when its current five-year period comes to an end.<sup>101</sup>
67. **We recommend that the Welsh Government continue to work with partners to invest in improvements to rail stations in Wales, both for passenger comfort and safety - especially passengers with disabilities - and also for better connecting rail**

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<sup>97</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 178, 21 October 2009

<sup>98</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 12 and 18-19, 4 November 2009

<sup>99</sup> The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>100</sup> The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>101</sup> Record of Proceedings para 151, 18 November 2009

**stations with other modes of transport such as buses, taxis and safe cycling and walking routes. We further recommend that these improvements be integrated in strategic transport plans at national and regional levels.**

68. We also heard how important it was to have adequate Park and Ride facilities. Improvements in provision for the Valleys network, for example, have proved to be very popular and very successful in increasing the number of people travelling by train for commuting and shopping.<sup>102</sup> Our 2007 report recommended that the Welsh Government and the regional transport consortia should work with the Train Operating Companies and Network Rail to improve car parking provision for rail passengers. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should encourage the regional transport consortia, through their Regional Transport Plans, to develop more Park and Ride facilities to encourage more people to travel by train, and that the assessment of need include consideration of a growth in use to ensure sufficient numbers of parking spaces can be provided.**
69. Finally, we expressed some surprise during our oral evidence session with Network Rail that Cardiff Central station was a Category B station (Regional Hub), compared with, say, Bristol Temple Meads which was a Category A station (National Hub).<sup>103</sup> During the course of our inquiry we were pleased to hear that “Better Rail Stations – The Report of the Stations Champions,” commissioned by the Secretary of State for Transport recommends that Cardiff Central should become a Category A station.<sup>104</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government respond to the Department for Transport’s consultation on “Better Rail Stations” and support the recommendation that Cardiff become a Category A station.**

## **Light rail**

70. Wales Environment Link view urban light rail as a major opportunity to encourage the public to view rail as a “real alternative to the private car, particularly for commuter journeys.”<sup>105</sup> It has the advantage of having lower operating costs, albeit with an initially high cost of investment. The disadvantage of light rail is that, unless tram-train technology is used, it is incompatible with heavy rail, and therefore excludes freight.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 65-66 and 69, 21 October 2009

<sup>103</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 56-60, 4 November 2009

<sup>104</sup> Better Rail Stations, An independent review presented to Lord Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Green and Professor Sir Peter Hall, November 2009, p16; Record of Proceedings paras 133-140, 18 November 2009

<sup>105</sup> Wales Environment Link written evidence, Annex B p2

<sup>106</sup> Record of Proceedings para 33, 11 November 2009

71. Wales has no urban light rail system - the Swansea and Mumbles Railway was decommissioned back in 1960. Recent examples of cities that have invested in light rail systems are Sheffield, Manchester and Bordeaux, the latter of which has reduced its peak-period traffic by some 80 per cent.<sup>107</sup>
72. The Deputy First Minister's written evidence alluded to the Government "looking at options" for light rail.<sup>108</sup> Professor Cole's written evidence argued that of the three cities in Wales where light rail could be justified (Cardiff, Swansea and Newport – all supported by Railfuture<sup>109</sup>) Cardiff would give the best rate of return.<sup>110</sup> At present, 43 per cent of all travellers to the city centre use the car, compared with using the bus (25 per cent) or train (12 per cent), although traffic congestion has led to a 10 per cent a year growth in rail passenger demand. Railfuture was also in favour of light rail, but warned against it replacing any of the heavy rail infrastructure in Wales,<sup>111</sup> a point also made by Rail Freight Group.<sup>112</sup>
73. Although Cardiff's extensive rail network was largely designed for moving coal, Professor Cole believed that it could still be used for light rail from Taffs Well, north of the city, into the city centre and along the southern city routes as far as the airport. We heard from the regional transport consortium that Cardiff Council has already undertaken some studies on this,<sup>113</sup> and we received written evidence from T N D Anderson on behalf of Trampower that outlined the case for light rail in the city.<sup>114</sup>
74. **The Deputy First Minister told us that he would welcome innovative transport solutions, including light rail.<sup>115</sup> We therefore recommend that the Welsh Government work with relevant partners to commission feasibility studies for developing light rail networks in the main urban areas of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, which should include consideration of how to integrate such systems with existing heavy rail infrastructure.**

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<sup>107</sup> Record of Proceedings para 64, 21 October 2009

<sup>108</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence, Annex B para 33

<sup>109</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p4

<sup>110</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B, p9

<sup>111</sup> Record of Proceedings para 97, 21 October 2009

<sup>112</sup> Rail Freight Group written evidence, Annex B para 17

<sup>113</sup> Record of Proceedings para 219, 23 November 2009

<sup>114</sup> T N D Anderson written evidence, Annex B, especially paras 5.1-6

<sup>115</sup> Record of Proceedings para 176, 21 October 2009

## Freight

75. According to the Freight Transport Association, the use of rail freight has been increasing since the mid 1990s. Although total market share is still low – about 11 per cent of UK freight movements – there is the potential to more than double rail freight by 2030, if it can be made more competitive. The Association also told us that every tonne of freight carried by rail produces at least two thirds less carbon dioxide than if moved by road; that a typical freight train can remove 50 lorries from the road; and that congestion on the roads costs British business £17 billion a year.<sup>116</sup>
76. The Department for Transport's July 2007 White Paper, Delivering a sustainable railway, proposed the development of a Strategic Freight Network (SFN) in England and Wales as part of its high level strategy to address the growing demands on the network for moving passengers and freight. A maximum of £200 million has been allocated towards the development of the SFN in 2009-14. Network Rail has coordinated the development of the SFN on behalf of the industry and the Department for Transport, overseen by a Strategic Freight Network Group made up of interested stakeholders including the Welsh Government, Rail Freight Group and Freight Transport Association. In our 2007 report we recommended that the Welsh Government should work closely with Network Rail to ensure that Wales can benefit from the development of the Strategic Freight Network.
77. The only parts of the Welsh rail network that are currently considered part of the Strategic Freight Network are the Great Western Main Line as far as Port Talbot and the Marches Line from Newport to Wrexham and from Chester to Shrewsbury. There are no specific proposals for development of the SFN in Wales beyond 2014.
78. The Deputy First Minister's National Transport Plan contains the commitment to improve the sustainability of freight transport by encouraging a shift from road to rail "where environmental benefits can be achieved." He later told us that, "the Government wants to see far more goods carried on the railways."<sup>117</sup> Rail Freight Group, however, believes that the National Transport Plan "lacks a coherent strategy" for freight movement, either by rail or road,<sup>118</sup> because it has not incorporated the principles of the Welsh Government's Freight Strategy that was published last year, and because there is no body of statistical evidence on freight flows within Wales.<sup>119</sup> The Group's main concern is that there is a lack of coordination

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<sup>116</sup> Freight Transport Association written evidence, Annex B paras 2-4

<sup>117</sup> Record of Proceedings para 137, 21 October 2009

<sup>118</sup> Rail Freight Group written evidence, Annex B para 25

<sup>119</sup> Record of Proceedings para 55, 11 November 2009

between planning capacity and infrastructure for rail passengers and rail freight, to the detriment of freight.<sup>120</sup>

79. The Freight Facilities Grant scheme helps to meet the extra costs that may be associated with moving freight by rail, and since 2001 £4.8 million of grants have been provided to enable 6 million tonnes of goods to be carried by rail, saving 5.8 million lorry miles a year. The Deputy First Minister informed us that several applications have been made for the grant and that he was looking to expand the scheme.<sup>121</sup>
80. Railfuture informed us that its Development Plan provides strategies for the expansion of freight services in Wales, including the provision of terminals and suitable rolling stock.<sup>122</sup> It recommended the creation of a network of mini terminals at regular intervals across the rail network to provide for the transfer of goods from road to rail (particularly dockland sites) and a fleet of diesel multiple unit freight trains to convey the traffic. It also recommended the continued use of freight grants for infrastructure developments. The Freight Transport Association argued that there should be integration of rail and retail Regional Distribution Centres to encourage more retail freight onto rail,<sup>123</sup> while Rail Freight Group similarly argued for the creation of terminals in key locations where goods and/or containers could be interchanged between road, rail and water,<sup>124</sup> a point also made by SWITCH.<sup>125</sup>
81. We take on board the Freight Transport Association's point that in order to shift more freight to rail the industry needs confidence in the rail network over the long term – a ten-year period at least<sup>126</sup> – and the removal of barriers to transferring freight from road to rail. We were very interested to hear from Transport Scotland that it was:
- “Developing a rail freight policy framework, which will allow us to understand more about the challenges that are currently faced by the freight industry in moving goods by rail, and to consider measures that might make it more achievable to move goods by rail in Scotland in the future.”<sup>127</sup>
82. **Given the forecasted growth in both rail freight and passenger traffic, we repeat our 2007 recommendation that the Welsh**

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<sup>120</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 10 and 16, 11 November 2009

<sup>121</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 139-141, 21 October 2009

<sup>122</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p5

<sup>123</sup> Freight Transport Association written evidence, Annex B para 11

<sup>124</sup> Rail Transport Group written evidence, Annex B para 22

<sup>125</sup> SWITCH written evidence, Annex B p7

<sup>126</sup> Record of Proceedings para 100, 11 November 2009

<sup>127</sup> Record of Proceedings para 21, 18 November 2009

**Government should give higher priority and more resources to encouraging a modal shift of freight from road to rail, including signalling, loading gauge and axle-weight capacity enhancements. This needs to be managed carefully in partnership with Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies to avoid conflict with rail passenger traffic. We further recommend that as part of a study to understand better the pattern of movement of freight the Welsh Government and its partners consider how to plan for the strategic location of terminals to increase the amount of freight that can be transferred to rail transport.**

83. The Wales Freight Strategy includes an action to identify port locations where new facilities could be developed, including rail transport terminals. The Welsh Affairs Committee's report on Ports in Wales<sup>128</sup> concludes that many Welsh ports are disadvantaged because of inadequate rail links and that a more integrated approach is needed to policy and planning. Rail Freight Group also told us that ports suffered because of the lack of rail gauge capability.<sup>129</sup> **We recommend that the Welsh Government and Network Rail prepare an action plan to identify and connect appropriate ports in Wales to adequate rail infrastructure in order for rail to compete with road and to fit operationally and financially with industries' logistics and distribution networks. We further recommend that the Welsh Government should ensure the Department for Transport's current consultation on a national policy statement for ports in England and Wales<sup>130</sup> reflects Welsh priorities.**

### **Regional transport consortia and Regional Transport Plans**

84. There are four regional transport consortia, which are partnerships between local authorities, covering South East, South and West, Mid and North Wales. These partnerships are important in identifying which investments and improvements are needed from the ground up within the context of wider transport issues. Each consortium has now submitted its finalised Regional Transport Plans, which are currently being assessed by the Welsh Government, for implementation from April 2010.
85. Rail Freight Group argued that there should be close alignment between the strategies and decisions of the Welsh Government and the regional transport consortia.<sup>131</sup> We understand that both Taith

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<sup>128</sup> House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee, Ports in Wales, HC 601, Fifteenth Report of Session 2008-09

<sup>129</sup> Record of Proceedings para 54, 11 November 2009

<sup>130</sup> Draft National Policy Statement for Ports, Department for Transport, November 2009

<sup>131</sup> Rail Freight Group written evidence, Annex B para 26

and Sewta have their own Regional Rail Strategies, which need to be integrated between the National Transport Plan and their own Regional Transport Plans.<sup>132</sup>

86. The impression we had from our joint evidence session with all four regional transport consortia was that the relationship between them was good, but that there could be a better working relationship between them and Network Rail.<sup>133</sup>
87. **We recommend that once the National and Regional Transport Plans are finalised, a formal concordat with Network Rail should be drawn up and agreed by the Welsh Government and the regional transport consortia. This would help achieve greater transparency in rail planning from the national to the regional level and closer communication and cooperation to ensure aspirations for the future rail infrastructure in Wales are coordinated and delivered.**

## **Powers and Funding**

88. As explained in paragraph 5 above, there is no direct statutory control for the Welsh Government over Network Rail's activities in Wales. The Regulatory Impact Assessment produced for the Railways Act 2005<sup>134</sup> explains that the UK Government did not accept the option of devolving responsibility for specifying the outputs required from Network Rail for services provided under the Wales and Borders franchise. Although the UK Government accepted this option for Scotland, it thought it was "unacceptable" in a Welsh context because of the mix of services that share the infrastructure to, from and within Wales.
89. When we questioned the Department for Transport about the possible devolution of rail to Wales, we were told us that its relationship with the Welsh Government, "is very good and is closer now than it has ever been," and that it still perceived the high level of cross-border rail traffic between Wales and England as a problem.<sup>135</sup>
90. Passenger Focus suggested that transferring powers and funding to Scotland has made the rail services there better, although it also drew attention to the differences between the Welsh and Scottish networks – it quoted figures from the Office of Rail Regulation that show only 8 per cent of Scottish rail journeys are cross-border with

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<sup>132</sup> Taith written evidence, Annex B p10

<sup>133</sup> Record of Proceedings para 158-162, 23 November 2009

<sup>134</sup> Department for Transport, Railways Act 2005 – Regulatory Impact Assessment, 2005

<sup>135</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 71 and 92, 18 November 2009

England, while the equivalent figure for Wales is 32 per cent.<sup>136</sup> As Rail Freight Group pointed out, it would make little sense if rail traffic flows were developed up to the Welsh side of the border if the Department for Transport were unwilling to support the required upgrades on the English side.<sup>137</sup>

91. These views conflicted with Transport Scotland's experience that this was simply not an issue. They told us that:

"It is important to make clear that while Network Rail in Scotland is under our direction it is a UK company and therefore the infrastructure is owned by Network Rail UK. There is just the one company, so there is no distinction made between the ownership of the infrastructure in Scotland and that in England. That eases the operation of cross-border railways, as there is no distinction made between the two countries. The operating companies simply operate their trains on their tracks and no separate arrangement is required for England or Scotland."<sup>138</sup>

92. We discovered during our oral evidence session with Network Rail that it does not routinely collate capital spending figures on a Wales basis because expenditure was calculated on a strategic route basis, which did not match the rail geography in Wales.<sup>139</sup> However, following the Committee's request for this information, Network Rail analysed the budget data to give an indication of current spending levels.<sup>140</sup> We take Network Rail's point that it is not so much capital spend that is important but the outputs in achieving targets, but in our view it is the relevance and adequacy of the targets that are set in the first place, and whether they meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Wales, that are the crucial issues.

93. There was a high degree of support among witnesses for additional powers and the devolution of the associated finance to Wales. The Deputy First Minister's written evidence stated that:

"We shall keep our statutory powers for the railway under review, and it may be that as we move forwards towards more innovative transport solutions, we may need to establish further powers."<sup>141</sup>

The Deputy First Minister later told us that:

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<sup>136</sup> Passenger Focus written evidence, Annex B p6

<sup>137</sup> Rail Freight Group written evidence, Annex B para 26

<sup>138</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 42-44, 11 November 2009

<sup>139</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 33-42, 4 November 2009

<sup>140</sup> Network Rail supplementary evidence, Annex B

<sup>141</sup> Welsh Assembly Government written evidence, Annex B para 4



“We do not have the full powers required to ensure that we can put in place some of the most innovative schemes...light rail, metro services and similar schemes.”<sup>142</sup>

94. Railfuture wrote that it was important for the Welsh Government and not Network Rail or the Department for Transport to decide what is best for Wales, and that it was “obvious that Wales has not had its full proportion of funding compared with England and Scotland.”<sup>143</sup> The organisation therefore supported additional powers and the devolution of the associated finance.
95. Professor Stuart Cole argued that in order to have a fully integrated transport policy in Wales, Welsh Ministers needed further powers, including the power to specify the outputs required from Network Rail for the railway infrastructure in Wales, and a transfer of the associated budget as in Scotland.<sup>144</sup> Transport Scotland told us that in addition to its own funding, it was also supporting over £1 billion of new rail investment within the next five to ten years through Network Rail’s own financial borrowing powers. It had a good and close working relationship with Network Rail and believed that:

“Rail devolution has allowed the Scottish Government to make investment decisions for the benefit of Scotland. Rail services...have been developed and improved under the scrutiny of the Scottish Parliament. Since 2006, the Scottish Government has invested substantially in a range of projects that may not have been taken forward if they had been competing for funds against projects in larger UK cities.”<sup>145</sup>
96. Passenger Focus thought that having the funding was more important than statutory powers.<sup>146</sup> Network Rail had no view on power or funding arrangements, but was content to work within any model presented,<sup>147</sup> a view shared by the Rail Freight Group.<sup>148</sup> Arriva Trains Wales believed that consideration of whether the Welsh Government might gain additional powers directly to fund infrastructure in Wales should be carried out in tandem with a robust process for formulating railway infrastructure strategies.<sup>149</sup>
97. As regards the regional transport consortia, all supported the principle of seeking increased powers for the Welsh Government

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<sup>142</sup> Record of Proceedings para 123, 21 October 2009

<sup>143</sup> Railfuture written evidence, Annex B p6

<sup>144</sup> Wales Transport Strategy Group written evidence, Annex B p13

<sup>145</sup> Transport Scotland written evidence, Annex B pp3-5

<sup>146</sup> Record of Proceedings para 138, 4 November 2009

<sup>147</sup> Record of Proceedings para 76, 4 November 2009

<sup>148</sup> Record of Proceedings para 21, 11 November 2009

<sup>149</sup> Arriva Trains Wales written evidence, Annex B para 2.11

similar to those of Scotland,<sup>150</sup> especially in terms of reconciling cross-border issues. TRaCC thought seeking additional powers was a “logical step” provided it was accompanied by adequate funding, knowledge and skills.<sup>151</sup> SWWITCH also wanted to ensure funding was ring-fenced for rail infrastructure purposes.<sup>152</sup>

98. We heard from Professor Cole that the key difference between Wales and Scotland is that Scotland is able to spend several hundred million pounds in its rail investment programme because it has an allocation in its block grant from the UK Government, but that Wales “does not have that luxury.”<sup>153</sup>
99. **We recommend that the Welsh Government should seek equivalent powers to the Scottish Government, together with the associated funding, whether by amendments to the Railways Act 2005 or other appropriate legislative means. We also recommend that the Welsh Government should continue to make a strong case for continued investment in Wales through the planning group for the next High Level Output Specification period (2014-19).**
100. We are very concerned that the Welsh Government has been and is spending millions of pounds to address inadequacies in the Wales and Borders (Arriva Trains Wales) franchise, a minimal service franchise that “involved no new trains, no additional train sets and no investment in stations.”<sup>154</sup> or as one of our Members expressed it, Wales was “sold a pup” by the Department for Transport.<sup>155</sup> The Arriva Trains Wales franchise, which the company itself termed a “do nothing franchise,”<sup>156</sup> is due to run until December 2018, although we understood from the Department for Transport that it could be amended by agreement at any time – at a price.<sup>157</sup>
101. We recognise the difficulty with the franchise system in achieving sufficient flexibility to respond to passenger growth, and in allowing sufficient time for investment. However, we are in no doubt that the existing Arriva Trains Wales franchise no longer reflects current aspirations and is therefore not fit for purpose. **We recommend that the Welsh Government use the opportunity of the next five-year performance review assessment of the Wales and Borders (Arriva Trains Wales) franchise to seek improvements for rail passengers and better value for public**

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<sup>150</sup> Sewta written evidence, Annex B p10 and Taith written evidence, Annex B p11

<sup>151</sup> TRaCC written evidence, Annex B p5

<sup>152</sup> SWWITCH written evidence, Annex B para 2.3.10

<sup>153</sup> Record of Proceedings para 8, 21 October 2009

<sup>154</sup> Record of Proceedings para 10, 21 October 2009

<sup>155</sup> Record of Proceedings para 7, 21 October 2009

<sup>156</sup> Arriva Trains Wales written evidence, Annex B para 1.3

<sup>157</sup> Record of Proceedings paras 158 and 164, 18 November 2009

**money. We further recommend that the Government establish a round-table partnership with the regional transport consortia to explore how the franchise could be improved.**

102. Finally on funding, we did not focus on ticket pricing in this inquiry on rail infrastructure. However, it was argued by Sustrans and Wales Environment Link that pricing policies for regular users should reflect the carbon impact of journey distance, and that pricing should be used as an incentive to shift from road to rail. In reality, however, pricing acts as a disincentive for using rail for travelling short distances<sup>158</sup> and for commuting purposes. Sustrans therefore recommended that ticket prices for shorter journeys should be reduced, as should peak/off peak inequalities to encourage more commuters to switch to rail in the rush hour.<sup>159</sup>
103. **We recommend that the Welsh Government work with the regional transport consortia on developing integrated policies for pricing structures such as smartcard systems that allow people to travel on different modes of transport – rail, light rail, buses – as well as encouraging alternatives to using the car.**

## **Conclusions**

104. This inquiry has left us with the distinct impression that Wales is not getting its fair share of investment in rail infrastructure, or getting it fast enough: programmes to electrify track, to improve stations and to upgrade rolling stock seem destined to reach Wales well behind other parts of the UK.
105. In light of forecasts that demand for rail services in Wales will grow significantly over the next 20 years, we trust that the recommendations contained in this report will help secure better services and infrastructure for more rail passengers - improved journey times and connections, better safety and comfort, and greater accessibility and affordability. At the same time, we hope to achieve economic and environmental benefits from the transfer of more freight from road to rail, and that proper planning will avoid the potential conflicts of interest between passenger and freight traffic.
106. Our eye is therefore on long-term strategy. The Welsh Government too needs to develop a clear vision for the rail network and acquire the necessary powers and funding that can be used to benefit Wales economically, socially and environmentally.

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<sup>158</sup> Record of Proceedings para 125, 11 November 2009

<sup>159</sup> Sustrans written evidence, Annex B p6

107. In conclusion, the future rail infrastructure for Wales should be a railway system for all - one that helps Wales to meet its sustainability commitments as well as its objectives for social inclusion, health and wellbeing.
108. We wish to finish, however, by stressing that Wales's overall transport strategy should be to reduce the distances people and goods have to move in the first place and to change the way people and goods travel to reduce their environmental impact. All transport decisions should therefore be made within a clear strategy for reducing their carbon footprint.

**Committee Service**  
**January 2010**

## **Summary of Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

We recommend that the Welsh Government should make the preparation of Transport Assessments a statutory requirement as part of the planning process for new development.

### **Recommendation 2**

We recommend that the Welsh Government should continue to lobby for the electrification of the railway network serving Wales. As well as the Great Western Mainline as far as Swansea, the first priorities should be the diversionary lines between South Wales and London, the Cardiff area network - including the Valleys Lines - and the North Wales Mainline. We also recommend that Network Rail ensure that sufficient gauge clearance is provided on any electrified track to take freight as well as passenger traffic, and that the best technology be used to minimise disruption to rail services while electrification work is being carried out.

### **Recommendation 3**

We recommend that the Welsh Government work with First Great Western to achieve speed improvements on targeted services between South Wales and London by omitting station stops such as Swindon, Didcot and Reading.

### **Recommendation 4**

We recommend that to ensure that Wales will not be left on the slow train but will benefit from high speed rail links to the rest of England, Scotland and on to Europe, the Welsh Government should develop a strong case and lobby jointly with other interested partners for a new High Speed Line from London to South Wales, and for the North Wales Mainline to be directly connected to the proposed High Speed 2 Line from London to North West and Scotland. We further recommend that any high speed rail provision should not detract from existing services along classic lines.

### **Recommendation 5**

We recommend that the Severn Tunnel should be adapted for electrification. We also recommend that Network Rail should be commissioned to consider options for renewing the Tunnel in the longer term, linked to the business case for a new High Speed Line from London to South Wales.

### **Recommendation 6**

We recommend that the Welsh Government, Network Rail and the regional transport consortia work together on options to improve the existing North-South Wales rail line and services, including a programme of line speed improvements, additional faster services and a limited stop service on alternate hours during peak periods.

### **Recommendation 7**

We recommend that the Welsh Government, in consultation with Network Rail, should respond individually to the list of recommended rail speed and capacity improvements listed in Appendix 2 of this report, and update its 2008 Rail Forward Programme accordingly.

### **Recommendation 8**

The planning of railway infrastructure needs to be better integrated with the provision of more appropriate rolling stock. We recommend that the Welsh Government should agree with the Department for Transport and Arriva Trains Wales how exactly it will deliver its commitment to provide more rolling stock, including longer trains on the Valleys Lines, and that it should publish this in a rolling stock plan for Wales, as we previously recommended. We also recommend that rolling stock provision and replacement should be integrated with plans for electrification of lines in order to achieve synergies and savings.

### **Recommendation 9**

We recommend that the Welsh Government and Network Rail take account of the socio-economic as well as the business case for new or re-opened stations. We also recommend that the Welsh Government, in consultation with Network Rail, should respond individually to the list of recommended schemes for new or re-opened stations and lines listed in Appendix 3 of this report, and update its 2008 Rail Forward Programme accordingly.

### **Recommendation 10**

We recommend that the Welsh Government carry out a cost-benefit analysis of providing new or enhanced Traws Cambria services both to complement existing rail services and to fill in gaps in the rail network, such as between Carmarthen-Aberystwyth, Moat Lane junction-Merthyr, Caernarfon-North Wales Main Line and North Wales Main Line-Ruthin-Corwen, linked to the Heart of Wales Line.

### **Recommendation 11**

We recommend that the Welsh Government should agree to fund the proposal, supported by the regional transport consortium SWWITCH and petitioners to the National Assembly, for providing additional trains to Fishguard.

### **Recommendation 12**

We recommend that the Welsh Government continue to work with partners to invest in improvements to rail stations in Wales, both for passenger comfort and safety - especially passengers with disabilities - and also for better connecting rail stations with other modes of transport such as buses, taxis and safe cycling and walking routes. We further recommend that these improvements be integrated in strategic transport plans at national and regional levels.

### **Recommendation 13**

We recommend that the Welsh Government should encourage the regional transport consortia, through their Regional Transport Plans, to develop more Park and Ride facilities to encourage more people to travel by train, and that the assessment of need include consideration of a growth in use to ensure sufficient numbers of parking spaces can be provided.

### **Recommendation 14**

We recommend that the Welsh Government respond to the Department for Transport's consultation on "Better Rail Stations" and support the recommendation that Cardiff become a Category A station.

### **Recommendation 15**

The Deputy First Minister told us that he would welcome innovative transport solutions, including light rail.<sup>160</sup> We therefore recommend that the Welsh Government work with relevant partners to commission feasibility studies for developing light rail networks in the main urban areas of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, which should include consideration of how to integrate such systems with existing heavy rail infrastructure.

### **Recommendation 16**

Given the forecasted growth in both rail freight and passenger traffic, we repeat our 2007 recommendation that the Welsh Government should give higher priority and more resources to encouraging a

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<sup>160</sup> Record of Proceedings para 176, 21 October 2009

modal shift of freight from road to rail, including signalling, loading gauge and axle-weight capacity enhancements. This needs to be managed carefully in partnership with Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies to avoid conflict with rail passenger traffic. We further recommend that as part of a study to understand better the pattern of movement of freight the Welsh Government and its partners consider how to plan for the strategic location of terminals to increase the amount of freight that can be transferred to rail transport.

### **Recommendation 17**

We recommend that the Welsh Government and Network Rail prepare an action plan to identify and connect appropriate ports in Wales to adequate rail infrastructure in order for rail to compete with road and to fit operationally and financially with industries' logistics and distribution networks. We further recommend that the Welsh Government should ensure the Department for Transport's current consultation on a national policy statement for ports in England and Wales<sup>161</sup> reflects Welsh priorities.

### **Recommendation 18**

We recommend that once the National and Regional Transport Plans are finalised, a formal concordat with Network Rail should be drawn up and agreed by the Welsh Government and the regional transport consortia. This would help achieve greater transparency in rail planning from the national to the regional level and closer communication and cooperation to ensure aspirations for the future rail infrastructure in Wales are coordinated and delivered.

### **Recommendation 19**

We recommend that the Welsh Government should seek equivalent powers to the Scottish Government, together with the associated funding, whether by amendments to the Railways Act 2005 or other appropriate legislative means. We also recommend that the Welsh Government should continue to make a strong case for continued investment in Wales through the planning group for the next High Level Output Specification period (2014-19).

### **Recommendation 20**

We recommend that the Welsh Government use the opportunity of the next five-year performance review assessment of the Wales and Borders (Arriva Trains Wales) franchise to seek improvements for rail passengers and better value for public money. We further recommend

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<sup>161</sup> Draft National Policy Statement for Ports, Department for Transport, November 2009



that the Government establish a round-table partnership with the regional transport consortia to explore how the franchise could be improved.

### **Recommendation 21**

We recommend that the Welsh Government work with the regional transport consortia on developing integrated policies for pricing structures such as smartcard systems that allow people to travel on different modes of transport – rail, light rail, buses – as well as encouraging alternatives to using the car.

## **Annex A – Transcript of evidence sessions**

21 October 2009

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=149802&ds=10/2009>

4 November 2009

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=151578&ds=12/2009>

11 November 2009

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152644&ds=11/2009>

18 November 2009

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=153902&ds=11/2009>

23 November 2009

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=155030&ds=11/2009>

## **Annex B – Written evidence**

### **Arriva Trains Wales**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152505&ds=11/2009>

### **Department for Transport**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=151875&ds=11/2009>

### **First Great Western**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152672&ds=11/2009>

### **Freight Transport Association**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=151123&ds=11/2009>

### **The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=151614&ds=11/2009>

### **Network Rail**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=149645&ds=11/2009>

### **Network Rail supplementary evidence**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=155908&ds=11/2009>

### **Paul Atkins**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=161338&ds=1/2010>

### **Passenger Focus**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=149647&ds=11/2009>

**Railfuture**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=147551&ds=10/2009>

**Rail Freight Group**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=150828&ds=11/2009>

**The Severn Tunnel Action Group**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=151610&ds=11/2009>

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=151611&ds=11/2009>

**Sewta**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152700&ds=11/2009>

**Sustrans**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=150827&ds=11/2009>

**SWITCH**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152695&ds=11/2009>

**Taith**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152813&ds=11/2009>

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152946&ds=11/2009>

**T N D Anderson**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=159500&ds=1/2010>

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=160007&ds=1/2010>

**Tony Burton**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=151615&ds=11/2009>

**TRaCC**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152701&ds=11/2009>

**Transport Scotland**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=152120&ds=11/2009>

**Wales Environment Link**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=153264&ds=11/2009>

**Wales Transport Strategy Group**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=147554&ds=10/2009>

**Welsh Government**

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=147818&ds=10/2009>

## **Appendix 1: Roles and responsibilities for railways in Wales**

### **Welsh Assembly Government (Welsh Government)**

The Railways Act 2005 transferred most of the functions of the now defunct Strategic Rail Authority to the Secretary of State for Transport in the UK Government. The Act required the Welsh Government to be a joint signatory with the Secretary of State for Transport to any franchise that provides rail services wholly within Wales.

Under the Act, the Welsh Government can also:

- give financial assistance to any organisation for the purpose of developing Welsh railways (including money for infrastructure enhancements to Network Rail or funding for additional services to Train Operating Companies);
- publish guidance jointly with the Secretary of State in relation to, and make any proposals for, closure of services or facilities that it funds;
- designate, where applicable, new services it funds as experimental for a trial period of up to five years.

In October 2005, the Welsh Government became a joint signatory, with the Department for Transport, to the Wales and Borders franchise operated by Arriva Trains Wales, and from 1 April 2006 became responsible for funding all Arriva Trains Wales services, except for a few services that operate only in England.

The Transport (Wales) Act 2006 made the Welsh Government responsible for preparing a Wales Transport Strategy and gave it a general duty to “develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, sustainable, efficient and economic transport facilities and services to, from and within Wales.”

The Act also provided measures to ensure that local transport planning is consistent with the Welsh Government’s overall transport strategy and provided for joint working arrangements and potentially for joint transport authorities in Wales so that local authority transport functions can be carried out on a regional basis.

The Welsh Government can appoint a member to the Rail Passenger Council, now called Passenger Focus. The Government can also pay freight grants to encourage the shift of freight from road to rail.

### **Department for Transport**

The Department for Transport is responsible for setting the broad strategy for the development of rail passenger and freight services in England and Wales. The Department has established new processes for

strategic planning through a High Level Output Specification (HLOS)<sup>162</sup> and Statement of Funds Available (SOFA) for five-year control periods; the current period is 2009-14. This process should take account of the longer-term Rail Planning Assessments produced for Wales and for each of the English regions.

Funding for railways is focused on paying for franchised train services and towards Network Rail, which receives its income through direct grants from the UK Government and from the train operators who pay to access the network. The Department for Transport is responsible for setting the performance and capacity outputs required from Network Rail through the High Level Output Specification (HLOS), in terms of performance and capacity, for a price that is set by the Office of Rail Regulation. The Department for Transport must consult the Welsh Government on the HLOS.

There is a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for Transport and the Welsh Government, which sets out their respective roles and responsibilities.

## **Network Rail**

Network Rail is a “not for dividend” company that owns and manages the rail network and associated infrastructure of Great Britain, including stations and signalling. It is directly accountable to its Members and is regulated by the Office of Rail Regulation.

It receives funding from the Department for Transport and the Train Operating Companies. It also receives income from stations, depots and open access operators. Network Rail uses this funding to maintain, renew and enhance the network. Funding is set for each Control Period by the Office for Rail Regulation. This sets the level of funding that Network Rail is to receive from the UK Government (for England and Wales) and from the Scottish Government, as well as the level of charges it can make to Train Operating Companies and Freight Operating Companies for access to the track.

In addition it receives modest funding (some £50 million a year for England and Wales) to allow for some enhancements to the network during routine maintenance works, where these can be shown to represent value for money. Network Rail can also receive funding for infrastructure improvements from other organisations, including the Welsh Government.

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<sup>162</sup> The HLOS was published by the Department for Transport in 2007 to cover the period April 2009 to March 2014 (known as Control Period 4) and defines the level of funding and new investment in the UK railway infrastructure

Network Rail has a well defined process for examining new projects, known as the Guide to Rail Investment Projects (GRIP). All enhancement projects must progress from definition of need and outline scope to delivery and implementation in accordance with the eight stages of the GRIP process.

Network Rail publishes a 10-year rolling business plan, as part of its licence conditions. The plan lists all the work that is to be carried out, route-by-route, and all of the aspirations for the network over the next 10 years.

### **Passenger Focus**

The Railways Act 2005 established a new Rail Passengers Council - now operating under the name of Passenger Focus - which is the official, independent voice of all rail passengers. Its mission is to “get the best deal for Britain’s rail passengers” with a strong emphasis on evidence-based campaigning and research.

### **Regional transport consortia**

There are four regional transport consortia covering Wales, each made up of a partnership of local authorities as follows:

- South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA) - 10 local authorities
- South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH) - four local authorities
- Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru (TRaCC) – three local authorities
- Taith – six local authorities (Gwynedd being a member of both TRaCC and Taith).

Each consortium works with a range of stakeholders, including bus and rail operators, user representatives, business representatives, universities, neighbouring authorities and the Welsh Government, to prepare strategic plans for all modes of transport within its region.

The Transport (Wales) Act 2006 required each consortium to produce a Regional Transport Plan that is compatible with the Wales Transport Strategy and the National Transport Plan.

### **Office of Rail Regulation**

This is responsible for the economic regulation of Network Rail. It licenses operators of railway assets; approves track, station, light maintenance depot access; and enforces health and safety regulation of the railways.



## **Train Operating Companies**

These provide rail services to agreed standards as set out in a franchise agreement or an open access agreement.

Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) operates intensive commuter services in the South Wales Valleys, fast inter-urban services from North to South Wales and along the Cambrian Line, and rural services along the Cambrian Coast, the Heart of Wales Line, the West Wales Branches and the Bidston to Wrexham Line. ATW services also link Wales to Manchester, Birmingham, Birmingham International Airport and Cheltenham.

CrossCountry operates services from Cardiff through Birmingham New Street to Nottingham.

First Great Western (FGW) operates High Speed services between West Wales, Swansea, Cardiff, Newport and London and also services between South Wales and Portsmouth Harbour and Taunton.

Virgin Trains operates services from North Wales through Chester to London Euston.

Wrexham and Shrewsbury Wrexham & Shropshire (WSMR) operates services to London Marylebone from Wrexham through Shrewsbury.

## **Appendix 2: Suggested network speed and capacity improvements**

### Within the Network Rail Financial Control Period 4 (2009-2014)

- Aberystwyth-Shrewsbury increased to hourly with line speed increases to reduce journey time by 20-30 minutes.
- Merthyr-Cardiff service increased to three trains per hour in place of two trains per hour.
- Gowerton-Llanelli track redoubled to provide capacity for additional frequency to Carmarthen and Pembrokeshire.
- Major investment in the Cardiff area core corridor with two extra platforms at Queen Street Station (north-bound and Cardiff Bay) and two at Cardiff Central Station (Maesteg / commuter terminating services and north-south metro services – platform 8 on the south side) together with a significant increase in capacity at Cogan Junction south of Cardiff and on which all capacity and frequency improvements in the Vale of Glamorgan are based. These would provide for airport access (see below) and also increase rail travel into Cardiff from a major commuter area.
- Re-signalling and major track work along the South Wales Main Line and the Great Western Main Line in England.

### Beyond the Network Rail Financial Control Period 4 (Post 2014)

- Valley Lines and other commuter services re-thought as the Cardiff / South East Wales Metro Rail service covering all routes from Treherbert, Aberdare, Merthyr, Ebbw Vale, Penarth, Barry, Cardiff Airport and Bridgend via the Vale of Glamorgan line. The Metro concept would extend to the South Wales Main Line with services to stations such as Pencoed, Pontyclun and Llanharran, Maesteg and Newport.
- Increased capacity and frequency on City Line from Radyr via Danescourt to Cardiff Central.
- A reinstated line from City Line to Creigiau along the existing formation to serve the recent growth in housing in the area north west of Cardiff.
- Re-opening of the Moat Lane junction to Builth Road section primarily for freight operation to enable increased use of both the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines for freight movements between South Wales and North West England and give some relief to the congestion in the Cardiff-Newport areas.

## **Appendix 3: Suggested schemes for new and re-opened stations**

### Professor Cole

- Construction of the Gateway Wales railway station and direct bus-way link to Cardiff Airport's planned terminal building upgrade. The new station could result in up to 20 per cent of airport passengers travelling by train. The frequency of four trains per day to and from Cardiff Central would make this as attractive as that at Newcastle airport where that level of modal split is being achieved. These might be envisaged as two stopping trains from Valley destinations (30 minute journey time) and two fast services taking 15 minutes, possibly extensions of the current Gloucester service in the Wales and Borders franchise (Arriva Trains Wales) and the Portsmouth Harbour First Great Western service. The latter would involve converting that operation into an "express" service with stops at principal stations. It would require agreement from the UK Department for Transport, the sponsoring department for that franchise and negotiations with statutory consultees.
- Park and Ride at locations such as Severn Tunnel Junction, Miskin and St Mellons where the M4 and the existing South Wales Main Line are in close proximity, to reduce road traffic congestion.
- Park and Ride at key stations such as Llandudno Junction, Rhyl and Fflint to increase demand on a limited stop service from North to South Wales and also to Chester and London.
- Underused stations such as those built for the Swanline service in the 1970s (e.g. Baglan, Llansamlet) which failed to develop its full potential, and an increase in frequency from the current two hourly service if train services are to extend the success of the Park and Ride bus services introduced by Swansea City Council to reduce congestion in the city centre.
- A new station at Landore, north of the existing Swansea (High Street) station and associated high frequency bus service links into the new Swansea shopping area, to avoid trains serving South West Wales having to reverse from the existing station and so reduce journey times.
- Track re-doubling between Gowerton and Llanelli to contribute to the increase in frequencies in Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire with through services or connecting links at Carmarthen. Reinstating the east-bound platform at Gowerton with improved Park and Ride facilities and the creation of a purpose-built Park and Ride facility at Whitland station.

### Railfuture

- New stations at Llandarcy business park, Morriston (for the Swansea Valley and the hospital) and Grovesend to improve direct passenger trains to West Wales.
- Introduction of passenger services over the following freight lines: Pontyclun to Beddau, Ystrad Mynach to Nelson, Gaerwen to Llangefnï.

- Reinstatement of the following lines: Bangor to Caernarfon, Grovesend to Pontadulais, Aberbeeg to Abertillery.
- New stations on the Chepstow line (Magor, Celtic Lakes, St Mellons); the Maesteg line (Llangynwyd, Brackla, St Fagans); the Marches line (Caerleon, Pontrilas); the Cambrian line (Bow Street, Carno); the Shrewsbury to Chester line (Baschurch, Whittington, Weston Rhyn, Cefn, Johnstown, Rossett, Chester Business Park); and the North Wales Coast line (Queensferry, Conah's Quay, Bagillt, Greenfield).