

Senedd Cymru

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau

Gweithio o bell: Y goblygiadau i Gymru

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Ymateb gan: ASLEF

Welsh Parliament

Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Remote Working: Implications for Wales

Evidence from: ASLEF



ASLEF Evidence Submission - The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee - Remote Working : Implications for Wales – January 2021

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems. The union has just over 600 members in Wales
2. The proposals from the Welsh Government to have 30% of workers in Wales working remotely on a regular basis over the long-term presents potential positive and negative impacts for the rail network in Wales.
3. With more workers working at home or a location close to their home in the local community there will be less commuters purchasing season tickets to travel which will affect any planning based on the confirmed income that these season tickets provide. With workers spending less time at their traditional offices it is assumed that commuters will favour a daily ticket or a more flexible ticket that doesn't commit them to travelling five days a week. Consideration must be given to how this will affect funding for the rail network.
4. The introduction of a more flexible rail season ticket for commuters that choose to work from home or remotely one to two days a week should be considered. This will not only encourage commuters to still buy tickets for travel in advance, allowing the operator to plan around expected passenger numbers but it will also enable the operator to continue to receive secure income from season ticket purchases, despite the number of commuters dropping.
5. It is important that rail services are maintained for the workers that will still be commuting, ensuring that rail continues to be an attractive green alternative to private vehicle usage. It is of more importance that any reduction in rail usage by commuters does not directly translate in to an unfair increase in rail fares for those still commuting via rail.
6. The reduced number of rail commuters could impact on the businesses which benefit from the footfall around major transport hubs. If the metro links in these areas are maintained

and invested in, as outlined in the Welsh Government's 2019 case for rail devolution, then this can be somewhat mitigated by offering local residents suitable public transport into town and city centres.

7. A continued investment in metro, bus, tram and cycle infrastructure would be needed to ensure that green and decarbonisation targets are met by keeping the public transport network convenient for residents. It is important that home and remote workers do not turn to private journeys via car if the new way of working is not serviced by current public transport networks. For example, if workers choose to commute to an alternative local location within their community or if they choose to make journeys to central town and city areas during breaks, the transport network will need to be designed to still serve these workers.
8. It is important to take note of how the reduced number of passengers commuting to work via rail may impact on the Welsh Government's current plans to invest in the railways. If certain lines and stations see reduced usage due to home working a revision of the current planned investment and development strategy may be needed to reflect the changing use of the transport network.
9. A drop in commuter usage may also lead to revised timetabling of services, which could deter travellers from choosing rail to reach their destinations. It is important that rail is still seen as a convenient mode of transport with regular services connecting stations. Keeping rail relevant and convenient will enable the local economies based around railway stations to continue benefiting from foot passengers. Any revision in timetabling also has the unintended consequence of affecting the tourism sector within Wales by disrupting the convenience of rail connectivity in to and out of, as well as within Wales.
10. The move to home and remote working would present an opportunity for an increase in leisure travel via public transport. This increase in leisure travel could help to mitigate any losses in funding from a reduction in rail commuter numbers, if rail is promoted as a viable option for leisure travel. An increase in leisure travel could help the Welsh Government's aims to invest in and develop strategic corridors connecting North and South Wales via rail. An Increase in leisure travel could further boost plans for investment by creating a stronger public desire to open up rail routes to tourist locations from the major towns and cities, which in turn, will help to boost the tourism economy of Wales.

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