

---

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /  
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee  
Teithio ar fysiau a'r rheilffordd yng Nghymru / Bus and rail transport in Wales  
BRT10  
Ymateb gan / Evidence from West Coast Partnership

West Coast Partnership welcomes the opportunity to submit views in response to the Climate Change Environment and Infrastructure Committee's call for evidence for its inquiry into public transport in Wales.

West Coast Partnership operates Avanti West Coast (the busiest mixed-use railway in the UK) and is the 'Shadow Operator' for HS2: designing, developing and mobilising high speed service operations and the associated conventional services. Our vision is to deliver a progressive railway that generates prosperity and pride across all the nations we serve and we stand ready to work with all partners to collaboratively promote and develop rail as we look to drive regional growth and deliver exceptional services for the benefit of customers and communities on our route.

Comments are provided below on each of the three main lines of inquiry. Given our role as a provider for rail services our views relate predominantly to rail – however we recognise that connectivity between various modes of public transport represents an opportunity for significant and sustained modal shift.

1) Priorities for post covid recovery for Welsh bus and rail

The pandemic has presented challenges, but also an opportunity for the rail industry, alongside and supported by Government, to continue to develop new ways of working that have collaboration and customers at the heart of everything that we do. We will continue to work with Government and others to support ongoing recovery and to create a better, more responsive offer for customers that also presents real value for taxpayers.

---

As a result of the pandemic, we have seen changes to traditional travel patterns and people are now starting to use public transport in a different way than previously. With more flexible working arrangements in place for many people we have seen a move away from expected rush hour spikes consistently across the week. Leisure demand at weekends has grown significantly across our network and on some routes has surpassed pre-covid levels. Building on the agility we and the rail industry demonstrate during Covid, we aim to maintain flexibility and grow services responding to such changing patterns of use through, for example, the timetables that we deliver and also ticketing products on offer.

In order to continue to build the market for public transport and attract more passengers we are focused on providing a proposition that meets and exceeds the expectations and needs of our current and potential customers. This means ensuring that we deliver a reliable and accessible service right across our network. Creating the conditions for these to be met will continue to be a priority for us alongside government, which will also enable growth and transformational regeneration across our route

- 2) The action required to achieve Welsh Government targets for modal shift to these modes, and behaviour change

West Coast Partnership supports the vision and ambitions outlined in *Llwybr Newydd – A New Wales Transport Strategy* - for an accessible, sustainable transport system which supports people and communities, is good for the environment, helps to drive economic growth and will contribute to the creation of great places to live and visit. We welcome the focus on partnership working to deliver that strategy and the commitment by Welsh Government to strengthen engagement with commercial transport operators who serve Wales.

We believe that the government can continue to help facilitate collaboration between transport operating companies across Wales which will be essential to help deliver a more integrated public transport services and is an essential requirement for the modal shift and behaviour change required. In addition to this, sustained and targeted investment will help create the conditions for a safe, reliable and integrated

---

rail network making it easier for people to access public transport in a way that meets their needs and requirements.

In 2023 Avanti West Coast will begin the rollout of its new fleet of Hitachi trains. The new fleet will be a mix of ten seven-carriage electric trains and 13 five-carriage bi-mode trains, with the ability to switch seamlessly between electric and diesel power. The electric trains (Class 807) will operate between London, the West Midlands and Liverpool while the bi-mode version (Class 805) will be focused on the London to North Wales route. Crucially the introduction of the fleet and the phasing out of the Voyager trains which currently serve our North Wales route will lead to a 61 percent reduction in carbon emissions.

- 3) Views on proposals for bus and rail reform – including UK Government plans to reform the rail industry, and Welsh Governments plans for regulation of bus services / the Bus White Paper

West Coast Partnership welcome reform that benefits customers. As much of the detail on reform is still to be decided, we want to work closely with all parties to ensure the customer is at the heart of the changes that will be made. We are keen to understand further how the introduction of Great British Railways will impact on private sector operators.

West Coast Partnership will deliver many improvements for customers and communities along the West Coast Mainline over the coming years and we're committed to making rail travel sustainable through delivering on the commitments in Our Responsible Plan. As part of this commitment, we look forward to continuing our work with Transport for Wales, the Welsh Government and other stakeholders to build on our achievements to date and will work with all partners to collaboratively promote and develop rail as we look to build back better beyond the pandemic.