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Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

05 March 2024

Dear Llyr,

I wish to provide you and the committee with an update on the plans Transport for Wales have developed for the Euro 2024 qualifier play-off match between Wales v Finland at Cardiff City Stadium on 21 March, before facing either Poland or Estonia on Tuesday 26 March, which as you know may be a play-off final or international friendly depending on the result of the Finland game. We in Transport for Wales recognise the significant role we play in supporting the success of these events and welcome your challenge in ensuring we provide the best service we can for fans from across Wales.

I recognise that TfW has previously faced operational challenges when delivering services on international football match days - especially for fans travelling between North and South Wales. We have heard strongly the concerns raised by fans and we want to improve our offer and build the trust and confidence with those traveling fans. I'd like to reassure you and the committee that I have personally met with the Football Association of Wales in early January 2024, to ensure that lessons learnt from previous fixtures are put into action in advance of the upcoming matches. I was grateful for the feedback from FAW and the supportive way they have approached facilitating conversations between ourselves and Wales football fan representatives. TfW's special events team presented and briefed the FAW and the Football Supporters Association (FSA) at Cardiff City Stadium on the 15 February, outlining the upcoming arrangements for both fixtures. An agreement has been reached to attend follow up sessions with the FSA, and scheduled meetings throughout the remainder of the year have also been agreed.

I have summarised on the following page the plans we now have in place for the forthcoming fixtures. The details are already in journey planning systems and we expect to publish the full details through a public announcement shortly.



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Service overview

Strengthening of key North - South rail services are scheduled for the following:

Inbound

- 10:40 departing Holyhead – arriving at Cardiff Central 15:10
- 12:30 departing Manchester Piccadilly – arriving at Cardiff Central 15:42

Outbound

- 22:47 departing Cardiff Central – arriving at Wrexham 01:32, Chester 01:48 & Crewe 02:14*
- 23:39 departing Cardiff Central – arriving at Hereford 00:42

*The late departure will allow time for customers to make their way from the stadium should there be any additional extra time/penalties at the match.

To support the above, we have strengthened the first service heading north the following day (22nd March which will coincide with hotel check-out times. This is the 11:25 from Cardiff Central, arriving at Holyhead 16:15.

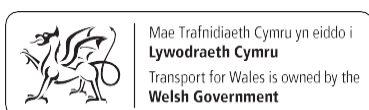
We have explored the aspiration to run a service through to Holyhead post-match, but this would prove particularly challenging due to scheduled engineering works, the need for extended signal box staffing and additional train crews. The team did investigate the option, but it was evident that if we were to operate, our customers wouldn't arrive until approximately 05:00 the following day. We have also scheduled strengthening of services on the following key routes:

- Cardiff Central to Ninian Park, Ninian Park to Cardiff Central – Pre & post-match
- Cardiff Central to Newport – Post match
- Cardiff Central to Hereford – Post match
- Treherbert to Cardiff Central (vice versa) – Post match
- Rhymney to Cardiff Central (vice versa) – Pre & post-match
- Merthyr to Cardiff Central (vice versa) – Post-match
- Aberdare to Cardiff Central (vice versa) – Post-match

The last services west are the 23:15 departing Cardiff Central, arriving Carmarthen 01:42, and the 23:59 departing Cardiff Central, arriving Swansea 00:52.

Engineering works

To deliver the above plans, we have requested midweek night engineering works to be amended – this allows normal service and additional services to operate in line with the event plan. We have worked closely with our partners in Amey Infrastructure Wales and Network Rail to facilitate these requests to allow the following routes to operate as normal:



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21 March 2024

- Treherbert Line
- Rhymney Line
- Merthyr Tydfil/Aberdare – Radyr Line(s)
- Two track possession at Newport station
- A protective path between Ninian Park – Chester to stop any additional engineering work.

26 March 2024

- Treherbert Line
- Ebbw Vale Line
- Rhymney Line
- Protective paths between Cardiff Central – Barry Island/Swansea/Chester to stop any additional engineering work.

There was a desire to run services further west for these fixtures, however, due to a 10-day engineering blockade between Whitland and Pembroke Dock, and despite requesting the cutback with Network Rail, we were unable to progress this further. It would have added an additional 2 days of engineering work onto the existing schedule.

Standby bus provision

We will have standby bus and coach provision available at key locations along the Marches line and at Cardiff Central, if customer numbers are higher than anticipated.

Customer delivery

We will be working closely with station staff, British Transport Police, and our security colleagues to monitor all services. We will have an events manager onboard two of the key services to and from North Wales (the 10.40 from Holyhead and the 11.25 to Holyhead) who will accompany supporters and advise passengers throughout their journey.

In addition, we will have a crowd management plan in place at Cardiff Central and at Ninian Park, where colleagues will be on hand to assist customers, as well as monitor passenger numbers both before and after the match.

I would like to reassure the committee that robust planning and contingency plans have been implemented to protect the key services we expect supporters to be using. Colleagues at TfW's special events team have dedicated planning and delivery managers in place, and our collaborative work with the FAW, and on other major sporting events across the network recently, have provided confidence in our position to deliver for these upcoming fixtures.



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I would urge fans travelling to continue to check for the latest travel updates before they travel, and throughout the day, via our website, journey check and social channels for the most up to date information.

I hope the above is useful and if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My office would be happy to arrange a technical briefing to take place should you wish to do so prior to the fixture.

Kind regards,

James Price
Chief Executive, Transport for Wales.



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