



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

13 January 2025

Dear Llyr Gruffydd MS

As requested by the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee, I am writing to you with further information on the specific topics requested and to provide an update on TfW's performance.

On behalf of TfW, I welcome the Committee's robust scrutiny of our performance to ensure the best rail services TfW can offer for the people of Wales and its border regions, and the integrity of the processes in place when spending taxpayer money to transform the railway. It was also a pleasure welcoming you to the Taff's Well Depot in November, and I am please that you were able to take time to come and see it.

2024 has not been without its operational challenges for TfW, but it's also been a year in which we've achieved some major milestones in terms of our investment in our new fleet, delivering a significant mainline timetable change and moving closer to delivering our ambitious vision for the integration of transport in Wales.

In November we started introducing the latest of our brand-new fleet, the Class 756s on the Aberdare and Merthyr Lines, and on the Treherbert line as of Monday 6 January 2025. This brings a welcome upgrade onto the TAM lines, and more Class 756s will follow on these lines over the weeks ahead.

Almost every line now has new units operating on them, with some lines such as the Wrexham-Bidston line or the Conwy Valley Line having every service run with an entirely new unit. As of the Sunday 15 December 2024 timetable change, the North Wales Branches will continue to have 100% of journeys on new fleet and the North Wales Mainline with over 80% of journeys on new fleet. Overall, over 87% of journeys will be on new fleet for North Wales from December 2024 timetable.

We expect the delivery of all new fleets, apart from the Class 398s, to be completed by the end of 2025, with all units entered into service by the end of 2026. The table below details the number of each new unit entered into service so far:

<b>New Trains</b>	<b>Number in service</b>
Class 197s	58 out of 77
Class 231s	11 out of 11
Class 756s	10 out of 24
Class 398s	0 out of 36
Mark 4s	7 out of 8
Class 153s	16 out of 18
Class 230s	5 out of 5



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Other key timetable changes introduced in December 2024 have been

- Significantly more stops at Pontyclun, Llanharan and Pencoed – increase in total daily services from 38 per day to 59. A 55% increase.
- Increase in Swanline services during peak hours to 1 train per hour (Baglan, Briton Ferry, Skewen and Llansamlet).
- Two extra Milford Haven services and a more evenly spaced service to Fishguard Harbour, which removes a six-hour gap without trains during the middle of the day.
- The last train from Cardiff to Maesteg via Bridgend is now later - at 11:24pm.
- Later last train from Swansea to Cardiff leaving at 11:30pm Monday to Friday.
- More consistent departures with more trains leaving at the same time past each hour.
- Maesteg services towards Cardiff will now run through to Ebbw Vale, rather than Cheltenham Spa.
- Cheltenham Spa services will start and end at Cardiff Central.
- Instigation of the changes brought about by the Strategic Timetable Review on the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines.
- Introduction of brand-new Class 756 trains on the Core Valley Lines (starting November) and dedicated active travel trains with extra bike spaces, a full refit and a dedicated livery for the Heart of Wales line.
- Some changes to the calling pattern on certain services between Cardiff and Manchester Piccadilly, to speed up some trains and deliver a standard pattern in the timetable.
- Some local services between West Wales and Cardiff will now use Platform 0 at Cardiff Central.
- The North Wales Branches will continue to have 100% of journeys on new fleet and the North Wales Mainline with over 80% of journeys on new fleet. Overall, over 87% of journeys will be on new fleet for North Wales services from December 2024 timetable.

These changes have been described as the “most significant mainline timetable change in a generation” and has taken four years to develop.

However, it’s true to say that we’re still experiencing delays from our manufacturers, both Stadler and CAF and it’s important to both work in partnership with them and to hold them to account in everyway possible. I very recently undertook a short visit to Spain to meet with the CEO of CAF to push them further on making decisions.

Therefore, with our current fleet and journeys on new trains, we are around 70-75% along our journey, but this will increase with more Class 756s coming online and then bringing them onto the Coryton Line around Spring/Early Summer in 2025.

Last year, we spent time reviewing our longer-term rail timetable commitments to ensure they best meet the demands of customers and are fit for the needs of passengers. In October, we shared this work with Members as well as online for members of the public. [TfW Future Timetable Review | Have your say by Transport for Wales.](#)



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In the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic, the way people use public transport for work, education and leisure has changed significantly. We've changed too, becoming a public railway in the truest sense of the word. Nearly every service we run requires some form of public subsidy at a time where budgets are tight. Every penny we take on any service that is above and beyond our operating costs goes back into reducing the subsidy we receive. As a responsible operator it is imperative that we balance the need for a regular, robust and reliable service within our budgets and against our targets to deliver more sustainable transport.

We had developed our future timetable to better align with current travel habits and requirements of customers, whilst becoming a truly multimodal operator. That means we're looking at demand and the opportunities for growth across bus and rail together. On the railway, some routes will see little change, others will see slightly different calling patterns better targeted to current needs, but in other areas we have had to make some tough decisions to ensure that we provide capacity where most needed, grow revenue and ultimately reduce public subsidy. Regular stakeholder feedback on our timetables has fed into this, alongside passenger counts and close consideration of alternative travel options.

In 2024, we continued our work in preparation for the introduction of a new Bill to the Senedd which will enable Bus Reform. In March 2024, we jointly published the [Roadmap to Bus Reform](#) with the Welsh Government which sets out our vision for bus franchising. We later updated this with more detail around our zonal approach in which we plan to franchise across four zones, over four years, starting with South West Wales in 2027.

We've been working closely with local authorities and the regions to develop blueprints to deliver Bus Reform across these four zones and developing a 'zonal methodology' which sets out how we plan to work together to create franchising plans across the regions, whilst ensuring a consistent national approach.

We've also established an engagement framework to support this change and understand the key priorities of our stakeholder and communities to build the bus network that Wales needs. This framework includes a new Bus Reform Industry Panel which brings together voices representing passenger interests, large and SME bus operators, Community Transport organisations, local government and Trade Unions. The panel will play an important role in helping us shape the detail behind Bus Reform and ensures that local and regional collaboration is at the heart of our plans to franchise buses.

The Committee have asked some specific questions and I hope I have fully answered with the below;

### **Performance Management**

We understand that transparency is key to inspiring the trust and confidence of the Welsh people, and for this reason transparency underpins everything we do. To this end, and so that our performance can be regularly reviewed and scrutinised, we report on a range of multi-modal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to both the Welsh Government and the public, which cover:

- Finance
- Health, safety & sustainability



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- Customer satisfaction & complaints
- Passenger journey & service performance
- Business plan deliverables
- Major projects deliverables
- Procurement & stakeholder engagement
- ED&I
- Our team & people
- Welsh Language

Most of the KPIs listed above are reported quarterly, excluding our rail performance which is reviewed by the TfW Rail Board every 4 weeks and is published for each rail period on our website: [Train performance | TfW](#).

As part of our reporting process, we present a quarterly KPI scorecard to the TfW/Welsh Government Performance Board, who scrutinise the organisation's overall KPI performance and escalate any concerns to be managed by the TfW Steering Board.

## **Budget**

In order to uphold transparency around financial reporting, we work closely with Welsh Government to develop financial reporting aligned to their needs. We prepare an annual multi-year view for the WG which allows us to ensure the longer-term discussions and plans are modelled and understood for critical decisions and prioritisation.

A timetable for the budget setting process has been agreed which allows us to work closely with Welsh Government colleagues to ensure their insight and challenge is reflected in our final budget.

At the end of July each year, TfW presents an initial proposed budget to Welsh Government colleagues to be reviewed alongside our business plan for the next financial year. This budget includes all TfW costs mapped to WG funding lines (BELs).

With most of the funding attributed to rail service provision, it can be challenging to provide a finalised budget nine months in advance of the upcoming financial year that takes into consideration variables such as rail customer behaviour. However, we carry out deep dives into the budget component parts with Welsh Government colleagues to review and challenge this draft budget, and the outputs from these scrutiny sessions are fed into a second version of the budget which is once again present to Welsh Government in November.

At this stage, we're able to review available funding and the proposed budget, and various options are considered in order to close any funding gaps identified. Following this, a finalised business plan, including our proposed budget, is published.

During the year, we also provide monthly financial reporting to the Welsh Government, which includes:

- Reforecasting with a similar level of detail to the budget (including by funding line) and information on variances
- identifying risks and opportunities



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- details of any funding variations being agreed with budget holders within WG
- specific updates about ongoing projects and focus areas (e.g. MAs, pensions, tax, rolling stock leases)

This reporting and forecast data is discussed in a number of forums (monthly finance meeting, steering board, detailed discussions with budget holders). We work closely with Welsh Government to continuously improve this reporting aligned to stakeholder insights.

We also work closely with Welsh Government financial reporting teams to support preparation and audit of the Welsh Government Annual Report and Financial Statements, within which TfW's financial results are consolidated.

### **Integration and the T Network**

In 2024, we've been preparing to deliver our new and exciting vision for the integration of transport in Wales, which brings our transport system together and joins up journeys for our customers- from one mode to many. TfW's T Network (previously known as TfW 2.0) sets out this ambitious vision of one network, one timetable, one ticket, delivered by one team.

We recognise that this requires real change and preparedness at TfW. This year, we've laid the groundwork for governance, brand development and cultural change. The key steps we've taken so far on this journey include:

- Creation of the T Network subcommittee – this is held bi-monthly and serves as a 'guiding mind' to unlock business or system-wide issues and support strategic decision making. The subcommittee's membership is made of Welsh Government colleagues, TfW's Executive Leadership Team, including myself, and TfW's Non-Executive Directors. It is likely that the work of this committee will shortly transition to the main Board – as this is the key role of TfW in the future.
- Mobilisation of 5 delivery workstreams- these workstreams cover Customer, Ways of Working, Systems and Technology, Culture, and National/Regional Transport Integration. Each area has an ELT sponsor and is overseen by the T Network project team so that delivery partners are held to account.
- Developed clear brand framework and brand architecture- We've developed a new way to communicate this multimodal future (brand architecture) to customers and drive nationwide behaviour change. This is a brand architecture that is functional, flexible and full of personality, using the 'T' symbol as a beacon to guide the people of Wales.
- Colleague culture change programme- To deliver on our future as an organisation we require internal cultural change. To drive a strong performance culture and to create a shared sense of purpose, we've worked in partnership with colleagues and Trade Unions to develop TfW's new mission, vision, purpose and values. We launched this among senior leaders in readiness for wider company launch in January 2025.



## Organisational Development

As part of our Strategic Equality Plan 2024 - 2028 we will ensure that a variety of EDI training, including anti-racism training, is rolled out across the business, to create an informed and aware workforce, ensuring that those who are from underrepresented and/or marginalised groups feel welcomed and belong among their peers and colleagues.'

In addition, we will continue to invest and support in a range of schemes such as:

- Women in Transport LEAD programme,
- Women in Transport Advance mentoring programme
- Women in Rail Moving Ahead Mentoring scheme
- 2025 launch of our internal Women in Leadership programme

The Welsh Women in Transport Hub and the Wales Women in Rail regional group will also continue its work in offering a range of events to share best practice, knowledge, engaging women across the transport sector and growing a male allyship to the work being undertaken.

These programmes support women to grow in confidence and achieve their full potential. Our Internal development statistics also show that more women proportionally are likely to undertake both vocational courses and qualifications.

The progress we've made by investing in the leadership training of women at TfW, is so we can see better representation of women in higher paid positions and to continue to narrow the Gender Pay Gap – and as a consequence so we can be a more effective organisation. To provide an overview of our official gender pay gap figures, we publish a yearly report in line with UK Government legislation that includes data on:

- Mean and median gender pay gaps
- Mean and median gender bonus gaps
- The proportion of men and women who received bonuses
- Proportions of men and women in each pay quartile.

Our 2023/24 data is set to be published at the end of January 2025, but the below table is a snapshot of our 23/24 Gender Pay Gap data that will be featured in the report:

Overall GPG	Mean		Median	
	2022/2023	2023/2024	2022/2023	2023/2024
TfW	15.8%	16.6%	18.8%	19.58%
Rail	15.2%	14.97%	16.2%	14.3%
Group	14.9%	13.6%	14.1%	15.3%



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## **Implementation of Regional Transport Planning**

Over the last few years, TfW has been working ever more closely with Local Authorities and Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) to support officers in the development of Regional Transport Plans (RTPs) by providing technical support, advocacy and liaison. At this stage, RTPs have been drafted by all four of the regions in Wales and each CJC will put these plans for consultation in early 2025. Further to this, it is expected that the RTPs be published in summer 2025 in line with Welsh Government guidance.

It's key to note that the CJCs only have a statutory duty to prepare the RTPs, whilst the delivery remains a matter for individual local government authorities. However, Welsh Government are seeking to devolve the funding streams to CJCs and initial discussions are taking place with representatives across the public sector to define how project management and delivery can take advantage of local knowledge and political advocacy, whilst benefitting from the resources of a regional approach. TfW will play a key part in this, as a centre of excellence for transport planning, management and infrastructure delivery.

With continued reduction in Local Government transport resource, the ability for local governments to deliver RTPs presents a significant challenge and further emphasises the importance of regional partnership working. Therefore, TfW are offering a range of skills and services to support and supplement local government work across Wales. We're keen to support our public sector partners to ensure the success of local and regional delivery.

As previously mentioned, we're beginning to form programs which promote the integration of transport across Wales. The Regional Transport Delivery Plans may be the method of delivery for this, delivering local improvements but with a nationally standardised approach and systems that ensure journeys are joined up, particularly for those journeys which integrate with public transport.

Finally, TfW is supporting the Welsh Government as they modernise the grant process to align with future year funding and with the priorities set out above.

## **Preparations for Bus Reform**

The Welsh Government and TfW are building an integrated transport network that brings together walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport to make sustainable transport the easiest way to travel. Buses are a key part of this vision, and the people of Wales need a reliable, affordable, flexible and easy to use bus network.

As part of our continued partnership work with CJCs and Local Authorities, we've jointly agreed a methodology for how we will work together in preparation for Bus Reform. This methodology has also been approved by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the transport cabinet members across all 22 Local Authorities.

As an update to our [Our Roadmap to Bus Reform](#), in which we proposed to take a geographical approach to the roll out of bus franchising, we've agreed the principle zonal roll out across four zones based on customer profile and the composition of the proposed network. In 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, announced the following timetable for the roll out:



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- South West 2027
- North 2028
- South East 2029
- Mid Wales 2030.

The key considerations made when agreeing the sequencing of franchise areas includes the complexity of the network, including cross-country and cross-border movements; current levels of control and competition within those zones; ability to grow revenue in the area; and bus decarbonisation opportunities available.

As we work towards meeting these milestones, we're continuing to work closely with both Powys Council and Ceredigion Council to work on the bridge to franchising initiative in Mid Wales. As most of the Mid Wales network is already contracted, we aim to achieve some partial benefits from bus reform ahead of the legislation receiving planned Royal Assent in Spring 2026.

In the interim, we're keen to learn about the impact that bus reform will have on services so we're applying some of the franchising objectives around fares, ticketing, timetable and contracts to our Traws Cymru services, as well as partnering with Local Authorities, such as Gwynedd Council, on re-tendering.

We're committed to maintaining open and honest dialogue about bus provision with people across Wales and the borders. Understanding the priorities of our stakeholder and communities is key to bringing the bus network that Wales needs. TfW has an established multimodal travel advisory architecture that brings together representatives from customer groups, government, industry and people with protected characteristics. They provide feedback, scrutiny, and advice. In relation to bus franchising, we've established a comprehensive framework for engaging and consulting with key stakeholders which has culminated in an all-partner unit called the Bus Industry Forum.

To ensure that bus reform allows the public sector to make decisions about network design, we're developing an approach to measuring how accessible the public transport network is. As part of this approach, we want to know:

- How convenient is the network?
- How well does it connect people to where they want to go?
- How well does it connect people to other transport services?

This will allow us to measure the success of the network in terms of improvement to access (being 400m from a bus stop, railway station or interchange with hourly or more frequent services); access to opportunity (where and what can you access by public transport within a given time from your home); and measure of integration.

To put this into context, we've already begun to implement this methodology in the South West as this is the first zone in which we plan to franchise. We've been working closely with the zone's four Local Authorities to establish two networks, including a base network and an aspirational network, which are subject to funding.



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Engagement with key stakeholders is already underway in the South West and we've delivered activities including sessions on franchising for elected representatives, as well as representatives from TfW attending formal and informal cabinet meetings to provide updates.

In Summer 2025, we will deliver a public consultation with both online and in-person opportunities for stakeholders and customers to have their say on how the network should look. As part of the public consultation, we'll engage with operators to provide them with opportunities to share their views on the network, and to support them to build their local knowledge in the process. We also intend to lay the South West network before the Senedd in 2026, in line with the planned phase of legislation agreement.

As we move closer to the first roll out milestone, we'll continue to work with partners and stakeholders to refine our approach to franchising the network so that we build passengers the best possible network.

### **Rail and Metro Delivery**

We've continued to deliver the Core Valley Line (CVL) Infrastructure Transformation works and the commissioning of rolling stock to support the Cardiff Metro programme, with all key major milestones successfully completed during 2024.

Last year we completed work on the signalling and Overhead Line Equipment (OLE), which will power the brand-new electric trains, on the Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr lines, and received Approval to Place Into Passenger Service (APIS) from the Office of Road and Rail (ORR) which has allowed us to begin to introduce our new Class 756 tri-mode fleet into passenger service in November 2024.

Another major milestone we achieved in November 2024 was the completion of the new Taffs Well Depot, the home of the brand-new Class 398 tram train fleet. The depot is now in full operation, with the first of our colleagues operating from the site.

With the primary activity on the TAM lines being the continued introduction of the new trains, our next focus for the infrastructure transformation as part of the South Wales Metro project is the commissioning and energisation of the Cardiff to Rhymney lines in 2025. As we move into this next phase of infrastructure transformation, we've taken the time to review our Programme Management and supply chain approach. As part of this exercise, we've revised the strategic approach to programme delivery so that the integration of the remaining works is simplified and to amend supplier contract terms to increase the use of fixed price and target cost contracts.

### **Active Travel**

Over the last few years TfW has been working ever more closely with Local Authorities and CJsCs to firstly further the technical ability of officers in Wales (both TfW and LAs) to develop and bring forward good active travel schemes and secondly to understand better how to evaluate their effectiveness and indeed how to encourage better usage and take up as part of a multi modal transport network.



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The focus is currently on working in partnership with CJs and Local Authorities to support officers to bring forward and design excellent schemes as part of a rounded regional transport plan. The emphasis is on supporting and enabling and providing a service to local authority officers rather than in an enforcement role.

TfW has over the last 18 months developed the capacity for the first time to support scheme design, offering the ability to achieve much higher value for money for Wales in this space as we move forward.

### **Climate Adaptation**

In 2023, we published our Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan which covers our owned network in South East Wales and complements the Network Rail Weather Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for the Wales and borders assets owned by Network Rail.

To help us prioritise our climate adaptation planning going forward, the plan assesses our current vulnerability to extreme or adverse weather and provides an understanding of how our network and services may be impacted during these events.

In addition to developing this plan, we've also undertaken climate change risk assessments to identify the likely risks and opportunities that may affect our operations, with the aim to develop project-specific adaptation delivery plans going forward. From this, we've rolled out training to various teams within TfW based on our Climate Change Assessment guidance for the development of new projects to ensure that climate resilience is embedded into our new assets, maintenance programmes and decision making.

From previous assessment, we understand that high winds and flooding lead to the biggest impact on the running of our services, as we witnessed towards the end of 2024 from the effects of Storm Bert and Storm Darragh. We also know that there are very specific events that occur due to severe weather conditions in certain locations on the Core Valley Lines (CVL), such as earth movements, that can cause major disruption to the network.

We have several weather stations located across the CVL where we can monitor local weather patterns including rainfall, wind gusts, humidity and heat. The data collected at these weather stations is used to determine the weather patterns that are likely to cause the most disruption to services on the CVL so that precautionary measures can be put in place. Our Asset Management team has robust procedures in place to provide an existing level of resilience to current weather events, and we review these procedures to ensure we're able to identify vulnerability and respond to worsening weather events.

We also have access to remote condition monitoring, including debris screen cameras, water level monitoring systems in known flood areas, as well as river flood level warning systems for river bridges at risk of damage from river borne debris.

In areas where intervention may not be possible due to geography or cost, we allow for rapid reaction once flooding has passed so we can limit the duration of line closure and ensure the safe re-opening of the railway.



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TfW is a member of the UK Rail (RSSB) Climate Change Adaptation Working Group in which we are committed to using the same climate projections as the wider rail industry in the UK. We've also established a CVL Climate Change Adaptation Working Group to lead on the implementation of a specific CVL Climate Adaptation Delivery Plan, which focusses on increasing the resilience of our owned assets.

The CVL working group reports into the overarching Climate Change Steering Group which has been established to provide TfW with strategic direction and accountability, and to monitor our progress to becoming more resilient to climate change.

I hope this information finds you and the Committee Members well and I look forward to our annual session on 23<sup>rd</sup> January to further delve into the detail.

Yours sincerely,

James Price  
Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive