



Ein cyf/Our ref KS/PO/81/2025

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

19 February 2025

Dear Llyr

Thank you for your letter of 13 December regarding the issues raised during the scrutiny session. Please see below responses to the questions from the committee.

### **Freight**

- **Could you update us on progress in developing the Wales National Freight and Logistics Plan, including when it will be published and what it will contain given the National Transport Delivery Plan commits to develop this by 2024.**

The Welsh Government made a commitment as set out in Llwybr Newydd, the Wales Transport Strategy (WTS), to develop a new Freight and Logistics Plan for Wales by the end of 2024. I understand there may be some disappointment that the plan has not been published by now. However, we have had to focus on other transport priorities.

We recognise that the industry faces more immediate challenges, but we must be more realistic about what we are able to achieve between now and the end of this government term. I am keen to address those challenges with deliverable outcomes that are industry driven.

My priority is to commit to action which is realistically deliverable by the end of this government term and then set a pathway for any new incoming government to refresh the plan in 2026, with five further years of deliverables.

We continue to work with the UK Government to ensure the sector is given the support it needs to continue delivering for the whole of the UK. We have also been working towards developing a Freight and Logistics Plan for Wales, with preliminary work now complete. The key priorities have been discussed through joint working and consultation with stakeholders such as The Rail Freight Group, Road Haulage Association and Logistics UK.

To achieve this, we will set up a Welsh Logistics Delivery Group, whose remit will be to collaborate on these practical solutions and provide oversight of our combined actions over the next few years.

Despite all the advances in technology, it is people that underpin this industry. Skills are essential, for now and for the future, so we must have clear career pathways where a career in freight and logistics is an attractive option for school and college leavers. We need to work together to attract more people into the industry, boost retention rates and expand training opportunities.

There are significant gaps in the evidence and statistics available for freight and logistics in Wales. We need more in-depth industry data analysis. There is a clear need to undertake the mapping of current roadside facilities and frequently used HGV parking locations in Wales, so we are looking at what we can do in this area.

We will work with local authorities to discuss integrating future freight and logistics infrastructure needs into local development plans and regional transport plans.

Recognising the uncertainty in the industry about decarbonisation of fleets and how to effectively adopt electric and hydrogen powered vehicles, we are working with industry to find a way forward and addressing barriers to uptake through the Wales Commercial Vehicle Decarbonisation Programme led by Zemo Partnership. Lastly, in an area where many of the levers for action are reserved to UK Government, we will work together with our new partners in Westminster to deliver improvements to freight and logistics in Wales and ensure an integrated approach with the rest of the UK.

I will provide a written statement to the Senedd listing our key deliverable actions for the next two years in due course.

- **Could you outline how you collaborate with the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning on the areas where your portfolios intersect, including freight?**

The members of the Welsh Government collaborate through Cabinet discussions, and outside of this we have regular bilateral meetings to discuss and collaborate on portfolio responsibilities that intersect.

The most active current example is the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning is supporting me, with the establishment of a Welsh Government-led multistakeholder taskforce to develop a new strategy for the future of the Port of Holyhead. The task force will include participation from Minister Lawless from the Irish Government so that we can ensure that the port will meet the future needs of both nations. The taskforce will also consider the resilience of sea connectivity between Wales and Ireland more generally, so that these critical transport links can better withstand the challenges we expect from climate-driven changes in severe weather patterns and other hazards and threats. The taskforce will of course link in with our broader work on a Welsh Ports and Maritime Strategy for Wales.

This shorter-term priority work will help shape the scope of the wider Ports and Maritime Strategy for Wales and determine the budget required to deliver the Strategy.

The new logistics and freight plan for Wales, will be developed alongside the Ports and Maritime Strategy for Wales, given the significant interdependencies between the sectors, the supply chain challenges currently being experienced worldwide and the potential opportunities for more sustainable logistics models.

Another example of collaboration is Freight and Logistics, Maritime Ports and Cardiff Airport Transport connectivity needs are considered as part of the Regional Transport Plans that the Corporate Joint Committees are preparing now and offer a forum within which Government can look at any connectivity issues or opportunities. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning's Freeports Policy officials work collaboratively with Transport officials when assessing the business cases for the Celtic Freeport in Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire and the Ynys Mon / Anglesey Freeport to ensure passengers and freight connectivity needs are considered as part of the development of those Freeports.

## Rail Reform

### **1. Can you provide details of the discussions you and our officials are having with your counterparts to ensure that Welsh Government priorities are adequately reflected in the Bill?**

The UK Government has committed to give the Welsh Ministers a statutory role in governing, managing, planning, and developing the rail network in Wales and we will work in partnership to shape how this can lead to better outcomes for passengers.

I have had productive discussions with the UK Rail Minister, Lord Hendy, and the Secretary of State for Transport, Heidi Alexander MP, concerning our key priorities for Rail Reform. These talks have encompassed the establishment of an empowered Wales and Borders business unit within Great British Railways that would deliver accountability to the Welsh Ministers for rail infrastructure alongside a greater role in the specification and operation of rail services to and from Wales.

My officials are in regular dialogue with UK Government officials to ensure our priorities are understood, respected and are being used to shape the delivery of rail reform. The formal consultation setting out the proposed legislative measures that will form part of a new Railways Bill is expected to be published soon.

### **2. How do you envisage GBR, a body exercising functions in relation to reserved matters, will be accountable to Welsh Ministers in a meaningful way? For example, do you anticipate the Bill devolving significant executive powers to the Welsh Ministers alone, or shared with the Secretary of State?**

We are seeking to secure a fundamental reform of Wales' rail operating model. We have outlined our priorities for Rail Reform to the UK Government, including the need for accountability to Wales for the management and enhancement of railway infrastructure, and a greater role for the Welsh Ministers in rail services to and from Wales.

An empowered Wales and Borders Business Unit within Great British Railways that is accountable to both Welsh and UK Ministers, would be a significant change from the status quo. We recognise the need for collaborative working given the cross-border nature of services, journeys and the infrastructure that connects Wales. Full devolution alongside a fair funding settlement remains our long-term objective. We view devolution as a process, not an event, and see the current reform programme as a significant moment to enable a greater role for the Welsh Ministers over both rail services and infrastructure.

### **3. Can you provide further detail on your suggestion that Senedd members will be able to scrutinise the Wales and Borders business unit?**

We want to enable the Senedd to have greater powers than at present to scrutinise and hold to account the bodies that will deliver rail services and manage the rail infrastructure in Wales. My officials are discussing with the UK Government the role of the Welsh Ministers, and of Senedd committees, in providing scrutiny under possible partnership models.

### **4. Could you provide further information and detail on the treatment of funding for the Core Valleys Lines under the Barnett formula, including:**

- **How this is managed currently under the transfer of ownership agreement.**

- **The matters that remain to be clarified in the light of the letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.**
- **The total funding currently received annually, and the amount you estimate is due following further agreement.**

There was a transitional period after the transfer of the Core Valleys Lines (CVL) in 2020. For the years 2020-21 to 2023-24, an amount for Operations Maintenance and Renewal was transferred to the Welsh Government by the Department for Transport on an annual basis, averaging around £13m a year. There was also a one-off transfer of £141m capital to cover enhancements in 2020-21.

During the transitional period, Transport for Wales produced a full report on CVL Operations and Maintenance costs. The Office for Road and Rail provided an assessment of this report for the Welsh and UK Governments, and as a result a baseline transfer of £39m was added to the Welsh Government's budget in 2024-25, roughly half resource and half capital.

Enhancements funding and Barnett formula treatment of the CVL are being discussed as part of the UK Government's ongoing spending review.

**5. What assurances have you received from the UK Government about creating a dedicated enhancement fund for Wales?**

I have exchanged letters with the Secretaries of State for Wales and Transport in which the UK Government has recognised that Wales have been underfunded for rail infrastructure improvements by previous Governments. As has been agreed in the exchange of these letters, we will now work together on the initial priorities identified by the Wales Rail Board, the interventions recommended by the North Wales Transport Commission and the South East Wales Transport Commission. These will be focus that will inform discussions with the UK Treasury ahead of the Spring Spending Review. Both Government's agree on the need for a sustainable pot of rail infrastructure funding for Wales.

**6. How do you anticipate accountability for this fund be shared between Welsh and UK Ministers to ensure effective delivery of Welsh rail priorities?**

Following the exchange of letters with UK Government, my officials will be working with their Department for Transport counterparts to reform the Wales Rail Board to deliver future enhancements and ensure joint oversight.

**7. Could you:**

- **Set out the calculations underpinning the figure of £350 million, which the Welsh Government has said would be due up to the current financial year.**
- **Provide the Welsh Government's view, with calculations, of total consequential funding which would be due on the total project spend, based on current estimates now that phase 2 has been cancelled.**

I understand that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language has written to you separately regarding this matter.

**8. Could you explain what steps you are taking to ensure Welsh priorities are adequately reflected in UK ministerial decision-making processes, particularly in cases where objectives between the Welsh and UK Governments may differ?**

Our priorities for Wales are always at the forefront of my discussions with UK Government. By working in collaboration, we are developing a pipeline of priorities that is more joined up and more strategic.

The UK Government has committed to give the Welsh Ministers a statutory role in governing, managing, planning, and developing the rail network in Wales. We are also seeking statutory duties for GBR to give due regard to our policies and strategies. We are aligned that greater investment in rail infrastructure in Wales is needed to drive economic growth across Wales.

**9. Could you provide further information on the composition, operation, and role of the Wales Rail Board, particularly in light of your comments about the Green Book and its interaction with the objectives of the UK and Welsh Governments?**

The Wales Rail Board is a joint Welsh and UK Government board which is attended by senior officials and includes both governments' delivery bodies, Transport for Wales and Network Rail. The board meets quarterly and was constituted following a recommendation from the Welsh Affairs Committee.

The Board has developed a pipeline of rail infrastructure enhancements. This list is informed by industry experts and supports the priorities of both governments. It is a robust plan for future rail infrastructure enhancements in and has strengthened our case for funding. Following the recent exchange of letters, we will now be working with the Department for Transport to reform the Wales Rail Board to oversee the delivery of enhancements.

The Green Book is an important consideration and source of guidance when developing and assessing enhancement proposals. The Department for Transport's (DfT) Transport Appraisal Guidance (TAG) has been developed based on the principles outlined in the Green Book, and Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) has since been implemented specifically to support projects and programmes here in Wales. This builds on TAG but has been tailored to ensure that the specific needs and priorities of Wales are represented.

**10. What actions are the Welsh Government taking to address the growing risks of climate change to the transport network, including rail?**

The impact from climate change is putting more pressure on valuable railway infrastructure assets in Wales. The recent storms caused significant damage to the railway, including the landslip near Gobowen and flooding on the Conwy Valley Line.

There are a number of locations on the Conwy Valley Line where the ballast has been washed away underneath the track. It is vital that Network Rail have the funding they need to improve the resilience of the rail network in Wales and to protect and maintain their infrastructure.

We know that the previous UK Government failed to invest in improving the railway network in Wales. Instead, they delivered a managed decline with a real terms' reduction in funding for Network Rail for operations, maintenance and renewals. I am working closely with the UK Government to secure increased investment in rail in Wales. This includes the real partnership working to improve infrastructure assets. We are also taking steps as part of our over £1bn transformation of the Core Valley Lines to best ensure our infrastructure is high performing and can withstand the challenges that climate change is bringing.

## Rail Services and Performance

### **11. Could you provide an update on the proposed Milford Haven to Paddington Service?**

We are aware of proposals for some Great Western Railway services to be extended from Carmarthen to serve Milford Haven. We recognise the additional connectivity these service extensions could deliver, whilst also being mindful of the potential impact to passenger revenue on Transport for Wales services. We have asked Transport for Wales to consider these impacts to enable the Department for Transport to take an informed decision on whether they would wish or be able to fund these proposed service extensions.

Transport for Wales introduced improvements to West Wales services at the December 2024 timetable changes by introducing 2 additional services to Milford Haven. This means that there are now 13 daily services to the town, with many of these operated by our brand-new Class 197 trains. The increase in frequency gives passengers more options to connect at Carmarthen, Swansea or Cardiff for the longer distance service towards London Paddington.

## Road safety and pavement parking

### **12. Could you provide the Committee with a timeline for publishing the new road safety strategy?**

This year I intend to work with our partners to agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will provide a cohesive framework to coordinate focus on key areas such as, but not limited to, motorcyclist safety, rural roads, young and older drivers, e-mobility and impaired driving. It will align with the UK Government's emerging strategy adopting the globally recognised Safe System approach, founded on the ethical principle that it is never acceptable for people to be seriously injured or killed on the road network.

A National Road Safety Board will be set up to manage the MoU and will be made up of key partners. The Board will provide oversight, coordinate stakeholder efforts, monitor progress and ensure the agreed road safety objectives are met.

### **13. In your note, could you also clarify whether you believe it would be appropriate for the UK Government to legislate on pavement parking for Wales, as suggested, given this would limit the opportunity for Senedd scrutiny and, in any event, would not address the underlying issue of local authority capacity.**

To take forward the preferred option, non-devolved secondary legislation must be amended to allow local authorities to enforce against 'Unnecessary obstruction of the pavement' as there needs to be a splitting of the 'pavement' from 'road' in regulation 103 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 - which makes unnecessary obstruction of the road an offence. Only then can the Welsh Ministers add "Unnecessary obstruction of the pavement" to the list of contraventions subject to civil enforcement in schedule 7, paragraph 4(2) of the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA), using the powers under paragraph 5 of that schedule.

As the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations is non-devolved secondary legislation, it cannot be amended by the Welsh Ministers, so the Secretary of State will have to make this amendment for Wales. The amendment could apply to England and Wales if the UK Government chose to make the same amendment to the TMA in relation to England.

## Road building and unadopted roads

**14. To better understand the role of road building in meeting the Welsh Government's targets, we would welcome data or evidence from projects like the Newtown bypass or others, explicitly demonstrating how they have contributed to a reduction in private car use on the network as a whole, as opposed to specific sections.**

I enclose a copy of the Newtown Bypass Post Opening Project Evaluation (POPE) Report – One Year After Opening. This report identifies the extent to which the expected outcomes of the scheme have materialised. Section 5.9 Effects on all Travellers: Pedestrians, Cyclists, Equestrians and Vehicle Traveller (Pages 51 to 55) identifies that the implementation of the Scheme has resulted in reduced in traffic along the existing A483 / A489 with strategic traffic using the bypass. This has had a beneficial effect on the residents of Newtown by reducing severance and improving road safety. In addition, it has given Powys County Council the opportunity to develop and deliver Active Travel schemes in Newtown, which has encouraged walking and cycling throughout the town and further reduce private car usage.

Several examples of the schemes implemented and in progress through WG funding are identified in the POPE (page 54 & 55). See also links below:

[Work to begin on the next phase of the Treowen Active Travel Route - Powys County Council](#) (January 2025)

[Funding secured for future active travel improvements in Newtown - All About Newtown](#) (July 2022)

[Active Travel Improvements For Newtown | Road Safety Wales](#) (January 2021)

One of the key objectives of the Newtown Bypass was to remove through traffic and rat running on local roads such as Heol Treowen and Plantation Lane. With this achieved through construction of the bypass, safety for local residents, and in particular school children attending the Treowen and Cedewain Schools has significantly improved. In addition, this has also facilitated excellent opportunities for active travel schemes to be implemented allowing residents, including parents and children, the option of walking and cycling to school rather than using their private cars.

Similarly, as part of the A55 Abergwyngregyn to Tai'r Meibion Improvements, a 3.6km long active travel route was constructed between Junction 12 and 13 and improvements to 800 metres of multiuser path alongside the A55 to encourage and make it easier and safer to walk and cycle. This has resulted in a significant increase (approximately tenfold) in walkers and cyclist using this route (see comparison figures pre and post construction in Appendix A) demonstrating its success in attracting and giving choices for people to use sustainable forms of transport rather than their private cars.

**15. Could you clarify whether the target of a 10% reduction in car miles per person by 2030, as set out in the 2021 Net Zero Plan, remains Welsh Government policy and how the Welsh Government is pursuing this target?**

The 10% reduction in car miles per person remains our policy reflecting the priorities set out in Llwybr Newydd and the role that transport demand plays in transport decarbonisation. Cars and taxis accounted for 23.0bn km in 2023, an increase compared to 2022, but still below the pre-pandemic (2019) levels of 24.0bn km. We are pursuing this target by investing in public transport and active travel schemes, providing an attractive alternative to travelling by car. We are also supporting those who want to work remotely through investment in digital

connectivity. Average car km per person was 7,269 in 2023, compared with 7,585 in 2019, a 4% reduction.

**16. Can you provide further details on how you intend to support Welsh local authorities in dealing with this matter? Can you also provide an update on the extent to which this issue is linked to broader issues, such as unadopted drains and other adoption of other community assets?**

For existing roads, the 2024/25 unadopted road schemes are progressing well. The total programme this year amounts to £982k. This included funding to Powys, Pembrokeshire, Merthyr, Denbighshire, Ceredigion, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Gwynedd and Carmarthen. It is proposed to provide similar funding for 2025/26 to local authorities across Wales. To increase the number of new build estate roads that are adopted, a set of Common Standards and a Good practice Guide has been signed up to across Wales by all local authorities, the Federation of Master Builders and Home Builders Federation.

Any adoption would need to include highway drainage and this or may not require sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), depending on the existing status and condition of the road and the interpretation of the situation by the SuDS Approval Body (SAB), in conjunction with their colleagues in the Council Highway section.

Wales uniquely has statutory SuDS legislation. The requirement for SAB approval is triggered by certain criteria such as the area and type of run-off within a site to be developed and each Welsh unitary authority has a SAB. SAB approval is similar to, but independent of, planning approval and is sometimes required even if planning is not.

This legislation 'climate proofs' new developments in Wales and also reduces pollution loading from highways, a problem increasingly recognised by research establishments and the highways industry.

## **Active Travel**

**17. What measures are being introduced to ensure the needs of disabled people are fully considered in the planning and design of active travel infrastructure?**

Creating safer streets for all is a key priority in the planning and design of walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure.

Our Active Travel Act Guidance already aims to deliver inclusive and accessible design and sets out the requirement for engagement and consideration of people with protected characteristics. The TfW design team is starting work to review the Active Travel Act Guidance and update it, with an even stronger emphasis on inclusive design, to ensure the guidance continues to reflect current best practice, legislation and the latest technology. We will ensure practitioners and leaders are kept abreast of the changes and the dissemination of this forms part of the scope of our training programme "Academi Teithio Llesol". As part of their remit, the Hub team will facilitate sharing of innovation and best practice across all local authorities and delivery partners to improve the function, safety, accessibility, quality, and value of all interventions.

As part of the Academi programme, TfW held a training day in November 2024 for local authority officers with specific workshops on design (highlighting inclusive design) and engagement (including engaging those with or groups representing users with protected characteristics). At the event the RNIB delivered a presentation to the local authority officers and offering a virtual reality experience to aid their understanding of the challenges faced by

people with visual impairments. The Academi programme will continue to provide training to local authorities throughout the next year.

The inclusive Active Travel sub-group of the Active Travel Board resumed its work and met in its new form for the first time on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The group includes a range of stakeholders who represent disabled people. The group will continue to assist the Board in supporting the effective implementation of the Active Travel (Wales) Act (2013), the Wales Transport Strategy (2021) and ensuring the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) are met.

Schemes receiving Welsh Government funding need to provide evidence that they have involved relevant stakeholders in the development of their schemes. The [application guidance](#) for the Active Travel Fund makes it clear that engagement with users and groups with protected characteristics must be included in the development of projects, which includes the needs of disabled people.

To ensure duties undertaken in line with the Active Travel Act comply with those of the Equality Act (2010), Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) must be carried out on all schemes funded through the Active Travel Fund and the Safe Routes in Communities Grant. Any predicted negative equalities impacts should be mitigated. Under the Equality Act (2010), public sector authorities also have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to the built environment to ensure the design of new infrastructure is accessible to all. The requirement for inclusive design applies to both pedestrians and cyclists.

There is a mandatory requirement in the Active Travel Fund 2025-26 guidance and the Safe Routes in Communities programme guidance for EQIAs to be supplied as part of the application process. Mandatory requirements are also in place for monitoring and evaluation of schemes as well as engagement plans and scheme specific engagement, and appraisers will be able to automatically discount schemes from consideration if sufficient evidence is not provided, including engagement with groups with protected characteristics.

TfW have also undertaken a pilot project to review a sample of Active Travel Fund projects with the aim of identifying any common access and inclusion issues that can be shared with local authorities to inform scheme designs. The high-level outputs from that project have been shared with local authorities, highlighting key themes arising for different types of infrastructure and how they impact on groups with protected characteristics. Further work on lessons learnt will inform future approaches. Scheme specific feedback was also provided to those local authorities who submitted schemes for review, so they could take account of it in developing their proposals.

## **18. How is the Welsh Government addressing the safety concerns associated with high powered e-bikes on active travel routes?**

The safety concerns associated with illegal high-powered e-bikes with no speed limitations, on active travel routes, are real and valid, especially for our most vulnerable users. However, it's important to differentiate between legal pedal-assist electric bikes and illegal high-powered electric bikes.

The use of illegal high-powered e-bikes is a law enforcement issue. Ensuring compliance with legal standards and addressing the misuse of these vehicles on active travel routes falls under the jurisdiction of the police. I am planning to discuss this matter in a meeting with the police to understand the scale of the issue and agree actions.

Legal, pedal-assist electric bikes, which are limited to a speed of 15.5mph, can be used safely on cycle and shared-use paths and can be a vital tool for promoting inclusive cycling, offering physical, social, and well-being benefits to a diverse group of riders.

E-bikes make cycling accessible to older people, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions and those recovering from injuries. For individuals with mobility issues, e-bikes provide a sense of freedom and independence, making cycling more accessible. The benefits of e-bikes to people's lives can be seen through the important work of inclusive cycle organisations such as Pedal Power in Cardiff, BikeAbility in Swansea, or Beics Antur in Caernarfon.

## **Legislation**

**19. Can you update the Committee on the development of the draft Bill and provide a timeline for the consultation on it? Can you also provide an update on the progress of non-legislative reforms in relation to this sector?**

The First Minister will announce the forward programme of legislation for the final year of this Senedd before the summer recess. Officials continue to work with stakeholders on the development of standards and a training package for the taxi and PHV sector. These are likely to be made available for voluntary use early in 2026 prior to being made mandatory at a later stage.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

**Ken Skates AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

## Appendix A: Comparison of walking and cycling count data pre and post construction of the A55 Abergwyngregyn to Tai'r Meibion Improvements

<b>A55 Aber to Tai'r Meibion Improvements: 24-hour two-way Walking &amp; Cycling count data comparison</b>												
<b>Date/Section</b>	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Roman Road NCR 5 through Crymlyn.</b>	268	184	447	514	782	815	909	800	550	339	226	134
<b>Date/Section</b>	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24
<b>New Non Motorised User Route</b>	1884	2359	2841	3018	4406	6967	4287	4489	3074	2857	2340	4794
<b>Increase between 2022 &amp; 2024</b>	<b>1616</b>	<b>2175</b>	<b>2394</b>	<b>2504</b>	<b>3624</b>	<b>6152</b>	<b>3378</b>	<b>3689</b>	<b>2524</b>	<b>2518</b>	<b>2114</b>	<b>4660</b>