

Response to the consultation on: The future of the Wales and Borders Rail Franchise

1. Whether the current franchise meets passenger needs and what lessons should be learnt from it

- a. The Wales and Borders Franchise (hereafter, 'the franchise') is currently operated by the private sector group Arriva Trains Wales, as part of the multinational transport company Arriva, owned by Deutsche Bahn AG. Owing to this, the franchise does not meet passenger needs in a variety of aspects, including cost at point of use, service provision, investment in infrastructure and assets, cost to maintain, and overall cost to the Welsh Government. Specifically, the cost at point of use continues to rise above wage inflation on a yearly basis, whilst the cost to run the service is significantly above that found in similar-sized networks elsewhere in the EU. This is in line with other instances where public services have been privatised - replacing a responsibility to the public with an obsession towards individual and corporate profit at the expense of universal service.
- b. To ensure a level of provision meeting the needs and demands of the people in Wales, and to allow for genuine investment and growth in public transport in Wales, *the franchise should be returned to public ownership and operation indefinitely.*

2. How passengers should be involved in the franchise development and delivery

- a. Through the return of the franchise to public control, passengers can express desires and influence through the relevant persons and departments at all levels of Government, as well as through dedicated channels for the franchise that should be established to move control fully to the public, and in particular, the staff that run the franchise.

3. How communities and local government / Regional Transport Consortia should be involved. Could they be involved in specifying the franchise or perhaps even in delivering services?

- a. The franchise should be operated as a semi-autonomous non-governmental body set up to handle the franchise on a not-for-dividend basis.
- b. This body should be operated and owned principally by the workers of the franchise; in conjunction with the Department for Transport, and should include meetings and forums for individual, community, franchise worker, and government input and control of all aspects of the franchise.

4. The management model to be adopted, including the Welsh Government's proposal for a not-for-dividend franchise

- a. Please refer to answers to 2 and 3.

5. How the franchise specification should improve the passenger experience, including issues such as franchise length, targets / incentives and the core service standards which should be included;

- a. All specifications for the franchise should be developed by the body described above, and reviewed on an annual basis by said body at a democratic forum; with oversight in the interim by a committee from said body.
- b. Targets and incentives would be unnecessary under this democratic public model.
- c. Key aspects for the body to consider should include universal coverage and infrastructure investment; reducing the cost at point of use, job creation and the rights of franchise workers, and ensuring all services rendered are accessible and meet the needs as set out by the democratic body.

6. The routes, particularly cross-border routes, which should be included;

- a. All existing routes and services should be maintained and transferred to the above-outlined public franchise. All routes and potential future routes should be reviewed by the above body.
- b. A route of particular social and economic interest to consider for review would be the establishment of a North-South line, which would likely bring significant economic benefit to Mid and North Wales, as well as vastly decreasing the financial and time barriers to movement of tourists and workers across Wales.
- c. Both Cambrian Line, and services east of Cardiff should see investment to reduce journey time, and increase the number of available services, particularly on nights and weekends.

7. The rolling stock needed for the new franchise. What factors need to be considered and how this should be procured? Will new rolling stock be required?

- a. Stock for a new public franchise should be appropriated from the existing franchise where possible, with refurbishment and repairs done to bring stock up to what would be required to enable accessible universal coverage, including but not limited to consideration of disabled access, seating arrangements, etc.
- b. Additional stock should be purchased to meet an increase in available services upon the start of the new franchise.
- c. The managing body for the franchise should establish set timelines for the life cycle of all future stock, bringing these in as needed when appropriated stock reaches the end of its life cycle.
- d. The Welsh Government should invest in the development of a publicly owned manufacturing consortium to manufacture all future stock as well as other goods as publicly needed. Thereby creating jobs, and economic investment,

whilst securing the future of the franchise's stock provision.

8. Whether additional lines, enhancements to existing lines, new stations or other infrastructure are needed; and

- a. Please refer to answers to 6.

9. Whether the franchise can support an enhanced relationship between Network Rail and the franchise operator and the benefits this might bring.

- a. By bringing the franchise under a public worker-led organisation, greater co-operation can be achieved between Network Rail and the franchise as differences in priorities (ie profit for private franchise companies) are no longer present. Ideally, and in the long-term, even this disconnect between Network Rail and a public operator of train services in Wales should not exist, and all rail control should be brought under the new organisation.

- Andrew Tindall