

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes	Enterprise and Business Committee
Ymchwiliad i'r Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer dyfodol Seilwaith y Rheilffyrdd yng Nghymru	Inquiry into the Priorities for the future of Welsh Rail Infrastructure
WRI 16	WRI 16
Ffederasiwn Busnesau Bach Cymru	Federation of Small Businesses Wales



Arbenigwyr mewn Busnes
Experts in Business

FSB response to the Inquiry on Priorities for Welsh Infrastructure

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FSB Wales

FSB Wales welcomes the opportunity to present its views to the committee on Priorities for Welsh Rail Infrastructure. FSB Wales is the authoritative voice of businesses in Wales. With 10,000 members, a Welsh Policy Unit, two regional committees and twelve branch committees; FSB Wales is in constant contact with business at a grassroots level. It undertakes regular online surveys of its members as well as a biennial membership survey on a wide range of issues and concerns facing small business.

FSB Wales has undertaken significant work on transport issues in recent years, and will shortly be publishing commissioned research on Transport in Wales by Professor Stuart Cole¹, and a further piece on the South Wales Metro by Dr Mark Lang². We hope this will further debate going into the next round of investment in Wales.

In our manifesto³ for the incoming 2016 Welsh Government we have called for the creation of an integrated transport authority for Wales called "Transport for Wales" which would have responsibility for overseeing transport infrastructure investment across Wales. Central to Transport for Wales' early role will be to develop a formula for prioritising transport investment in Wales, which treats road, rail, bus and active travel as a cohesive whole. FSB Wales believes that such an approach would better serve the whole of Wales, and lead to better transport investment that relieves issues outside of the main population centres.

Transport for Wales would also oversee integrated ticketing across Welsh public transport, and allow for timetabling to operate in such a way that mixed mode public transport journeys are practical for Welsh passengers.

Some measures that we envisage being implemented by Transport for Wales may require devolution of additional powers to Wales (such as bus regulation), and others will require careful consideration of their implementation and impacts. FSB Wales has been approached by Transport for London, who are able to offer advice to organisations on integrated transport for free as part of their statutory obligations. We would encourage this committee and other bodies to take advantage of such a service.

¹ Forthcoming research paper for FSB Wales

² Forthcoming research paper for FSB Wales

³ FSB Wales (2015) A Better Way for Wales



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Please tell us what you think on each of these topics:

- *High level priorities for the development of rail infrastructure to provide the capacity and connectivity necessary to support the social and economic well-being of Wales;*

Proposals for the South Wales Metro should not come at the expense of the development of new rail infrastructure in other areas of Wales. In particular these should include further consideration of the electrification of the North Wales line. In Mid Wales, extending hourly services on the Cambrian line, and the consideration of the addition of new stations on this line (including Carno and Bow Street), such proposals may also have merit on some or all of the Heart of Wales line. In South West Wales, the Welsh Government should explore ways of increasing rail connectivity into a key hub, such as Carmarthen or Swansea. This might involve making permanent the extension of services to Fishguard that has been in place since 2011 or the creation of similar schemes to service the Milford Haven branch.

- *How far Welsh Government's rail infrastructure priorities, including those in the National Transport Finance Plan, and the Ministerial Task Force on North Wales Transport report meet the needs of Wales;*

As intimated by our manifesto and other work we have carried out, we do not feel that the transport needs of Wales and Welsh businesses are best served by the current arrangements for managing transport infrastructure in Wales. FSB Wales believes the establishment of a body such as Transport for Wales with oversight over all Welsh transport infrastructure would provide a key central point of contact and a more coherent strategic approach to Welsh transport.

- *How the development and exploitation of rail infrastructure in England affects Wales, and vice versa;*

It is obvious to us that in the absence of devolved funding for rail infrastructure the development of new infrastructure in England plays a key role in Wales' network. It is also apparent that exploitation of key routes in England will strongly influence Wales' rail network; especially on the borders network and on the key lines which connect into Wales, such as in the North West and South West of England.

- *The impact on Wales of key planned developments in England including High Speed Rail, electrification, Northern Power House / Transport for the North, and wider devolution of responsibility for rail within England;*



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We are concerned that the development of HS2 (and perhaps onwards to HS3) may not be Barnetised and that Wales will therefore not benefit from the scheme.

In terms of the proposals for Transport for the North / Northern Powerhouse it is essential that any future franchise holder (and/or Transport for Wales) for the Wales rail franchise works with that body to preserve and enhance the rail transport links that are key to the prosperity of the 'A55' corridor. Whilst North / South connectivity in Wales must be improved, we must recognise the economic importance of North Wales' relationship with the Northwest of England.

Any powers over rail devolved to regions in England should be extended to the Welsh Ministers or National Assembly for Wales, allowing for Wales to pursue its own goals in rail infrastructure. Devolution of any powers should also come with attached funding, in order that Wales does not lose out on any rail infrastructure development.