

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 19	WRI 19
Grŵp Seneddol Hollbleidiol ar gyfer Glannau Mersi Dyfrdwy Gogledd Cymru	All-Party Parliamentary Group for Mersey Dee North Wales

This submission is intended to focus on priorities for rail infrastructure with a particular focus on the needs of North Wales.

It reflects a similar submission made recently to the National Infrastructure Commission on Northern Connectivity by the Mersey-Dee North Wales All Party Parliamentary Group; both submissions deal with similar issues and both deal largely with cross-border transport.

The Mersey-Dee Region, which includes North East Wales, crosses a national border but is an integrated economic unit. This integration includes economic activity, where trade flows operate East-West in both directions across the England-Wales border. Both Welsh Government and UK Government Ministers have indicated their belief north Wales is a key part of the Northern Powerhouse.

However, at present neither road nor rail infrastructure reflect the needs of the North Wales economy in the region. Proposed changes in North West England, particularly to rail infrastructure, are vital to secure better connectivity – electrification projects being a particular example.

In the Mersey-Dee North Wales APPG submission to the Northern Connectivity inquiry, the group made the point that:

*“The UK Infrastructure Commission is a UK body. Its role is to "carry out independent and unbiased assessments of the UK's long-term infrastructure needs". We request, therefore, that when assessing the needs of the north of England, it takes into account also the closely allied needs and requirements of North Wales.”*

Clearly, that when the National Assembly and the Welsh Government consider rail infrastructure priorities, it is important that work in North Wales tallies with work in Northern England; complementary transport systems (or, indeed, single transport services which cross national borders) need to take into account their impact on an economy which operates across those borders.

Among the priorities we have identified are:

### **Access to both Manchester and Liverpool Airports.**

Currently, the links to both airports by public transport is poor. Parliamentary questions show that the UK Government expect increased demand for the Airport Services – including from North Wales specifically - in the years ahead.<sup>1</sup>

### **More competitive North Wales rail services.**

Key regional services on rail have long journey times. To encourage commuters to move from road to rail, and relieve pressure on roads such as the A55, A483, A494 and others, rail in North Wales must be more competitive. Slow journey times discourage labour market mobility and business to business connectivity and act as a brake on economic growth and prosperity.

### **Reducing car usage**

North Wales has high proportions of people who travel to work by car. One report, focusing on the North East of the country, noted:

*“It is clear that while public transport exists, it does not meet aspirations in terms of linkage to employment, frequency or quality of service. Journey times are simply not competitive to those by car and there is clear evidence that this is having a significant impact on both employee and employer aspirations.”<sup>2</sup>*

A number of major employment sites across the region, including major aerospace and automotive companies, are difficult to travel to at the moment by public transport. Development of some rail lines, notably the Wrexham- Bidston-Liverpool rail line, could improve the situation. This line passes the Deeside Industrial Park but does not currently have a station serving the park – a relatively small level of investment could alter this situation. Further electrification of the line could significantly improve its usage, journey times and economic impact.

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<sup>1</sup> [Written Answers — Department for Transport: Manchester Airport \(14 Dec 2015\)](#); [Written Answers — Department for Transport: Manchester Airport \(14 Dec 2015\)](#); [Written Answers — Department for Transport: Manchester Airport \(14 Dec 2015\)](#); [Written Answers — Department for Transport: Manchester Airport \(14 Dec 2015\)](#); [Written Answers — Department for Transport: Manchester Airport \(14 Dec 2015\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.taith.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/130628-NEWITT-Report-FINAL-High-Res.pdf>