

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 29	WRI 29
Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru	Welsh Local Government Association

Inquiry into the Priorities for the future of Welsh Rail Infrastructure

Evidence from the Welsh Local Government Association

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, the three national park authorities and the three fire and rescue authorities.

The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Enterprise & Business Committee inquiry into the priorities for the future of Welsh Rail Infrastructure. We do not offer views against all the questions posed.

QUESTIONS

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;

- Future development of rail infrastructure should benefit all of Wales and support the work being undertaken by the different regional economic bodies such as the City Region Boards, Growing Mid Wales Board and North Wales Ambition Board to improve the local economies.
- Transportation is an essential component of economic growth priorities across Wales. The WLGA manifesto Localism 2016-2021 <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/local-government-policy-priorities-for-the-national-assembly-for-wales> is calling for local authorities to have a statutory economic development duty capable of being exercised at a regional level in an integrated and strategic way alongside transport and land use planning – supporting the regional development work of the city region boards and other regional partnerships. As a result local authorities will need to be fully involved in discussions over rail planning. This would be a marked change from the present situation whereby local authorities through the Local Transport Plan process have been steered away from involvement in transport planning and projects where there is not a direct responsibility for delivery such as rail schemes and to focus on local issues only.
- It is our view that this question should have included not just social and economic wellbeing but environmental wellbeing. Welsh Government and

local authorities have a role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and rail has a part to play in shifting modal share away from the car.

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;

- The current transport planning regime ie National Transport Finance Plan and Local Transport Plans does not promote a fully integrated approach which will be necessary if the wider transport issues in Wales are to be properly addressed. In taking an integrated approach it would be important to consider bus and active travel alongside planning for rail. WLGA is keen to see support for bus services continued, especially in rural areas, and this will be most effective if it is targeted at key routes that complement plans on the rail network.
- In line with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act we need to think about how we want our communities to develop so that they facilitate more sustainable methods of transport. Rail is part of the solution but should be looked at alongside planning of all other modes so that an optimal arrangement is in place. It would be unrealistic to expect rail to solve all the problems of congestion on the highways but joint planning across the various modes of transport has to be a better way than planning each mode in isolation. Local authorities are well placed to assist in such integrated planning.

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

No comment

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;

No comment

How Welsh Government can best engage with and influence infrastructure developments in England and the development of passenger and freight services using the network;

No comment

Whether the periodic review process meets the needs of Wales and takes account of the needs of Welsh passenger and freight users, and how this should be developed;

No comment

The effectiveness of the Network Rail Wales Route and whether the approach to delivery of network management, maintenance, renewal

and enhancement functions are effective in delivering value for money, capacity, frequency, speed, reliability and handling disruption for passengers and freight users in Wales;

- Many of the services in Wales are operating at near capacity. This does not always result in delivering a service that meets customers' expectations or requirements. Improving the customer offer will be essential in attracting more people to choose rail for their journeys and this will include investment in rolling stock and station improvements.

The fact that funding for Welsh rail infrastructure is not devolved. The advantages, disadvantages, opportunities and risks potentially associated with devolution.

- If funding for Welsh rail infrastructure is devolved then it should be adequately funded. There is high risk that this will not be the case.
- Currently whilst rail infrastructure is not devolved risks are spread across a much larger budget, this would not be the case if devolved.
- If rail infrastructure is devolved then mechanisms will need to be put in place to ensure cross border planning and integration resulting in a seamless operation between Wales & England.