

# Petition: Improvements to the railway provision at Kidwelly Carmarthenshire

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Medi 2016  
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## Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-5-689

Petition title: Improvements to the railway provision at Kidwelly Carmarthenshire

Text of petition: Kidwelly is a lively town in Carmarthenshire, with many tourist attractions, including a quay overlooking the Gwendraeth estuary with rare bird and wildlife, the Kymer canal, Wales' oldest canal and an Industrial museum.

Demographically, Kidwelly has a higher than the Carmarthenshire average proportion with long term limiting illness and the highest proportion of over 45's in Carmarthenshire according to the Carmarthenshire Policy, Research and Information section 2015 electoral division profile.

Additionally many people commute to work or for social activities outside the Town.

Issues.

1. The station is a request stop this causes problems, (a) visitors, tourists and new residents do not always appreciate they need to signal to get the train to stop, this causes a reluctance to use and potentially impacts negatively upon the economy of the town (b) on trains with no conductor less ambulant passengers cannot pass down the train to the driver, many people are worried and distressed that they will go past their stop and anecdotally have done so, (c) there is clearly time programmed into the timetable to allow the train to stop, as this could be requested on every journey, so the request requirement is anachronistic and unnecessary. The station should become a standard stop and not a request stop.

2. The platform height on the westbound platform is so low that even with the train's mobile ramp system a wheelchair and those with other mobility aids cannot board or alight trains. This renders the provision discriminatory in respect of wheelchair and other less

ambulant users.

3. The frequency of trains serving Kidwelly is not sufficient to support the community and potential tourist traffic. This limits both social, commercial and tourist journeys, negatively impacting upon the social and economic wellbeing of the community.

## Background

### Rail Infrastructure

Network Rail is the owner of most rail infrastructure in Great Britain. It owns most of the approximately 2500 railway stations in Great Britain. However, all but 18 of the largest and busiest of these stations are managed by Train Operating Companies as part of their franchise. Kidwelly station is managed by Arriva Trains Wales (ATW).

Rail infrastructure investment is not devolved and the main statutory powers and duties rest with the Secretary of State for Transport. However, the Welsh Government has powers under the *Railways Act 2005* ('the 2005 Act') to invest in rail infrastructure, including stations.

### Rail Services

Rail franchising is not currently devolved. However, the Welsh Government is responsible for the day to day management of the Wales and Borders franchise, including the funding of services within Wales ("Wales only services"), and those which start or finish in Wales ("Welsh services").

As well as infrastructure investment, the 2005 Act empowers the Welsh Government to invest in rail service enhancements. This could include any costs associated with a scheduled stop at Kidwelly station. However, it is worth noting that inclusion of additional scheduled stops on a rail service has a knock-on impact on the timetable and journey times.

The Welsh and UK Governments are currently negotiating devolution of executive powers to procure the next Welsh rail franchise from 2018. Powers are expected to be devolved from 2017, and the Welsh Government has begun preparations for the next franchise (see below).

### Disability Access and Rail

As the petitioners suggest the rail regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) requires all licensed train and station operators to draw up and comply with a Disabled Person's Protection Policy. The ORR has published [guidance on writing DPPPs](#) (PDF672 KB).

Section 71B of the Railways Act 1993 requires the Secretary of State for Transport to produce a [code of practice on design standards for accessible railway stations](#). The most recent version was published jointly with Transport Scotland in March 2015 and "is relevant to all passenger train and station operators in Great Britain".

This code is not mandatory. However, all licences issued to passenger train and station operators by the Office for Rail Regulation (ORR) contain a condition that licensees “will pay due regard to the Code of Practice” in drawing up their DPPP.

Compliance with licensing requirements is a matter for the ORR, which is also responsible for enforcing compliance with DPPPs. ATW’s DPPP can be accessed [here](#).

## Representations from Kidwelly Town Council

Kidwelly Town Council is also considering the issue in its [General Purposes Committee](#). The minutes of the [meeting on 2 June 2015](#) say:

The number of train stops at Kidwelly station is inadequate, especially at times needed by commuters. Arriva trains have been requested to designate Kidwelly as a definite STOP station rather than a REQUEST STOP. Initiatives such as the RSPB Futurescapes Project and the development of the Gwendraeth Railway Project will attract passengers wishing to use Kidwelly Station. **The response from Arriva Trains was negative. A response from Edwina Hart was also negative.**

Later minutes indicate that a meeting with Arriva Trains Wales was arranged for 5 November 2015, and subsequently the Town Clerk made representations for ATW to consider making Kidwelly a scheduled stop when preparing its new May 2016 timetable.

## Welsh Government action

### Rail Services

The Welsh Government’s [National Transport Finance Plan](#) covers the period 2015–2020, as well as “medium term” objectives for 2020 and beyond. This includes a number of schemes related to rail services and infrastructure, among them proposals for a range of frequency and other enhancements, and a commitment to “a review of currently proposed service enhancements” between 2016–17 and 2018–19.

The plan also sets out objectives for procurement of the next Welsh rail franchise by Welsh Government. The Government is currently working with the rail industry and other stakeholders to develop the next franchise.

In anticipation of devolution of powers to award the next rail franchise, the Welsh Government launched a public consultation, [Setting the Direction for Wales and Borders Rail](#), in January 2016. This consultation sought views on rail services themselves, including the “range of future services”. It also sought views on “how [Welsh Government] can most effectively fulfil the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010”.

A [summary of consultation responses](#) has now been published. From an accessibility perspective this comments:

Disability groups told us that improvements to accessibility should also be built into the contractual arrangements. It was suggested that operators should be encouraged to develop a solution which

enables disabled travellers to 'turn up and go', as currently many disabled passengers have to pre-book support in order to use the railway with confidence.

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure made a statement giving an update on the [Wales and Borders Franchise and Metro Programmes](#) on 12 July 2016. In outlining the next stages in the process the Cabinet Secretary referred to a further public consultation:

The process will include a programme of engagement activities with stakeholders and, after we have a clear set of proposals for a new contract early next year, there will be a further formal public consultation. Subject to a successful process, we will award that contract at the end of 2017.

The Cabinet Secretary's letter to the Chair of the Petitions Committee says that he will ask officials to look at possible improvements to the way in which request stops are communicated.

## Accessibility

In terms of accessibility, the National Transport Finance Plan includes schemes to improve accessibility under the "Access For All Programme" and "Station Improvement Programme". The station improvement programme element refers to an "easy access installation programme for small stations across Wales to provide wheelchair access by use of on train ramps". Both the "delivery period" for both programmes does not extend beyond 2015–16.

However, the Cabinet Secretary's letter to the Chair highlights that rail infrastructure is not devolved but says that the Welsh Government is:

actively looking at designing platform raising humps to assist with low platform heights and Kidwelly would be considered with others, if budget becomes available in future years.

## National Assembly for Wales action

The Fourth Assembly's Enterprise and Business Committee undertook an inquiry into [Integrated Public Transport in Wales](#). In considering the "quality and accessibility" of public transport services in Wales it published evidence of what it described as "a catalogue of problems faced by disabled passengers in travelling on bus and train services in Wales". The report recommended that the Welsh Government revisit recommendations made by the [Equality of Opportunity Committee](#) of the Third Assembly in its inquiry into the impact of Welsh Government policy on the accessibility of transport services for disabled people in Wales.

Subsequently, the Enterprise and Business Committee undertook an inquiry into [The Future of the Wales and Borders Rail Franchise](#) which reported in December 2013. The report highlighted evidence emphasising the importance of access for people with disabilities. The also report included a "charter for the next Wales and Borders Franchise" which included recommendations that the Welsh Government should undertake extensive consultation and should:

base the development of routes, service levels and future infrastructure requirements on a detailed understanding of the socio-economic drivers of rail traffic flows within the Wales and Borders Franchise area, and the potential market and future demand scenarios, including cross-border flows.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.