



Cross Party Group for North Wales Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Gogledd Cymru

Note of the Meeting 11th June 2018 with Growth Track 360 (GT360)

Present

Llyr Gruffydd AM (In the Chair), Mark Isherwood AM, Ken Skates AM, Hannah Blythyn AM
Tim Peppin and Stephen Jones (WLGA)

North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Task Force (GT360): Cllr. Samantha Dixon (Chair, GT360),
Cllr. Liam Robinson (Chair, Merseytravel and GT360)

Cllr. Patrick Heesom (Flintshire) attended as a guest of Mark Isherwood.

Presentations and Discussion

Ken Skates AM, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport

The text of the Cabinet Secretary's which focussed on the key improvements from the new franchise remarks is attached.

Key points included: -

- The award of the Wales and Borders franchise will lead to better rail services in Wales. The new franchise commences in October 2018. Improvements will follow over the next two years.
- GT360 helped define and deliver the improvement proposed for North Wales.
- There is a need to increase the use of public transport in North Wales in particular, with trains contributing as part of that change.
- Pressure needs to be applied to the UK Government in the future to electrify the Holyhead to Crewe line as part of lobbying for connectivity to HS2 at Crewe and electrification of Chester to Warrington to connect to Northern Powerhouse Rail at Warrington (assumes N Wales Coast electrification to Chester and Crewe).

Cllr Dixon, Chair Growth Track 360 and Leader, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Cllr. Dixon gave a presentation the text of which is attached.

GT360 has been successful in raising the profile of North Wales and the Cross-Border area in terms of rail investment. This has been based on: -

- Collaborative working
- Linking aspirations to national strategies such as growth and economic development.
- Positioning transport to serve the economy

Cllr. Liam Robinson, Chair of Merseytravel.

The Metro Mayor of Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotherham, is very keen to see the transport system in the Liverpool City Region better linked to Cheshire and North Wales.

Collectively there are considerable industrial, service and educational assets in the combined geography. People cannot fully capitalise on the benefits of these assets without good transport links.

It is essential that we work in partnership to compete internationally post-Brexit, with a step change in competitiveness via a UK Powerhouse to which the Northern Powerhouse will be a major contributor.

GT 360 has aimed to make Whitehall and the UKG more aware of the transport (rail) needs and economic opportunities from improved (rail) transport of the wider North Wales and Mersey Dee Geography.

Key priorities for GT 360 are: -

- Influencing the West Coast Partnership which will let a contract for West Coast mainline services (Currently Virgin Services). The new contract will include a development requirement for HS2 services from 2027 that are integrated into the traditional network.
- A Crewe Hub with 5 – 7 HS2 trains per hour passing through Crewe and a remodelled North Junction at Crewe to accommodate those services stopping at Crewe.
- Electrified classic compatible services running directly from North Wales to London on the HS2 lines from Crewe.
- Chester Station investment to accommodate more through services and receive more services from Crewe, Liverpool and Warrington.

TfN is key to delivering more East – West services from North Wales and Chester into Liverpool and Manchester and onwards (Leeds) and also from Chester to Crewe, especially where infrastructure upgrades are required. Priority for the TfN Wales and West Corridor is very important to this aspiration, which is why GT360 has produced its Wales and West Prospectus.

North Wales and Chester will connect and integrate with Northern Powerhouse Rail through developing links and influencing with TfN

Discussion

HS2 Crewe Hub

Mark Isherwood requested an assessment of where we are with the Crewe Hub: -

The SoS DfT supports the concept of a Crewe Hub and moving from 2 tph from London to Liverpool to around 5 tph.

Network Rail and HS2 Ltd. are seeking to reconfigure line and platform layouts to achieve the hub concept to respond to the SoS. They are seeking to work within current budgets and solve the issues raised by pooling resources.

It is a work in progress and will not address the appearance/modernisation of the station nor a new North Junction. This means that the Cardiff – Manchester service will use freight tunnels and have platforms some way from the main concourse and platforms.

The risk is disruption to fast, direct services from N Wales and Chester. Our current services could become, slower, stopping services.

The aim is to achieve: -

- Fast, direct services to London and/or high frequency services to Crewe to pick up frequent, fast HS2 services to London
- A North Junction upgrade to enable frequent HS2 services (5 – 7 tph) stopping at Crewe and the Cardiff Manchester service to cross the mainline without use of the freight tunnels
- Decent station configuration to prevent long walks between platforms.

Progress should be closely monitored.

Actions

- Draft a letter re. Crewe Hub to the SoS from the group
- Ken Skates' letter to the DfT to be shared to form the basis of correspondence
- Look at revisiting the campaign for electrification next year

Integrated Transport

There was discussion of bus travel and links to stations.

Integration is an aspiration of the Franchise and an objective of TfW. The franchisee and TfW will work on integrated ticketing. WG is looking to stabilise bus services through financial support.

There was discussion of forming transport authorities or alliances to plan and deliver more strategic bus services that better serve employment and shopping patterns.

There is a clear and strong case for partners – local authorities and WG to work together more closely to plan, commission and deliver bus services.

Interoperability of Rail Rolling Stock and Deployment of New Technology

There was a brief discussion of use of rolling stock that can operate across franchise boundaries, including battery operated trains and trains that can be split and joined together to enable more destinations to be well served.