

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 21	WRI 21
Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Rhanbarthol ar gyfer De Orllewin Cymru	Regional Transport Forum for South West Wales

Enterprise and Business Committee into Welsh Rail Infrastructure

Introduction

The Regional Transport Forum for South West Wales is a collaborative body made up of the four South West Wales Local Authorities (LAs), working with a range of providers and users of transport in and beyond the region. The Forum was formed in 2014 to provide a framework within which strategic transport issues could be planned and delivered.

The four LAs prepared and submitted a joint Local Transport Plan covering the period 2015 – 2020. This was endorsed by the Swansea Bay City Region Board and approved by the Welsh Government in 2015.

Whilst the plan does not include specific railway infrastructure requirements (as these are non-devolved LAs were prevented from including these in the LTPs), an accompanying letter made plain our expectations and aspirations for rail infrastructure and relevant sections of this are included as Appendix A to this submission for information (rail infrastructure proposals are highlighted).

The projects and improvements included for rail in Appendix A are based on the December 2013 Rail Strategy, a copy of which is available on request. This strategy was in itself an update on a previous rail strategy prepared by SWWWITCH in 2002 and updated in 2005. The 2013 strategy looked at both rail infrastructure and services, was based on an examination of rail patronage and proposed developments and included an options appraisal and short, medium and longer term interventions.

1) High Level Priorities for the Development of Rail Infrastructure

Rail patronage has grown significantly in the region over the last 10 years and this has put a strain on the capacity of train services, extra services have been provided where possible and this in turn has meant the railway infrastructure is being utilised to an extent where there is limited resilience and no spare capacity to address new demands as they arise.

The region is expecting population growth in the next 10-15 years and the aspirations of the City Region Board are to deliver the regional economic regeneration strategy which will increase high value economic activity, support a growth in entrepreneurs and increase the GVA of the region. There are a number of key sites identified for development and the importance of connectivity and access to support regeneration is recognised. At present rail plays a relatively small part in terms of the overall transport mix. However, with growing concerns about air quality and climate change, as far as possible, increased movements should be catered for by public or sustainable transport means and where demands are high enough, rail infrastructure should be first choice.

The Forum would welcome more transparency and more opportunities to engage with rail infrastructure providers and funders to try and influence funding decisions.

As a region we consider the delay in the rail electrification beyond Cardiff to Swansea as a serious set-back to inter-regional public transport development, local regeneration and the problem of peripherality. Not only as it will now be several more years before the benefits (in terms of journey times, passenger comfort and reduced impact on the climate) of electric vehicles as opposed to diesel accrue to South West Wales, but also because of the perception that this decision creates of Swansea as a secondary location, not as important as Cardiff. At a time when development around the region is

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remarkably buoyant and new opportunities are arising around the Universities, the Enterprise Zone and Local Growth Zones, it appears that planning for rail infrastructure is lagging way behind.

2) Welsh Government's Rail infrastructure priorities

The National Transport Finance Plan (NTFP) 2015, sets out clearly that rail is:

“an important component of the transport network in Wales for both passengers and freight”.

The Wales Route study (currently being prepared for publication in Spring 2016) will set out a range of proposals and options for funders for Control Period 6 (2019 – 2024).

However, the rail infrastructure proposals set out in the NTFP are almost exclusively related to South East or North Wales. Aside from some generic project proposals (see below) even full delivery of the NTFP proposals will provide little benefit to South West Wales:

- RI13 – CP5 Access for all Programme: Including station accessibility improvements at Llanelli
- RI2 – NSIP+ programme of Station Improvements - Port Talbot Parkway (this project is nearing completion already)
- RI18 – New Railway Lines – consider opportunities to bring disused railways back into the network subject to viability through feasibility studies and economic appraisal/evaluation on a case by case basis
- RI8 – Develop assessment criteria and, using the criteria, develop a prioritised list of station improvement proposals to draw down funding from relevant HLOS specific funds
- RI10 - – Develop assessment criteria and, using the criteria, develop a prioritised list of new station proposals for further consideration, including (in south West Wales) - Templeton, St Clears, Cockett and Landore
- RI11 – Identify and prioritise opportunities to improve efficiency or capacity through level crossing closures or line speed improvements

Out of 24 projects there are only 6 which in any way refer to South West Wales, this is significantly lower than North or South West Wales and will not support the City Region Board's connectivity aspirations for the next 5 years.

3) How the Development and exploitation of rail infrastructure in England affects Wales and vice versa

This is difficult to assess in any given period as of course projects in delivery vary enormously in scale, impact and cost.

With Rail not being devolved to the Welsh Government the Westminster Government is responsible for ensuring that Wales receives a fair share of infrastructure investment. On a purely population count basis that probably does happen. But this takes no account of the fact that infrastructure in Wales is under developed, particularly for rail infrastructure (outside Cardiff and the Valleys). Yet despite this we have seen huge growth in rail patronage.

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In this region we are concerned that Westminster Government commitments to major projects like Cross Rail, High Speed 2 and the Northern Powerhouse mean there is less funding available to support an expansion of rail capacity in Wales.

4) The Impact on Wales of Key Planned Developments in England

See comments for Q3 above

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

The Welsh Government needs to develop more regular, more transparent and more effective communication with the Department for Transport so that each understands the aspirations, needs and demand evidence behind schemes. There appears to be limited engagement at present and this maybe because there is insufficient Welsh Government official experience and time to take discussion to a deeper and more meaningful level, or whether there are political constraints.

6) Whether the periodic review process meets the needs of Wales and takes account of the needs of Welsh passenger and freight users

The review process takes place every five years to feed into planning on a Control Period basis. The review includes a range of investment options over and above general maintenance and repair and the difficulty is that this means it is very difficult to react to changed demands quickly. So for example, when passenger or freight demands change to accommodate new development or manufacturing (which are certainly aspirations of the City Region Board) there is too long a lead in time to even get rail infrastructure improvements on a list, let alone deliver them at the time when non-private transport is an option.

7) The effectiveness of the Network Rail Wales Route

See comments to Q6 above

8) Rail devolution, advantages, disadvantages, opportunities and risks

The advantages of devolving rail are that it will allow the Welsh Government to set priorities based on its understanding of demands and pressures and opportunities arising. There is also an opportunity to address rail in a holistic fashion with control of both infrastructure and services (via the Wales rail franchise).

The disadvantages is that there will need to be adequate budgets to support the needs of passengers and freight in Wales transferred, that the risks are that this will not be the case so control starts with an inadequate budget; and also that other priorities for funding perceived as more urgent (for example Health care or education) may mean that funding for railways decreases over time. In addition, because many rail trips are cross border, and the majority of intercity trips, rail infrastructure in Wales can not be viewed independently from England so its governance lends itself to being a single organisation.

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Appendix One Local Transport Plan aspirations for a better connected region

Five Year Rail aspirations

Description	Detail
Improved rail services to and from the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrification of the Great western mainline to Swansea • Increase service levels to the east and west of Swansea City Centre • Identify station improvements for all stations in the region • Improve integration at railway stations through improved bus, cycle, walking, electric vehicle charging and parking facilities
Improved access by rail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of the TEN-T Rail network • Seek to improve quality of carriages on west Wales and Heart of Wales line services and allow for cycle carriage on trains • Examine role/impact of additional stations • Continue to support additional rail services to Fishguard/Goodwick and the Heart of Wales line • Make better use of commuting stations around Swansea • Examine the potential for additional hourly services to Cardiff from West Wales via the district line
Future Proofing rail services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine role of rapid transit corridors to link railheads with communities/strategic development sites • Examine the potential for increased freight levels and freight interchange depots • Examine the potential for increased rail traffic to/from ports

Medium and long term rail aspirations

Description	Detail
Improved rail services to and from the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrification of the GW Mainline to Carmarthen • Increase service levels east of Swansea • Increase service levels west of Swansea • Ensure integration between modes at all stations
Improved access to and from the rail network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishguard & Goodwick and improved HOWL services to be part of franchise requirements • Additional regular services to and from West Wales via the district line • Investigate the opportunities/develop business cases for new stations
Wider rail connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to secure Western rail access to Heathrow • Examine the potential for a South Wales HS3 new alignment for high speed rail • Examine new rapid transit corridors utilising freight only corridors

Five Year Trunk Road aspirations

Description	Detail
Trunk Road commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct the Llandewi Velfrey to Penblewin improvement scheme • Construct the Llandeilo bypass
Trunk Road priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review/improve M4 Slip roads in Port Talbot following experimental closures • Selective improvements to the A40 and prepare business case for full dualling in due course • Selective improvements to the M4/A48/A40 junctions and associated

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	schemes/links
Collaborative working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work collaboratively with LAs on the introduction of road safety measures on the Trunk road network
Trunking	<p>Trunking the following links:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A4138 M4 Junction 48 to Llanelli A4138 Wind Street, Tir y dial junction A483 M4 Junction 42 to Swansea A483 M4 Junction 47 to Swansea A4067 – M4 Junction 45 to Swansea A42412 M4 Junction 38 to Baglan A476 – Llandeilo to Cross Hands A478 Cardigan to Narberth A477 Johnston to Pembroke Dock <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review options for park & share sites adjacent to the M4 along the TEN-T route Improve access to ports and links to Ireland

Medium and long term Trunk road aspirations

Description	Detail
Improved connectivity for people and freight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete dualling of the A40 Commence construction and operation of Park & Share sites adjacent to the M4 Trunk A485/6 Carmarthen to Synod Inn Trunk A4076 Johnston bypass

Five Year and long term Sea & Air aspirations

Description	Detail
Tap into available resources and capacity for carriage of people and goods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise multi modal journeys which utilise port capacity Continue to encourage appropriate development close to ports Encourage tourism related traffic through ports to increase the viability of towns and district centres
Providing fast access to investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider options for and benefits of expansion of capability at regional airports as part of the RERS

Five Year Revenue aspirations

Description	Detail
Protecting and Growing existing connectivity services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase existing levels of funding for road maintenance, support for rail, bus and community transport services Set up 3-5 year guaranteed levels of support to bus and community transport to foster innovation, attract match funding and ensure stability (as recommended by Bus Policy Group) Fund pilot studies for innovative “travel to work” transport Protect and grow Traws Cymru strategic services
Supporting behavioural change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support Regional Travel Plan role Implement behavioural change programmes to encourage more sustainable travel Support the Education, Training and Publicity schemes associated with Road Safety Develop and introduce an all Wales payment method for use on multi modal or multi operator journeys

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the collection and collation of City region wide data for evaluation purposes
Raising the profile of alternative modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an all Wales advertising campaign to support coherent and consistent messages on sustainable and healthy travel • Examine the role for concessionary fares for younger people, job seekers etc • Promote the All Wales car sharing scheme

Medium and long term aspirations for Revenue

Description	Detail
Creating stable and resilient connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve levels of funding for maintenance, rail, bus and community transport support • Set up 5 year guaranteed levels of support to bus and community transport to foster innovation, attract match funding and ensure stability • Fund the development of innovative forms of “travel to work” transport schemes • Examine the introduction of network franchising in Wales
Raising awareness of and improving information about travel choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain behavioural change programmes to encourage more sustainable travel • Support the growth of an all Wales payment method for use on multi modal or multi operator journeys • Continue with an all Wales advertising campaign to support coherent and consistent messages on sustainable and healthy travel