

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017

Dear Mr George

Thank you for your letter of 1 December. The rail industry work very closely together on major events for Cardiff and we have therefore prepared a joint reply, which I trust you will find helpful.

### **Rugby World Cup**

The 2015 Rugby World Cup was a fantastic showcase for Wales, demonstrating to the world that our capital city can host and deliver major global events. However, it also highlighted some major challenges for the rail industry.

More than ever, visitors to Cardiff are choosing to travel by rail, and we have worked incredibly hard as an industry to improve the experience for visitors: by working more collaboratively and by building stronger relationships with our partners.

This joint working has reached beyond the transport sector, across other key agencies, including the Welsh Government, Principality Stadium, Cardiff Council and South Wales Police.

### **UEFA Champions League Final**

This strengthened collaborative working supported the delivery of a world class experience to visitors for the UEFA Champions League Final in June 2017 – the biggest event ever hosted in Cardiff's history.

Despite the unprecedented numbers travelling to and from Cardiff Central Station, and the additional challenge of a major terrorist incident in London, our dedicated teams kept passengers moving throughout and the rail industry was singled out for praise by the Cabinet Secretary, Ken Skates.

Implementing a key recommendation of the Enterprise and Business Committee's report on Rugby World Cup Transport Planning, a single command structure was in place across all agencies. This ensured the planning, operational decision making and public information was consistent and robust, with each agency fully engaged in this process.

Another key issue highlighted in the report was the impact of the Central Square development in the delivery of major events. We have responded by constantly reviewing the queueing system outside Cardiff Central, flexing it around the various scheme work packages and working closely with the developer on optimising queue space for events. We have also utilised Cardiff Queen Station for passengers travelling on the Core Valley Lines to increase flexibility while space is limited around Cardiff Central and is a result of close working between Train Operators, Network Rail and Cardiff Council.

Joined up communications have also been important, and the recent establishment of the Wales Route Supervisory Board has further strengthened the ability for the rail industry to maintain a coordinated approach to communicating with rail passengers, stakeholders and the public ahead of, and during, major events.

It is worth noting the entire train service to London after the UEFA event operated after the last train would normally have departed, so we had to mobilise an operation for which no staff or rolling stock would normally exist. For all the rail operators, delivery of the Champions League Final plan was made possible by funding that covered the additional staffing, train services and a bus operation and withdrawing services on other parts of the ATW and GWR networks to provide the trains that were used.

### **Anthony Joshua fight**

In advance of the recent Anthony Joshua fight at the Principality Stadium, we worked hard as an industry, alongside local delivery partners, to communicate detailed information to ticket holders and visitors about the limitations of rail services, particularly after the event.

This detailed communication resulted in a positive overall experience for those who were able to make journeys by rail, and gave potential rail travellers an opportunity to consider alternatives; helping to control demand from those unable to travel by rail due to essential engineering work which had been planned over a year in advance. In order to plan this work, Network Rail first agrees a schedule with train operators to give passengers the most notice possible and achieve the best value for the taxpayer. Engineers and specialist equipment are booked in advance. Cancelling work and rescheduling it at another time would increase costs for the taxpayer.

All partners worked closely together ensuring that visitors received consistent information, with Cardiff Council leading on the coordination of travel advice.

The challenge for the rail industry was balancing the need to deliver a great experience for customers while at the same time delivering important upgrade work through. This needed to be done with minimal impact on regular rail customers and within a much shorter window of notification than normally provided for major events.

Without the opportunity to deliver important railway investment it is difficult to develop and improve our transport infrastructure for the long-term benefit of the Welsh economy. We alerted the stadium to the improvement work before the decision to go ahead with the match was made, and made clear that this would mean no return trains to London after the match finished.

Once the decision to go ahead was made, we had just eight weeks to put plans in place and to make sure customers were aware and able to make informed decisions on alternative transport.

Late finishes to large events present a challenge for rail, as we have to balance the aspiration for delivering train services to the demanded routes whilst still delivering a service to customers the following day, with the need to refuel, maintain, repair and clean trains a key consideration. This event highlighted a significant challenge in this respect due to the late finish, and this will be a continued key consideration for the planning of late night events for the future.

### **Future recommendations and priorities**

The [‘Wales Route Study’](#) published in March 2016 highlighted further investment in Cardiff Central railway station as a key choice for funders.

Investment here would support an improved visitor experience to Cardiff for major events and would meet the ongoing growth in passenger journeys through Cardiff Central during normal non-event operation. An enhanced, bigger station would reduce the need for queuing outside, which is done as part of the risk mitigation for such large numbers of passengers on the station platforms. Demand forecasts suggest the number of journeys will grow from 13 million in 2013 to upwards of 23 million by 2023 and then to upwards of 32 million by 2043.

We will continue to work with partners in the Principality Stadium, Cardiff Council and Welsh Government on ways to best provide funding and resources for enhanced provision such as Champions League, and will consider best practice from other cities as part of our ongoing development.

## Conclusion

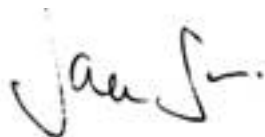
The successful delivery of the Champions League Final demonstrated that with strong partnership working, additional funding and the appetite to redirect resources from other routes on our networks, we were able to overcome the challenges from Rugby World Cup 2015. This delivery also included the implementation of the key recommendations of the previous Enterprise and Business Committee's report.

We are able to support the delivery of such major events effectively working with our partners, where we can plan according to our operational timescales. This allows us to deliver the level of services we would provide normally for major events, including the recent Autumn Internationals.

The benefit of closer alignment and improved organisational structures means we are now in a good position to keep visitors and local communities informed so that we can deliver the best experience possible for those visiting Cardiff. In the future, the addition of new and more rolling stock will also help us to manage these special events better.

To manage the expected growth in visitor numbers and to maximise Cardiff's potential in the future, we are aligned on the need for enhanced infrastructure. This is key to delivering improved rail and wider transport services with additional capacity and faster boarding. We are happy to offer advice on options and to work with partners and stakeholders to take forward any opportunity that will help create a world class station to match the world class events now being regularly hosted by the city.

Yours Sincerely,



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Route)