

Enterprise and Learning Committee

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Rail Programme for Wales – Evidence from Arriva

Introduction:

Arriva Trains Wales operates the Wales & Borders Franchise, which commenced in 2003 and runs until 2018. The Franchise was let on the basis of no investment being required and little passenger growth was anticipated.

Despite an unpromising start, Arriva and the Welsh Assembly Government have invested heavily in the franchise. Investment by the Welsh Assembly has included route openings, frequency enhancements and train lengthening.

Arriva has invested in new depots and maintenance facilities, better customer facilities at stations, extra Sunday services, train lengthening, new ticketing and information facilities at stations and enhanced security, all beyond any contractual commitment in its Franchise. ATW is now one of the most punctual train companies in the UK and customer satisfaction has been steadily rising.

Passenger growth has been consistently strong, demonstrating that more and more people want to use rail services. However, this has presented its own challenges, as despite innovative deployment of our limited fleet, many services are now crowded for parts of their journey

Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) works closely with the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver the aspirations set out in the 2009 Wales National Transport Plan and other aspiration to improve rail services. We also work closely with Network Rail to ensure infrastructure enhancements meet the immediate and long term needs of our passengers.

Rail Program for Wales

ATW is keen to play a key role in developing and delivering the Rail Program for Wales jointly with the Welsh Assembly Government and Network Rail. We believe the key areas for development include, train capacity, long term fleet provision, rail infrastructure enhancement and stations.

Train Capacity

Passenger growth throughout the Wales rail network remains strong and far greater than ever envisaged when the Wales and Border was Franchise was let.

Whilst there have been small increases to the fleet size to accommodate new lines, service frequency enhancements and some service strengthening, this has been outstripped by the continued growth in passenger numbers.

The limited fleet is insufficient to comfortably accommodate this growth on all routes, despite ATW's efforts to carefully deploy its resources according both regular and seasonal demand. In particularly the South Wales Valleys Network is busy at peak times and when there are major events on in Cardiff. Equally, services that operate over the North Wales Coast line are busy at both commuter and leisure times. We are keen to work with the Welsh Assembly to discuss how rolling stock may be deployed both in the long and short term to address crowding, provide more comfortable journeys and encourage new users to Rail.

Long Term Fleet Provision

ATW has one of the oldest train fleets on the UK Rail Network. The vehicles are maintained to a high standard and the Main Line fleet is currently undergoing an extensive re-fresh and refurbishment program. However, many of the vehicles will be approaching the end of their life when the franchise expires in 2018. It is important that the process for replacing these trains begins soon, so that appropriate and sufficient quantity of rolling stock for the Wales and Borders franchise can be sourced, procured, tested and implemented. ATW is working closely with the Welsh Assembly Government to begin this process, which we believe should form a strong element of the Rail Program for Wales.

Rail Infrastructure Enhancements

There are a number of schemes highlighted in the 2009 National Transport Plan to enhance capacity on the Network and reduce journey times. ATW will be working with the Assembly and Network Rail to ensure that investment is targeting where it offers the greatest benefit to our passengers. We believe that eliminating bottlenecks through more track and better signalling, as well as improving line speeds are key to delivering even better performance and passenger growth.

Stations

There has been significant investment in stations across the franchise through the National Station Improvement Program (NSIP). ATW, WAG, Network Rail, local authorities and Transport Consortia have all contributed to this project which has improved the station environment, passenger facilities and access for mobility impaired passengers at many locations. This successful partnership working has

resulted in investment extending well beyond its original scope and ATW are committed continuing with this partnership approach going forward, so that more improvements can be made at our stations.