



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal
The Committee on Equality of Opportunity**

**Mawrth, 22 Mehefin 2010
Tuesday, 22 June 2010**

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mohammad Asghar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Eleanor Burnham	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Janet Ryder	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Tim James	Cyfarwyddwr yr Is-Adran Trafnidiaeth Integredig, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Deputy Director Integrated Transport, Welsh Assembly Government
Ieuan Wyn Jones	Aelod Cynulliad, Plaid Cymru (Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog a'r Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth) Assembly Member, The Party of Wales (The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport)
Dave Thomas	Rheolwr Prosiectau Rheilffyrdd, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Rail Projects Manager, Welsh Assembly Government

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Leon Goberman	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members Research Service
Catherine Hunt	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.58 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.58 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this meeting of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. I will first remind those around the table and in the public gallery to please switch off any mobile phones, pagers or anything that is likely to affect the broadcasting and translation equipment. Members are free to speak in English or Welsh, and translation facilities are available via channel 1 on the headsets. Channel 0 can be used to amplify the floor language. We are not expecting the fire alarm to sound, but if it does, we will take instructions from the ushers or make our way to the assembly point, which is near the Pierhead building.

[2] Do any Members have an interest to declare? I see that they do not.

9.59 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad i Hygyrchedd Gorsafoddd Rheilffordd—Tystiolaeth Lafar gan y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog a'r Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Inquiry into the Accessibility of Railway Stations—Oral Evidence from the Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport**

[3] **Ann Jones:** We move on to the main item on today's agenda and continue our inquiry into the accessibility of railway stations. We will receive evidence from the Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport, Ieuan Wyn Jones. A very warm welcome to you. I think that you have been to our meetings before.

[4] **The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones):** I have indeed.

[5] **Ann Jones:** You therefore know that we are not horrible on this committee; we are a good committee. You have officials with you: Dave Thomas, who is the rail project manager, and Tim James, who is the deputy director of integrated transport. You are all very welcome.

[6] Thank you for your paper, Deputy First Minister. Do you have an opening statement to add to that, or do you want to go straight into questions?

[7] **The Deputy First Minister:** I would like to go straight into questions, please.

10.00 a.m.

[8] **Ann Jones:** I will start. This first question is on your evidence that the Government believes that investing in improved accessibility is the right thing to do, and I am pleased to hear that. What is your overall vision in relation to the future accessibility of railway stations in Wales?

[9] **The Deputy First Minister:** The first thing that we need to recognise is where the responsibility lies. As this is not a devolved issue, the primary responsibility lies with the Department for Transport, but the day-to-day work is delivered either through Network Rail or those companies that run stations on its behalf. So, where there are programmes that Network Rail funds, it is our vision to supplement its funding. We are not able to devote substantial sums, but we would want to do that where we can. Clearly, our vision would be that, where substantial improvements to stations are undertaken, they would then be fully accessible and fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Where we have been responsible for building new stations, particularly on the Ebbw valley line, for example, and in other places, we have made sure that they are fully accessible. However, the reality is that most stations in Wales are not—I think that around 50 per cent are not accessible. Our aim is to substantially improve on that, by working with Network Rail and supplementing the funding with some of our own.

[10] **Ann Jones:** Do you have any estimates of the cost of making the other 50 per cent of stations fully accessible?

[11] **The Deputy First Minister:** I am not sure that I have the full costings, unless Tim can help us on that, as that would be difficult to assess. We are aware of the level of funding that Network Rail has in relation to the two schemes that it is currently funding, which we

supplement with our own funds.

[12] **Janet Ryder:** On that point, if the Assembly Government did not subsidise those schemes, would they go ahead?

[13] **The Deputy First Minister:** The truth is that some of them would not.

[14] **Janet Ryder:** So, the subsidy from the Assembly Government is crucial.

[15] **The Deputy First Minister:** In certain areas, yes. The truth is that Network Rail would not have advanced as quickly in Wales if we had not been prepared to add to the funding.

[16] **Eleanor Burnham:** O gofio nad yw llawer o'r dulliau o reoleiddio rheilffyrdd yng Nghymru wedi cael eu datganoli—a bu ichi sôn am hynny'n gynharach—beth yw swyddogaeth Llywodraeth Cymru wrth gyflawni'r weledigaeth hon?

Eleanor Burnham: Given that many of the mechanisms for regulating railways in Wales are not devolved—and you mentioned that point earlier—what is the role of the Welsh Government in achieving this vision?

[17] **Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog:** Yr ydym yn dibynnu ar Network Rail i feddwl am gynlluniau. Yr ydym wedyn yn trafod gydag ef ac yn dweud, 'Hoffem wneud hyn yng Nghymru,' ac mae'n ymateb gan ddweud, 'Os ydych eisiau gwneud hyn, mae'n rhaid ichi gyfrannu'n ariannol.' Er nad oes gennym gyfrifoldeb statudol yn hynny o beth, yr ydym yn ymwybodol bod angen gwella mynediad i orsafoedd, ac, felly, yr ydym yn ychwanegu arian at yr hyn y mae Network Rail yn ei wneud. Felly, mewn gwirionedd, ceir trafodaeth, dros gyfnod o amser, ynglŷn â'r rhaglen a pha orsafoedd y dylid eu blaenoriaethu ar gyfer buddsoddi.

The Deputy First Minister: We depend on Network Rail to come up with ideas for projects. We then discuss with it and say, 'We would like this to be done in Wales', and it responds by saying, 'If you want to do that, you have to contribute financially.' Although we do not have a statutory responsibility in that respect, we are aware that there is a need to improve the accessibility of stations, and therefore we contribute funds towards what Network Rail is doing. Therefore, in reality, there is discussion over a period of time about the programme and which stations should be prioritised for investment.

[18] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae hynny'n anodd i'w ddeall, oherwydd yn y rhestr o fuddsoddiadau'r Llywodraeth ym mhwynt 16 o'ch papur, ar dudalen 5, yr ydych yn sôn am y cynllun canlynol:

Eleanor Burnham: That is hard to understand, because in the list of Government investments in point 16 on page 5 of your paper, you mention the following project:

[19] 'teclyn rheoli o bell ar gyfer lifftiau ym Mangor, Y Rhyl a Bae Colwyn, fel y gellir eu defnyddio'r tu allan i oriau staff'.

'remote control for lifts at Bangor, Rhyl and Colwyn Bay, to allow their use outside staff hours'.

[20] Nid wyf yn deall pam nad yw Wrecsam ar y rhestr honno.

I do not understand why Wrexham is not on that list.

[21] **Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog:** Ni allaf egluro pam yn union nad yw Wrecsam arni.

The Deputy First Minister: I cannot explain exactly why Wrexham is not on it.

[22] Dave, would you like to explain further, because you have more detail on individual stations?

[23] **Mr Thomas:** Wrexham is one of the six stations in Wales that are subject to a major Access for All scheme.

[24] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is fabulous.

[25] **Mr Thomas:** There will be an entire new bridge structure and lift.

[26] **Eleanor Burnham:** The only reason why I asked that—and our Chair is very indulgent—is that there was one gentleman who constantly had to go from Wrexham to Chester and come back down to Wrexham to get onto the right side of the platform. So that is absolutely brilliant news.

[27] **Felly, sut y mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn ymgysylltu â Network Rail, cwmnïau trên megis Trenau Arriva Cymru, a Chymdeithas y Cwmnïau Trên?** How does the Welsh Government engage with Network Rail, the train operating companies, such as Arriva Trains Wales, and the Association of Train Operating Companies?

[28] **Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog:** Byddwn yn cysylltu â hwy, yn naturiol, drwy gyfrwng ein swyddogion yn trafod y rhaglen â hwy. Os cofiaf yn iawn, mae rhyw fath o raglen amlennu amser o ryw bum mlynedd. **The Deputy First Minister:** We engage with them, naturally, through our officials who discuss the programme with them. If my memory serves me correctly, there is a time envelope of around five years.

[29] **Mr James:** Oes. Bydd y rhaglen pum mlynedd nesaf yn weithredol rhwng 2014 a 2018. Fe'i gelwir yn '*control periods*'. Ar hyn o bryd, yr ydym yn cydweithredu â Llywodraeth San Steffan i sicrhau bod hygyrchedd yn flaenoriaeth yn setliad Network Rail am y pum mlynedd nesaf. **Mr James:** Yes. The next five-year programme will run from 2014 to 2018. They are known as '*control periods*'. We are now working with the Westminster Government to ensure that accessibility is made a priority for the next five years' funding settlement for Network Rail.

[30] **Eleanor Burnham:** A gredwch bod Network Rail a'r cwmnïau trên yn rhoi digon o sylw i wella cyfleusterau ar gyfer pobl anabl yn y gorsafoedd trên? **Eleanor Burnham:** Do you believe that Network Rail and the train operating companies are paying sufficient attention to improving disabled persons' facilities at railway stations?

[31] **Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog:** Y realiti yw mai eu cyfrifoldeb statudol hwy ydyw, ac nid oes gennym unrhyw gyfrifoldeb i ychwanegu yn ariannol at y prosiectau. Fodd bynnag, gan ein bod yn teimlo nad ydynt yn symud yn ddigon cyflym, yr ydym yn darparu arian ychwanegol ein hunain. **The Deputy First Minister:** The reality is that it is their statutory responsibility, and we have no responsibility to contribute financially to the projects. However, because we feel that they are not moving quickly enough, we provide additional financial support ourselves.

[32] There was quite an interesting example where we felt that something needed to be done at Aberdyfi, for example. Dave, perhaps you could explain to the committee how long it took, from the department first thinking about what could be done there, to the time when it was actually delivered. Perhaps you could show the length of the time that it takes for some of these schemes to come to fruition.

[33] **Mr Thomas:** Aberdyfi is a very lovely community on the Cambrian Coast railway. Due to the age of the railway, the platform has been subject to a very notorious stepping

height issue. I would say that, from the train step to the platform, there is a stepping distance of a metre or more. As is typical of the communities along the Cambrian Coast railway, there can be quite an elderly component to the population and, across Wales, we have high levels of disability. In relation to the Cambrian Coast railway, there is quite a large caravan park nearby with many seasonal visitors. The extent of the stepping height issue at that station was such that, although every Arriva train carries a ramp and all of the staff are trained to use a ramp for wheelchair users, if the height is over so much, the ramp cannot be used on safety grounds. Therefore, effectively wheelchair users, mothers with buggies and other people who find steps difficult have had a very difficult time using the railway, if they bothered at all. The community there has campaigned for many years for this issue to be addressed. They gathered the support of the Deputy First Minister who, I believe, had a two-year correspondence on this issue with the previous Secretary of State for Transport, because as the footfall—the number of people using the station—was so small, it did not meet the eligibility criteria of the Department for Transport. We chanced upon a radical and innovative development in the form of a hump—

[34] **The Deputy First Minister:** The point that we are making is that it takes a long time.

[35] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, you corresponded with him for two years.

[36] **The Deputy First Minister:** That is right. As Dave said, we have that innovative solution to have our own ramp there, which has worked extremely well.

[37] **Mr Thomas:** We get unsolicited letters of congratulation and thanks.

[38] **Eleanor Burnham:** I suspect that the reason why they were so few people using it was the vicious circle that they could not. I was in Portugal recently—in Lisbon—and I noticed straight away that there is a seamless divide between the train and the platform. We do not have that. I know that the Chair agrees with me. When you get off some of the Arriva trains, the steps are narrow, let alone high, which is an issue that we have discussed with the train operators.

[39] **Ann Jones:** Janet wants to come in before we move on, Eleanor.

[40] **Janet Ryder:** Can you quantify the increase in footfall that the changes have made?

[41] **Mr Thomas:** Not at this point because it has only just passed its trial.

[42] **Janet Ryder:** At what point will you be assessing that to see the impact?

[43] **Mr Thomas:** We will be looking at that after a year and then after two years. We undertook an intensive community consultation prior to installation. We will go back to the community to take their views.

[44] **Janet Ryder:** Although this committee may not be here in a year's time, there will be a committee on equality of opportunity and perhaps, Chair, we could ask for a report back to that committee, and an assessment of the increase made?

10.10 a.m.

[45] **Ann Jones:** That would be helpful.

[46] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yn atodol i'm **Eleanor Burnham:** As a supplementary to
cwestiwn ar Network Rail a'r cwmnïau my question on Network Rail and the train
trenau, a yw'r cyrff hyn yn rhoi digon o sylw companies, do these organisations pay

i anghenion pobl sydd â nam ar y synhwyrâu? Dywedodd tyst â nam ar ei glyw wrthyf bod diffyg pobl i gyfathrebu ag ef mewn gorsafoedd, gan nad oeddent yn deall bod ganddo nam. Dywedodd bod prynu tocyn hyd yn oed—soniodd yn benodol am Gaerdydd—yn anodd, gan nad oedd ef ei hun yn ddealladwy ac nad oedd unrhyw un yn deall beth oedd yn bod arno. Mae hyn yn berthnasol hefyd i bobl ag anawsterau dysgu.

sufficient attention to the needs of people with sensory impairments? A witness with a hearing impairment told me that there was a lack of people to communicate with him, because they did not understand that he had an impairment. He said that even buying a ticket—he mentioned Cardiff in particular—was difficult, because he is difficult to understand, and people did not understand what his difficulties were. This is also relevant to people with learning difficulties.

[47] **Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog:** Ni chredaf fod digon yn cael ei wneud. Mae gan Drenau Arriva Cymru, er enghraifft, bolisi o ran pobl ag anableddau—anableddau corfforol, yn bennaf. A ydych yn ymwybodol o ba gamau mae cwmnïau trên yn eu cymryd, Tim? Y cwmnïau trên fyddai'n gyfrifol am hynny, yn hytrach na'r cwmnïau isadeiledd.

The Deputy First Minister: I do not believe that enough is being done. Arriva Trains Wales, for example, has a policy regarding people with disabilities—physical disabilities, mainly. Are you aware, Tim, of what steps the train companies are taking? It is the train companies that would be responsible, rather than those responsible for infrastructure.

[48] **Mr James:** Mae Arriva'n cyhoeddi dogfen er mwyn helpu pobl, 'A Guide for Customers with Disabilities', fel yr ydych wedi ei weld, yr wyf yn siŵr. Mae pwynt 26 yn ein tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig yn nodi'r gwaith mae Dave yn ei wneud â phobl sydd yn anabl, o ran cerdded drwy orsafoedd, i weld beth yn union yw'r problemau. Efallai y byddai'n werth gofyn i Dave am hynny.

Mr James: Arriva publishes a document to assist people, 'A Guide for Customers with Disabilities', as I am sure you will have seen. Point 26 in our written evidence notes the work that Dave is doing with people who have disabilities, walking through stations to identify exactly what problems exist. It may be worth asking Dave about that.

[49] Could you talk about the most recent rail tours that you have done, Dave, as well as about some of the findings that you have come across by involving people with disabilities, visual disabilities and so forth?

[50] **Mr Thomas:** We have taken some user groups on what we call accessibility rail tours. This has included the Multiple Sclerosis Society Cymru and the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. I was in Swansea yesterday with representatives of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and Swansea Access for Everyone. What you get, rightly, from these people, is an immense list of issues, difficulties and barriers. The station improvements programme that we are working on, with railway partners, seeks to make exemplary disability improvements for all people with all needs; that is one of the main criteria that we work on. People such as Andrea Gordon and Tony Wiggins—a wheelchair user from the MS Society—give an immense amount of practical input, which a layman such as myself would not have the perspective to dream of. It is very useful, and it is a core part of our process.

[51] **Eleanor Burnham:** Nodwch yn eich tystiolaeth eich bod yn bwriadu parhau i adolygu eich pwerau statudol. A yw'r fframwaith deddfwriaethol presennol yn ddigonol i sicrhau digon o hygyrchedd?

Eleanor Burnham: You note in your evidence that you intend to keep your statutory powers under review. Is the current legislative framework sufficient to ensure suitable levels of accessibility?

[52] **Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog:** Ni chredaf ei fod, fel y mae'n sefyll ar hyn o

The Deputy First Minister: I do not believe that it does, as it currently stands. We keep

bryd. Yr ydym yn adolygu hyn yn rheolaidd, o ran ystyried a ydym angen mwy o bwerau i'n galluogi i wneud mwy. Un broblem gyda'r setliad cyfansoddiadol presennol yw mai'r unig arian a drosglwyddwyd i ni, pan ddatganolwyd y pwerau yn 2005, a ddaeth yn weithredol yn 2006, oedd yr arian a oedd yn ymwneud â'r fasnachfaint—nid oedd arian ar gyfer adeiladu isadeiledd.

this constantly under review, in the sense that we consider whether we require further powers to enable us to do more. One problem with our current constitutional settlement is that the only funding transferred to us, when the powers were devolved in 2005, and came into force in 2006, was the funding relating to the franchise—there was no funding for building infrastructure.

[53] Mae'r arian yr ydym wedi gorfod ei roi mewn i ddatblygu'r isadeiledd wedi bod yn ychwanegol, ac yr ydym wedi ei wneud o'n gwirfodd, yn hytrach na bod galw statudol arnom i wneud hynny. Yn naturiol, ryw bryd yn y dyfodol—yr wyf yn siŵr y bydd yr holl bleidiau gwleidyddol yn ystyried hyn yn rhan o'u maniffesto ar gyfer yr etholiad nesaf—yr wyf yn siŵr y bydd y gwahanol bleidiau yn ystyried pa gamau pellach y dylem fod yn eu cymryd o safbwynt datganoli mwy o bwerau yn y maes hwn.

The money that we have had to provide to develop the infrastructure has been additional, and we have done that voluntarily rather than our having a statutory responsibility to do so. Naturally, at some point in the future—I am sure that all political parties will consider this as part of their manifestos for the next election—I am sure that consideration will be given by the various parties to what further steps we should be taking with regard to devolving further powers in this area.

[54] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yn ei dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig i'r pwyllgor, dywed Passenger Focus,

Eleanor Burnham: In its written evidence to committee, Passenger Focus notes that,

[55] 'We would like to see franchise specifications include more service quality targets rather than mainly being based on solely hard performance measures'.

[56] Mae rhai pobl sydd wedi cyfrannu at yr ymchwiliad hwn wedi cynnig y dylai cylch masnachfaint Cymru a'r Gororau, yn y dyfodol, gael ei ddiwygio i gymell ymgeiswyr i wella hygyrchedd cyfleusterau gorsafoedd rheilffordd. A ydych yn cefnogi'r syniad hwn?

Some contributors to this inquiry have proposed that future rounds of the Wales and Border franchise be amended so as to compel bidders to improve the accessibility of station facilities. Do you support this idea?

[57] **Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog:** Byddwn yn cefnogi unrhyw benderfyniad a fyddai'n ei wneud yn haws i bobl gael llais yn y broses, neu sy'n ein helpu i ddatblygu'r broses. Mae'n anodd i mi roi ateb pendant ynglŷn â'r cynllun penodol sydd gennych dan sylw, ond byddaf yn sicr yn ei ystyried gyda swyddogion ac yn ysgrifennu atoch.

The Deputy First Minister: I would support any decision that would make it easier for people to have a voice in the process, or which assists us in developing the process. It is difficult for me to give a definite answer regarding the particular scheme that you mentioned, but I will consider it with officials and write to you.

[58] **Janet Ryder:** Turning to negotiations with the UK Department for Transport in relation to accessibility schemes and issues, how did you engage with that department, and how will you do so in the future, under a new Government?

[59] **The Deputy First Minister:** The early engagement for the current schemes will have preceded my time as a Minister—it was a control period that started before I became a Minister. Therefore, the previous Minister will have agreed the programme that comes to an end in 2014. Therefore, the discussions will now be ongoing for the period 2014-18; we are

negotiating there. Of course, we do not know what the position of the new Government in Westminster is likely to be on these issues. I have an early meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport to discuss a range of issues, and once my officials have had an opportunity to discuss matters with their counterparts, we will have greater clarity on what they do. We would like to see the schemes being speeded up a bit, but it will be against a very difficult financial climate.

[60] **Janet Ryder:** You are looking for a greater emphasis from the Government in Westminster on making public transport more accessible and you have touched on what might be the biggest barrier to that, which is the funding in future years. You have already said this morning that where—

[61] **The Deputy First Minister:** It is fair to say that that is not only in relation to the funding that comes from the Department for Transport; it will be an issue for us as well, to see how much we can allocate for future programmes.

[62] **Janet Ryder:** I do not think that we could expect you to put a figure on that this morning, but you have already said that the Welsh Assembly Government funding is non-statutory, but is something that you feel that you need to do. Given the pressure that may build, as you have to look at budgets and perhaps further funding packages, how much will this remain a priority for you? How determined will you be to protect this? Is making all forms of transport accessible fundamental to getting Wales moving?

[63] **The Deputy First Minister:** It is difficult to give a straight answer to that, simply because we do not know what the settlement will be—it is likely to come later this year, in October. It is a bit difficult because the planning assumptions that we have made within the department are based on taking a stab at those figures, so it is difficult for us to come up with firm conclusions. I will share with the committee some of the challenges that exist. These schemes come within capital expenditure, and the expectation—the Government has published this—is that capital could be reduced by as much as 10 per cent per year between now and 2014, which tells you the nature of the challenge that we face. When the comprehensive spending review is published later in the year, that estimate could turn out to be conservative, or it could be way out—we do not know. Until that time, it is too early for me to give certainty around those funding issues.

[64] **Janet Ryder:** We were expecting an announcement shortly on a further funding package for the national stations improvement programme. Will that still go ahead, or is that now subject to reconsideration?

10.20 a.m.

[65] **The Deputy First Minister:** The discussions around what future programmes will be included will be shaped by the funding that, presumably, the Department for Transport will allocate to it. Virtually all its current programmes will be subject to review, so we cannot say any more until we have greater clarity on that. Do you have any further knowledge about what is happening at the Department for Transport, Tim?

[66] **Mr James:** Effectively, the department is currently maintaining previous commitments. That is clear from what it is saying about the national stations improvement programme. As the Deputy First Minister explained, some of the money that goes into that programme is tied up in terms of what the department provides; other parts are more within our gift, such as European funding. Therefore, in pulling together this programme, which will be announced shortly, we have tried to leverage in as much funding as possible from other sources as well.

- [67] **Janet Ryder:** So can we bring in European funding to support these issues?
- [68] **The Deputy First Minister:** Yes, in those areas where convergence funding applies.
- [69] **Janet Ryder:** I have a hypothetical question. You have said that roughly half of our stations are not accessible—perhaps more than that. What would your vision, or aim, be?
- [70] **The Deputy First Minister:** Our aim, or vision, would be to try to ensure that all stations are accessible. However, there are several challenges, not least of which is the issue of finance, and the fact that Network Rail has stated that, because of the grandfather rights that relate to stations, it is not statutorily obliged to bring them up to standard. That inhibits discussion around—
- [71] **Janet Ryder:** What sort of rights are these?
- [72] **The Deputy First Minister:** They are called grandfather rights. Perhaps Tim could explain that.
- [73] **Janet Ryder:** Am I hearing that correctly—grandfather rights?
- [74] **The Deputy First Minister:** Yes, you are hearing it correctly.
- [75] **Ann Jones:** I have heard of grandfather rights.
- [76] **The Deputy First Minister:** As they are old stations, what are called grandfather rights apply to them, which means that they do not fall under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. I will ask Tim to explain that further.
- [77] **Mr James:** We have highlighted this issue in paragraph 9 of our paper, because we felt that it was worth setting the context. Effectively, all existing stations have grandfather rights. That means that, if you want to change them, you have to become DDA compliant, but if you leave them as they are, they will have grandfather rights for ever. That sets the scale of the challenge that we face. In some quarters, you could potentially argue that grandfather rights are an incentive not to invest in a station, because, as soon as you make an improvement, you have to spend much more money putting accessibility right. Therefore, that is why we have highlighted this, in order to set the context of the challenge that we face.
- [78] **The Deputy First Minister:** As far as we are concerned as a Government, it is not the status of the station, and whether it has grandfather rights, that determines whether we should be doing something. There will be areas, even where those rights exist, where we would like to see access improved. Therefore, although Network Rail determines that these rights mean that it is not statutorily obliged to improve access in all stations, we would like to see some of those stations included, because they include some of the worst stations in terms of access.
- [79] **Janet Ryder:** May I ask a further question on this?
- [80] **Ann Jones:** I believe that we all want to come in on this issue. Carry on, Janet; I will then bring Joyce in.
- [81] **Janet Ryder:** We can clearly state publicly that, without devolution, Wales's stations would not improve at all. They have been totally ignored by Westminster, and it is purely devolution that has driven the improvements forward.
- [82] **The Deputy First Minister:** Where we have been able to bring Network Rail to the

table, it is because we were able to supplement what it was spending. Otherwise, some of these things just would not have happened.

[83] **Joyce Watson:** If they had been called ‘grandmother rights’ things might have been different. I am just being facetious. [*Laughter.*]

[84] **The Deputy First Minister:** We could call them ‘grandparent rights’.

[85] **Joyce Watson:** We will not have a debate about that, but I could not resist it.

[86] A note on that issue, and its implications, would be useful.

[87] **Ann Jones:** Yes, that would be good.

[88] **Joyce Watson:** Did I hear you correctly, Minister? Whether they have grandfather rights or not, if we decide to do something, we can change that. It is not the case that, because they have grandfather rights, they can stop us doing something that makes them fall under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, is it?

[89] **Mr James:** That is a correct assumption, yes.

[90] **Joyce Watson:** So we need to know that, but we do not need to get too wrapped up in it because, ultimately, the choice is for us and the partners who would deliver the changes. They may have the rights, but the rights can be taken away.

[91] **Mr James:** Absolutely. One example is Aberdyfi station. It would affect grandfather rights to make improvements there. It is non-compliant and we have made the case for investment there. That is the right thing to do.

[92] **Joyce Watson:** A further note on that would still be helpful.

[93] **Eleanor Burnham:** It might explain to us how we would move forward if we are ever in the fortunate position of being able to renegotiate some of these archaic arrangements that exist in these Westminster-led franchising agreements and particularly the agreements with Network Rail. Frankly, it is a bit like the situation with Cadw. I appreciate that Cadw cannot make everything DDA-compliant, particularly the castles, which were built many centuries ago. However, it seems archaic and unacceptable in the twenty-first century that there is a cop-out from the legal obligations. That is interesting, and I do not think that any of us were aware of that. I am fascinated by what you have come to tell us about this very important issue.

[94] **Ann Jones:** We will get a further note on this.

[95] **Eleanor Burnham:** I assume that we would need an Act of Parliament or further devolution before we could make the impact that we need to on Network Rail, and not just on you as a Government trying your best to deal with the situation when these are not statutory requirements.

[96] **The Deputy First Minister:** Yes, it would have to be changed to being statutory in Westminster.

[97] **Mr James:** We will provide a note on this and ensure that our lawyers draft it so that it is in the right context for you with regard to powers.

[98] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much. Janet, do you want to carry on?

[99] **Janet Ryder:** Yes. Am I therefore right in saying that, because they are classed as grandfather stations, they are not a priority for the Westminster Government and that, therefore, as Westminster looks at its budget, the stations will slip even further down the list? Is it the case that, although you have made the decision to prioritise accessibility and stations, your budget is limited and your scope to provide support and to intervene in this situation may well be severely limited in future?

[100] **The Deputy First Minister:** What happens is that the Department for Transport funds Network Rail, which then makes a decision on which stations it will improve in terms of accessibility. It can say that, in these areas, it has a statutory obligation to do it and that, therefore, it will, but that, in those areas where it does not have a statutory obligation, it will not necessarily do it. So, it would prioritise its spending, focusing on those areas where it has a statutory obligation and not on those areas where it does not. However, that does not prevent us from working with Network Rail where we think accessibility is important to tackle some of the worst examples using some of our resources. However, in the context of the spend, our resources are limited. They are a small proportion of the total spend, to be honest. We need to make that point.

[101] **Joyce Watson:** If that is the case, we must have a forward work programme that demonstrates whether Network Rail is ignoring or not tackling those stations that have grandfather rights, compared with those that do not. It might be useful to have a list that would demonstrate that. That would back up our concerns about the need to do something about removing that status.

[102] **Eleanor Burnham:** I think that the evidence—

[103] **Ann Jones:** I think that we have done grandfather rights to death, actually. Well, I would like to do them to death. Go on, Eleanor.

[104] **Eleanor Burnham:** The evidence that we have received is that, if all of this was done, it would not only help disabled people, but make everyone much more amenable to rail travel. Everyone could make more use of public transport, because it is the lack of integration of all of this that deters many people.

[105] **Ann Jones:** We will move on now.

[106] **Janet Ryder:** You have talked a lot about the improvements to Aberdyfi station, and it was a long process. What lessons have you learned from the process that will help you to improve negotiations if we get the chance to improve another station?

10.30 a.m.

[107] **The Deputy First Minister:** You have been involved in the discussions, Dave, so it may be useful for you to relate your experiences and what you think the lessons are.

[108] **Mr Thomas:** As a personal view, the message is to push against the boundaries. Community engagement was a main plank of this. Both locally and nationally-elected politicians made their views clear to the Minister, but it was then about getting the view of the community that something needed to be done and realising that it was pointless to continue to debate a £0.5 million station rebuild if we could find a £60,000 solution that would go in quickly and easily, yet be durable. The first one was at Aberdyfi and the second at Valley. The Minister will be announcing a longer list soon. It is about finding practical and sensible solutions and getting them through the mammoth machinery of railway safety standards. Understandably, safety is their main priority, but these things work and have proved to be

popular.

[109] **Mohammad Asghar:** Many contributors to this inquiry have expressed strong concerns about the lack of accessible toilets at 90 per cent of Welsh stations, which is a very surprising statistic. Are you satisfied with that? Does the Welsh Government have a role to play in improving the provision of accessible toilets at Welsh railway stations?

[110] **The Deputy First Minister:** The answer to that is, 'Yes, where we can'. We recognise that this is a major issue. There are a number of schemes where we have made this a priority. For example, in Prestatyn, where we have improvements and a toilet that is DDA compliant. There are also proposals for Llanelli, Llandudno Junction and Machynlleth, and other stations are in the pipeline. We recognise the importance of having accessible toilets that are DDA compliant. Where we can, we will ensure that they are introduced and brought into use.

[111] **Mohammad Asghar:** The Association of Train Operating Companies has told this committee that it is keen to work with the Welsh Government to increase the number of Disabled Persons Railcards in circulation through improved publicity. Do you see scope for working with the association to achieve this aim?

[112] **The Deputy First Minister:** Yes, we do. We would like to highlight the importance of people taking every opportunity to travel by public transport, and where people can have a railcard or a reduction in the cost of their journey, we would be keen to do that. One of the problems that many people have with public transport, as a general point, is a lack of information. It is something that we are all concerned about. People find it difficult: although there is increased access to information on the internet and through a number of call centres, there is more that we can do to highlight travel opportunities and to give people opportunities for reduced travel costs.

[113] **Mohammad Asghar:** You have answered my next question in part. Some contributors to this inquiry have suggested that more could be done to publicise the facilities and services available to disabled people. Is there scope for the Welsh Government to assist with this?

[114] **The Deputy First Minister:** Yes, I think that there is. For example, I would imagine that most customers are not aware that a guide has been published by Arriva, 'A Guide for Customers with Disabilities'. Most people might not be aware of that and of the fact that a service is available whereby they can make arrangements beforehand to have someone to assist them on the platform. Publicising that information is very important. We will certainly go back and discuss with Arriva and other train operators how we can assist in ensuring that that information is more readily available.

[115] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much for that answer, Deputy First Minister. Instead of printing a book that is not widely read, the media can be used to publicise your objectives locally and nationally.

[116] **The Deputy First Minister:** I accept that.

[117] **Eleanor Burnham:** I think that the point that has come over to us is that it is about having correct information. The information might be there in a booklet, but it is a matter of trying to put it into practice. Many disabled people have to plan ahead, but it would be really nice if they could do something impetuous and suddenly decide to go to Rhyl or wherever. However, they obviously have to plan ahead. Sometimes these plans do not actually work because things go wrong, and people forget that they are supposed to be helping someone. It is not all to do with money for infrastructure. Much of this is to do with mind-bogglingly

basic common sense to some of us who travel on the railway constantly, and the milk of human kindness, etiquette, and old-fashioned politeness towards people in general, not just disabled people.

[118] **The Deputy First Minister:** I think that it is about customer service, really. Train operators need to be aware that customer service means that they should be in a position to assist people whatever their disability. We certainly think that they should do that.

[119] **Ann Jones:** Do you think that capacity on a train would be an issue for disabled people if they get to a station and a train pulls up, but there are people standing and buggies, pushchairs, cases and everyone in the aisles? Is that an issue that would put disabled people off? It would put me off.

[120] **The Deputy First Minister:** The circumstances that you describe clearly would. Train operators are now increasingly aware of the need to cater for people with disabilities, particularly people with wheelchairs. I have seen—as will you—a number of carriages that are designed so that there are spaces for people with wheelchairs. As Eleanor has pointed out, we need to recognise that, with the best will in the world, it probably takes a bit of planning to do the journey. Provided that proper planning is in place and the train operator is aware that this requirement exists, by and large—although I understand that there are circumstances sometimes when it does not always work—I think that train operators do their best. If there are any recommendations that the committee will eventually make around that, we would be happy to take them up with the companies.

[121] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much for that.

[122] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. I will now move on to the involvement of disabled people. We have taken evidence from various groups. Do you believe that the views of disabled people are taken sufficiently into account when accessibility issues are being considered by key stakeholders in the railway industry? How does the Welsh Assembly Government take the views of disabled people into account when developing accessibility strategies? Do you think that their views are taken seriously; and, if so, how do we go about getting—

[123] **The Deputy First Minister:** I do not believe that the current arrangements show a sufficient degree of consistency in how we approach this. As I mentioned at an earlier meeting of the committee on another matter, where one of the campaigning groups in Wales sponsored a debate on accessibility at stations in Wales, I then invited it to talk to me and my officials around some of its concerns. That was because there was a debate and I recognise that that was the case. Dave has mentioned some of the work that he is already doing in having discussions with groups that have particular problems, and he has mentioned some of the organisations. We need to formalise some of this. I will shortly be announcing details of the public transport users committee, which will be mainstreaming accessibility in all aspects of its work. One member will be the Welsh nomination on the Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee. Formalising it like that, so that people have an opportunity through the public transport users committee to mainstream some of these issues, is very important. That then means that you have a formal way of bringing them to the attention of groups with disabilities.

10.40 a.m.

[124] **Joyce Watson:** Another issue that has been raised time and again is the lack of integration between trains and other modes of transport. For example, we were told that the railway station in Porthmadog is outside the town but that there is no accessible mode of transport to get there. We have also been told by other groups about several bus lanes running

parallel to railway stations, which creates complications for blind or partially sighted people. That being the case, do you share those concerns about transport integration and how is the Welsh Government seeking to resolve those problems?

[125] **The Deputy First Minister:** To discuss this in a general sense, the ideal position would be for people who use public transport to be able to undertake their whole journey by public transport, and not just take their car to the station, park there and take the train. So, in an ideal world, a bus should be available to take people to the train station to get on a train, and there would also be a bus at the other end. That is the ideal position. That is what full integration would mean. However, we all have to recognise that we are not quite there yet.

[126] We are trying to create integrated transport arrangements within a number of key station locations. We have to accept that that will not be possible at every station, but it may be possible at some of the key hubs. For example, we are now looking to see how, within the Sustainable Travel Towns initiative and the Môn a Menai action plan, we can create a hub around Bangor station. That could then be a key example. There are also discussions in Cardiff about making transport more integrated, and also in a number of other stations where we have schemes highlighting the need for integrated transport.

[127] The truth of the matter is that that is the aspiration, but we are a long way away from achieving it. Making it easier for people to use modes of public transport for the vast majority of their journeys is what we would like to achieve.

[128] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is the key to this. I am very fortunate because Arriva buses are wonderful in Rossett. They travel between Wrexham and Chester every 12 minutes, and they go to the station in Chester and also now to the station in Wrexham. So, surely integrating transport is not beyond the wit of man. I spoke to the gentlemen from Arriva Trains Wales and Arriva buses the other week and it seems that that is their aim, in theory. So, why can we not get it done quicker? We will be discussing further this issue of integrated journeys, because it is the big experience that generally puts people off using public transport.

[129] **The Deputy First Minister:** I agree with that. Our vision is to make journeys easier for people, as you described. I have had discussions with representatives of Arriva Trains and Arriva UK Bus on the same issue, and significant improvements are being made. When we get the opportunity, with our Sustainable Travel Towns initiative, we can 'road-test' or pilot some of these initiatives to see how well they work. For example, you should now be able to travel by bus to Bangor station and then onwards by train. It is not just about accessibility; it is about ensuring that the timetables are compatible and all the things that go along with that. Quite a lot of work is being done on this issue, and it is clearly a key objective in our national transport plan.

[130] **Mr James:** Yes, indeed. The transport plan was subject to an equality impact assessment and, in pulling together this programme of work, we have looked at the best ways of making services accessible for everyone. The TrawsCambria network is important with regard to integration. We are reviewing the network, and our plans going forward are not yet finalised, but we are clear that the TrawsCambria network has to integrate with the railway timetable, so the new TrawsCambria service will hang off the back of, for example, the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth train service. The fundamental train timetable changes once a year, which provides a secure and safe way of making connections. The train timetable does not generally change very much, so you can build up, over a few years, a very reliable timetable. That is one area in which we want to provide better integration.

[131] **Joyce Watson:** Moving on, some submissions to this inquiry have proposed that it would be useful if expected accessibility standards could be defined for individual railway stations in Wales. Would you support such an approach?

[132] **The Deputy First Minister:** I do not know whether it is possible to have a standard that is common across all stations because they are all different and have different needs. Legislation is driving this, namely the Disability Discrimination Acts. There is also the problem that we have with those who are exempted from that. I would have thought that there were sufficient drivers for us to push this through without having a common standard, because I think that we know what needs to be done, and it is just a case of getting people around the table and doing it.

[133] **Mr James:** I agree. I think that there is probably sufficient regulation of standards. There is the DDA, which you talked about.

[134] **The Deputy First Minister:** To be honest, on transport, numerous regulations are already in place. It is the most regulated sector that I am aware of.

[135] **Mr James:** New trains have to comply with the requirements of the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations and stringent European standards. So, there is sufficient regulation; the issue may be about playing catch-up with the ‘grandfather’ stations.

[136] **Joyce Watson:** That is fine, but that will not be of expected accessibility standards, will it? I am not blaming us, the Welsh Assembly Government, or you, the Deputy First Minister, for that, but I think that that was what people were really trying to say. If there were an agreement or a possible way forward, at least everyone would work towards it, which brings me to my next question.

[137] Several submissions to this inquiry have called for the Welsh Government to work with stakeholders to develop an outline strategy for railway accessibility. They argued that such a strategy could outline the improvement activities to be prioritised and a suggested timescale—and we all know that there will be things that get in the way of that. It could also provide comment on potential funding requirements and sources. Would you support such an outline strategy for railways?

[138] **The Deputy First Minister:** Part of the difficulty with this is that there is not much point in our having a strategy under the current devolution settlement when we do not have the main responsibility or the drivers for the funding. In a way, because of how the devolution settlement is currently organised, the driver for this has to be Network Rail. We could then persuade, cajole and argue the case for particular improvements in Wales. This comes down to how the arrangements are put in place. Tim has mentioned control period 5, which is the next period, 2014 to 2018, and we will have agreement on what we do during that period. So, if we had full powers over this matter—and, I hasten to add, the funding to go with those full powers—we could probably agree on a strategy as a Government, but we are constrained by the current settlement.

[139] **Joyce Watson:** You have answered my last question, but I will ask it anyway. Given the limited nature of devolved powers, which you have mentioned and which we all know about, would the Welsh Government support the development of a UK-wide route-map?

10.50 a.m.

[140] **The Deputy First Minister:** There is a route-map, is there not, Tim? That is the whole point of this control period discussion. There is initially what they call a high-level output statement, which sets out the funding outputs for that period, and then you agree a programme within that. We call that the rail forward programme, and that is supplementary to what Network Rail is doing with stations. So, I am not sure that it is necessary to have another strategy or agreement. What is necessary is for us to have a programme of improvements to

stations, accepting that accessibility is an issue. Even if there is the political will to do that, it will be difficult to achieve substantial improvements in the next control period because of financial circumstances. However, to make a personal comment, I want an agreement that concentrates on those that have the worst accessibility problems, regardless of whether they have grandfather rights, and those that have the largest footfall in those areas where there are difficulties. That is the key. Those are the two criteria that we need to look at. If those two are satisfied, we can probably do something.

[141] **Ann Jones:** You may come in very briefly, Eleanor.

[142] **Eleanor Burnham:** You are very indulgent, thank you, Chair. Do you not agree that one of the key issues ‘going forward’, to use that expression, is that rolling stock improvements could be integrated in all this? For instance, as we have said before, why can we not have rolling stock that allows most of the general populace to go seamlessly from the train to the platform without there being a height differential? Could we not simply improve the types of steps that we have, if we must have steps? They are extremely narrow on trains in Wales. Able-bodied people have to be careful when there is a mass of people waiting on the platform and they are trying to get off the train. You probably have not noticed, but women’s shoes are different from men’s shoes. They have high heels. I am making a sexist point, but it is true—

[143] **Ann Jones:** We do not allow sexist points here, in the Committee on Equality of Opportunity.

[144] **Eleanor Burnham:** It is a gender-related point then. It is a different matter to get off a train in a high-heeled shoe than in a man’s shoe. Perhaps you have not noticed the difference, but it is true.

[145] **The Deputy First Minister:** Some of us men have worn Cuban heels in the past, Eleanor. [*Laughter.*] There are high heels on some men’s shoes.

[146] **Ann Jones:** However, did you travel on the train in those heels? That is the question.

[147] **Eleanor Burnham:** I think that you understand the point that I am making.

[148] **The Deputy First Minister:** The newer rolling stock would probably be compliant, would it not, Tim?

[149] **Mr James:** Yes.

[150] **The Deputy First Minister:** One problem is that it is difficult to access rolling stock, as it is a rare commodity. By and large, you have to take what is on offer—

[151] **Eleanor Burnham:** Usually at the end of the line.

[152] **The Deputy First Minister:** Not necessarily, actually. [*Interruption.*] No, it is true to say that we have made it clear that there are benefits to us in purchasing rolling stock, because that means that there is a capital outlay and we do not always have to have the revenue stream that follows if we can do that. Nevertheless, Tim has had a great deal of frustration trying to access that rolling stock.

[153] **Mr James:** Yes, it is difficult, because, through the franchise, we are tied into contracts with rolling stock companies until 2018. In addition, there is not much on the market unless you buy in huge volumes. So, we are doing the best that we can to see what opportunities there are to get on the existing order books, to start with. We are also

refurbishing some rolling stock: the class 175s, which travel from north to south Wales, and the class 158 trains, which are better and have more space for people with disabilities. They are cleaner and have better toilet areas and so forth.

[154] To answer the question of why there is always a step, one issue is that rolling stock has to be able to go to any station throughout the UK, and there are some gauging tolerances that mean that, in some situations, there will always be a gap. If it is an entirely self-contained railway, such as a small one that you start building from scratch, and the train does not go anywhere else, you can achieve that perfect fit, but we are quite a way off that at the moment.

[155] **Ann Jones:** Some trains and rolling stock have managed that perfect fit at most mainline stations. If that can be achieved there, surely that can be expanded on.

[156] **Mr James:** With newer rolling stock, yes.

[157] **Ann Jones:** Who would give the specification for the rolling stock? If there was a requirement for there to be a level walk-off from the train to the platform, who would be responsible for ensuring that that was contained in the specification?

[158] **Mr James:** It is a UK Government standard—

[159] **Ann Jones:** So, would it be the Department for Transport? If we get further powers, it would be our responsibility.

[160] **Mr James:** I could not really comment on that.

[161] **The Deputy First Minister:** That is probably a matter for the politicians.

[162] **Ann Jones:** That was an ‘if’; and if ifs and buts were pots and pans—

[163] **The Deputy First Minister:** It depends on the extent of the devolution of powers that you get. My feeling is that the Department for Transport would be extremely reluctant to transfer responsibility for some of those regulatory issues. That is certainly the case in other areas, so it may be very reluctant to transfer those.

[164] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are any of these powers devolved to the Scottish Parliament?

[165] **The Deputy First Minister:** I am not in a position to answer that question today, but we can have a look at that.

[166] **Ann Jones:** I do not think that there are any more questions. Thank you very much for your evidence and your paper. We are almost at the end of our evidence-gathering sessions, so we will be looking at the emerging themes shortly. We will send you a copy of the transcript of this meeting.

[167] **The Deputy First Minister:** Thank you. I look forward to receiving your recommendations.

10.56 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[168] **Ann Jones:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from its next meeting on 6 July in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37.

[169] I see that everyone is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.56 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.56 a.m.*