Network Rail – Supplementary evidence

The Committee requested further information from Network Rail at the Committee meeting:

- Dr Gibbons enquired into railway funding in Wales outside of Network Rail's "infrastructure commitments", specifically, Network Rail and Welsh Assembly Government shared funding for activities that would otherwise not have occurred.

- Details of cable theft.

As part of our "infrastructure commitments", Network Rail is delivering a substantial programme of renewals and maintenance in Wales over Control Period 4. Such investment is crucial in maintaining and improving safety and operational performance on the railway.

For example, we are delivering a major re-signalling scheme with a value over £60m on the Cambrian Line. WAG is also using this opportunity to deliver an enhancement scheme, which along with the new signalling system will help to deliver an hourly service between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury.

We are also currently undertaking a £450m renewal of the signalling system on the South Wales Main Line. The project is taking a phased approach to minimise disruption the travelling public – the Port Talbot area completed in 2007, delivering significant improvement to rail services where delays dropped by 63% a year after the re-signalling.

We are delivering a major scheme of works around the Cardiff area signalling renewal to increase the capacity on the Cardiff area to accommodate future demand growth. This £220m scheme is funded by Network Rail with a WAG contribution of approximately £16.965m.

As well as the Cardiff area and Cambrian enhancements, we also work with WAG to align funding into Projects to gain an additional output than just either WAG or Network Rail funding in isolation. For example;

- The re-developed Newport Station (Network Rail contribution: £14.8m. WAG contribution: £7.7m)

- Swansea Station improvements – utilising Network Rail renewal funds (£0.5m), National Station Improvement Programme funds and WAG funding.

- East – West Wales Journey Improvements – Network Rail renewal of Lougher Viaduct (£8m) and WAG funded re-doubling scheme.

Outside of our "infrastructure commitments", Network Rail works with a range of third party funders to deliver their aspirations for the railway. For example, in Cornwall we recently installed a passing loop on the Falmouth branch line, to facilitate a two per hour passenger train service during peak times, in a scheme funded by Cornwall

County Council. Elsewhere, we are delivering a major re-development of Birmingham New Street, which is funded by a number of partners, including Birmingham City Council and Advantage West Midlands.

Within Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government has discretionary powers to fund rail infrastructure enhancements, for example, to improve connectivity between North and South Wales and West and South Wales as set out in the One Wales Coalition Agreement. At present, as highlighted in our original evidence, Network Rail is developing a range of further enhancement schemes, all of which are funded in entirety by the Welsh Assembly Government:

- Gowerton Redoubling

- Taff / Rhondda Turnback

- Maesteg Frequency Enhancement

- Energlyn Station

- Ebbw Vale Extension

- Ebbw Vale Branch Re-Doubling

- North-South Wales Journey Improvements

- Aberdare – Hirwaun passenger line re-opening

- Llangefni – Gaerwen (Amlwch branch re-opening)

With regard to cable theft, there is a correlation between the number of incidents and the market price for copper. In the last full financial year (2009/10), there were 28 incidents of cable theft on the Wales and Marches area. These cable theft incidents impacted on 1533 trains with 28829 attributable delay minutes.

In attempting to tackle the impact of cable theft our strategy is two-fold; firstly we work to reduce the number of cable theft incidents through crime prevention and detection and secondly, minimising the impact on the travelling public through better management of cable theft incidents.

With regard to crime prevention and detection we work with a number of stakeholders, for example British Transport Police and the regional police forces. There are a number of initiatives, for example, use of covert technology, a funding contribution to the police helicopter and the use of forensic tagging technology.

We have had a number of recent successes with several high profile cases resulting in custodial sentences.

The issue of metal theft is not a problem for the rail industry alone. There are many other examples of metal theft for example, in the water and telecommunications industries. In this regard, we are actively engaged in the Pan Wales Metal Theft Group where we share information on trends to attempt to identify crime hot spots.