

Y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu ar y cyd â'r Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig

Joint meeting of the Enterprise and Learning Committee and the Welsh Affairs Committee

Dydd Llun, 23 Tachwedd 2009
Monday, 23 November 2009

Cynnwys Contents

[Cyflwyniad ac Ymddiheuriadau](#)
[Introduction and Apologies](#)

[Seilwaith Rheilffyrdd Cymru yn y Dyfodol](#)
[Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#)

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 Menter a Dysgu yn bresennol Enterprise and Learning Committee members in attendance

Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Paul Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Nerys Evans	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cydgadeirydd y cyfarfod) The Party of Wales (Co-chair for the meeting)
David Melding	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Jenny Randerson	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

Aelodau'r Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig yn bresennol Welsh Affairs Committee members in attendance

Hywel Francis	Llafur (Cydgadeirydd y cyfarfod) Labour (Co-chair for the meeting)
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Nia Griffith	Llafur Labour
Siân James	Llafur Labour
Alun Michael	Llafur Labour
Hywel Williams	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Mike Bagshaw	Cyfarwyddwr Masnachol, Trenau Arriva Cymru Commercial Director, Arriva Trains Wales
Ron Davies	Cadeirydd, TAITH Chair, TAITH
Mark Hopwood	Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr, First Great Western Managing Director, First Great Western
Jeff James	Cyngor Bro Morgannwg, Cadeirydd, SEWTA Vale of Glamorgan Council, Chair, SEWTA
Anthony O'Sullivan	Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili, Cadeirydd, Cyfarwyddiaeth SEWTA Caerphilly County Borough Council, Chair, SEWTA Directorate
John Pockett	Rheolwr dros Gymru, First Great Western Manager for Wales, First Great Western
Gareth Roberts	Cyngor Sir Ceredigion, TraCC Ceredigion County Council, TraCC
Trevor Roberts	Cadeirydd, TraCC Chair, TraCC
Michael Vaughan	Pennaeth Masnachfreintiau a Rheoli Rhanddeiliaid, Trenau Arriva Cymru Head of Franchise and Stakeholder Management, Arriva Trains Wales
Michael Whittaker	Swyddog Gweithredol, TAITH Executive Officer, TAITH
Christopher Wilson	Cydlynnydd, TraCC Co-ordinator, TraCC

Richard Workman	Prif Swyddog, SWWITCH Lead Chief Officer, SWWITCH
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Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Dan Collier	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Joanest Jackson	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Siân Phipps	Clerc Clerk
Graham Winter	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

Swyddogion Tŷ'r Cyffredin yn bresennol
House of Commons officials in attendance

Dr Sue Griffiths	Clerc Clerk
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"Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 11.07 a.m.
The meeting began at 11.07 a.m."

Cyflwyniad ac Ymddiheuriadau
Introduction and Apologies

<p>Gareth Jones: Bore da a chroeso cynnes i'r cyfarfod hwn o'r Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu. Fel y gwelwch, mae'r cyfarfod hwn yn un arbennig gan ei fod yn gyfarfod ar y cyd â'r Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig yn San Steffan. Estynnwn groeso cynnes i bawb sydd yma, gan gynnwys Aelodau'r Cynulliad, Aelodau Seneddol, y tystion a phawb arall o'r cyhoedd sy'n gwyllo neu sy'n dymuno ymuno â ni.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: Good morning and a warm welcome to this meeting of the Enterprise and Learning Committee. As you will see, it is a special meeting as it is a joint meeting with the Welsh Affairs Committee at Westminster. We extend a warm welcome to everyone here, including Assembly Members, Members of Parliament, witnesses and the public watching proceedings or who wish to join us.</p>
<p>Yn unol â'r arfer, gwnaf ychydig gyhoeddiadau am faterion y tŷ. Bydd y cyfarfod hwn yn un dwyieithog. Darperir clustffonau i glywed y gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd o'r Gymraeg i'r Saesneg, a cheir hwnnw ar sianel 1. Mae modd chwyddleisio'r sain ar sianel 0. Bydd cofnod o'r cyfan a ddywedir yn gyhoeddus.</p>	<p>As is usual, I will make some housekeeping announcements. The meeting will be held bilingually. Headsets are provided through which you can hear the interpretation from Welsh to English, which is on channel 1. The amplified audio is available on channel 0. A record will be made available of all that is said in public.</p>
<p>Atgoffaf bawb i ddiffodd eu ffonau symudol ac unrhyw ddyfais electronig arall. Nid oes angen inni gyffwrdd â'r microffonau wrth gyfrannu. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os bydd unrhyw fath o argyfwng, rhaid inni ddilyn cyfarwyddiadau'r tywyswyr a symud o'r ystafell ac efallai yr adeilad.</p>	<p>I remind everyone to switch off mobile phones and any other electronic devices. There is no need to touch the microphones when making a contribution. We are not expecting a fire drill, and so should any sort of emergency arise, we should follow the ushers' directions and exit the room and possibly the building.</p>

<p>Daeth ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb i law oddi wrth yr Aelodau Cynulliad Huw Lewis a Sandy Mewies, ac oddi wrth yr Aelodau Seneddol David Davies, David Jones, Albert Owen, Mark Pritchard, Mark Williams a Martyn Jones. Nid oes dirprwyon.</p>	<p>We have received apologies for absence from the Assembly Members Huw Lewis and Sandy Mewies, and from the Members of Parliament David Davies, David Jones, Albert Owen, Mark Pritchard, Mark Williams and Martyn Jones. There are no substitutes.</p>
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11.08 a.m.

Seilwaith Rheilffyrdd Cymru yn y Dyfodol Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales

<p>Gareth Jones: Dyma'r unig eitem ar yr agenda, ac mae mewn dwy ran. Fel y dywedais, dyma gyfarfod ar y cyd â Phwyllgor Materion Cymreig Tŷ'r Cyffredin. Dyma'r sesiwn graffu olaf inni yn ymchwiliad y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu i seilwaith rheilffyrdd Cymru yn y dyfodol, ond dyma sesiwn gyntaf ymchwiliad dilynol y Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig i'w adroddiad ar ddarparu gwasanaethau cyhoeddus trawsffiniol i Gymru ym maes trafniadaeth. Felly, mae'r cyfarfod hwn yn gam ymlaen i'r pwyllgor, fel dilyniant i'r adroddiad a gyhoeddwyd rai misoedd yn ôl.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: This is the only item on the agenda, and it is in two parts. As I have said, this meeting is being held jointly with the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee. This is the final scrutiny session for the Enterprise and Learning Committee's inquiry into the future rail infrastructure in Wales, but it is the first session of the Welsh Affairs Committee's follow-up inquiry into its report on the provision of cross-border public services in Wales in the field of transport. Therefore, this meeting represents a step forward for the committee, as a progression of the report that it published some months ago.</p>
<p>Estynnaf groeso cynnes i Hywel Francis AS sy'n cadeirio'r Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig. A ddymunwch ddweud gair neu ddau, Hywel?</p>	<p>I extend a warm welcome to Hywel Francis MP, who chairs the Welsh Affairs Committee. Do you wish to say a few words, Hywel?</p>
<p>11.10 a.m.</p>	
<p>Hywel Francis: Diolch yn fawr, Gareth. Mae'r pwyllgor yn edrych ymlaen yn fawr at gydweithio â chi ar yr ymchwiliad hwn. Yr ydym eisiau sicrhau ein bod yn gwneud ein gwaith yn dda ac yn bwrpasol. Yn y gorffennol, yr ydym wedi cydweithio yn llwyddiannus dros ben â sawl pwyllgor o'r Cynulliad, ac yr wyf yn siŵr bydd yr ymchwiliad hwn yn llwyddiannus. Yr wyf yn hapus ichi gymryd y Gadair heddiw.</p>	<p>Hywel Francis: Thank you very much, Gareth. The committee looks forward to collaborating with you on this inquiry. We want to ensure that we carry out our work well and appropriately. In the past, we have collaborated very successfully with a number of committees of the Assembly, and I am sure that this inquiry will also be a success. I am happy for you to take the Chair today.</p>
<p>Gareth Jones: Yr ydym yn estyn croeso cynnes i chi ac yn falch o gael y cyfle i gydweithio fel hyn. Mae cymaint o sôn am bwyllgorau Tŷ'r Cyffredin ym mhwyllgorau'r Cynulliad, ond mae'n arbennig inni allu dod at ein gilydd gyda'r brif bobl yn y maes a chael cyfle i graffu ar y cyd. Dylem wneud llawer mwy ohono, ond amser a ddengys.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: We extend a warm welcome to you and we are pleased to have the opportunity to collaborate like this. There is so much talk about House of Commons committees in Assembly committees, but it is special that we can come together with the most important people in the field and have an opportunity to scrutinise jointly. We should do a lot more of it, but time will tell.</p>
<p>Trown at y sesiwn graffu yn awr ac estynnwn groeso cynnes i gynrychiolwyr y cwmnïau trên. Ar ran Trenau Arriva Cymru mae Mike Bagshaw, y cyfarwyddwr masnachol, a hefyd Michael Vaughan, y pennaeth masnachfreintiau a rheoli rhanddeiliaid. Yma i gynrychioli First Great Western mae Mark Hopwood, y rheolwr gyfarwyddwr, a John Pockett, y rheolwr dros Gymru. Ar ran yr holl Aelodau, o'r Senedd a'r Cynulliad, diolchaf i chi am eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig. Yn groes i'r arfer, nid oes gennym amser i wrando ar gyflwyniad, ond rhaid imi bwysleisio ein bod yn ddiolchgar am y dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig yr ydym wedi'i derbyn. Yr wyf yn siŵr, drwy'r cwestiynu, y cawn fwy o fanylion a gwybodaeth. Yr wyf yn edrych ymlaen at y drafodaeth hon. Trof at Hywel Francis am y cwestiwn cyntaf.</p>	<p>To turn to our scrutiny session, we extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the train companies. On behalf of Arriva Trains Wales, we have Mike Bagshaw, the commercial director, and Michael Vaughan, the head of franchise and stakeholder management. Here to represent First Great Western are Mark Hopwood, the managing director, and John Pockett, the manager for Wales. On behalf of all Members, from Parliament and the Assembly, I thank you for your written evidence. Contrary to normal practice, there is no time for us to hear a presentation, but I emphasise that we are grateful for the written evidence that we have received. I am sure that, through questioning, we will get more details and information. I am looking forward to this discussion. I turn to Hywel Francis to ask the first question.</p>

<p>Hywel Francis: Mae gennyf gwestiwn eithaf syml i ddechrau. Sut ydych yn gweithio gyda Llywodraeth y Cynulliad, yr Adran Drafnidiaeth, a Network Rail i sicrhau bod y rhwydwaith yn llwyddiannus ac yn addas? Yn ychwanegol, a ydych yn gweithio gyda Gweinidog Rhanbarthol y De Orllewin yn Lloegr?</p>	<p>Hywel Francis: I have a relatively simple question to begin with. How do you work with the Assembly Government, the Department for Transport and Network Rail to ensure that the network is successful and appropriate? In addition, do you work with the Regional Minister for the South West in England?</p>
<p>Mr Pockett: Mae ein rhyddfrait yn croesi'r ffin ac mae First Great Western yn darparu gwasanaethau o dde Cymru i Lundain yn ogystal â'r gwasanaethau o Gaerdydd i Taunton ac i Portsmouth. Yr ydym yn cwrdd yn rheolaidd â swyddogion o adran drafnidiaeth y Llywodraeth yma yng Nghaerdydd, ac mae fy nghydweithwyr yn cwrdd â swyddogion yr Adran Drafnidiaeth yn Llundain. Yn ystod y ddwy flynedd diwethaf, mae'r trefniadau cydweithio rhyngom ni a'r Llywodraeth yng Nghaerdydd wedi gwella'n arw. Yr ydym yn cwrdd yn rheolaidd i drafod beth bynnag sydd angen ei drafod. Nid oes ofn ar neb i godi'r ffôn a chodi pwyntiau gyda fi, Russell neu swyddfa Mark. Gobeithio bod yr ateb hwnnw yn rhywfaint o help.</p>	<p>Mr Pockett: We have a cross-border franchise and First Great Western provides services from south Wales to London, in addition to the services from Cardiff to Taunton and to Portsmouth. We meet regularly with officials from the transport department of the Government here in Cardiff, and my colleagues meet with Department for Transport officials in London. Over the past two years, the working arrangements between us and the Government in Cardiff have improved immensely. We meet regularly to discuss whatever needs to be discussed. No-one is afraid of picking up the phone or of raising issues with me, Russell or Mark's office. I hope that that answer is of some assistance to you.</p>

Mr Bagshaw: I echo those points. At Arriva Trains Wales, we work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Transport. We meet with the Assembly Government on an almost weekly basis to discuss the various transport plans in Wales, and we discuss capacity provision, looking to the longer term. We also meet regularly with the Department for Transport. There is a cross-border forum at which representatives from the Welsh Assembly Government, the Department for Transport and other stakeholders meet to discuss cross-border services, at which issues of capacity and timetabling are relevant to both Governments. So, we have a very close working relationship. We are planning carefully how we cater for the ongoing growth that we are seeing in passenger numbers across Wales and on the English borders. We are currently in discussions with the Department for Transport and the Welsh Assembly Government about how we can provide more capacity, where funding is available and develop the policies in the national transport plan.

<p>Gareth Jones: Hywel, a oes gennych chi unrhyw gwestiynau eraill?</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: Hywel, do you have any other questions?</p>
<p>Hywel Francis: Nac oes.</p>	<p>Hywel Francis: No.</p>

Gareth Jones: Thank you, Mike. We now turn to Alun Michael.

<p>Alun Michael: Diolch yn fawr. Mae'n bleser bod yma yn yr etholaeth ar ddydd Llun fel hyn.</p>	<p>Alun Michael: Thank you. It is a pleasure to be here in the constituency on a Monday like this.</p>
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Can we cut to the heart of the issue on the First Great Western service between Cardiff or Swansea and London? When will the experience of travellers between Cardiff or Swansea and London improve? When are we going to be able to depend on trains arriving at advertised times? How will you increase capacity? I say this against the background of what I consider to be a real problem with the measures of performance and a degree of complacency. It comes as a shock when you travel to places like Yorkshire or the north-east and discover that longer journeys can be simple, pleasant and on time. The north-west service used to be as bad as the south Wales service, but it has greatly improved, although ours has not. When can we expect to see the dependable improvements that other parts of the country have experienced?

Mr Hopwood: There has been a substantial improvement in punctuality on the London to south Wales services. There is more work to be done, but we are now running more services punctually on that key route than before. A key part of the First Great Western franchise was to bring in additional capacity, and the five-coach trains that had been introduced into traffic at the end of the last decade have been taken out of the franchise and replaced by longer high-speed trains. So, if you look at our current high-speed train fleet, you will see that it now has 54 train sets, whereas for most of the period since those trains were brought into traffic many years ago, the Great Western route operated with just over 30. So, there has been a substantial increase in capacity.

As far as working with Network Rail is concerned, there are many things that we are doing to carry on driving improvements in performance. Our high-speed train fleet is delivering the best levels of reliability in terms of the rolling stock that we have ever seen. That is significantly helped by the new engines in the high-speed train fleet, and they have all been refitted over the past three or four years. There is more work to be done, particularly at the London end of the route, where it is most congested. The development of Reading station, with the four additional mainline platforms, will make a substantial difference to capacity and performance. We are working with Network Rail on other smaller-scale schemes, such as ensuring that high-speed trains from south Wales get more priority than they currently get against the Heathrow Express trains coming out of the airport. There are many other smaller schemes of that nature that will help to improve performance.

Our customers are telling us that they have seen a difference in performance; the number of complaints is substantially lower and our national passenger survey results have improved. So, there is evidence of improvement, and our punctuality has often been as good, and sometimes better, than the punctuality of the services on the London-to-Yorkshire inter-city operation.

Alun Michael: I must be singularly fortunate when I travel to the north-east and singularly unfortunate when I use your services. I have some sympathy for current management, because I acknowledge that things have moved from the singularly awful to the poor and unpredictable, and that, in itself, is an improvement. Do you accept that there is still a long way to go before we have the dependable service that there is in other parts of the country? Do you also accept that weekend services, particularly on Sundays, are often particularly poor, and that you end up with an additional hour of travelling and then being late on top of that? We have seen south Wales services being merged with west country services, which means that the trains are vastly overcrowded, but it is presumably a saving to the company. Things are still not at an acceptable level, are they?

Mr Hopwood: The punctuality of First Great Western services is now better on the whole than the national average. On whether there is more to be done, I have already acknowledged a few times that we accept that there is more work to be done and that we are getting on with doing that. As far as weekend engineering work is concerned, there is a lot of work being done between train operators and Network Rail, which is also facilitated by the Department for Transport. Lord Adonis, as Secretary of State for Transport, has shown a personal interest in the work as regards reducing the amount of disruptive engineering work at weekends, and to try to ensure that we can operate the normal advertised services on a greater number of weekends.

11.20 a.m.

As many committee members will be aware, the Severn tunnel closures that we have had—and there was one this weekend, for example—led to our London to south Wales service diverting via Gloucester. A key constraint in those diversions is the single-track railway between Swindon and Kemble, which means that we have to combine our London to Cheltenham service with the London to south Wales service; that is not to save money, but for capacity reasons. First, that deprives Cheltenham of a through service to London, but it also slows down the south Wales service. A lot of positive progress has been made over the last nine months or so, after the disappointment of the double-tracking scheme not being included in the periodic settlement for the railway industry over the next five years, and local authorities are diverting funds from road schemes to progress double-tracking further. Many of us in the industry are confident that, despite the initial disappointment, we may well see that scheme completed. We have two targets on this: first, to avoid the need for the diversions, which Network Rail is making progress on; and secondly, when they do occur, to make them less disruptive.

Gareth Jones: Diolch. Trown yn awr at Jeff Cuthbert.

Gareth Jones: Thank you. We now turn to Jeff Cuthbert.

Jeff Cuthbert: I endorse the comments welcoming this excellent opportunity to meet with our colleagues from the Welsh Affairs Select Committee for joint scrutiny. My main question is to you both, but I suggest that First Great Western answers it first in order to give Arriva Trains Wales an opportunity to consider its response. I will also ask my supplementary question now in order to save time, Chair. The main question is: to what extent is the planning for new railway infrastructure adequately integrated with the provision of rolling stock? My supplementary is directed very much at Arriva Trains Wales, because my particular concern is the Valleys lines, which are well-used for commuter travel into Cardiff, and specifically the Rhymney valley line. Many millions of pounds of public money has been invested over the last few years to lengthen platforms, and improve signalling and infrastructure on these lines, all with the intention of allowing you to run trains of up to six cars at peak times. That has not happened. Some of those platforms have been lengthened for more than two years, so the infrastructure is in place, but my constituents complain to me regularly that they are packed in like sardines at peak times. When we will see six-car trains on the Valleys lines, particularly in the Rhymney valley, and especially at peak times?

To conclude, Chair, when I travel back from London I often entertain myself by buying a copy of "Private Eye". In an article from the edition of 13-27 November, under the heading 'Signal Failures, with Dr B. Ching'—I will not use his colourful language, because this is on the record and I do not want to cause offence—it says that Arriva Trains Wales has 60 of Britain's 'poorest' carriages, shall we say? "Private Eye" uses a different word, and goes on to say that Arriva will not provide any new trains by the time its 15-year franchise ends in 2018. The article then criticises the Association of Train Operating Companies. Is this true? I assume that it is referring to pacer trains, but it links to my supplementary question on rolling stock, and I would be grateful for an answer on that.

Mr Hopwood: As requested, I will answer first. As far as First Great Western is concerned, and particularly looking at our services into Wales, there has been good co-operation on rolling stock provision and network capacity. For us, things are perhaps more straightforward than for other operators—we already operate quite long trains into Wales on the high-speed network, with eight vehicles and the two power cars giving a total of 10. Generally, where capacity is capable of accommodating those trains, it is capable of accommodating all the smaller trains as well. That works in our favour. Away from this part of the world, there are examples where we have had to work on infrastructure upgrades to provide for the longer trains that we need, and we have been able to do that as well.

As far as the future is concerned, the infrastructure is generally in place for us to provide more capacity on local services into Wales. The next key event for us in looking at where infrastructure provision and trains come together in the context of capacity will be the replacement of our high-speed train fleet. It is proposed that the replacement trains, which will be called the super-express trains and which have been ordered by the Department for Transport from Hitachi, will have 26-metre vehicles. Currently, we use 23-metre vehicles. So, they will be longer at their maximum length than our current trains.

There is already a stream of work, which we are co-operating with but that is led by Network Rail and the Department for Transport, to ensure that the infrastructure in south Wales and England is capable of accommodating those trains. That work has started, although the trains will not enter passenger service until 2016.

Mr Bagshaw: I will respond on the points about capacity, but it might be worth first putting this in the context of the franchise that Arriva Trains Wales operates. The Wales and borders franchise was let in 2003 by the Strategic Rail Authority. It was let on a minimal basis. There was no real investment, it made little provision for passenger growth, and there was no provision for new trains—very little investment was envisaged in the franchise. That was the policy at the time. Thankfully, the reality has been very different. There has been investment by the Welsh Assembly Government and Arriva in the franchise. There has been additional rolling stock, longer trains on some routes and investment in stations. We are continuing to work with the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver its national transport plan and the growth in passenger numbers we are seeing in Wales.

You raised the issue of our trains being relatively old. The average age of our fleet is 16 years. Yes, it is an old fleet, which was known when the franchise was let. Although they are old trains, we have spent some money on making them a lot more reliable. We are now one of the most reliable train operators in the UK. We are the fourth most punctual train service in the UK. So, despite the fact that the trains are old, a lot of effort is being made to ensure that the trains are reliable for the passengers.

You raised a specific point about the Rhymney valley line and the six-car platforms. The decision on whether to run longer trains in the Valleys will be made by the Welsh Assembly Government. Funding would be needed to operate longer trains on those services to provide that extra capacity. We are working very closely with the Welsh Assembly Government on delivering all its aspirations in the national transport plan. We are discussing with it the funding and the timing of funding for those developments, but the actual decision as to when longer trains will operate will be one for the Welsh Assembly Government.

Jeff Cuthbert: So, Arriva Trains is just waiting on a decision from the Welsh Assembly Government. Is that what you are telling us? I have heard that the extra rolling stock exists, but is being used elsewhere on the network. Is that the case?

Mr Bagshaw: All the rolling stock we have available to us now is being used. Going forward, we obviously need to talk to the Welsh Assembly Government about how the rolling stock is deployed and what the aspirations are for running more services and more frequent services.

Gareth Jones: Thank you for your answer on that point. Jenny Randerson has the next questions.

Jenny Randerson: My question is specifically to representatives from Arriva Trains, but representatives from First Great Western might wish to comment from their perspective. In your evidence, you say:

'we believe a root and branch review is required to ensure that future development and investment in railway infrastructure is based on sound strategies which address actual need and provide the best value for money.'

You have just indicated the basis on which the current franchise was let. That comes as no surprise to me. However, do you think that it was let on a worse basis than any other franchise across the country? The franchises were let at much the same time, and the Strategic Rail Authority was clearly working to a different agenda at the time. Can you tell us what you mean by that rather coded comment on the need for a root-and-branch review? Is that a comment on the Assembly Government's transport planning, or is it a reference to the origins of the current franchise?

11.30 a.m.

Mr Bagshaw: We are keen that the agenda is moved on. There is an appetite for investment in rail infrastructure and for developing rail, and that is a positive thing. We, like everyone else, are keen to ensure that investment is made in the right places, that it delivers the best value for money, and that it encourages passenger growth. That requires close dialogue between the train companies, Network Rail and the Welsh Assembly Government.

Jenny Randerson: You refer to 'a root and branch review'. Are you suggesting that the Assembly Government's transport strategy, which was produced very recently, is not the result of good thought and planning?

Mr Bagshaw: No, that is not what we are implying at all.

Jenny Randerson: Your comment refers to the rubbish franchise that was let in 2003.

Mr Bagshaw: The franchise in 2003 was let at the minimum cost, which was the agenda at the time. Today, thankfully, the reality is very different. We are now setting out to see how we, in conjunction with Network Rail, can best deliver the aspirations that the Welsh Assembly Government has set out in its national transport plan. That is what we mean by 'a root and branch review', which we will do in order to develop those aspirations.

Jenny Randerson: Your evidence refers to the question of whether the Assembly Government will get additional powers over infrastructure, and you say that that needs to be done in tandem with better planning. Would it help or hinder you if the Assembly Government had additional powers over infrastructure? For the benefit of colleagues who were not here last week, we heard evidence at the last meeting from Transport Scotland, which said that cross-border issues were not an issue in Scotland at all because of the way in which it runs the system.

Mr Bagshaw: We have a number of lines that go across borders, indeed far more than in Scotland, so it is a key issue. On the development of the infrastructure, we know that the Welsh Assembly Government has a close working relationship with Network Rail, as it does with us, and we work very closely together. We do not have a strong view as to how that may change in the future, but the important issue is that all parties work together to deliver the right thing for the travelling public.

Jenny Randerson: Does First Great Western want to comment on any of those issues?

Mr Hopwood: You referred to Transport Scotland. From the perspective of the railways and the train operating companies, Wales's geography is quite different from that of Scotland. We at First Great Western believe, based on the numbers that we have produced, that we carry just under 25 per cent of the passengers travelling into Cardiff in the morning and out of Cardiff during the evening peak period. To compare that with Scotland, Virgin Trains, for example, on the west coast or east coast lines, is an important provider of long-distance services, but it provides a much smaller number of seats for travel-to-work journeys into and out of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Our experience is slightly different, as there was quite a large investment in our franchise in respect of rolling stock and stations. As Members will be aware, we do not have a role in managing stations in Wales; all the stations that we call at are maintained and operated by Arriva Trains Wales. We have been able to have constructive dialogue about the future of our services in a way with which we feel comfortable. The main structural issue with our franchise is the provision of capacity and the specification of local services in Bristol, south Wales and the west of England. However, I am pleased to say that we have had some positive discussions with the Department for Transport, in which the Welsh Assembly Government has been involved and of which it is well aware.

Nia Griffith: I would like to explore your views about using Network Rail's current forecast for future growth as a guide for future investment and whether the currently planned infrastructure improvements will meet demand. To put this in context, we have an increased number of passengers, which is great news, but we have also had steep hikes in ticket prices. Therefore, people feel that you are getting a lot of extra income, but they want to see fully-staffed stations; they want to see places like Kidwelly getting a more regular service with more trains stopping at the station and not just passing through; and they also want to see an improved Sunday service. If you want to go to see a match from Llanelli, or if you are trying to get to Cardiff or London for a big event, it is no good because the first train does not run until 11.30 a.m. Do those forecasts match up to what you believe needs to be done? What additional things might you be able to do?

Mr Bagshaw: I will respond to that. We are working closely with Network Rail. You mentioned some specific examples in west Wales, where currently the infrastructure is limited, with single sections of line between Swansea and Llanelli. There are plans for that section of line to be doubled.

Nia Griffith: That work is starting today, is it not?

Mr Bagshaw: I believe that some of the preparation work is starting today. The project will take a little longer. I cannot recall the exact timescales. The positive aspect is that that will release a key bottleneck on our network that constrains a lot of the timetable. This will give us a lot more flexibility to run the train services at different times or to better cater for passenger needs. That is a positive step forward. We will work with the Welsh Assembly Government to look at service provision in the future.

You mentioned Sunday services. We are planning to revise the service on Sunday in west Wales this December to ensure better connections with the rest of the rail network and a better spread of services to provide better journey opportunities. That will come into play from the December timetable change. In addition to that, we are working closely with Network Rail to try to reduce the amount of disruption that we see because of engineering works so that we can run more services on Sunday mornings so that we reduce the number of occasions where passengers are required to travel on buses. Engineering work is essential and, inevitably, there will need to be some disruption at certain times. We are seeking to hold Network Rail to account, particularly on its commitment to a seven-day railway, so that we can make Sunday a day on which people can make journeys easily by rail.

Mr Hopwood: I would support a lot of what Mike has said. We work closely with Network Rail, and we support its rail utilisation studies, in relation to both the work that goes into them and some of the outputs. As I said earlier, the track capacity provision will allow us to grow the business quite substantially with regard to what is in place in south Wales.

In relation to providing a service from south Wales to London, the key challenge is very much at the east end of the route, as the London and Thames valley area is very much at capacity. In the very long term, if we are to provide the service that many people in south Wales quite rightly aspire to, we will need to split the current train service into two so that there is an express service to south Wales and that places like Reading, Didcot and Swindon have a separate service. That is a long-term aspiration and there is certainly no capacity to provide for that at the moment. That is one of the challenges in the long term for the rail industry to look at.

A seven-day railway is important. It is true to say that Network Rail's engineering activity has not caught up with people's travelling habits on a Sunday. Network Rail now understands that and we will see engineering work being moved away from weekends into weekday nights and there will be a rapid acceleration of some of the technological improvements that will allow one railway line to be renewed while the other is kept open. Currently, they are both closed. You will see the benefit of that in the next few years when the train service will be allowed to continue to run, whereas it might not be able to do that at the moment. As is the case with Mike at Arriva Trains Wales, we are pushing Network Rail quite hard to achieve that as quickly as possible.

11.40 a.m.

Nia Griffith: Is there a commitment to keep staff at the stations that are currently staffed because that is important in terms of people's safety and comfort when travelling?

Mr Bagshaw: The answer is, yes.

David Melding: I would like to probe on the issue of franchises, if that is the correct plural. Obviously, when your companies bid for them, you responded to the terms of the franchises that were advertised and there was competition, and that is what you do. So, in a sense, you must feel slightly frustrated about some of our questions on what we may see as inadequacies in the franchise system. However, we are trying to make recommendations that will improve public services and value for the public pound, so, in general, should the length of the franchise be related to the level of investment? I specifically want to ask Arriva Trains Wales if it was surprised about a 15-year franchise with essentially a 'do nothing' commitment on investment. You rightly pointed out that you had invested, but that that had taken you beyond the strict terms of the franchise. Should not investment fit a bit more into the terms of the franchise? Surely, in any future rounds, should we not be more aware of likely passenger growth and how that would affect the franchise system? Perhaps we could start with Arriva and the fact that it has a 15-year 'do nothing' franchise.

Mr Bagshaw: As I said before, although it was let as a 'do nothing' franchise, there has been investment from both sides. Arriva has invested because over that 15 years, we can get a payback, whereas, with a shorter franchise, we may not have been able to make that investment. Some of the things that we invested in included a new depot at Machynlleth, improved customer information screens, better security, ticket gates and many other initiatives on which we would probably not have received the same level of payback with a shorter franchise. Long franchises provide a greater opportunity to invest, which is positive.

David Melding: The First Great Western franchise is significantly shorter, so has that had an effect on investment decisions? For example, the current engines are being refurbished, but the new engines will not be here until after this franchise period runs out.

Mr Hopwood: That is right. Ours is a seven-year franchise, with the opportunity to earn a three-year extension. We committed at the start of the franchise to a large amount of investment, which was built into the franchise. Some of that investment was specifically asked for, but all bidders were required to produce proposals on some of it. Unique to FirstGroup plc was the fact that we said that we would make additional investment. That has been committed to in the franchise. There is always a slight dilemma about this subject. For example, having a long-term franchise gives you that opportunity to invest more and to recover that investment over a longer time, but clearly the longer the franchise, the more uncertainty there is about things like passenger income and about what the requirements of customers and stakeholders will be at the end of the franchise. All of us can look around the UK at the moment and reflect on how things have changed in quite a short period of time. There are a number of things about our franchise—which most people thought were sensible when the original specification was written in 2005—that we would now have done differently. That is a challenge.

In fairness to the Department for Transport, we have been able to accommodate changes that have happened with some degree of flexibility, so we are talking to the Department for Transport about provision of additional capacity, which was never part of our original franchise. We are also managing the considerable changes to the infrastructure that will happen on our patch, even though they were not part of the original franchise specification. That is our position.

David Melding: I would like to ask both witnesses if they think that the franchise that they secured in 2003 and 2006 respectively—if I have got those dates right—was technically fit for purpose at the time.

Mr Bagshaw: At the time, there was no vision of investment in the franchise and it was let on a low-cost basis. Obviously, Arriva bid for the franchise on that basis. Thankfully—

David Melding: I must say that these are technical questions and you should not infer from what I am saying that I think that you are to blame. We are looking at the technical nature of the franchise that was let to you and why the passenger-growth assumptions in particular, which are now common currency, were not anticipated in any way.

Mr Bagshaw: Obviously, we are now looking at this with the benefit of hindsight. We have seen some spectacular growth, which clearly was not envisaged at the time and we are now responding to that by looking forward and planning how we are going to allocate rolling stock. With a good working relationship with the Welsh Assembly Government, we are able to do that and we are able to plan, even though the original franchise was fairly pessimistic in its outlook for rail travel. Clearly, the increased popularity of rail travel that we are now seeing was not envisaged, but, thankfully, we now have policies in place that seek to address that trend going forward.

Mr Hopwood: As far as First Great Western is concerned, I would concur with a lot of that. One of the challenges has been that of growth, particularly outside London, where commuting fares generally are much lower. We are very often faced with the challenge that the times when we need additional rolling stock are quite limited, so there is not a commercial case for having a vehicle that, very often, will only work one loaded journey in the morning and one in the evening. So, it becomes a question on which the Government has to work with us to address. Certainly on our local services in this area, particularly into Bristol, where there is quite a lot of commuting from south Wales, as well as from other parts of England, there are phenomenally high levels of growth, which is providing an interesting challenge for us.

Hywel Williams: Mae gennyf gwestiwn i First Great Western yn benodol ynglŷn â thrydanu'r prif linell i dde Cymru. Beth ydych yn rhagweld fydd effaith y trydanu hynny? A fydd problemau? A fydd aflonyddu o gwbl ar y gwasanaeth tra bo'r gwaith yn mynd ymlaen, ac, os felly, sut y byddwch yn delio â hynny?

Hywel Williams: I have a question to First Great Western specifically about the electrification of the south Wales main line. What do you foresee will be the effects of that? Will there be problems? Will there be any disruption to the service while the work is undertaken, and, if so, how will you deal with that?

Mr Hopwood: I think that we have to be realistic and say that there will be some disruption, but Network Rail is currently developing its plans for how it will electrify the route. Certainly, if one looks back over the last 20 to 25 years at electrification in the UK, at routes such as the east coast main line and other electrification schemes, a very large amount of that work took place without disrupting train services because masts and so on were installed overnight and existing engineering blockades were used. However, there will be some disruption. The challenge for us is to make sure that Network Rail uses the technology that it has available to it as effectively as possible and keeps disruption to a minimum. We have other work planned with Network Rail on the route and one of the challenges is to make sure that we make best use of the planned engineering possessions. If you take Reading, for example, in an earlier answer I talked about some of the upgrade work at Reading and one of the things that the project team at Reading is doing is building some of the electrification work into its projects so that you will not have two separate disruptive events at Reading. By taking that approach, we will minimise disruption. We have some diversionary routes available. That will lead to some extension of journey times, but, by and large, it will keep customers on trains and customers tell us that if they are going to have some disruption, they would much rather stay on the train, even if it means that they are diverted, than get off and get on a bus. So, we will certainly try to follow that approach.

Hywel Williams: Gofynnais i chi hefyd beth fyddai effaith tebygol trydanu'r llinell. A oes newyddion da?

Hywel Williams: I also asked you what the likely impact of the electrification of the line would be. Is there any good news?

11.50 a.m.

Mr Hopwood: Sorry, I thought that you meant the impact of the works. The overall impact of electrification clearly will be very positive. When you combine the electrification of the infrastructure with the delivery of the new super-express trains, you are going to see some reductions in journey times. It looks likely that those reductions will be in the region of 20 minutes on the fastest trains from Swansea to London. As I said earlier, the trains will themselves have more capacity. They will be able to accelerate more rapidly away from stations and attain 125 mph more effectively. An area for discussion that we have already kicked off with the Welsh Assembly Government is how we can exploit the high-speed capability of the trains on the existing infrastructure to greater effect. Many of you may know that once our high-speed trains get into Wales, we do not use their 125 mph capability, so we will want to look at whether we can change that.

Each individual thing that we do is unlikely to add more than one or two minutes, but if you do several of those things between Paddington and Swansea, you will deliver worthwhile improvements.

<p>Gareth Jones: Yr wyf yn derbyn bod y mater hwn o bwys, ac felly yn caniatáu Hywel Williams a Nia Griffith i ddod yn ôl â chwestiwn atodol byr yr un.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: I accept that this is an important issue, so I am allowing Hywel Williams and Nia Griffith to come back with a short supplementary question each.</p>
<p>Hywel Williams: Efallai mai cwestiwn llygwr yw fy nghwestiwn atodol. Gan fod trydaneiddio yn dod â phob math o fendithion economaidd, a fydd yn digwydd ar hyd y lein ar yr un adeg, neu a wnewch ddechrau ym mhen Llundain neu yn Maidenhead, ynteu a ddechreuwch ym mhen Abertawe? Yr wyf yn siŵr fod gwerth i ddechrau ym mhen Abertawe neu ben Maidenhead os na ddigwyddai ar hyd y lein yr un pryd.</p>	<p>Hywel Williams: My supplementary is perhaps a layman's question. Since electrification brings all sorts of economic gains, will it be implemented at the same time along the length of the line, or will you start at the London end or the Maidenhead end, or will you start at the Swansea end? I am sure that there is some value in starting at the Swansea end or the Maidenhead end if the work does not take place along the whole line at the same time.</p>

<p>Mr Hopwood: That is probably a question that we will have to ask Network Rail to answer. I think that not even Network Rail has decided on the detailed plan for electrification, but it is worth pointing out that our current fleet of trains does not have any capability to operate under the electrified network. In reality, therefore, the infrastructure is only a part of the equation, and we will not be able to use the electrified infrastructure until the new train fleet has arrived. Some of the new trains will be electric trains that are designed only to operate on the electric network, while others will be bi-mode, and they will be capable of operating away from the electrified network. Our through service to Carmarthen and our summer services to Pembroke Dock would use bi-mode trains, which would be capable of using the electrified infrastructure even if the whole route is not electrified.</p>
<p>Nia Griffiths: I think that you have answered my question. As the line is electrified, the use of those bi-mode trains will mean that people will not have to change trains, but will be able to stay on the same train from London right through to west Wales. Is that correct?</p>
<p>Mr Hopwood: Yes, that is correct.</p>
<p>Nia Griffiths: Will you be using those bi-mode trains from the beginning of the electrification process, from when the very first bit is done from London to Reading, for example?</p>
<p>Mr Hopwood: Your questions are very interesting, and, if I am honest, the industry has not yet reached that detailed stage of planning. However, the intention is to have a mixture of solely electric trains and bi-mode trains. If we get to a position where the bi-mode trains have arrived and are available for use, and some, but not all, of the route, is electrified, I would expect us to take advantage of the electrified network wherever possible, because, in performance terms, it is better and more environmentally friendly, so we would be keen to use it.</p>

<p>Nerys Evans: O ran eich blaenoriaethau trydaneiddio leiniau eraill yng Nghymru, clywsom dystiolaeth gan y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ei fod am weld pob lein i mewn i Gymru ac allan ohoni a phob lein y tu fewn i Gymru'n cael ei thrydaneiddio. Beth yw'ch ymateb i hynny?</p>	<p>Nerys Evans: With regard to your priorities for the electrification of other lines in Wales, we heard evidence from the Deputy First Minister that he wants to see every line into and out of Wales, as well as every line within Wales, electrified. What is your response to that?</p>
<p>Trenau Arriva Cymru, dywedwch yn eich tystiolaeth bod buddion trydaneiddio leiniau'r Cymoedd, ond mae Network Rail yn amau bod achos economaidd dros wneud hynny. Pam bod gwahaniaeth barn yn hynny o beth?</p>	<p>Arriva Trains Wales, you say in your evidence that there are benefits to be had from electrifying Valleys lines, but Network Rail doubts that there is an economic case for doing that. Why is there a difference of opinion on that?</p>

<p>Mr Pockett: Credaf mai mater i'r Llywodraeth yw pa leiniau sydd i'w trydaneiddio. Ein diddordeb, a gorfoledd i ni, yw i'r penderfyniad gael ei wneud yn Llundain i drydanu'r lein o Lundain yr holl ffordd i Abertawe, ac yr ydym yn croesawu hynny. Ar gyfer y leiniau eraill, sut bynnag, credaf mai mater i Lywodraeth, boed hynny yma neu yn Llundain.</p>	<p>Mr Pockett: I believe that which lines are electrified is a matter for the Government. Our interest, and a cause of great joy for us, is that the decision was taken in London to electrify the entire line between London and Swansea, and we welcome that. For other lines, however, I believe that it is a matter for Government, whether here or in London.</p>
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Mr Bagshaw: I would echo the point that it is a matter for Government, but Arriva Trains Wales will certainly work closely to look at opportunities for further electrification in Wales, such as diversionary routes on the south Wales mainline, the Valleys line and the Wrexham to Bidston line. This is a decision for Government, but we would support any investment in electrification on our network.

<p>Nerys Evans: Felly, nid ydych yn gweithio ar unrhyw gynllun hirdymor lle mae trydaneiddio yn ffactor fawr yn y rhwydwaith yng Nghymru—yr ydych ond yn gweithio ar sail y cytundeb sydd gennych ar hyn o bryd.</p>	<p>Nerys Evans: So, you are not working on any long-term plan where electrification is a major factor in the network in Wales—you are only working according to the basis of your current contract.</p>
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Mr Bagshaw: That is correct—there is no assumption that there will be further electrification of our network at the moment.

Mr Hopwood: As far as First Great Western is concerned, once the electrification of the main line has been completed, it would allow us to operate the vast majority of our London services with electric trains. We have started explorative discussions with the Department for Transport about the changes we might want to make to our local train network to exploit electrification to enable as many of those routes as possible to operate electric trains. It is worth reflecting on the fact that if you take the Cardiff to Portsmouth service, for example, once the current electrification plans are delivered, although those trains will be diesel trains, a large chunk of the mileage that they will operate on will be under overhead electrification or the third rail system in the Portsmouth and Southampton area. So, one is inevitably led to the conclusion that if we were to work with Network Rail to fill in the small amounts of track that are left we could convert further services to electric operation, with obvious benefits. Those are discussions that we have already started.

Paul Davies: My question is for Arriva Trains Wales, and it is to do with the north-south route. In your written evidence to us, you say that from an operational, customer service point of view, you feel strongly that improvements in line speeds on the Marches line should be pursued as soon as possible. What speeds and journey times from north to south will be possible after the planned line-speed improvements?

Mr Bagshaw: This subject is currently being reviewed by us, the Welsh Assembly Government and Network Rail. It is a key aspiration for the Welsh Assembly Government to reduce travel times between north and south Wales, and we are currently exploring the best ways to do that. The issues are about the type of rolling stock, the line speeds, the signalling capability and bottlenecks such as those between Wrexham and Chester, where there is only a single section of track. Currently, we have a mixture of trains on that route; some of them have a top speed of 90 mph, and some have a top speed of 100 mph. The maximum line speed is 90 mph, and given that many of our trains have 100 mph capability, there is an opportunity to improve the journey time if line speeds are improved. However, that needs to be looked at along with signalling and the timetabling of other services. It needs to be looked at as part of a package, and we are working on that very closely with the Assembly Government and Network Rail, because it is a key aspiration of the Welsh Assembly Government to bring north and south Wales closer together in terms of journey time.

Paul Davies: When do you envisage these improvements taking place.

Mr Bagshaw: The infrastructure work may take some time, because it would require investment; I know that Network Rail is carrying out quite a detailed review of what needs to be done to achieve the aspirations. We are looking at aspirations to improve the rolling stock and the journey times on that corridor as well. So, we are looking at a range of measures—some of them will be in the shorter term and some will be in the longer term.

Paul Davies: So, it could be five years before the improvements take place?

Mr Bagshaw: It is likely to be a staged approach—there might be things that we can do as early as next December if we are able to prune the timetable to bring some type of journey time improvements. However, investment in the infrastructure is likely to take longer than that. So, I think that we will see gradual, year on year, improvements in the service between north and south Wales, but it will be a phased approach rather than everything happening in one go.

Gareth Jones: Diolch yn fawr iawn. Tra ein bod yn feirniadol o'r cwmnïau trên, yr wyf yn eich atgoffa fod ein trên yn rhedeg 10 munud yn hwyr hefyd ar hyn o bryd.

Gareth Jones: Thank you very much. While we are being critical of the train operators, I also remind you that our train is currently running 10 minutes late.

12.00 p.m.

Christine Chapman: I have a specific question about light rail. What role do you see for light-rail schemes in Wales, and how should these be integrated with investment in heavy rail?

Mr Bagshaw: It is not something that Arriva Trains Wales has looked at closely, but light rail could have a role in urban transport. If there is a case where light rail could provide a better solution to existing heavy-rail services, we would be supportive in developing those options and in looking at the best overall solution. However, we have not been involved in any detailed study on light rail at this stage.

Christine Chapman: May I pursue that? In its paper, Arriva Trains Wales talks about workable options being presented when available, so I am not quite clear who would be proactive in this—would it be the Government or you? How would it come together?

Mr Bagshaw: It is more likely to be the Government. Any investment in light rail would be significant, so it is something that would be led by Government, but as a train operator we would happily participate in those discussions and look at the best solution overall to the transport needs in that area.

Christine Chapman: What are the advantages and disadvantages of converting the Valleys lines, for example, and local services to light rail?

Mr Bagshaw: There are some advantages in light rail, particularly in urban areas where better frequency can be achieved at a more affordable cost. Heavy rail plays a more important role in longer journeys, particularly in reducing journey times. So, it needs to be looked at as part of a package, recognising the needs of people making short journeys who want a frequent and convenient service, as opposed to those making slightly longer journeys, where journey time is perhaps more important.

Siân James: Prynghawn da a chroeso. Pa deithwyr fyddai'n elwa fwyaf os byddai llinell o Swindon i Kemble yn cael ei hail-ddyblu?

Siân James: Good afternoon and welcome. Which passengers would benefit the most if the Swindon to Kemble line was re-doubled?

Mr Hopwood: I will answer that question. As to who would benefit the most, it is most likely to be the local customers and the longer-distance, regular customers of that route. However, as we discussed earlier, the route is also important as a strategic diversionary route when the Severn tunnel is not available, or when any of the infrastructure between Bristol and Newport is not available. So, there are much wider benefits than just to the immediate, regular customers of that service. If we had a double track on that route, one of the immediate benefits is that it would allow us to operate a faster service to south Wales because we could operate a local service at the same time that we were diverting the south Wales express services.

Siân James: There has been a lot of evidence about the dependency on the Severn tunnel, which is in a good state of repair, as I am reassured continually by Network Rail. However, we are very dependent on that tunnel remaining open and remaining in useful life. What are your views on the need for a second Severn rail crossing?

Mr Hopwood: As for whether it is justified entirely by the condition of the Severn tunnel, I do not believe that there is a need for a second Severn crossing in the short to medium-term. If you opened the question to wider issues around capacity and journey time, and you were to provide a second Severn rail crossing as part of a substantial increase in capacity through investment, then it would play a part. One of the things that we mentioned briefly in our evidence was a new high-speed line, and although there is no immediate prospect that that will happen, it is an aspiration of many people, which we share. You would almost certainly want to provide a second rail crossing at the time that you were providing that infrastructure.

Siân James: So, you are providing a much more long-term future for rail in that way. In the Welsh Affairs Committee, we looked at the situation up to 2025 and 2030, and we were thinking in the much longer term. In your opinion, how important is the electrification of the Severn tunnel diversionary route?

Mr Hopwood: As you probably know, there is currently no proposal to divert that route. That means that we will have to allocate our rolling stock carefully so that, in the future, when engineering works are carried out, bi-mode trains are allocated to south Wales services. There is a potential issue in that if we have to deal with emergency engineering work or an unforeseen short-term closure, we would either have to terminate the train or provide a diesel locomotive to drag the electric train along the route via Gloucester. From an operational perspective, it would be much more desirable to have the diversionary route electrified as well. That is not just an issue for that route—it is also an issue for the route via Newbury, which is also, occasionally, used as a diversionary route for south Wales. In due course, we would want to explore that.

It is difficult to justify electrifying a railway purely for diversionary capability. One has to look at the day-to-day use of a railway line. If you were to combine the diversionary use with daily use, in due course, you may well find that it is something that could be done during future stages of the electrification process. It is right that you raise that issue, as it is one that will have to be explored in more detail between now and the introduction of the new trains.

Gareth Jones: Yr ydym am wasgu un cwestiwn byr, ond pwysig, i mewn, ac yr wyf yn siŵr y bydd yr atebion yn fyr.

Gareth Jones: We want to squeeze one short, but important, question in, and I am sure that the answers will be brief.

Nerys Evans: Mae'r pwyllgor wedi clywed tystiolaeth bod pryder ynghylch problemau wrth i nifer y bobl sy'n defnyddio'r trenau gynyddu ac oherwydd cynnydd yn y nwyddau a gludir ar y rheilffordd. Sut yr ydych yn cynllunio i atal problemau rhag codi?

Nerys Evans: The committee has heard evidence about a concern with regard to problems as the number of people using trains increases and due to an increase in the amount of freight being transported by rail. How are you planning to prevent those problems from arising?

Mr Bagshaw: That is a key area. Track capacity on many routes is limited, and there are parts of our network that are very congested, which limits the opportunities to run more passenger and freight services. It is something that Network Rail has picked up in its rail utilisation strategies, identifying areas where capacity is critical, and there are plans to invest in the infrastructure at some locations.

We talked earlier about the links between north and south Wales, via Newport and Shrewsbury. That is one route on which the signalling is limited, and with further increases in freight and passenger services, we may find that capacity is insufficient, and we may need to look at improving the signalling and making other improvements to the infrastructure. I mentioned the single section of track between Chester and Wrexham that is also a bottleneck. Network Rail is aware of that. Again, we are looking at where growth across the network will happen, and with Network Rail, we are looking at where investment is needed to provide better infrastructure.

Mr Hopwood: I echo what Mike has said. Trying to run 125 mph passenger trains on the same railway as 60 mph freight trains is not always a great combination, but a lot of work has been done to add capacity—the route from Didcot to Swindon, for example, now has additional loops for freight trains compared to some years ago. The work with Network Rail will continue, and in the very long term, the issue that you raised in your question will be one of the factors that will be driving us towards dedicated, high-speed lines. That is some time away, so we have to use the infrastructure that we have as effectively as possible.

<p>Gareth Jones: Efallai y byddwch yn falch o glywed mai dyna oedd cwestiwn olaf y rhan hon o'r sesiwn graffu. Ar ran y ddau bwyllgor sydd wedi cael cyfle i ofyn cwestiynau treiddgar, ac anodd ar brydiau, diolch yn fawr ichi am eich ymateb. Caiff y wybodaeth yr ydych wedi'i rhannu gyda ni ei bwydo i mewn i'r adroddiadau a'r adolygiadau pellach sy'n digwydd yn Nhŷ'r Cyffredin a'r Cynulliad Cenedlaethol. Yr oeddem wedi estyn gwahoddiad i gwmni arall, ond nid oedd yn gallu bod yma y bore yma. Diolch ichi am eich presenoldeb, a dymunwn yn dda ichi yn y gwaith hollbwysig yr ydych yn ei wneud o ddydd i ddydd. Diolch yn fawr iawn.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: You may be glad to know that that was the last question in this part of the scrutiny session. On behalf of both committees, which have had the opportunity to ask searching, and sometimes difficult, questions, thank you very much for your response. The information that you have shared with us will be fed in to the reports and further reviews of the House of Commons and the National Assembly. We had invited one other company, but it was not able to attend this morning. Thank you for your attendance, and we wish you well in your very important work that you undertake from day to day. Thank you very much.</p>
<p>12.10 p.m.</p>	
<p>Symudwn ymlaen i ail ran eitem 2, sef y sesiwn graffu ar seilwaith rheilffyrdd Cymru ar gyfer y dyfodol. Yr ydym yn estyn croeso cynnes i gynrychiolwyr o'r consortia trafndiaeth rhanbarthol sydd wedi ymuno â ni. Yr ydych yn gwybod y cefndir i hyn oll. Mae hwn yn gyfarfod arbennig ar y cyd rhwng Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig Tŷ'r Cyffredin a Chynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru.</p>	<p>We will move on to the second part of item 2, the evidence session on the future railway infrastructure in Wales. We extend a warm welcome to representatives from the regional transport consortia who have joined us. You know the background to this. This is a special joint meeting between the Welsh Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the National Assembly for Wales.</p>
<p>Cyn imi gyfeirio at y cynrychiolwyr sydd yma, hoffwn ddiolch ichi am eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig fanwl iawn. Yr ydym wedi cael cyfle i'w darllen. Ni fydd cyflwyniad; byddwn yn troi'n syth at y cwestiynau. Ymddiheuraf ein bod yn rhedeg ychydig yn hwyr. Ar ran y ddau bwyllgor, estynnaf groeso cynnes i gynrychiolwyr Taith, y Cynghorydd Ron Davies, cadeirydd Taith, a Michael Whittaker, swyddog gweithredol Taith. O gonsortiw trafndiaeth canolbarth Cymru, sef TraCC, mae'r Cynghorydd Trevor Roberts, y cadeirydd, a Christopher Wilson, cydlynnydd TraCC. Croeso cynnes ichi. O Gonsortiw Cludiant Integredig De-orllewin Cymru, SWWITCH, estynnwn groeso i Richard Workman, sy'n brif swyddog. O Gynghair Trafndiaeth De-ddwyrain Cymru, SEWTA, mae'r Cynghorydd Jeff James o Gyngor Bro Morgannwg sy'n gadeirydd, ac Anthony O'Sullivan o Gyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili, cadeirydd cyfarwyddiaeth SEWTA. Fe'ch croesawaf ar ran y ddau bwyllgor.</p>	<p>Before I refer to the representatives who have joined us, I would like to thank you for your detailed written evidence, which we have had the opportunity to read. There will be no introduction; we will move directly to the questions. I apologise that we are running a little late. On behalf of both committees, I extend a warm welcome to representatives from Taith, Councillor Ron Davies, the chair of Taith, and Michael Whittaker, its executive officer. From the mid Wales transport consortium, TraCC, we are joined by Councillor Trevor Roberts, the chair, and Christopher Wilson, the co-ordinator for TraCC. A warm welcome to you. From the South-West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium, SWWITCH, we welcome Richard Workman, its lead chief officer. From the South-East Wales Transport Alliance, we are joined by its chair, Councillor Jeff James from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, and Anthony O'Sullivan from Caerphilly County Borough Council, the chair of the SEWTA directorate. I welcome you on behalf of both committees.</p>
<p>Diolch am y dystiolaeth yr ydych wedi'i chyflwyno inni. Trof yn awr at Jenny Randerson, sydd â'r cwestiwn cyntaf.</p>	<p>Thank you for the evidence that you have submitted to us. I now turn to Jenny Randerson, who has the first question.</p>

<p>Jenny Randerson: Good morning. In your written evidence, you have all expressed support in principle for the idea of the Assembly gaining additional powers over the railways. Could you explain what would be the main advantages from a regional transport planning point of view of the Assembly having direct responsibilities for specifying the outputs required of Network Rail and having the additional funding required to do that?</p>
<p>Gareth Jones: You do not need to touch the microphones.</p>
<p>Mr Wilson: From TraCC's point of view—although everyone will probably give the same answer—it is the logistics of it all. The Assembly Government has additional powers and has a big role to play on rail, as well as in other areas, and just having that ability to talk to the integrated transport unit, in this case, would be a big help to us. It would make handling the various relationships with the various partners a lot easier. TraCC has a regional rail partnership that is attended by Assembly Government officials, Network Rail and Arriva, for example. We try to deal with the issues in that forum. It brings people together, and so that would be the real benefit.</p>

Mr Whittaker: I just want to come back on the point about the transport plans. We have a public transport group that meets regularly with Arriva Trains Wales and Virgin West Coast. There would be advantages in the strategic planning of the regional transport plans, the national transport plan and the commitments in 'One Wales' so as to co-ordinate investment. It is one thing for the committee to look into infrastructure in Wales, but people still have to get to and from the train station, and that is within the purview of the consortia and their constituent local authorities in delivering the regional transport plan. Unlike our colleagues over the border in England, where there are four transport consortia, Wales has the opportunity to achieve that close integration. The committee will be able to make recommendations on that.

Jenny Randerson: That is interesting. We heard evidence from Transport Scotland to the effect that cross-border issues were not of concern and the rail networks were perfectly integrated. However, the Assembly Government chose not to seek additional powers under the Railways Act 2005 because it felt that cross-border issues were a factor. There are more trains running between Wales and England than there are between Scotland and England, but are there any legitimate cross-border issues, and is it possible to plan effectively across borders?

Mr Davies: May I come in here? In north Wales, we already have the Mersey-Dee alliance, which covers north-east Wales, and we discuss our work with them. In fact, it is one of our aims to create a new link to the airports at Liverpool and Manchester, which also serve north Wales, and we work across the border to achieve that.

Mr Whittaker: Our chair has just written to the chair of the Office of Rail Regulation in connection with the proposals that you heard about in evidence from Arriva Trains Wales—that is, their application to run additional services through to Manchester airport from Manchester Piccadilly from the December 2009 timetable. Unfortunately, I understand that there is some resistance to that. Given the equipment that the Assembly Government provides through the franchise, and the considerable revenue payment, it would make sense for the service to run to the airport and back—and not just a couple of times in the morning and again late at night, but right around the clock. That would make sense at a Wales and a UK level as an effective use of assets, as well as providing an improved service from the airport to north Wales.

Mr G. Roberts: Over the years since the rail Bill was introduced, we have found that border locations such as Shrewsbury are fundamental to the rail network because so many trains meet there. Unless there is Welsh input to investment decisions, there is some evidence to suggest that Network Rail has a tendency to view the Welsh network as peripheral to its core business. That is very much contrary to what we find on the ground from consultation through the consortia. A Welsh network should develop trains that can connect mid Wales especially to the rest of the UK. Unless we or the Assembly Government has a greater say in investment, and guide Network Rail on what is needed at locations such as Shrewsbury, Newport and so forth, where we can connect into the main network, there are cross-border issues that are fundamental to how we are looking at rail at present.

12.20 p.m.

Gareth Jones: Rhaid inni symud ymlaen. Daw'r cwestiwn nesaf gan Siân James.

Gareth Jones: We must move on. The next question is from Siân James.

Siân James: Croeso cynnes i gyfeillion hen a newydd.

Siân James: A warm welcome to friends old and new.

As key stakeholders—and I know this from first-hand experience—you have a key role in driving forward rail development in your regions. What role do you think the regional transport consortia and regional transport plans play in the future planning and delivery of railway infrastructure schemes in Wales?

Mr Workman: The consortia play a vital role in identifying which improvements are necessary from the ground level up, in the context of a whole-network approach. It is important not only that there is a business case but also that the case is developed with the public generally. The SWWITCH area, for instance, covers a large geographical area in which 650,000 people live. We have to assist in how we deliver rail services across the region to residents and businesses through identifying local constraints on how the infrastructure could be improved. That clearly needs to be in the context of what is happening across Wales and across the UK, taking a whole-network approach. Our businesses tell us that. The local consortia are ideally placed to identify those local issues within the context of what is happening in Wales overall.

Mr James: To support that, I think that the consortia are unique in having a three-way partnership, including the Welsh Assembly Government and councils. It is a great strength to have councils working together and with the Welsh Assembly Government, and there have been great examples of that. I cannot take credit for it as I have been a member of SEWTA for only a year, but I have seen the programmes that have been delivered in my area and in others, and I have also seen the ambition that the consortia have for improvements and investment. I would say that the national and regional transport plans reflect that ambition. It is an exciting opportunity to have that three-way working happen.

Siân James: In Taith's evidence, you talk about the formalisation of that. Do you see that perhaps the Welsh Assembly Government should formalise its relationship with you as regional transport consortia?

Mr James: It is difficult to say whether it should be formalised because it works very well at the moment to some extent because of the degree of flexibility in it. It depends on what formalising would mean in reality, rather than just the concept.

Siân James: I will give you a quick example. When organisations such as FirstGroup plc have a formal consultation, are we certain that information comes to you and that you are formally consulted every time? I am not necessarily convinced that you are.

Mr James: I totally agree with you.

Siân James: Good.

Mr O'Sullivan: We would certainly welcome a degree of formalisation—perhaps councillor James is being a bit too modest—and I think that that is also the case with our members. The key with the development of SEWTA is the increasing role that members have taken. Members wish to drive the agenda and they would certainly welcome an interface with you on a biannual basis, or whatever is appropriate, so that you could sensibly discuss the issues that affect you all. That is a forum that is currently missing.

On the role of the consortia in delivering the infrastructure that you asked about earlier, it is a great feather in the Assembly Government's cap and in SEWTA's cap that the Ebbw valley railway has been delivered. It is the first new railway in the UK in 40 years. Recently, it carried its millionth passenger. So, on the basis of 'If we build it, they will come', that will happen. The consortium had a key role to play in that. The Ebbw valley railway runs through several different local authority areas, and there is integration with park-and-ride facilities, as a key part of the strategy to get people onto rail. SEWTA has been able to deliver park-and-ride sites around all the stations, it has an interface with local communities, it has popular local support, and that has driven the whole thing. It has been very pleasing to see it. It was not without its teething problems, but if you are treading new ground after 40 years, you will experience that, but an awful lot was learned in the process that can be sensibly built upon.

Mr T. Roberts: Thanks very much for the opportunity to come here. On the formalisation, I understand that the Assembly Government is carrying out a review at the moment. We have an officer who has been having discussions with the consortia.

Mr Whittaker: I hope that that will be taken into account, because the consortia have made reference to the working relationship with the train operating companies, the Welsh Assembly Government and Network Rail. The consultation on the national transport plan has just closed, and it and the regional transport plan are now before the Government, having been submitted in September. Together with the committee's work, they provide an opportunity, as councillor Jeffrey James said, for a tripartite arrangement from planning through to delivery. Examples of the delivery of rail projects have been quoted and, in the case of north Wales, there was the introduction of real-time information screens for customers. It is a testament to the strength of the constituent authorities, but we need the methods that Andrew Davies referred to recently at the North Wales Economic Forum to do with smart collaboration. Wales is not a big country, but we can play to the strengths of our key individuals. You have a lot of them around this end of the table this morning to do that. It is a chance that should not be missed because it does not come around too often.

Gareth Jones: Just to be clear, Trevor, there is an ongoing consultation, is there?

Mr T. Roberts: Yes, there is a review going on at the moment. The officer from the Assembly Government is coming to us on 4 December. The Government is in discussion with our officer at the moment.

Gareth Jones: Diolch am hynny. Trof yn awr at fy nghyd-Gadeirydd, Hywel Francis.	Gareth Jones: Thank you for that. I now turn to my co-Chair, Hywel Francis.
Hywel Francis: Prynawn da.	Hywel Francis: Good afternoon.

<p>My question is about forecasting. We all know how difficult it is to forecast future growth and to make such forecasts robust. What are your views on Network Rail's forecasts for growth, as a guide to future investment?</p>
<p>Mr G. Roberts: What we have seen so far from the forecasts of Network Rail, particularly for rural lines, is that it takes a low-growth view. However, when opportunities are given to people to travel, we find that the forecasts are exceeded by quite a lot. That has been demonstrated by the Ebbw valley line, where the original forecasts were exceeded. The Network Rail forecasting system tends to play down the extent to which rail and other factors can change the country rapidly; it is not taken into consideration. It is a very slow, ponderous system, and many investment decisions are made on the basis of these forecasts. If they had been more accurate, infrastructure and service provision would have been delivered far earlier. The case for better provision in Wales would have been made.</p>
<p>Gareth Jones: Thank you for those general thoughts.</p>
<p>Mr James: I would say that it is a classic case of the point made earlier about the methodology used to arrive at these predictions not satisfying the ambitions of the consortia. There is an opportunity to explore how Network Rail arrived at that position. Was it being cautious in its business case, looking at the risk? The consortia are looking to be ambitious for Wales and for transport. So, there is an issue to do with better understanding and communication between the two sides.</p>
<p>Hywel Francis: Do you have the opportunity to challenge these predictions and the methodology?</p>
<p>Mr James: I would not say that we have an opportunity to challenge them. We have meetings to which Network Rail is invited where we ask questions, but the methodology is never really discussed.</p>
<p>12.30 p.m.</p>
<p>Mr Whittaker: I would like to add to that when the route utilisation programme and the rail planning assessment came forward, the consortia was not on the core reference group, although we were part of the wider stakeholder group. That would support the points that my colleagues, the chairs of the other consortia, have made. Again, that is something that would reflect the data and the experience of local authorities' economic development departments and data from the Assembly Government, that we are all members of our respective spatial plan areas in Wales.</p>
<p>Mr Workman: There is also the point that the role of the regional consortia is to promote sustainable travel within and throughout Wales. In consortia such as SWWITCH, at the moment, only 1 per cent of total journeys are made by rail, which is considerably below the national average. As I said, there are large populations, and the consortia must play a role in promoting opportunities. Obviously, that must be on the basis of a proper business case, but there are opportunities out there that the consortia can help to drive forward. There are examples in our area, such as the Fishguard line, where a lot of work has been done to demonstrate that there is an economic case. So, occasionally, those statistics need not necessarily to be challenged, but to be bolstered by other, aspirational views, while recognising that each case has to have a fully thought out business case.</p>
<p>Gareth Jones: Those are well-made points.</p>
<p>Dr Hywel Francis: It almost sounds as though you are implying that we ought to have municipal or public ownership of our transport system. ["Laughter."] That is a rhetorical question.</p>
<p>Mr Workman: As an officer, I would not say that. ["Laughter."]</p>

Gareth Jones: It was a rhetorical question, apparently, so we can move on quickly.

Nia Griffith: To turn to the issue of priorities, you have listed in the documents that you have given us what you see as the main priorities for development. Are there any particular ones that you want to emphasise or any that you feel have not been given sufficient attention? In other words, is your voice being heard regarding the list that we have? The issue of frequency is very important in terms of uptake and I note that, particularly in the SWWITCH document, if there are to be any additional trains that only stop at main stations, they should be in addition to the ones that stop at the smaller stations, because if you are to increase the 1 per cent, it is the frequency of trains that stop at the smaller stations that will matter. So, in your comments on those priorities, you do not need to go through the whole list again, but can you say in which areas you need to push extra hard and whether you are getting the response that you want?

Mr G. Roberts: One of the issues coming through loud and clear when we try to look at problems around stations, is the bureaucracy that you have to deal with in Network Rail and the way that, over a number of years, strips of land had been sold off. When we move forward to bring in park-and-ride schemes and interchanges, it is difficult to get a speedy response or a solution, even without financial finality. It is a question of knocking heads, at times, and of who you should speak to to get a decision. In rural areas, it is about bringing together rural stations and communities to feed into the network. The network is a wonderful asset, but it is difficult to feed into it at certain locations. One of the issues that we have raised with the electrification that will hopefully come to Swansea is that, from mid and west Wales, you can feed into that investment, because most people—we have to be pragmatic—will have to travel either by car or bus to a railhead somewhere, but unless you have facilities so that you can easily interchange at that railhead, it will be difficult. The bureaucracy that is still enshrined in Network Rail is getting better, but it needs to be broken down, as a priority, to move things forward.

Gareth Jones: Does anyone share that view or want to add anything?

Mr O'Sullivan: Of all the agencies that we deal with, Network Rail is probably the most difficult. Why that should be is not obvious or apparent, because there is very much a fraternity—I think that you can see that the relationship between the transport consortia is very good—and people get on well. It seems that, regrettably, Network Rail is not quite able to grasp that ethos. We stretch out the hand of welcome, and we will continue to do so.

The way in which the transport grant is currently administered in Wales is frustrating, in that you get an allocation for a year. If you are looking to acquire a piece of land from Network Rail, or conclude a financial deal with it, but you are unable to do it within the financial year, you then lose the money and you must bid again. There is no continuity. There have been several fairly high-profile examples of that. There have been great difficulties in delivering high-profile things that put transport and the Assembly on a proper footing, and that put the consortia in a proper light.

Another area where we feel that we could be listened to a little better is in improving the rolling stock, and that must be the case. There will be capacity issues, and we are going to need to press for that. I mentioned the Ebbw valley line, which was hopelessly oversubscribed when Wales played an international rugby match on a Friday evening 10 days ago. We need more rolling stock and more capacity. We have demonstrated where the need lies, and we will keep asking very politely. Those are the issues that will be recurrent.

Mr T. Roberts: There have been several incidents in the Network Rail saga. We have a pure partnership within the TraCC consortium, which has been working well. Network Rail is hardly turning up at all, and, with all due respect, we do not have any one from the hierarchy present. A classic example is Dyfi Junction, where there is a national coastal footpath and where everything is held up at the moment. There are moneys available for the next few years to create a pathway, but Network Rail will not give any information about any infrastructure work to be carried out there, which would help—a new footbridge or a cycle bridge. We just cannot get Network Rail representatives to sit around the table at the moment. Mr Williams sat in a meeting with me a week last Friday, and it was a battle just to get Network Rail to the table. The Assembly has just opened its office in Aberystwyth; road vehicle parking is hopeless there and there is scope for a park and ride facility in the Machynlleth area. You just cannot get Network Rail to the table.

On Mrs Randerson's first question on additional powers, that is perhaps something on which the Assembly should be looking to bring Network Rail on board. It is still operating out of Swindon, and, being very parochial, I believe that it should be operating within Wales.

Gareth Jones: Diolch am eich sylwadau. Yr oeddem yn disgwyl clywed rhywbeth ar y llinellau hynny. Nia, a oes gennych gwestiwn?

Gareth Jones: Thank you for those comments. We were expecting to hear something along those lines. Nia, do you have a question?

Nia Griffith: Yes, on the Sunday services. It seems that, very often, trains are very overcrowded because there are so few of them, and that people are humping suitcases on and off coaches and so forth. Would better dialogue with Network Rail help you to improve existing services? What prioritisation would you give to increasing services, because it is certainly frustrating not being able to leave Llanelli before 11.30 a.m. on a Sunday if you want to get anywhere?

Mr G. Roberts: On service provision, in the mid Wales context, we very much want the hourly service, and that is one of our top priorities. Unfortunately, I experienced difficulties last Friday coming back from Leeds, when, having missed the connection in Manchester, I had to sit for an hour and 50 minutes at Shrewsbury station waiting for the two-hourly service, and I did not get home until 9.30 p.m.. They do not appreciate in Manchester how difficult it is to get to the west coast of Wales if you miss your train connection. So, we definitely want a minimum of an hourly service in mid Wales. In this day and age, I do not think that that is too much to ask if you are trying to promote a modern railway system.

Mr Whittaker: I will just build on that from a north Wales perspective and on our short-term service strategy, which was outlined in our paper. There has been considerable growth in Sunday services, for tourism and leisure, in terms of access, for example, to Chester, and to Liverpool and Manchester airports, and inbound to Bangor and Llandudno in the summer. It is critical that we have earlier services starting on a Sunday, and that we realise our aspirations for the key Wrexham to Bidston line, which was mentioned by Arriva Trains Wales in its evidence to you earlier this morning, the extension to Manchester airport, as I mentioned, and to accelerate services to Manchester, which are presently quite slow.

12.40 p.m.

We would also be concerned that north Wales might be cut off from discussions on the prospects for electrification, which I mentioned in my paper, and the discussions that I hope are going on between the Deputy First Minister and Lord Adonis in connection with the demands for High Speed 2 to ensure that north Wales—and, for that matter, mid Wales—are not disadvantaged regarding connections. We would not want to undo the good work over a number of years of Taith's predecessor, the north Wales economic forum, in supporting the key Holyhead to London service.

Mr Workman: I just have one further point, Chair, based on the weekend service and improving services in general. We in SWWITCH would argue that a number of infrastructure constraints have led to relatively poor services west of Swansea. Hopefully, we are now heading towards the major infrastructure constraint being removed by 2012, with the doubling of the section over the Loughor. That will enable greatly improved services to the west, because it will remove that capacity issue, and we therefore hope to see service improvements. However, bearing in mind the previous discussion about other agencies, all parties should ensure that there is a clear link between infrastructure investment and service improvements—the two should come together, so that we are joining up our thinking on this.

Paul Davies: I want to explore additional capacity further with you, and ask a brief question about train services west of Carmarthen. I specifically want to ask about improvements to services to Fishguard, which Richard has already touched upon. I recently had the privilege of accepting a petition from two 15-year-olds, calling on the Welsh Assembly Government to fund an additional five trains per day to Fishguard, which SWWITCH has already identified as necessary. The petition has attracted over 1,300 signatures, and has been passed on to the Assembly's Petitions Committee for consideration. It is a credit to those young people that they have organised such a petition. My question is therefore for Richard. Why do you support the case for additional services to Fishguard, and what benefits would they bring?

Mr Workman: By way of introduction, the point about youngsters was important, and the more that we can get youngsters used to using rail services, it is a habit that they will continue with rather than looking at less sustainable modes of travel. There is a tremendous benefit there.

As part of the work that we have done, we have developed a robust business case to demonstrate that improved services to Fishguard would increase both commuting opportunities and the wider use of rail. Along with the infrastructure improvements that I mentioned—the doubling of the Loughor section—it would also improve connectivity across the network, so that is an example of service improvements coming together with infrastructure improvements. Fishguard would benefit in its own right, but the major benefits would be driven out when it can connect better to the rest of the network.

Paul Davies: Could you confirm whether these additional services could be provided prior to the doubling of the track west of Swansea? Would the cost be fairly modest?

Mr Workman: Unfortunately, I cannot share the cost at this public meeting, because the work was done for a confidential report. However, if Members are interested, I can share that information with you on a confidential basis via the secretariat. It is certainly cost-beneficial to undertake the services by themselves, but as I have said, the benefits are far greater alongside the other infrastructure works.

Gareth Jones: That was SWWITCH-specific. Now we turn to Christine Chapman.

Christine Chapman: I would like to ask about the franchise arrangements. I know that we could all recount good and bad experiences under the franchised network, but how fit for purpose are the current franchise arrangements for rail services in Wales, particularly in light of the continuing growth in demand, which we have just discussed?

Mr G. Roberts: As you suggested in the question, experience suggests that the no-growth franchise is certainly not fit for purpose given the way that we see the network developing in Wales. That is not just for the provision of rolling stock and services for passengers—although in the end, the passenger is paramount—but whenever you ask a train operating company for any form of improvement, its response is guarded and limited, and usually amounts to asking for funding from the Assembly Government in one form or another. It has just been proven that growth is happening but without a mechanism for addressing it. Even the ability to make improvements to stations is limited unless an outside pot of funding is available. In essence, the franchise is stifling the commercialised entrepreneurship of the companies. As for whether Arriva is hiding behind that in some instances, that might be another way of looking at it. As far as we are concerned, this franchise is not best suited to Wales getting an improved service.

Mr O'Sullivan: We concur with that view. Looking back to some of the earlier questions, it was unfortunate that Wales did not go for additional powers, because we really wanted to influence some cross-border issues. For example, with the 15:15 train from Paddington, we were not able to punch our weight or make a point with the franchise holder on that, which was First Great Western in that case. We have also seen the spectacular collapse of another franchise recently on the east coast main line, which has strengthened the hand of the franchise holders here. They can now say that we must be cautious because of what has happened elsewhere. Clearly, they are not philanthropists and are doing quite well out of it. Regrettably, the odds seem to be stacked in their favour. Although we enjoy good personal relationships and try to press matters as far as we can, you can take goodwill only so far. We do not have the mechanisms to enable us to say that we want to make changes and ask where there is scope for more negotiation. It does not exist. They are sitting pretty at the moment, regrettably.

Gareth Jones: On that specific point, my understanding from last week's session is that we can renegotiate, but there must be money on the table. So, there is scope, but we will look into that specific point. It is vital, because it is a part of the problem that we have with upgrading the franchise and the service. I agree with the comments that you have made, but there is another aspect that we need to get to grips with, to find out more about how this can be improved upon.

Mr O'Sullivan: Thanks, Chair.

Mr James: I can see that everyone is reflecting the frustration that people feel that the ambition that we all have for improved services and better rolling stock does not seem to be shared by the franchise holder. Then again, it rests with you to examine what constraints are on Arriva in operating the franchise. From our point of view, as Anthony rightly said, I am sure that we all engage with it. We invite its representatives to our meetings; in fact, we invite them to make presentations. That engagement happens, but what is frustrating is that you have to ask what is holding them back from doing what they want to do. If they keep saying that it is due to a lack of money, that would be disingenuous to some extent, because we need to know how the franchise operates, how it can be made to operate better, and how we can get more value for your money from it. If we can help in any way with that, perhaps with a round-table partnership to improve how the franchise operates, we would be willing to offer that help.

Gareth Jones: We appreciate those comments. It is an aspect that we need to look at, because it is an important issue. I was surprised to learn that there is this possibility or option to improve the services and the franchise and so on, and we will need to look into that carefully.

Alun Michael: Those of you who are interested in history might like to reflect that it was the general election of 1979 that led to British Rail's headquarters staying in Swindon instead of moving to Brunel House in Cardiff. That would have made all our lives much easier.

12.50 p.m.

The comments about the need to challenge methodology and look for change and improvement are very interesting. I wanted to ask about one particular aspect of improvement. In the 1980s, the old Mid and South Glamorgan councils worked with British Rail and put a lot of money and effort into opening up new stations that improved matters in the Valleys and the Vale of Glamorgan, which was good for the whole of the network. Are you doing any serious work on opening up additional stations and services? If I were to give one example, it would be the St Mellons area of Cardiff, because a station there would open up real opportunities for the greater Rumney area. There is a total lack of stations there, simply because of how Cardiff grew. There is an enormous amount of congestion on the eastern side of Cardiff that a service of that sort would help to obviate. That aspiration has been around since 1973 when I first stood as a councillor, so there has been plenty of time to think about it. Are you examining examples like that—and I am sure that there are others in other parts of Wales—to put those improvements to services and opportunities on the map at least, even if it takes some time to get there?

Mr Davies: I refer you to the regional transport plan prepared by Taith, in which there is a list of six stations that we are looking into. They are scattered across north Wales, on the coastline and also on the line from Chester to Cardiff at Rosset and Johnstown. The accessibility of some of the stations is also worrying us, as you cannot park a car there or get a bus to the station. It is that modal aspect that we need to look at carefully to ensure that you can make the journey to the station, either by car or bus, to catch your train to go a further distance.

Gareth Jones: A few people want to come in at this point. I invite Michael Whittaker to speak first, then Trevor Roberts and then councillor Jeff James.

Mr Whittaker: As part of that, integration is critical to get to and from any station, either by bus, walking or cycling, as has been referred to in the national transport plan. We have a specific package for non-car station access to do that, but we still come up against some of the issues with Network Rail. There is also the TrawsCambria service, which I do not think has had a great deal of airing in this committee. It has been referred to in the national transport plan to buy rail-equivalent services in key inland locations that are not currently on the rail network, although perhaps they were, historically. It is critical that its services are brought into that, because, at the end of the day, the end user does not really mind how they get to their destination, whether via Arriva or Virgin, a trunk road or a county road, or a tendered bus service. The integration issues are critical to meet that, particularly on the public transport side to provide a totally seamless journey as well as information. There is no point in just putting in investment, as we need capital. Are we able to take advantage of the present powers and guidance being brought forward to provide end-to-end journeys, to increase the 1 per cent that Richard referred to in the SWWITCH figure, particularly given the Assembly Government's commitment to carbon reduction?

Mr T. Roberts: TraCC has commissioned a feasibility study, which will report at the end of February. It is looking at the reopening of Carno, Dyfi junction, the park-and-ride facility, and Bow Street. The money has been spent, and we are waiting for the final report on that, which will be out at the end of February. That is the way to go and it will happen. We must look at that and at the difficulties around the Aberystwyth area, as I mentioned. So, there is a need for it. We have been lucky, because our officers managed to find money from somewhere for that feasibility study—sorry, it has just been pointed out to me that it was the Assembly Government's money. ["Laughter."] However, at least we are half-way down that road now.

Mr James: SEWTA is looking for new stations at Brackla, Llanwern, Coedkernew and St Mellons.

Mr Workman: We are looking to reopen two stations: Goodwick, which is part of the Fishguard line, and Gowerton, which is dependent on the Loughor doubling. In both those instances, because they form part of a wider package, we have avoided increasing journey times, because, occasionally, the problem with reopening stations is that you increase the journey time. May I also say that we should not forget the national station improvement programme? A lot of our stations are in need of a lot of investment—that is, the existing ones.

Mr G. Roberts: One issue in this context is that, quite often when you come to propose a station opening, it is defined in the business case and, when you start dealing with Network Rail, it quite often views the business case in the light of how it looks at stations in south-east England. Wales has to get away from that initial rejection because a proposal does not fit with the model that it has had for x number of years. In the Welsh context, we have to look at new business cases and at what those stations are for.

Alun Michael: So, it is back to the methodology again.

Mr G. Roberts: Yes.

Gareth Jones: Yr ydym yn hapus gyda'r ateb hwnnw. Mae ychydig o newid yn awr o ran ein rhaglen o gwestiynau. Trown at Nerys Evans am y cwestiwn nesaf.

Gareth Jones: We are satisfied with that answer. There has been a bit of a change to our list of questions. We now turn to Nerys Evans for the next question.

Nerys Evans: Hoffwn ofyn am gludo nwyddau. Beth sydd angen ei wneud i ddatblygu cyfleusterau cludo nwyddau yng Nghymru i atal unrhyw wrthdaro posibl yn y dyfodol rhwng cludo pobl a chludo nwyddau?

Nerys Evans: I want to ask about freight. What needs to be done to develop freight transport facilities in Wales to prevent any possible conflict in future between the transportation of people and of freight?

Mr Davies: We have a perfect example of this in north Wales. We have the A55 road that runs right along the coast, alongside a railway that is underused. If you have had the misfortune of travelling on the A55, you will have seen all the heavy lorries that travel from Holyhead right across north Wales through to England. In fact, next week, some of us are going to Brussels on behalf of Taith to lobby Europe for some help—mainly in the form of money—to provide for the electrification of that railway line, as that would provide a better infrastructure, enabling containers to go on the railway rather than along the A55.

Mr Workman: Echoing the comments just made, in south Wales, we have the M4, which runs virtually parallel to a heavy rail link, serving the ports at Milford Haven and Pembroke Dock particularly, which account for a huge amount of the freight that comes into the country. We need to ensure that we futureproof the current infrastructure and infrastructure improvements to make sure that we do not reduce the capability of the network to take future freight enhancements. The improvements that I have already talked about would help to do that.

Mr James: To support what the others have said, SEWTA is focusing on freight. I hold the view that we need to be engaging the people who generate the freight. We need to start looking not only at the people who run the heavy-goods-vehicle fleets, but also at those who put the goods in them. There is a job of work for the consortia in engaging with that process. It is very difficult to encourage the private sector to use rail unless it suits its purposes, on business and costs. If we want that to happen, to see that shift, it is incumbent on us to engage with the private sector in the freight business.

Gareth Jones: I totally agree. From the evidence that we have received, it is not quite as simple as there being a straightforward transfer onto rail—once the rail is there, that is. It is far more complicated than that.

Mr Whittaker: Some elements of the Taith rail strategy would apply to the comments that Richard made. As you will be aware, the amount of rail freight on the north Wales coast is currently declining, unfortunately, with the tragic loss of Anglesey Aluminium traffic and the variable amount that is moved out of Penmaenmawr quarry. The Taith management office is at Flint station and I know when the freight trains go past because the whole building shakes.

As part of that, a report has found indicative signs of good commercial demand for the reintroduction of a land-bridge service from northern Europe to Holyhead. If you have driven along the A55, you will know that a great number of vehicles belonging to the same manufacturers and haulage firms travel along that road carrying freight that could be moved on the special wagons. That has been mentioned a number of times. The longer-term aspiration of electrification would give W10 clearance, as Robin Smith from the Rail Freight Group mentioned to you in evidence during an earlier session. The same is true of the consolidation park at Deeside.

p.m.

To pick up the point that Jeff James of SEWTA made, we also identified that a rail freight awareness campaign would have an extremely high benefit-cost ratio. The consortia, of which we are members, were collectively involved with the production of the Wales freight strategy and sit on the Wales freight group. There is an opportunity for us to use that forum to take that forward.

Gareth Jones: I am sorry; we have no further time on that particular question. I now turn to David Melding.

David Melding: How important is it that Wales gets on the high-speed rail network?

Mr G. Roberts: In Wales, unless High Speed Two has a connectable interchange around Birmingham so that you can connect to north and mid Wales, it will not be of much use to us. By the same token, if any high-speed line comes to south Wales, it must have adequate connectivity so that existing road or rail services allow you to interchange very quickly. We support the initiatives but it must have adequate connectivity at sensible locations.

Mr Whittaker: I echo that. We are very concerned that north and mid Wales do not become disconnected from the network by forced changes. As Stuart Cole indicated, in France the TGV can run on the classic lines, which is another case for electrification of the main lines and the station. As I understand from the High Speed Two report published earlier, Warrington station would not be adjacent to the line from Chester to Manchester, for example, so at a stroke, it would be disconnected, whereas I think that there may be an alternative site at Crewe, which would be much better in terms of the connectivity. If you are going to spend that amount of money, it is important, as was set out in the Wales transport strategy, that we have good international connectivity. In fact, I would go further and say that the connection from High Speed Two to Europe might be a physical connection rather than having to change trains in London, as presently happens if you go on the French TGV network. You do not have to change at Paris as there are trains that go around Paris. I do not think that we should lose sight of that.

I would go even further and say that the Irish are quite critical in this. The southern corridor through SEWTA and SWWITCH, and the north Wales corridor to Dublin are priority access routes on the European network and are among the top 30 in Europe. We need to make more of that and bring them in to do that strategically. In the Department for Transport's 'Delivering Sustainable Transport' document, the arrows stop at the boundary between England and Wales. The committee might want to take a view on that.

Gareth Jones: Are there any particular comments? I call on Richard Workman.

Mr Workman: I just want to reflect on the point that high-speed rail is important for areas where peripherality, particularly among the economic community, is seen as a key issue. We have to make sure that wherever the high-speed rail link finishes—at present, it is proposed to be Swansea—the benefits are then apparent to the rest of the network.

Gareth Jones: A oes gennych ragor i'w ychwanegu, Trevor?

Gareth Jones: Do you have any further comments to make, Trevor?

Mr T. Roberts: Nac oes. Mae popeth yn iawn.

Mr T. Roberts: No. That is fine.

David Melding: Are there any doubters? We have heard some evidence that electrification is important but high-speed rail comes at one heck of an infrastructure cost, which could be used elsewhere. Your primary aim is to promote modal shift on public transport. Should we be trying to spend money elsewhere or would you give high-speed rail the sort of priority that the British Government seems to want to give it at the moment?

Mr Whittaker: I think that we would support it—["Inaudible."]—on the west coast main line, the present projections are that it will run out of capacity by 2015, but it is not just a matter of passenger growth; we are also considering the needs of freight. I would like to make the case for freight as part of that. It is not always the most popular option. Nonetheless, if we are to move towards more sustainable transport, stuff that we eat goes by freight, and so there would be a release in capacity on conventional lines, and why not have high-speed freight lines for parcels and high-value goods as an alternative to air freight?

Mr O'Sullivan: I do not think that the doubt is about HS2. Perhaps HS3 is a different argument for somewhere further down the line. If High Speed Two delivers a connection from Swansea all the way to Paddington, and reduces the time out of Cardiff to an hour and 40 minutes, that is probably where we want to be. If we are talking about £15 billion to take another 10 or 15 minutes off that journey, that might be where we would come in and say, 'We are doubtful about that; the money could be better spent elsewhere', but we are fully behind the principle of HS2.

Mr T. Roberts: Could I quickly mention David Rowlands, who is heading this high-speed HS2 project with the Government? They are about to publish their report at the end of this year. David Rowlands spoke to the Assembly Government around three months ago. I also had a meeting with him. So, we should not lose sight of the fact that electrification is a major step forward at the moment, which should be grasped with both hands; we should push on with it.

Mr James: I just wanted to say that we do not yet have electrification and we are already talking about what will come after it. So, to some extent, I think: let us get electrification first. The infrastructure costs that will arise out of that will no doubt be challenging. However, issues such as the Severn tunnel junction and introducing additional capacity are key issues on which we should be working now. We still have the ambition and the wish to see the connections through to Europe and so on. However, we need to consolidate what is available to us and look to make the most use of that and have an eye on the future, but we have to be realistic because someone else holds the purse strings in terms of those big infrastructure costs.

Gareth Jones: Diolch yn fawr. The next question is from Jeff Cuthbert.

Jeff Cuthbert: I have experienced first hand the benefits of light-rail systems in cities like Manchester and Sheffield. You refer to it in your submission, but could you say more about to what extent you see the value of light-rail schemes in Wales and how they can integrate with heavy rail? To SEWTA in particular, do you think that the Valley lines could integrate with the light-rail systems towards Cardiff?

Mr O'Sullivan: From a SEWTA point of view, the traffic on the Valley lines has increased significantly; they are very popular now. We have capacity issues there, but it is encouraging that we have achieved a modal split, which fits in with park-and-ride policies and so on. The balance that we need to achieve with light rail is, effectively, down to how long people are willing to stand. It is a rapid-transit, high-frequency system, which carries 85 passengers with 15 or 20 standing. People will tolerate standing for around 20 minutes. The systems that you mentioned in Manchester and Sheffield are very good. Nottingham is a more recent example where the capacity or capability of these new vehicles to climb significant gradients is a big departure from the past. That fits in with our Valleys terrain.

There needs to be integration, but quite where it starts and finishes, I am not sure. Cardiff Council has a draft light-rail strategy, which is still being considered internally, but there will be nodes and points at which heavy and light rail will interact. If we are to get the full benefits, as we say in the evidence, the system must run on city streets and it has to move away from heavy rail. That is a discussion for us to have and the study that Cardiff Council has undertaken will ascertain whether that is viable. Clearly, that is very expensive in initial capital costs, but the benefits are there for all to see. We have aspirations for Wales to be a modern European country and for Cardiff to be a modern European city. The leading cities have these systems in place—it is the way to get people around and we want to be a part of that.

We could apply the Nottingham example in particular; I was disappointed that Manchester and Liverpool failed to get an extension, but that was to do with costs, so we need to get the right balance. So, do we like it? 'Yes, we do'. Does it have applications? 'Yes, it does', but I am not sure whether we can afford it just yet.

Gareth Jones: Dyna'r consensws ar hwnnw. Trown at Alun Michael am y cwestiwn nesaf.

Gareth Jones: That is the consensus on that. We will turn to Alun Michael for the next question.

Alun Michael: I think that you have answered part of my question because I was going to ask about priorities for electrification and we just talked about the mainline electrification being the priority. However, the Deputy First Minister, in his evidence to the Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee said that he wanted to see all lines—to, from and within Wales—electrified. What would be your priorities within Wales and what would be the realistic timescale for that?

1.10 p.m.

Mr G. Roberts: Looking at the whole of Wales and speaking from a rural perspective, it is quite often put forward in the rail industry that rural lines should not be electrified, but if you take the model used on the continent, most rural lines are electrified. Making quite a leap of faith and going forward 30 years into the future, the environment is paramount and the climate change debate has been taken on board, so we should not rule out looking at rural lines because there are so many benefits in terms of noise reduction, lower maintenance costs on the rolling stock and a better ability to sell rail as a clean form of transport. When it comes to priorities, we cannot argue with the fact that the Valleys lines and the south Wales lines need to be electrified, but not at the expense of ruling out doing so to possible rural lines in the long term.

Mr James: Again, I do not disagree with anything that has been said, but this is about being realistic about what is achievable. Clearly, we all welcome the mainline electrification through to Swansea. I know that we would like it to go beyond Swansea and into other areas that have been mentioned, for example, the Valleys lines and so on. However, we have to make the best of what is available and the electrification of the main line will be a fantastic improvement. I suspect that any further investment will be done on a cost-benefit analysis, based on the likely increase in flow of traffic, whether that be passenger traffic or freight traffic. Again, because the infrastructure costs are so great, extending that to rural areas would probably take around 30 years, which is a good guess, but it may take longer. The amount of investment required is so big that any Government would have to weigh that against all the other transport challenges that it faces.

Mr Workman: I would not disagree with what colleagues have already said, but clearly it is a given that electrification, as far as Swansea is concerned, is necessary. Beyond Swansea, from the SWWITCH perspective, bearing in mind the question about our aspirations and where we would like to see it, we would like the line to be linked to the ports and be part of the trans-European network—making that journey across Europe seamless and delivering what Europe can potentially deliver for the international traveller.

Mr O'Sullivan: SWWITCH's aspirations are clearly set out in the paper, but the one point I would bring to your attention is that we would hope that any major signalling works being undertaken in the coming years are future proofed to the degree that they would be able to accommodate electrification, should it occur, and that would be part of our continuing healthy dialogue with our good friends, Network Rail.

Gareth Jones: I can see that there will be a lot of healthy dialogue.

Fel y gwelwch, mae Hywel Francis wedi ymddiheuro am ei absenoldeb. Mae gennyf gyd-Gadeirydd newydd, sef Mr Hywel Williams—o un Hywel i'r llall. Hywel sydd â'r ddau gwestiwn olaf a fydd yn cloi'r sesiwn hon.

As you can see, Hywel Francis has apologised for his absence. I have a new co-Chair, namely Mr Hywel Williams—from one Hywel to the other. Hywel has the final two questions that will close this session.

<p>Hywel Williams: Bu llawer o drafod yn ddiweddar ynghylch datblygu a gwella'r gwasanaethau. I rywun fel fi, sydd yn ymroddedig i'r rheilffordd, mae hwnnw'n beth addawol iawn ac yn groes i sut y bu pethau yn y gorffennol. Yr ydym wedi clywed am y posibiladau o wella'r llinell o'r de i'r gogledd rhwng Wrexham a Bidston a morglawdd Hafren a allai gael ei ddefnyddio ar gyfer croesiad newydd ynghyd â dyblu'r llinell rhwng Swindon a Kemble. Mae'r holl bosibiliadau hynny. Weithiau caiff ei ddarlunio yn y wasg fel cwestiwn ynglŷn ag a ddylem ganolbwyntio ar fynd o'r gorllewin i'r dwyrain ynteu o'r de i'r gogledd. Ni wn a yw hwnnw'n gwestiwn teg. Beth yw'r pwysicaf yn eich barn chi: de i'r gogledd ynteu'r gorllewin i'r dwyrain? Efallai nad ydych am ateb y cwestiwn hwnnw neu efallai eich bod yn barod am eich cinio. ["Chwerthin."]</p>	<p>Hywel Williams: There has been much discussion recently about developing and improving services. For someone like me, who is committed to the railways, that is very promising and is contrary to how things were in the past. We have heard about the possibilities of improving the line from south to north between Wrexham and Bidston and the Severn barrage that could be used for a new crossing thereby doubling the line between Swindon and Kemble. There are all those possibilities. Sometimes it is illustrated in the press as a question of whether we should concentrate on going from west to east or from south to north. I do not know whether that is a fair question. What do you think is most important: south to north or west to east? You might not want to answer that question or perhaps you are ready for your lunch. ["Laughter."]</p>
<p>Mr G. Roberts: Mae'r ddau yn bwysig, ond o ran mynd o'r gogledd i'r de, mae'n rhaid inni fod yn realistig yn y tymor hir ynghylch y daith honno. Ni ddylem golli golwg ar y ffaith bod angen, wrth i gymunedau yng Nghymru newid, inni edrych ar sut y mae pobl yn teithio ledled Cymru, a bod angen gwneud gwelliannau ar y rheilffordd i ddod â rhai trefi yn agosach at ei gilydd, yn enwedig yn y gorllewin.</p>	<p>Mr G. Roberts: Both are important, but in terms of going from the north to the south, we have to be realistic in the long term about that journey. We should not lose sight of the fact that, as communities in Wales change, we need to look at how people travel throughout Wales and to make improvements to the railways to bring some towns closer together, particularly in west Wales.</p>
<p>Yr ydym yn siarad yn aml am linell y gororau, ac mae'n bwysig bod safon y llinell honno yn cael ei chodi fel ei bod yn addas ar gyfer teithwyr a llwythi masnachol. Hyd nes y gwneir hynny, ni allwn ofyn am arian i'w wario ar rywbeth arall. Fodd bynnag, mae'n rhaid edrych weithiau ar syniadau "off-the-wall" er mwyn gweld yr hyn y gellid ei wneud yng Nghymru i gysylltu'r rheilffyrdd sydd gennym. Ar hyn o bryd, mae rhwydwaith y rheilffyrdd yng Nghymru fel 'E' wedi'i gwyrddroi—os ydych yn mynd o'r gogledd i'r de mae'n rhaid mynd allan o Gymru a dod yn ôl i mewn. Bydd yn gostus, ond ni ddylid colli golwg ar yr hyn y gellid ei wneud yn y dyfodol.</p>	<p>We often talk about the marches line, and it is important that the standard of that line is improved so that it can handle not only passengers, but freight. Until that is done, we cannot ask for more money to be spent on something else. However, we sometimes have to look at off-the-wall ideas in order to see what could be done in Wales to connect the railway lines that we have. At the moment, the railway network in Wales is in the form of a reversed 'E'—if you travel from north to south Wales you have to go out of Wales and then come back in. It will be expensive, but we should not lose sight of what could be achieved in the future.</p>

<p>Mr James: I am representing SEWTA, which is located in south-east Wales. You would probably expect me to say that I would not prioritise a north-south route, but, as someone who travels to north Wales and back, as I am sure many of you do, it is an incredible challenge. I can go to London more quickly than I can go to Llandudno. We all have to accept that there are geographical and geological problems to be faced. In the SEWTA region, we are seeing a lot of investment in the Valleys lines, and they are benefiting from that. That is the best that I can do with regard to north-south lines.</p>
<p>Hywel Williams: That is slightly to the north.</p>
<p>Mr Davies: To add to what Jeff said, we feel that it is important that there should be a link between south and north Wales. Michael and I came down this morning on the train from north Wales, but there is no equivalent train from south Wales to north Wales, which we think is important. Being realistic, I represent areas in north-east Wales, and it is important to us that we have that east Wales link. I mentioned the electrification of the north Wales line; it is important that that continues. It is a continuation of the English electrification. I have also mentioned the link to the airports in the north-west of England, which are desperately important to Wrexham and to north Wales generally.</p>
<p>Mr Wilson: To add to what Gareth said about the missing link in Wales, with regard to the priorities, we are currently torn between north-south and east-west links, especially in mid Wales. Most freight and so on goes from east to west, so, in the shorter term, we have to look at what we can do to strengthen the east-west links. Having said that, the north-south link is vital, especially if we can get something in mid Wales. To join the north-south route from Aberystwyth you have to travel to England and onto the marches line. So, in the shorter term, there is an issue as to whether we focus on east-west or north-south links. In the longer term, we should be looking at north-south links, which will include having something within Wales.</p>

<p>Gareth Jones: Mae'n rhaid inni adael pethau felly. Yr wyf yn teithio bob wythnos am bedair awr, ac weithiau am bedair awr a hanner, o Llandudno i Gaerdydd, ac yr wyf yn falch o glywed bod yr ewylllys yn bodoli. Mae hen ddywediad yn Gymraeg—ni wn sut y bydd y cyfieithwyr yn ei drosi—sef diallu pob diewylllys. Os yw'r ewylllys yn bodoli, fe gawn ni rywbeth yn y dyfodol.</p>	<p>Gareth Jones: We have to leave things there. As someone who travels every week for four hours, and sometimes for four and a half hours, from Llandudno to Cardiff, I am glad to hear that the will does exist. There is an old saying in Welsh—'diallu pob diewylllys'; I am not sure how the interpreters will convey it—which means that if there is no will, there is no way. However, where there is a will, there is a way—and we will get something in the future.</p>
<p>1.20 p.m.</p>	
<p>Cyn imi gloi'r cyfarfod, hoffwn ddiolch i aelodau'r Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu ac i aelodau'r Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig. Mae'r cyfarfod ar y cyd hwn wedi bod yn ddiddorol ac arbennig. Gobeithiaf eich bod wedi mwynhau bod yma. Yn sicr, yr ydym wedi mwynhau eich cwmni a'r cyfle i ofyn cwestiynau.</p>	<p>Before I close the meeting, I would like to thank the Enterprise and Learning Committee members and members of the Welsh Affairs Committee. This joint meeting has been interesting and special. I hope that you have enjoyed being here. We have certainly enjoyed your company and the opportunity to ask questions.</p>
<p>Yr ydym yn hynod ddiolchgar i'r tystion. Yr ydym wedi diolch eisoes i'r gweithredwyr trenau, ond yr ydym yn gwerthfawrogi gwaith y consortia. Mae eich atebion wedi dangos lle mae'r rhwystredigaeth yn hyn oll a bod angen mwy o gydlynw os ydym am weld dyfodol disglair i'n rheilffyrdd ac i gludiant gyffredinol yng Nghymru. Diolch eto am ymuno â ni. Gwn fod yr amser wedi bod yn brin y bore yma, ond fe'ch sicrhaf fod eich atebion yn cyfrif. Yn sicr, byddant yn bwydo'r adolygiad neu'r dilyniant a fydd yn digwydd yn Nhŷ'r Cyffredin drwy'r Pwyllgor Materion Cymreig, a byddant o fudd inni yn ein gwaith wrth graffu ar seilwaith rheilffyrdd Cymru ar gyfer y dyfodol.</p>	<p>We are extremely grateful to the witnesses. We have already thanked the train operators, but we appreciate the consortia's work. Your answers have shown where the frustration lies in all of this and that there needs to be more co-ordination if we want to see a bright future for our railways and transport more generally in Wales. Thank you again for joining us. I know that time has been scarce this morning, but I assure you that your answers do count. They will certainly inform the follow-up review to be undertaken at the House of Commons, through the Welsh Affairs Committee, and they will be of benefit to us in our work of scrutinising the railway infrastructure in Wales for the future.</p>
<p>Yr wyf yn mawr obeithio eich bod yn teimlo bod y croeso yr ydych wedi'i dderbyn yn llawer cynhesach na thymheredd yr ystafell hon. Ymddiheuraf am hynny; waeth beth fo'n digwydd yn yr adeilad eiconaid hwn, mae'n oer. Diolch am wneud ymdrech i ymuno â ni. Gwerthfawrogwn eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig a'r hyn a glywsom y bore yma, a dymunwn y gorau ichi. Fe'ch sicrhaf ein bod yn fwy na pharod i gydweithio gyda chi, gan ein bod ni i gyd yn mynd i'r un cyfeiriad. Diolch yn fawr i bob un ohonoch. Dyna ddiwedd ein cyfarfod.</p>	<p>I greatly hope that you feel that the welcome you received is much warmer than the temperature of this room. I apologise for that; regardless of what is happening in this iconic building, it is cold. Thank you for making the effort to join us. We appreciate your written evidence and what we heard this morning, and we wish you all the best. I assure you that we are more than willing to work with you, given that we are all moving in the same direction. Thank you to all of you. That brings our meeting to a close.</p>

"Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 1.22 p.m.
The meeting ended at 1.22 p.m."