



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

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

**Dydd Mawrth, 8 Mehefin 2010
Tuesday, 8 June 2010**

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

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

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Ian Bullock	Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau i Gwsmeriaid, Trenau Arriva Cymru Customer Services Director, Arriva Trains Wales
Mike Goggin	Cyfarwyddwr, Gorsafoedd a Gwasanaethau i Gwsmeriaid, Network Rail Director, Stations and Customer Service, Network Rail
David Sindall	Pennaeth Anabledd a Chynhwysiant, Gymdeithas y Cwmnïau Trenau Cyf Head of Disability and Inclusion, Association of Train Operating Companies Ltd
Gary Tordoff	Rheolwr Gwella Llwybrau, Network Rail Route Enhancement Manager, Network Rail
Michael Vaughan	Pennaeth Masnachfreintiau a Rheoli Rhanddeiliaid, Trenau Arriva Cymru Head of Franchise and Stakeholder Management, Arriva Trains Wales

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

Leon Goberman	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members Research Service
Catherine Hunt	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.27 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.27 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. Welcome, Members; I hope that you have all switched off your pagers, phones, BlackBerrys and so on—you are allowed to keep your pacemaker going.

[2] **Eleanor Burnham:** I will ensure that mine is kept on.

[3] **Ann Jones:** I invite Members to make any declarations of interest under Standing Order No. 31.6. You and I should probably declare that we are regular train travellers, Eleanor. I have received apologies for absence from Janet Ryder and Dai Lloyd is substituting for her again. Welcome, Dai, and thank you for stepping in.

9.28 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad i Hygyrchedd Gorsafoddd Rheilffordd—Tystiolaeth Lafar gan
Trenau Arriva Cymru a Network Rail
Inquiry into the Accessibility of Railway Stations—Oral Evidence from Arriva
Trains Wales and Network Rail**

[4] **Ann Jones:** We are very grateful to Michael Vaughan, head of franchise and stakeholder management, and Ian Bullock, customer services director, from Arriva Trains Wales. From Network Rail, we have Mike Goggin, director of stations and customer service, and Gary Tordoff, route enhancement manager. You are all very welcome. Thank you for your papers, which Members have received. We will go straight into questions, unless you want to make a statement to enhance your papers. I see that that you do not.

[5] Can you explain to the committee what services you each provide and how you work together to provide those services? You can choose who goes first. You do not have to press any buttons; the microphone will come on automatically.

[6] **Mr Vaughan:** This stems from our policy, which is in the public domain. This is the customer friendly version of our disabled people's protection policy, which generally outlines what we do to try to help disabled and older customers. It is very comprehensive; it contains everything that a disabled person would need to know to access our services and generally explains how we work with the various industry bodies, such as Network Rail.

9.30 a.m.

[7] **Mr Bullock:** We work with Network Rail on many different levels, particularly on station development, where we have a local delivery group that was formed two or three years ago as part of the national stations improvement programme. Uniquely in NSIP, it is not only us and Network Rail, but also the Welsh Assembly Government officials, who are working on that. We also have an integrated station planning team that works with Network Rail on changing stations and ensuring that our work is co-ordinated, and that we get best value. We also have senior meetings at director level with Network Rail on an ongoing basis. So there is a lot of co-operation and interaction between our two organisations. I would add that, as well as working with Network Rail, we work very closely with the transport consortia, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government, particularly around station development.

[8] **Mr Goggin:** Just to support Ian's view, the local delivery group, as he suggested, was set up under the national stations improvement programme. We recognise our role as a landlord for the stations that Arriva Trains Wales leases from us, and we support Arriva Trains Wales in its operation and maintenance activities at those stations. We also act as a national infrastructure control room provider, almost, to support it in the delivery of its train services on a day-to-day basis.

[9] **Ann Jones:** Would you briefly summarise the main legal obligations that you both have in relation to disabled travellers?

[10] **Mr Vaughan:** I suppose that the overriding obligations are those under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and we try to ensure that we are compliant with those. Working with industry partners, in particular the Association of Train Operating Companies and the Department for Transport, which provide guidance, we take our obligations on board. Equally, we have the European passenger rights regulations, and I think that we are fully compliant with the current status of those regulations.

[11] **Mr Goggin:** Network Rail is licensed by the Office of Rail Regulation. That is mainly for our managed stations, where we have a station operating licence, under which we have to produce a DPPP, which has to demonstrate our compliance with the appropriate code issued by the Department for Transport.

[12] **Ann Jones:** Is that sufficient? Is this over-regulated, or under-regulated?

[13] **Mr Vaughan:** It is pitched at the right level.

[14] **Ann Jones:** Mohammad, do you want to take the next set of questions?

[15] **Mohammad Asghar:** At present, half of all railway stations in Wales have platforms that are either partly or wholly inaccessible to disabled passengers. How much importance do you attach to addressing this issue? How have you been addressing it in recent years? What are your plans for the future?

[16] **Mr Bullock:** If I may start on that point, you are quite right—52 per cent of stations in Wales are not fully accessible. The way that that is being addressed is incrementally, as funding becomes available. We have already touched, in our opening remarks, on the national stations improvement programme that brought in £5.9 million as part of the DFT award to ATW, and on top of that we have managed to lever in significant contributions from local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government. Together with the Welsh Assembly Government, we are also working on a Welsh European Funding Office bid. All of these amounts of money that we are working to get will go into station delivery, and accessibility is a key part of station improvement. We are aware that one of the things that customers want is customer information systems on the station. We start from quite a low base—only 77 stations have CIS at the moment—and the first tranche of NSIP will deliver 56 more stations. In tranche 2, which will be announced shortly, we hope to complete CIS at every station.

[17] Not only are there incremental improvements, but we also have a programme of big station change. We have recently completed part 1 of the Chester scheme, where, again, accessibility was a key part. Indeed, Passenger Focus did an accessibility audit for us on Chester station. The Swansea scheme is coming up, and, again, various elements of accessibility will be encompassed into that. In tranche 2, we have big projects such as Port Talbot, where, again, accessibility is a key issue for us. So, a range of projects flow from this funding.

[18] **Ann Jones:** Eleanor wants to come in with a question.

[19] **Eleanor Burnham:** We have had some startling evidence from disabled people. I was particularly startled—as I am sure was the rest of the committee—by the testimony of the blind person who talked to us. Who advises you on Passenger Focus? Do you include people who are blind, or who are hard of hearing—we had evidence that was just as startling from someone who was hard of hearing? I hope that you can confirm that you include blind and hard of hearing people, or even deaf people.

[20] **Mr Vaughan:** Yes, I can confirm that. In terms of the Swansea development, I know that the person to whom you refer was part of that consultation and assessment.

[21] **Eleanor Burnham:** I am relieved to hear that.

[22] **Mohammad Asghar:** I was going to ask the same question as Eleanor. I was pleased to hear your answer. Have you carried out any studies that would allow you to estimate the potential costs of upgrading the stations that are currently partly or wholly inaccessible to disabled people?

[23] **Mr Tordoff:** In terms of specific costs in Wales, no, we have not. At the start of the Access for All programme, back in 2005-06, the Strategic Rail Authority did some estimates—the cost of making all platforms higher to assist in accessibility, across the UK, was estimated at £3 billion. As part of the Access for All consultation process, it was decided that due to the cost that would not be part of Access for All. So, what we have as part of addressing accessibility is the Access for All programme work at the stations that the DFT and Transport Scotland select.

[24] However, the other thing that we have tried to do—we are working towards this with the Welsh Assembly Government—is to roll out platform hump schemes. These are partially raised areas of the platforms, or humps, whereby we can try to improve accessibility—although they do not give level access—at a reasonable cost. I understand that we are talking to Arriva Trains Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government about how we fund a larger programme. I am not sure of the exact numbers and how many sites will be addressed, as this is currently being discussed.

[25] **Mr Bullock:** I believe that the number of sites that we are looking at is 36, with two already completed, namely Valley and Aberdovey.

[26] **Eleanor Burnham:** I have a supplementary question. However much you improve matters, most of the issues are to do with timings. For instance, we all know from our experience—the Chair and I in particular—that if it is a particular time of the night, or evening, or whatever, lifts are not manned, because the staff are not there. I got to Wrexham station one morning—

[27] **Ann Jones:** I believe that you are encroaching on someone else's questions, Eleanor.

[28] **Eleanor Burnham:** I am sorry.

[29] **Ann Jones:** That is all right—carry on. We will adjust things as we go on.

[30] **Eleanor Burnham:** I apologise; I am passionate about this issue, as you can see.

[31] Even if you were to spend £1 million on Wrexham station, for instance—let us hope that you can do so soon—if the staff are not there, and the lifts cannot work, there is still a problem. I know of a gentleman who has had to travel to Chester to come back to Wrexham to be on the right side to get out of the train, because the lifts, if the staff are not there, do not function. What are you going to do about that problem, as much as anything?

[32] **Mr Bullock:** Do you want me to answer on Wrexham station?

[33] **Eleanor Burnham:** No, in general. I mentioned Wrexham because that is where I normally get on the train to come to Cardiff.

[34] **Mr Bullock:** We have significantly increased the number of station staff that we have available since the start of the franchise. We had 336 station staff at the start of the franchise; we now have 382.

[35] **Eleanor Burnham:** You only have two in Wrexham—you have not increased the number there.

[36] **Mr Bullock:** I was trying to address the general question.

[37] **Ann Jones:** We are looking at this issue across Wales. Wrexham may be the centre of Wales to you, Eleanor, but it is not—

[38] **Eleanor Burnham:** No, but it is a big station.

[39] **Ann Jones:** Let Mr Bullock finish first and then you can come back.

9.40 a.m.

[40] **Mr Bullock:** The number of station staff has increased, but one issue is making those staff as visible as possible. We have been trialling at the five biggest stations, which account for 40 per cent of all our assisted bookings, new high-visibility tabards to distinguish them from the other staff on the station. The key thing for us is to make the staff that we have as visible as possible. Our resources are finite, like yours. Staff are tremendously expensive. Just to give the committee some kind of feel for it, if we were to put one member of staff on each of our stations in Wales, it would cost about £5 million a year. So, it is about using the resources that we have to the best effect. There are, particularly across Wales, areas where the staff currently undertake duties in which we can better focus and highlight their customer service skills. It has certainly been our policy to increase staff numbers. Some train operators have taken a different view, but we have not gone down that route. However, I accept that we must make the staff that we have as visible and as helpful as possible.

[41] **Eleanor Burnham:** I have one final question on this. If you do not do that, is it possible for disabled people to use the lifts when the staff are not there? How can you improve that aspect? Does that mean extra resources?

[42] **Mr Bullock:** Back in March 2008, we installed what we call remote-control lift devices. Until that point, after the station staff had left, the lifts were locked and you could not use them. There have been technical issues with that system and there have also been problems with the lifts themselves failing. In fact, I looked at Wrexham station and since March 2008 the lift has failed 19 times. To be fair to Network Rail, repairs are normally done within 48 hours, but it is still a problem during those 48 hours. I can give the committee an assurance that we are continuing to try to improve the process of the remote controlled lifts and we spend a lot of time and effort on that. We have learned from some particularly distressing incidents where people have got stranded, so we have a much better process now. However, it is not perfect and I would not pretend that it is because these mechanical things can fail.

[43] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yn ôl canllaw Trenau Arriva Cymru ar gyfer cwsmeriaid ag anableddau, nid oes mynediad i'r trenau ar gyfer cadeiriau olwyn mewn 26 o orsafoedd yng Nghymru. Mae tystiolaeth Trenau Arriva Cymru yn nodi y bydd Llywodraeth y Cynulliad yn rhoi rhagor o arian ar gyfer gwelliannau i uchder y platform mewn 20 o orsafoedd, tra bod cynllun yn mynd rhagddo yn ngorsaf y Fali. A yw'r arian hwn gan Lywodraeth y Cynulliad wedi'i sicrhau a beth **Eleanor Burnham:** According to the Arriva Trains Wales guide for customers with disabilities, 26 stations in Wales do not have wheelchair access to the train. Arriva Trains Wales's evidence states that the Welsh Government will provide further funding for platform height enhancements at 20 stations, while a scheme is underway at Valley station. Has this funding from the Welsh Government been secured, and what is the timescale for these improvements, please?

yw'r amserlen ar gyfer y gwelliannau hyn os gwelwch yn dda?

[44] **Mr Bullock:** Gary has already touched upon the platform height hump programme. I believe that we are looking at a programme of 36 stations. In terms of securing the funding, we, along with the Welsh Assembly Government, have made an application to the Welsh European Funding Office as part of a wider package of improvements, and Arriva Trains Wales is currently awaiting notification as to whether that funding bid has been successful. If it has been successful, then there will be a roll-out of the platform humps by Network Rail. I do not know whether Gary's team has given any thought as to the scale of the programme, but fitting these humps can be done reasonably quickly, I think, once you get the go ahead.

[45] **Mr Tordoff:** In terms of the programme itself, as you have seen from Valley, Aberdovey and other sites, these installations are prefabricated offsite, so they are fairly simple to make. In terms of onsite works, again, the nature of how they are constructed is such as to minimise time on stations, so these are really quick pieces of work that we can turn around, once the pieces of kit are built, in a matter of weeks rather than months in terms of installations. The platform humps programme is a UK-wide programme; but, as I say, Wales has the largest proposal at present. We have a manufacturer ready and waiting to start rolling out these raised platform areas as and when the funding is in place. Therefore we have people ready and waiting to get on with this.

[46] **Ann Jones:** We hope that that bid is successful; but if it is not will you put the funding in to make these platforms accessible?

[47] **Mr Tordoff:** We have to source the funding from somewhere. We will not just give up if the first round of funding is removed. We would still make efforts to try to establish what funding was available and examine everywhere. However, as we know, there is a lot of pressure in terms of what funding is available.

[48] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae **Eleanor Burnham:** The Association of Train Operating Companies has stated in its evidence to this committee that there is considerable frustration concerning the slow rate of delivery of Access for All improvements by Network Rail, that is, Cymdeithas y Cwmnïau Trenau wedi datgan yn ei thystiolaeth i'r pwyllgor hwn fod cwmnïau trenau yn wynebu cryn rwystredigaeth ynghylch diffyg brys Network Rail wrth gyflawni gwelliannau Mynediad i Bawb, sef 'Railways for All'. A allwch roi sylwadau ar y datganiad hwn? Pa gynnydd a wneir ar y cynlluniau hyn a fydd yn cael eu datblygu o dan y cynllun hwn yng Nghymru? this scheme in Wales?

[49] **Mr Tordoff:** I head up the Access for All programme, which is the reason why I am here today. The comment by ATOC is accurate. The programme was slow to get started. It is a fairly substantial programme of work. It is nearly £400 million-worth of work. It was a programme of works that was new to the way that Network Rail did things. Therefore, we were trying to get started, and the difficulty—I will give you the overall picture to try to explain where we are in Wales—was that when we originally started the programme of work, we could not physically work on some of the stations that were selected by the Government. Therefore, it took a while to get the programme up and running. We then got two stations identified for Wales. The two stations in Wales should have been completed by March 2009, but we did not complete them by then. In fact, we did not start on one of those until February 2010. As I say, the programme encountered quite a lot of problems at the front end. There was quite a steep learning curve in terms of how we got started and it took us probably 18 months to catch up.

[50] In terms of the three groups of works in Wales, the programme is due to run until March 2015. At present, our target is for all of the stations in Wales to be complete by the end of 2013. We do not have the stations all set up to be done as quickly as possible, as we are trying to integrate them with other work. For example, if we have a major renewal item at a station, it is appropriate to package the works together. Therefore, you only have one disruption and you get efficiencies from joining the works. We are currently on site in Prestatyn, and we are due to start in Wrexham towards the back end of this year. All of the schemes in Wales, under the current programme, will be completed before the end of 2013, which was not the original request from the Department for Transport, which had schemes running quite late, up to 2015.

[51] Have we been slow in getting to where we want to be? Yes. Will we be able to deliver these schemes to a timeline that gives you the comfort that this programme is effective? At this moment in time, yes and, better than that, we will not run into 2015; we are trying to get all of these done in Wales before the end of 2013.

[52] **Eleanor Burnham:** Da iawn. Ar hyn o bryd, nid oes gan 89 y cant o'r holl orsafoedd yng Nghymru doiledau sydd yn hygyrch i gadeiriau olwyn. Sut ydych yn cyfiawnhau'r diffyg hwn? A oes gennych unrhyw gynlluniau i osod cyfleusterau ychwanegol, a phryd y bydd hyn yn cael ei gyflawni? **Eleanor Burnham:** Very good. At present, 89 per cent of all stations in Wales do not have wheelchair accessible toilets. How do you justify this shortcoming? Do you have any plans to install additional facilities, and when will this be done?

[53] **Mr Vaughan:** In previous evidence that we have studied, there was an acceptance that there are problems with vandalism and drug-taking and such like. We know that we can look after the facilities that we currently have, and make sure that they are of a standard that can be used. Where we do new developments, we will improve and enhance those disabled toilets.

9.50 a.m.

[54] **Eleanor Burnham:** I note that, in certain places, ultra-violet light is used to deter people from injecting and so on.

[55] **Mr Vaughan:** Yes. I think that Newport is the prime example of that. It does not entirely deter people from taking drugs, because drug takers can find other ways of doing it.

[56] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is usually because the station is unmanned and so there is no-one around. In Wrexham, the taxi company is now based in the station. Surely having people around would deter people from doing that.

[57] **Mr Vaughan:** Yes, we encourage retailers and taxi companies to work with us to identify such problems in stations.

[58] **Ann Jones:** You talked about partnership working earlier. I think that Ian mentioned it with regard to local authorities. Is that an issue, given that you may have the franchise for some stations and someone else has the franchise for some other stations? Does having different landlords mean that you cannot get a uniform set of facilities across stations?

[59] **Mr Vaughan:** As a company, that is what we want. We want consistency of delivery in all facilities. We have a set of standards that we apply, certainly for Arriva trains, to every station that we have.

[60] **Mr Bullock:** It might be helpful to mention a report that came out at the beginning of this year, 'Better Rail Stations', which was undertaken by independent former railway people and presented to the former Secretary of State. By category of station, it set out proposed standard facilities for each station, from the major hubs to the small unstaffed stations. In my opinion, it was a good blueprint for dealing with these sorts of questions. For the first time, it set out what should be expected. The question really is how that is funded. That probably needs to be addressed at a national level. However, that is in place.

[61] **Eleanor Burnham:** When you talk about the national level, I take it that you are not talking about Wales, but the UK?

[62] **Mr Bullock:** Yes, in my view.

[63] **Mr Goggin:** I tend to agree. 'Better Rail Stations' sets out a suggested hierarchy of stations and the corresponding facilities that we should expect. Our own research says that rail users understand that they should not expect high-class retail at a small country station; they have certain expectations and understand the differences between stations. There is a challenge for those who let franchises and those who fund Network Rail about how much they can afford for implementing minimum station standards. I think that, right now, the Department for Transport is considering how to respond to the recommendations of 'Better Rail Stations'.

[64] **Eleanor Burnham:** I would like to challenge you on that. If you use country train stations, I would not say that it is that you expect less, but that you learn to live with less.

[65] **Ann Jones:** We have not looked at that report, and I will do so. I think that the point was that you could not expect a Marks & Spencer food outlet—I should not advertise, but it is usually Marks & Spencer—at every station, and nor could you expect a WH Smith outlet at every station.

[66] **Eleanor Burnham:** I did not mean that.

[67] **Ann Jones:** I think that that is what the gentleman was talking about.

[68] **Eleanor Burnham:** I was talking about basic cleanliness, availability of toilets, accessibility and staffing.

[69] **Ann Jones:** Yes, and that is acceptable, but I think that what the gentleman was trying to say is that there will be retail outlets at some stations but that there is not sufficient footfall at other stations to justify such outlets.

[70] **Mr Goggin:** Yes, that is correct. There are always the basic requirements: people want to be informed, secure and feel assured, and then there are additional facilities that people expect to see in larger stations, be it an ATM or whatever.

[71] **Eleanor Burnham:** May I come back on that?

[72] **Ann Jones:** We need to move on, Eleanor.

[73] **Joyce Watson:** That leads nicely on to my question. In your evidence, you say that you intend to provide an additional 56 customer information systems in stations throughout Wales between now and next year. Can you explain what the systems are and how many stations in Wales currently have those systems in place?

[74] **Mr Bullock:** Currently, we have 77 stations with customer information systems. As I

am sure that those of you who use our services are aware, these are scrolling, three-line customer information systems. There are 77 at the moment, and tranche 1 of the national station improvement programme will add another 56, which takes us to 133. Then, when tranche 2 comes in and, hopefully, with the grant from the Wales European Funding Office, our aim, working with the Welsh Assembly Government on the local delivery group, will be for every station in Wales to have a customer information system. It is likely that the smaller, unstaffed stations will not have the scrolling, three-line CIS, because that requires a lot of telecom links, which are expensive in rural areas. However, we are trialling some systems that are new to the market. We are working with a company called Gai-tronics at the moment, and if you go to Mountain Ash station you will see the first trial module of the Gai-tronics system, which provides a help point and an information line as well as a television screen with train running information. So, it is an all-in-one system based on mobile phone technology—similar to GPRS or GSM—so you do not have the really expensive telecom links going in. It will probably be suitable for the small, unstaffed stations with low footfall. Those with greater footfall will look for the three-line, scrolling system.

[75] **Joyce Watson:** Will it be accessible to all?

[76] **Mr Bullock:** Yes, the screen at Mountain Ash has been mounted at the correct height, and all the rest of it, so it should be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

[77] **Ann Jones:** Is it audible? If you have a sensory impairment, like sight impairment, you would need that.

[78] **Mr Bullock:** Yes, it speaks, and it acts as a helpline—you can press a button and talk to someone. It goes through to the national rail system.

[79] **Joyce Watson:** That covers the next bit of my question. You have the equipment in place, and I use it in Haverfordwest in the morning, if I am taking the early train, but the only way that I know the train is definitely coming is if a voice speaks to me from somewhere telling me that it is about to arrive, or sometimes, sadly, that it is not; but at least I know. The other question is: will those systems address the requirements of disabled passengers? You have said that they will, but I am asking particularly about those with sensory impairments and learning difficulties.

[80] **Mr Bullock:** We are working with a supplier at the moment on a fob that people with a sensory impairment can carry, so that as they approach the information system, it will speak to them. ATOC is trialling that system as we speak. We hope that, by the end of the programme, all of these screens will be fully accessible. That is the aim that we have.

[81] **Mr Vaughan:** Potentially in Welsh as well.

[82] **Eleanor Burnham:** I was going to ask about that.

[83] **Joyce Watson:** Now you do not need to bother. That is great. Thank you for that response.

[84] **Mr Vaughan:** Could I add one more point? There is quite a lot of work going on within local authorities to stimulate the confidence of people, particularly those with sensory impairments, but also the vulnerable, and those with any other category of disability. You may care to note that Pembrokeshire has just launched a passport system that will tell our staff where people want to go, so that is another step forward. I believe that it is only the second county in the UK to do that, and I would encourage local authorities everywhere to adopt the same principle, because it helps our staff and the customer at the same time.

[85] **Joyce Watson:** Some of the contributions to our consultation identified disabled parking outside the station as a factor that can make rail travel inaccessible to some disabled people. People talked about insufficient spaces at some stations, but others have said that they cannot operate the pay and display machines easily—especially those who are in wheelchairs. How has Arriva Trains Wales addressed some of these issues? How do you intend to address them?

[86] **Mr Bullock:** The 18 managed car parks are inspected on a daily basis for the occupancy of the disabled spaces. We comply with the Department for Transport's code of practice on the number of spaces to allocate, and if there are exceptions, we have derogations from those.

10.00 a.m.

[87] The way it works is that we look at how many times they are fully occupied and if more than 10 per cent are occupied according to our observations, then we will put in additional disabled spaces. We have recently put additional spaces in at Bridgend, Ludlow and at Cardiff Riverside car parks. That was all done on the basis of our monitoring. So, we have increased the number of spaces. In fact, Ludlow went from three to five spaces. I read the comments that suggested that someone had problems accessing the machine at Cardiff. We asked NCP to check that and there is one machine that is non-compliant, which it will address for us because it is mounted too high. So, we have noted that and we will sort that out.

[88] **Joyce Watson:** That is really good. Can you tell us about the assisted passenger reservation service and what its main strengths and weaknesses are?

[89] **Mr Vaughan:** It is a very good system and provides fairly comprehensive information. We provide an in-house system where all the staff who deal with APRS inquiries should get the accurate information about stations that we have in our network.

[90] On its effectiveness, we monitor the failure rates at the five largest stations and it works out that within the last six months, we have had around a 0.25 per cent failure rate. We will accept that there are some failures in the system, which are generally due to human error, but every failure is recorded and followed up by a senior manager in the company.

[91] **Joyce Watson:** Passenger Focus's evaluation of the APRS scheme throughout the UK found that less than half of all service users were satisfied with it. How have you and the Association of Train Operating Companies been working to amend and improve the scheme? You talk about 0.25 per cent, but the survey shows that 50 per cent were not satisfied.

[92] **Mr Bullock:** We currently handle around 31,000 APRS reservations on our network each year, so even a failure rate of 0.5 per cent is too many because that means that we have let down a few hundred people. Over the last couple of months, we have implemented a ring-back system for 10 per cent of the people who book through our journey care system. We get their direct feedback on how we can improve, and we will act on that feedback to ensure that we improve the system. However, there is recognition in the industry, and not just within ATW, that we sometimes over-promise and under-deliver on APRS. David is coming in shortly and my head of stations, David and other representatives from the train industry have been working on how we can improve APRS. It is based on old, 1990s technology. There are many ways in which we can improve the robustness of the system to eliminate these failures. So, there will be a lot of work, which I am sure that David will outline to you in a moment.

[93] **David Lloyd:** Fel rhan o **David Lloyd:** As part of this committee's

ymgyngoriad y pwyllgor, yr ydym wedi cael nifer o ddarnau o dystiolaeth gan wahanol bobl sydd wedi pwysleisio pwysigrwydd hyfforddiant staff i gynorthwyo pobl anabl. A allwch egluro eich rhaglen hyfforddiant? Mae'r cwestiwn hwn at Drenau Arriva Cymru.

inquiry, we have had many different pieces of evidence from different people that have emphasised the importance of staff training in order to assist disabled people. Could you explain your training programme? This question is to Arriva Trains Wales.

[94] **Mr Vaughan:** We have submitted in our evidence, not just the outline, but the whole detail of what we do. Training starts with every member of staff having disability awareness training during induction. That could be called by another name. It is very detailed in terms of recognising disabilities, how we physically handle people, monitoring and reviewing and trying to put in place a system as well as how to enhance it further on. However, we still come back to refresher training, so the process does not end with induction or formal training because we have a system of refresher training for those customer-facing staff who deal with the many ranges of disabilities and limitations.

[95] **David Lloyd:** Yn dilyn hynny, unwaith y mae'r hyfforddiant cychwynnol wedi ei gwblhau, fel yr ydych wedi awgrymu, mae hyfforddiant ychwanegol. Sut ydych yn sicrhau bod staff yn parhau i berfformio'n foddhaol yn y misoedd a'r blynyddoedd sydd yn dilyn? Ai drwy ragor o gyrsiau neu a oes rhyw raglen arall sydd yn edrych ar sut mae staff yn perfformio ym maes edrych ar ôl pobl anabl?

David Lloyd: Following that, once the initial training has been completed, as you have suggested, there is additional training. How do you ensure that staff continue to perform satisfactorily in the following months and years? Is it through further courses or is there some other programme that looks at how staff are performing in providing assistance to disabled people?

[96] **Mr Vaughan:** For customer-facing staff, there is a schedule of refresher training and the schedule and the content will take on board the experiences of all the staff who have been trained in the previous few months or 12 months, and that is discussed and, hopefully, will be factored into future training.

[97] **Mr Bullock:** May I add a couple of points? At the moment, station staff have two training days a year and the conductor staff have three training days a year. In the feedback that we get from the ring-backs from the assisted passenger rail system and from the national passenger surveys of our staff, which are conducted by Passenger Focus twice a year, the helpfulness of the staff and their training are not issues that come up. As I have already described, it is more that the APRS tends to let people down than there being a big problem with staff training.

[98] **David Lloyd:** I symud ymlaen—mae'r cwestiwn hwn eto ar gyfer Trenau Arriva Cymru—yn y papur atodol yr ydych wedi ei roi i ni, yr ydych yn sôn am sefydlu panel anabledd. A allwch ehangu ychydig ar y panel anabledd hwn? Pwy sydd yn eistedd arno a beth yn union yw ei waith?

David Lloyd: To move on—this question is also for Arriva Trains Wales—in the supplementary paper that you have provided for us, you mention establishing a disability panel. Can you expand a little on this disability panel? Who sits on it and what precisely is its role?

[99] **Mr Vaughan:** You could say that this is essentially a sub-group of our main passenger panel. We recognised on our main passenger panel that we wanted representation from disability user groups, so we thought that it was probably better to set up a disability panel in isolation from that. Senior management from Arriva Trains Wales and Passenger Focus are represented, and Disability Wales is now also included on that panel.

[100] **Ann Jones:** Does anyone else have any more questions? I am sure that you could find some, Eleanor, but we will not pursue them.

[101] Your papers and your oral evidence today will form part of the evidence that we will use in drawing up our recommendations. Is there one recommendation that you think that we should include in our final report that will make it easier for disabled people to travel?

[102] **Mr Bullock:** We have talked a lot today about the national station improvement programme and WEFO, and those incremental improvements, which are all valuable, take us up to 2015 when that funding runs out. The question is how we get from there to an accessibility strategy. What is the strategy going forward from that point? As I have already mentioned, documents such as the 'Better Rail Stations' report, which sets out the levels of facility, might be a template that we could use to set out levels of accessibility. The committee may decide that for every single station to be fully accessible is not achievable given the resources, and if that is the case, what levels of accessibility do we want in Wales? Setting out that programme and setting clear timescales and funding routes will also help with the expectations of the people whom we are trying to help.

[103] **Ann Jones:** Before Eleanor comes in, does Network Rail have a suggestion for a recommendation?

[104] **Mr Goggin:** I would echo Ian's point. You will be aware of Government spending constraints and so on and of the £100 million that Network Rail has to find to support the Government's efforts. Anything that the committee can do to give us recommendations regarding how we can get the best value for money in the work that we do and where we focus our investment would be useful.

10.10 a.m.

[105] **Eleanor Burnham:** Thank you for your indulgence, Chair. The issue is closing the gap that you mentioned earlier between your wonderful leaflets and what you say you are doing, and what you actually do. It is bad enough for us as regular travellers, but if you are disabled, it is an enormous catastrophe when you are let down during a travelling experience. It is difficult for some of us, and a few of us have been in wheelchairs to experience what it is like. The experience is quite devastating and I cannot imagine what it must be like to be blind or hard of hearing. The testimony from those who were hard of hearing really hit me; I had not thought how difficult it is for them. The issue is that it is not a streamlined system. There are so many people in the equation; members of the public can use a phone line to get some information, but the reality of that information is quite different. That is the issue and I do not know how that can be dealt with given that there are so many people in the equation.

[106] **Mr Vaughan:** We can test the system. We have used consultants—people with real disabilities—to test the system for us and we take on board everything that they say to us.

[107] **Mr Bullock:** There is a positive story with the incremental changes and improvements that are being made. We, and the Welsh Assembly Government officers that we work with, are absolutely committed, when making station changes, to ensuring that accessibility is the key plank of the changes that we make. To go back to your point, Eleanor, when we let people down—and we have let people down on occasion—we take it seriously. All that I can say is that we try to learn from those mistakes and try to put systems in place that mitigate those mistakes.

[108] **Ann Jones:** The aim of this committee is to make travel easier for everyone. If you get it right for the people with the severest disabilities, or even mothers or fathers with pushchairs and toddlers, then it will be so much easier for the majority of the travelling

public. That is our aim.

[109] I thank you all for coming today. You will receive a copy of the transcript of today's proceedings to check for accuracy. If there is anything else that you feel that you want to submit to us as evidence, we will be happy to accept it and go forward. Thank you very much.

10.12 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad i Hygyrchedd Gorsafoddd Rheilffordd: Tystiolaeth Lafar gan
Gymdeithas y Cwmnïau Trenau Cyf
Inquiry into the Accessibility of Railway Stations: Oral Evidence from the
Association of Train Operating Companies Ltd**

[110] **Ann Jones:** We now move on to our second evidence session. We are delighted to have with us David Sindall, who is the head of disability and inclusion at the Association of Train Operating Companies Ltd. We are grateful to you for coming today and for your paper. I know that you sat in and listened with interest to the session with Arriva Trains and Network Rail. I will start with the first question.

[111] How do you work with the train operating companies to address disability issues?

[112] **Mr Sindall:** ATOC is the trade association for passenger train operators. Our main means of engagement is through the ATOC disability group, whereby we have representatives from all the train operating companies, including open access operators, the non-franchised train operators. We work regularly through a series of issues with them. The agenda is fairly complex but clear. The train operating companies, by agreement, put in place a strategy for tackling disability and age-related issues. The predominant focus in the strategy is around continuous improvement, working with stakeholders, ensuring that the existing regulatory framework addresses the reality of train operation, and not an ideal of what we deal with, and improving the reach and range of the disabled persons' railcard. So, what ATOC essentially does from the centre is help train operators to work through a whole range of issues around disability and inclusion to improve passenger experience and work with our stakeholders constructively.

[113] **Joyce Watson:** In your evidence, you state that

[114] 'ATOC recognises that disabled passengers should be able to use rail in the same way as all other passengers. It is our intention to develop rail services so that rail travel becomes an appropriate choice for all older and disabled people'.

[115] Can you provide an estimated timescale for the achievement of this vision?

[116] **Mr Sindall:** Improved access to rail services is work in progress and some deadlines are approaching. For example, in 2020, all train rolling stock will have to be accessible. You also have the Department for Transport's own rail accessibility programme, 'Railways for All', through which stations have been improved. I do not think that there is a deadline because, if you think about it, people's expectations are forever increasing. As an equal opportunities committee, you will be aware that quality and equality go hand in hand, and people's expectations of what we will deliver in the future will change. I do not therefore think that there is a fixed point. We are trying to work towards a situation in which travelling by train, where services are available, is an appropriate choice, so that impairment or age-related factors do not get in the way of people using train services. It is an aspiration without a deadline, I am afraid, but it is one that we are working towards.

[117] We have clear touch points and stepping points as well. I will talk about this in more detail later, but I will just give you one example of our 'Stations Made Easy' accessibility guide, which is an interactive system within the National Rail Enquiries website. That replaced what we had five years ago, which was basically a static paper-based map that showed station accessibility in three categories. We now have something that is much more interactive; it gives you up-to-date information, and it gives you the ability to scrutinise stations from your own perspective as a user.

[118] **Ann Jones:** May I ask you about the rolling stock that has to be accessible by 2020? Do you think that train companies would argue that most of their rolling stock is accessible because ramps are available at stations and there are ways in which people can get on and off? For somebody with mobility problems, the steps from the train to the platform—I have personal experience of this—can pose a colossal challenge because of their height. Who is to decide what 'accessible' means? That is what I am asking.

[119] **Mr Sindall:** It is all in line with the Department for Transport's code of practice for stations, which includes the rail vehicle accessibility regulations for trains. Increasingly, we are seeing the use of European regulations, such as the PRM TSI—the technical specification of interoperability relating to persons with reduced mobility—which, although technical in nature, basically sets out the standards for stations and trains across Europe. Basically, improvements are made to stations to comply with the European regulations. If improvements do not comply, then you are not able to carry out your proposed improvements.

[120] **Eleanor Burnham:** It is not just the height, but the very narrow width of the steps as well. When we get off the train at Cardiff, there are so many people piling out that you have to disembark in a hurry, regardless of whether you have a bag, and even if you are not disabled, the steps are very narrow. I was on a train in Lisbon recently and that was completely disability friendly. There were no steps; the train just rolled up level with the platform.

[121] **Ann Jones:** Sorry, Joyce, we cut across you.

[122] **Joyce Watson:** That moves us on nicely. At present, half of all railway stations in Wales have platforms that are partly or wholly inaccessible to disabled passengers. Have the train operating companies throughout Great Britain carried out any sort of study that would allow the potential total cost of upgrading stations to at least be estimated?

[123] **Mr Sindall:** We have not undertaken a cost estimate. What we have done as part of our preparation of the 'Stations Made Easy' accessibility guide, as well as mapping out routes in stations that people can use, was to undertake an access audit of all 2,516 stations on the rail network. So, an access audit is available for every station in the country. That audit highlights where improvements need to be made.

[124] Staying with 'Stations Made Easy', one of the problems that we have is that there is an assumption in matters of accessibility that something is either entirely accessible or entirely inaccessible. That may well be true if you are among the 5 per cent of the population who are wheelchair users, but a high proportion of the population with mobility impairments consists of people who have restricted mobility. I think back to my father when he was alive; he had had a stroke, which meant that he could not walk very far. What he needed was better information about how to get around a station. In 'Stations Made Easy', we have given people the ability to make their own assessment. They might look at the staircase and say, 'I could manage that because I can see that there is a handrail, so I can see that there is a way that I could utilise this station'. That does not get us to the point at which every station is accessible, but it does mean that passengers can make better informed choices.

10.20 a.m.

[125] Interestingly, we understand that one of the largest groups of users of that system are parents travelling with kids or pushchairs, because they can make an assessment of whether they can use their local station. Again, it is about mainstreaming the information that you have and recognising that accessibility is not just about disabled people or older people—there are whole groups of people who need better information and who need to access facilities at stations.

[126] **Joyce Watson:** You have stated in your evidence that the train operating companies are frustrated by Network Rail's slow delivery of improvements funded by the Access to All scheme. Can you explain to the committee the causes of that frustration and how you have been working with Network Rail to address those issues?

[127] **Mr Sindall:** The first thing to say is that the programme that Network Rail has undertaken is a very challenging programme. Much of the Great Britain rail network and the Welsh rail network is Victorian in age and there are particular problems when you start looking underneath platforms and seeing the conditions of various items that the Victorians happily buried away before they started to build the station over them. Having said that, one of the frustrations experienced by train operating companies is that most of the programmes to date, bar one at Southampton Airport Parkway, have been delivered by Network Rail itself. Some of the train operators would like to have the option to deliver some of those schemes themselves because they believe that they can achieve better value for money and that they could deliver some of the schemes more quickly.

[128] Having said that, we think that there could be better liaison and an improvement in the way that Network Rail manages its programmes. One of the problems was the expectation surrounding the development of the Access for All programme, in that we expected to see a rapid improvement in the number of stations that would become accessible. In reality, we have seen about 45 to 51 stations improved over a three-year period, which is good, but the expectations of our stakeholders, some of whom have given evidence to this committee, were that things would have improved much quicker.

[129] The other point that I would make is that the other part of the 'Railways for All' strategy is the small schemes fund. The small schemes fund is a pot of funding of about £6 million per annum that is available to pay for work by train operating companies. Arriva Trains Wales has accessed it, as have other train companies operating in Wales. It is for minor works, such as improvements to car parking spaces and the fitting of induction loops at counters and so on. Due to the fact that it is match funding, we generated about £91 million-worth of expenditure on station improvements and facilities. All that work has been delivered by train operating companies, bar some projects that have been delivered by local authorities. Essentially, what we are seeing is better delivery on those programmes. It seems to indicate to us that the way forward is to involve train operating companies in delivering not necessarily the huge programmes, but some of the smaller programmes that can still make a real difference.

[130] **Eleanor Burnham:** Fel y clywsoch gynnau, nid oes gan 89 y cant o orsafoedd Cymru doiledau sy'n hygyrch i gadeiriau olwyn. A yw Trenau Arriva Cymru a Network Rail wedi rhoi digon o sylw i'r mater hwn? Efallai yr hoffech ddweud mwy am eich tad, nad oedd mewn cadair olwyn ond a oedd yn profi anawsterau o ran symud o gwmpas.

Eleanor Burnham: As you heard earlier, 89 per cent of stations in Wales do not have wheelchair-accessible toilets. Has this issue received sufficient attention from Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail? Perhaps you would like to say more about your father, who was not in a wheelchair, but who had mobility problems.

[131] **Mr Sindall:** There is a problem with toilets on stations. We know that people would like to see more toilets on stations. The ‘Better Rail Stations’ report published earlier in the year highlighted the need for improved facilities at stations. In terms of accessible toilets, there are issues to do with exposure to vandalism, for example, and the requirement to ensure that toilets are kept safe and that people can use them. The way that most train operators get around that is by installing locks sanctioned by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation on toilets to ensure that they are protected. As you heard in earlier evidence to this committee, it is an area where Arriva Trains Wales is keen to make improvements and where the facilities need to get better.

[132] I was recently involved in discussions around bids to the Department for Transport. Just as you get to the point of believing that you have the right specification for accessible toilets, along comes a campaign such as the Changing Places campaign, which is campaigning for better toilet facilities for people with multiple impairments, including people with continence problems. We are now looking at how we can include and make reference to better accessible toilet provision that would take account of that campaign, so that people who have continence problems, for example, have better facilities to look after themselves and to clean themselves when problems occur. However, we recognise that we need to make improvements.

[133] **Eleanor Burnham:** We had testimony from one person who suggested that, because of his various difficulties, cleanliness is extremely important.

[134] **Mr Sindall:** Yes. We need to ensure that accessible toilets are included in the maintenance and cleaning routines of all train operators.

[135] **Eleanor Burnham:** Absolutely.

<p>[136] Beth yw eich barn am sut y mae gwybodaeth am drenau yn cael ei chyflwyno i deithwyr anabl, gan gynnwys unigolion sydd â nam ar eu synhwyrau neu anableddau dysgu? Sut y gellir darparu'r wybodaeth yn well, a sut yr ydych yn sicrhau nad oes bwlch rhwng y wybodaeth sydd ar gael a realiti'r sefyllfa?</p>	<p>What are your views on how train information is presented to disabled passengers, including individuals with sensory impairments or learning disabilities? How could the provision of this information be improved, and how do you ensure that there is no gap between the information that is available and the reality of the situation?</p>
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[137] **Mr Sindall:** Information about rail travel is important. We need to go back a step before you even get to the station. For example, the National Rail Enquiries website, which I believe is the second busiest website in Europe—or it might be the third; I will check that out for you—has a lot of information about station facilities, station accessibility, and what people can expect on stations. One benefit of ‘Stations Made Easy’ is that you can also print off pictures of your step-by-step route in a station. That means that people who do not read very well, and people with learning difficulties, can see what they are going to encounter, work out their route through the station and so on.

[138] On train information, platform information and so forth, we are governed by the code of practice and by European regulations. Again, we need to make information available in audio format, as well as visually, on passenger information systems and so on. There have been big improvements in this area in recent years. Some of the work that has been undertaken with the small schemes fund has been about putting in better passenger information systems at stations, particularly those that give better contrast and better quality visual information for passengers. Sometimes, the old dot matrix systems were rather small and rather difficult to read, so we are making improvements there.

[139] Your point about people with learning difficulties brings me on to another important aspect of where schemes such as the small schemes fund, which I mentioned earlier, need to think about how they can bring in the end user. Of course, there need to be improvements in terms of how people access stations and so on, as well as bricks and mortar projects, but there is also a need for funding to go into working directly with organisations such as those that work with people with learning disabilities, for demonstration projects, to see what works for them, and how situations can be improved. However, at present, there is a shortage of funding for that kind of project.

[140] **Eleanor Burnham:** I am not disabled, but I have often stood on a platform—as I am sure has our Chair—and the information that is displayed is completely incorrect. You are looking at something on an information panel, which you can see, because you are intelligent and you have been there before, is quite incorrect. Therefore, how will you ensure that the improvements are made so that there is no gap between the information and the reality?

[141] **Mr Sindall:** I can write to you further about that, because some of those issues are technical—it is to do with the management of information in train services. If the Chair would allow, I would like to write to you about that.

[142] **Ann Jones:** That would be good; thank you.

[143] **Eleanor Burnham:** You could also perhaps tell us about the training that is available for people with inaudible voices; they ramble on on the tannoy system and you cannot hear them, even if you do not have a hearing difficulty.

[144] **Mr Sindall:** I can answer that question now. One of the issues there is about automated announcements. Automated announcements tend to be clearer and tend to have a clarity to the voice that is consistent, whereas individual humans tend to have varying levels of voice, diction, clarity and so on, which creates problems. Therefore, the solution in the medium term is to have more automated announcements. I suspect that the problems that you mention are to do with when there is a disruption in the network.

[145] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes, absolutely.

[146] **Mr Sindall:** Disruption is difficult for all passengers. So, if you will allow me, I will get back to you on that point.

[147] **Ann Jones:** Thank you.

[148] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae gennyf un cwestiwn olaf. Yn ddiweddar, lansiwyd ‘Stations Made Easy’—yr ydych wedi cyfeirio at hyn eisoes—ar y we gan Gymdeithas y Cwmnïau Trenau, sy’n galluogi teithwyr i weld y cyfleusterau sydd ar gael mewn gorsafoedd. A allwch egluro sut mae hyn yn gweithio, a pha effaith yr ydych yn disgwyl iddo ei gael ar allu pobl anabl i gael mynediad at wasanaethau rheilffyrdd gwell?

Eleanor Burnham: I have one final question. Recently, the Association of Train Operating Companies launched ‘Stations Made Easy’—to which you have already referred—on the internet, which allows passengers to see the facilities on offer at stations. Could you explain how this works and what impact you expect it to have on the ability of disabled people to access better rail services?

10.30 a.m.

[149] **Mr Sindall:** ‘Stations Made Easy’ is a web-based facility that enables passengers to

look at three levels of information. The first is a station overview, where there is an interactive map that a passenger can click on. By moving their mouse across the plan of the station, they get a photograph of what the facility looks like and they can see what facilities are on the station. The second part is the written information about the facilities that exist in the station, such as when the staff are available, what the contact number is for passenger assistance, whether there are toilet facilities, parking and so on. That has always been available on the National Rail Enquiries website, but we use that as part of 'Stations Made Easy'. The third part of the programme is the capacity to plan a route within a station from one point to another, avoiding particular features that you might find difficult, if the facilities are there. For example, if you wanted to use Cardiff Central station and avoid steps, you would note that you preferred not to use steps. It will then plan a route for you from the main ticket counter to platform 4, for example, avoiding those barriers that you find difficult to use.

[150] To date, we have had positive feedback from disabled passengers. We have had one instance, for example, where a colleague in Scotland who is a member of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee did not realise that she could use her local station, instead of using a station that was about 20 miles away, because she thought that her local station was inaccessible. She got all that information from 'Stations Made Easy', by being able to interrogate the data that are there. We have also found that other rail users, such as mums with buggies, are also finding those data useful and the ability to look at what a station is like is important. The programme is a good example of how the industry works in partnership; ATOC put funding into it, as did Transport Scotland, Network Rail and the Department for Transport. We work together and all the train operators across the rail network work together, so that every station on the rail network has the same level of detail. There is something like 1 million photographs in the programme that you can interrogate and look at to plan routes across the whole rail network.

[151] **Eleanor Burnham:** It sounds wonderful, but you need to have a friend to do this with you on the web if you cannot use it.

[152] **Mr Sindall:** Do you mean from an accessibility point of view or from a general point of view about access to the internet?

[153] **Eleanor Burnham:** Generally. Not everyone is computer literate.

[154] **Mr Sindall:** It is also available through the National Rail Enquiries call centre, so staff there can help and some of the train operating companies have made it available to their own staff at stations. One train operating company is looking at putting interactive displays at stations so that you can navigate using those as well.

[155] **Eleanor Burnham:** Is that Arriva Trains Wales by any chance?

[156] **Mr Sindall:** No, not at the moment.

[157] **David Lloyd:** Trof at y gwasanaeth sy'n cefnogi pobl i archebu tocynnau ymlaen llaw, os mai dyna yw'r cyfieithiad o 'assisted passenger reservation service'. Byddwch yn gwybod am yr arolwg mae Passenger Focus wedi ei gynnal o'r gwasanaeth APRS, a ddarganfu bod llai na hanner y teithwyr yn hapus gyda'r gwasanaeth hwnnw. Sut yr ydych wedi bod yn gweithio gyda'r cwmnïau trenau i wella'r gwasanaeth hwn?

David Lloyd: I turn to the service that assists people in buying tickets in advance, if that is what is meant by 'assisted passenger reservations service'. You will be aware of the Passenger Focus survey of the APRS scheme, which found that less than half of all passengers were satisfied with that service. How have you been working with the train operating companies to improve this service?

[158] **Mr Sindall:** We are in the process of putting in a new passenger assistance strategy. We work closely with Passenger Focus. It was at the last meeting of ATOC's disability group, because it is rerunning the research that it did previously, to which you refer. The Passenger Focus report was helpful. Although it did not tell us a great deal new, it confirmed some of the problems that we know exist within the system. Our new passenger assistance strategy has three aspects. The first part is that the computer system that currently drives bookings needs to be upgraded. We are looking at how we upgrade it, how we replace it and, most importantly, how we improve communication between stations and passengers about the bookings that they have made. That is the big ticket item in terms of the work that we are doing, so it is expensive to replace. We are in the process of evaluating whether we can find a business that can replace that for us.

[159] The second part of our strategy is about improving staff performance at the front line and ensuring that staff are able to deliver assistance when it is booked and that basic routines are followed—for example, ensuring that, when a passenger who has booked assistance has arrived, the station down the line where they interchange or where their journey ends, is contacted. That is basic standard practice, but it is something important that needs to take place.

[160] The third element of work that we are undertaking is work with disabled people themselves, to remind them of the assistance that is available. There is an awful lot of mythology around passenger assistance; there are an awful lot of misconceptions. For example, the requirement to book 24 hours ahead—that is a recommendation, simply because we want to ensure that people who want to make a journey can make those journeys. Booking in advance enables us to check out those facilities. As you will know, if the destination station is not accessible, we take the passenger to the last accessible station on the journey and provide them with a taxi. The problem is that taxi provision across Wales and across Great Britain as a whole is not uniform, so booking an accessible taxi is not always possible. Booking in advance enables us to put those facilities in place.

[161] Most of the horror stories that I hear about passenger assistance are about turn-up-and-go type journeys, or journeys where there has been a complication, such as the train being delayed. That is when the system starts to get a bit more difficult to utilise. At the moment, we are trying to make a step change in how we provide assistance. Through the three elements of the strategy, we are hoping that we can make the system better so that we can make further improvements in future.

[162] **Eleanor Burnham:** Do you, perhaps, advise people not to travel on a Sunday? I had the most horrendous journey—which was nothing to do with Arriva Trains Wales—on a Sunday, coming through Birmingham to Cardiff. Everything that could go wrong, went wrong. It is an issue, given that there is so much disruption because of Network Rail activity, which has to take place, but it must be horrendous for disabled people to get caught up on a Sunday like that.

[163] **Mr Sindall:** When there is engineering work, providing that the passenger has booked in advance, we are able to make sure that they can complete their journey, either by utilising accessible alternative transport or by booking taxis. We would never advise people not to travel on a Sunday.

[164] **Ann Jones:** Dai, do you want to carry on?

[165] **David Lloyd:** Yes.

[166] Diolch am yr ateb cynhwysfawr Thank you for the previous comprehensive blaenorol. Mewn perthynas â'r gwasanaeth reply. In relation to APRS, according to the

APRS, yn ôl y dystiolaeth yr ydym wedi ei chael, mae problemau o ran cydlynu cefnogaeth ar ddau ben y siwrnai, yn enwedig os oes angen trosglwyddo mewn argyfwng. Yr wyf yn cymryd yr hyn yr ydych wedi ei ddweud, eich bod yn datblygu pethau i wella'r cynllun, ond a oes unrhyw broblemau—yn enwedig mewn perthynas â'r gwasanaeth APRS—o ran gweithredu siwrneiau sy'n dechrau yng Nghymru ac yn gorffen mewn gorsaf yn Lloegr? A oes unrhyw beth sy'n atal y cynllun rhag gweithio?

evidence that we have received, there are problems in co-ordinating support at both ends of the journey, especially if a transfer is required in an emergency. I accept what you say, in that you are trying to improve this scheme, but are there any problems—especially in relation to APRS—with journeys that originate in Wales but which end in a station in England? Is there anything that prevents the scheme from working?

[167] **Mr Sindall:** Journeys that are made within one train operating company tend to be the most successful; most things are in that company's control. However, when you make a journey whereby you move from one train operating company to another, it is like anything in life: the more complicated it is, the more dependencies there are to be fulfilled. We are aware that one of the key areas where we need to make improvements is on journeys between train operating companies. It is a difficulty at the moment, but we are confident that, with the strategy that we have in place, we are going to make improvements to that.

[168] One thing that I would point out is that Great Britain offers the most extensive network of passenger assistance. You can book assistance, at the moment, at all the 2,500-plus stations on the rail network. As colleagues mentioned earlier, we believe that, at the moment, we tend to overpromise and underdeliver. We want to focus on what we can deliver. Using Germany as an example, where there are something like 5,000 stations, you can only book assistance between 70 stations on the entire network. No-one is proposing that model for GB; it would be entirely unacceptable, and it would not fit within our legal requirement under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. What we are saying is: let us see what we can do and let us really focus on what we can deliver, moving perhaps to a hub-and-spoke approach to stations, so that you have some hub stations, where we know we can provide assistance all the time, and some spoke stations, where assistance may be available during limited time periods. However, we need greater clarity. The issue of co-operation between the train operating companies is an area where ATOC has a crucial role to play.

10.40 a.m.

[169] **David Lloyd:** Diolch am hynny. Hoffwn symud yn awr at fater y cardiau rheilffordd ar gyfer pobl anabl. Dywedwch yn eich tystiolaeth fod angen cynyddu'r defnydd a wneir o'r cardiau hynny. Dywedwch hefyd:

David Lloyd: Thank you for that. I would like to move on to the issue of railcards for disabled people. You say in your evidence that more use needs to be made of those cards. You also say:

[170] 'We are particularly keen to work with WAG and Welsh local authorities to increase the numbers of cards in circulation.'

[171] Y cwestiwn sy'n deillio o hynny yw sut yr hoffech weithio gyda Llywodraeth y Cynulliad a chynghorau lleol i gynyddu nifer y bobl sydd â chardiau rheilffordd o'r fath?

The question that arises from that is how would you like to work with the Welsh Government and local councils to increase the number of people who have such cards?

[172] **Mr Sindall:** I can give a short answer to that. One reason most disabled people do not have a disabled persons railcard is because they do not know about it, so raising awareness of

the fact that the product exists is important. With local authorities, and through the disabled persons railcard fulfilment centre, we recently tried to develop a local authority partnership programme, whereby vouchers could be exchanged for disabled persons railcards. Not many local authorities were interested in doing that, and so encouraging local authorities to help disabled people to purchase their railcards would be particularly useful. I can give the committee clerk some more information about how that works, too.

[173] **Ann Jones:** Thank you for that.

[174] **Mohammad Asghar:** My question will be based on suggested solutions. You have stated that barriers to ensuring that rail travel becomes an appropriate choice for disabled passengers include

[175] ‘a franchising system that focuses on short term rather than long term service development’.

[176] How should the franchise system in Wales be amended in the future to address that issue?

[177] **Mr Sindall:** The key issue is how you measure what is delivered, and the quality standards that you put into your franchises in the future. Earlier this year, ATOC produced a report on franchise reform, which I will circulate to you, but we have not seen it yet. That was quite clear about the fact that we need to include quality standards within franchising as well. We have argued for a long time that, although the whole customer service issue and services for disabled passengers are referenced in the franchising process, they are not scored in that process, so we would like to see those elements scored, as perhaps then they would be taken a little more seriously by those who are bidding for franchises.

[178] **Mohammad Asghar:** Another barrier that you have put forward is a general lack of knowledge among disabled passengers about the facilities and services available. I think that some of my colleagues disagree about that. Could you explain the background to that point? What should be done to improve awareness among disabled people of the facilities and services available?

[179] **Mr Sindall:** The key, first of all, is communication. Nationally, at the GB-wide level, we communicate with many disability advocacy organisations. We work quite closely with organisations such as Mind, the RNIB, and the committee on mobility for visually impaired people. We also work closely with the Disabled Persons’ Transport Advisory Committee. However, to some extent we are talking to people who already know about this. We have moved away from talking about things such as rail travel for disabled people. For example, our leaflet on accessibility is now called *Rail Travel Made Easy*, because we believe that lots of people, whether rightly or wrongly—and I am not making a judgment about them—will not necessarily see themselves as being disabled; they just need things to be easier. So, some of this is about the language that we use to communicate, and some of it is about finding the right channels to use to get through to people who are not using the train. I would welcome advice as to how we can do that with disabled people in Wales, because it is true that, from a GB-wide perspective, we could do more work in Wales, particularly in relation to things such as the disabled persons railcard and improving awareness generally of the accessibility of the rail network.

[180] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you for your consideration of that. How might disabled people play a part in improving the accessibility of railway stations, for example through staff training, awareness raising and identifying priorities, given the limited availability of funding?

[181] **Mr Sindall:** Two years ago, we produced a training DVD, which was entitled 'Everything you wanted to know about disability but were afraid to ask'. I can also let you have a copy of that. The DVD uses the voices of disabled passengers and draws upon the problems that they have had in accessing and using the rail network. It has been used in a number of different ways by train operating companies. For example, some have incorporated it into the design of all their disability training, all based around that resource; some have taken it and used small chunks of the training DVD to put into briefings for various groups of staff. We developed this resource in discussions with colleagues at the DPTAC and other disability organisations and also by looking at the training requirements of staff at the front line. We are always more than willing to engage with and talk with disabled people delivering and developing training. We have just launched a new online training resource around passenger assistance, developed by a company called Wideaware, which is run entirely by disabled people, and which has at the centre of what it does the social model of disability. It is very clear about the need for equality and fair treatment for disabled people. We believe that using disabled people as trainers and training advisers is a good way forward.

[182] **Ann Jones:** As you heard me say to both Network Rail and Arriva Trains, your papers will be used as the evidence on which we will form the basis of our report and make recommendations. Is there one recommendation that you think we should include that would be achievable and effective?

[183] **Mr Sindall:** The integration of transport is very important. Different transport systems need to work together—rail, cars and so on. Getting to the station is still an important aspect; it is still a barrier for disabled people in how they use rail services. In line with our colleagues from Arriva Trains Wales, we believe that taking a strategic view of how the whole of the rail network in Wales develops and its relationship with the rest of the Great Britain rail network is also very important.

[184] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much for your evidence today. A copy of the transcript will be sent to you for correction, and we look forward to receiving the additional information that you have promised us.

[185] I remind committee members that the next meeting will be on 22 June, when the Deputy First Minister in his capacity as Minister for the Economy and Transport will join us to discuss the evidence that we have received from this inquiry so far. I declare the meeting closed.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.47 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.47 a.m.*