

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

[Inquiry into the future of the Wales and Borders Rail](#)

Evidence from Railfuture Cymru South Wales Branch - WBF 8 6

***RAILFUTURE {Cymru}***

***Cymdeithas Datblygu Rheilffyrdd Cymru***

***Railway Development Society (Wales)***

**Cangen De Cymru**

**South Wales Branch**

Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry

This is a condensed summary of the recommendations of Railfuture for the new Wales and Borders franchise. We trust we will have the opportunity to expand them in the future when officials are writing the new franchise specification.

1 What lessons can be learnt from the current franchise?

Franchise owners can change and there can be takeovers by foreign companies which results in profits moving out of the country and not being reinvested. A no growth franchise is inappropriate.

Railfuture proposes a not for dividend company and has already supplied details of its proposal in detail.

2 What priorities can be identified to ensure that rail passenger services in Wales and the borders provide the best possible service for passengers from 2018?

The provision of an integrated transport system, seven days a week, both in Wales and to all parts of Britain and not just London

3 How can service delivery after 2018 deliver connectivity and value for money for passengers while reducing the burden on the tax payer?

There must be central control and also control over the services operated in Wales by other franchises. Rail links with other forms of public transport are essential and in some cases bus services should be part of the rail franchise. Lessons can be learnt from Northern Ireland.

The existing subsidy was not sufficient to provide a franchise that could be enhanced. Enhancements to the present franchise have had to be paid from Welsh Government funds and not by money from Westminster Government. The existing franchise was a no growth franchise and consequently has been less of a burden on British taxpayers. It is important that Wales receives a fair share of subsidy paid by Westminster Government and not be given a cheap franchise as has been the case with the present one.

#### 4 Whether the current franchise meets passenger needs and what lessons can be learnt from it.

The present franchise does not meet fully passenger needs in the following areas -insufficient capacity on many trains, poor or nonexistent Sunday services, poor conductivity between train services especially with other operators, inappropriate rolling stock for some longer journeys, inadequate station facilities including shelters and toilets, poor station design e.g. Newport,

In most continental countries Sunday services are similar to those on weekdays and this should be the case in Wales. The level of train services required to serve Welsh communities is stated in Railfuture's Development Plan.

Welsh Government must have the role of setting fares and the development of more appropriate forms of ticketing. We support the setting of a maximum fare for the franchise and in some cases for regional travel. Rover tickets must continue to be available and the Red Rover system in North Wales could be extended to the whole of Wales. Plus bus tickets should be promoted.

National arrangements provided by ATOC must remain for travel to be compatible with rail travel in England and Scotland.

#### 5 How passengers should be involved in the franchise development and delivery.

This requires the continuation of rail partnership schemes and also the expansion of these schemes with funding from the franchise. Consultation with stakeholders including rail user groups both national and local, also community and town councils, with regard to services and facilities.

By continued support from the franchise for community projects and sponsorship where appropriate. Continuation of station adopters and customer panels including disabled representation. This should be written into the new franchise.

There should be a clear method of handling suggestions and complaints. Consultation on plans proposed by Welsh Government, Network Rail, other rail operators in Wales and Transport Consortia. The PTUC appears to be a Government advisory body and not a champion for rail passengers. Its role should be re appraised.

There must be an opportunity for passengers to suggest and to comment on proposed timetable changes

The role of Passenger Focus is limited and should be improved with greater contact with passengers. It does provide good research information covering all of Britain.

The present franchise provides a high standard of information except at times of disruption and when engineering work is taking place. It must not be assumed that everybody has access to real

time information. However information re rail bus connections is variable and a much higher standard than at present must be achieved by Travelline Cymru if it is to be fit for purpose .

6 How commuters and local government /Regional Transport Consortia should be involved. Could they be involved in specifying the franchise or perhaps even in delivering services?

Commuters are only one section of travellers and are covered by the suggestions above. The needs of travellers other than commuters should also be considered .Local government is now part of the Transport Consortia and if they continue to exist they should have a role in franchise development but they do not have the expertise to deliver rail services. There must be joined up planning by the Consortia.

The Consortia and local communities should have a role in the management of local stations, car parks toilets, retail outlets, refreshment facilities and feeder bus services.

7 The management model to be adopted including the Welsh Government proposal for a not for dividend franchise.

This would retain control in Wales and provide additional funds for investment and is strongly supported by Railfuture which made the original proposal .There must also be Welsh Government control over Network Rail activities in Wales

8 How the franchise specification should improve the passenger experience including issues such as franchise length, targets / incentives and core service standards which should be included.

This requires a long and detailed response. If the not for dividend model in used the franchise length is not important but if this is not the case a longer term has advantages if the franchise term includes growth and investment. The core service standards have been listed in Railfuture's Development Plan

9 The routes, particularly cross border routes, which should be included.

These are also included in Railfuture's Development Plan

10 The rolling stock needed for the new franchise. What factors need to be considered and how this should be procured. Will new rolling stock be required?

These comments are additional to those in the Railfuture Development Plan. The type of rolling stock should be appropriate for the journeys being made and should provide provision for refreshments on longer journeys. If possible new rolling stock should be acquired but this needs to be ordered before the franchise change and should be at the planning/order stage now. It is preferable to buy new stock, diesel and electric of the same internal standards which have already been tried and tested. New stock can be constructed to the requirements of the franchise and be more economical to run. The proposed use of second hand cast off electric stock from the South East will require considerable adaption to be fit for purpose including a more friendly and effective 2+2 seating arrangements, the fitting of toilets, the fitting of air conditioning, provision of tables, the provision of adequate accommodation for disabled, pushchairs and prams and bikes, the fitting of power points and wi-fi , corridor provision, disabled access and adequate capacity. The use of older stock which in some cases is older than the stock which it will replace will also compromise present

day safety standards. The continued provision of single coach trains results in capacity problems and the use of three coaches on long distance services also results in similar problems at peak times. We suggest the provision of 4 car and not 3 car trains for most services with a limited number of two coach trains for lesser used services and also to provide six coach trains where required. Trains of this size will make full use of the platform lengths including extensions in Wales. The new four and two coach electric trains are already in use in South east England in up to 10 coach formations. In the longer term longer trains and platforms could be required. All sets/stock should have interconnecting corridors and an enhanced passenger information system.

There must be the ability to increase the length of trains and platforms.

11 Whether additional lines, enhancements to existing lines, new stations or other infrastructure are needed.

These are suggested in detail in Railfuture's Development Plan .With greater powers Welsh Government would find it easier to encourage Welsh cities and towns to invest in light rail.

12 Whether the new franchise can support an enhanced relationship between Network Rail and the franchise operator and the benefits this might bring.

This is essential. It is also important that Welsh Government is able to be more closely involved in the work of Network Rail in Wales and ensures that it obtains value for money and receives an equitable investment in Wales compared with England and Scotland.

Yours faithfully

For Railfuture South Wales Branch

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Submissions are to be made by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013 to [enterprisecommittee@wales.gov.uk](mailto:enterprisecommittee@wales.gov.uk)