

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes	Enterprise and Business Committee
Ymchwiliad i'r Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer dyfodol Seilwaith y Rheilffyrdd yng Nghymru	Inquiry into the Priorities for the future of Welsh Rail Infrastructure
WRI 20	WRI 20
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrexham	Wrexham County Borough Council

Lead Member for Environment & Transport  
Aelod Arweiniol dros yr Amgylchedd a Chludiant  
**Councillor David A Bithell / Y Cyngorydd David A Bithell**

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14 January 2016  
Councillor David A Bithell  
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Dear Sir

I write in response to the current consultation by the National Assembly for Wales on issues relevant to the rail infrastructure in Wales in order to inform decisions on Welsh rail infrastructure in Control Period 6 and beyond. Attached for your attention is copy of Wrexham County Borough Council's response to the consultation, the contents of which it is hoped will inform the Enterprise and Business Committees work on this matter. In line with the Council's Welsh Language Policy, a bilingual version of the response will follow.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D A Bithell'.

**Councillor David A Bithell**  
**Lead Member for Environment & Transport**

## Appendix A : Draft Consultation Response

### Inquiry into the Priorities for the future of Welsh Rail Infrastructure

**Question 1**     **High level priorities for the development of rail infrastructure to provide the capacity and connectivity necessary to support the social and economic well-being of Wales;**

**Response**     In planning its long term rail infrastructure Wales needs not only to look to developments within Wales but those cross border in England too which can bring social and economic benefits to Wales. Connectivity to international gateways such as Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham with their airports is vitally important to north and mid Wales. With the plans to have a HS2 hub at Crewe we need to ensure we are ready in Wales with infrastructure that can maximise any opportunities and benefits that HS2 will bring.

**Question 2**     **How far Welsh Government's rail infrastructure priorities, including those in the National Transport Finance Plan, and the Ministerial Task Force on North Wales Transport report meet the needs of Wales;**

**Response**     Wales is not an island and the rail network used by the passenger needs not to see any boundaries. We need to be aware of infrastructure developments in England so that we may be part of the bigger picture. Electrification is a case in point. Plans for electrification in the north of England and in the West Midlands may only yield benefits if we are planning electrification to link in with their timescales. Electrification should include all of North Wales and not just the North Wales coast.

Any service enhancements from the journey time enhancement project are still defined and it is not clear as to how and what can be achieved, we are aware that capacity enhancements are possible. The delay to the project is not helping this work.

The next franchise needs to ensure that all stakeholders are able and encouraged to provide meaningful, local feedback into the specification. We need a franchise that is passenger driven and not driven from a transport operator's perspective.

This is important as there are opportunities in this area to achieve greater network benefits than the journey time enhancements foreseen. Work is being undertaken on the Halton Curve which would provide an important link from Wrexham to Liverpool and the airport via Liverpool South Parkway but capacity on the single track in the section Saltney Junction to Wrexham may restrict the running of such services or in addressing the aspirations of the region to see a 30 minute interval service between Wrexham and Chester.

The growth potential of the Wrexham Bidston Liverpool line has for too long been unexploited. Future electrification must be considered but in the meantime an enhanced interval diesel service should be implemented.

**Question 3**     **How the development and exploitation of rail infrastructure in England affects Wales, and vice versa;**

**Response**     As mentioned previously we need to ensure infrastructure plans in England are communicated in good time allowing us to prioritise any infrastructure developments in Wales which may if carried out in tandem bring in cost savings through economy of scale. Disruption to passengers could also be managed better with through route work and maintenance being carried out in parallel.

- Question 4**    **The impact on Wales of key planned developments in England including High Speed Rail, electrification, Northern Power House / Transport for the North, and wider devolution of responsibility for rail within England;**
- Response**    We need to be part of the wider network benefits that rail can bring. Devolution can bring benefits but it can also lead to the wider benefits not being understood or catered for. We need to convey our requirements to these devolved areas to ensure we continue to have access to major international gateways and airports. High Speed Rail implications have already been mentioned and accessibility both to Crewe and Birmingham will be vitally important in the future to connect to the HS2 network.
- Question 5**    **How Welsh Government can best engage with and influence infrastructure developments in England and the development of passenger and freight services using the network;**
- Response**    It is vital that Cross border developments are understood and indeed influenced. Currently separate route plans are produced but in certain areas and in Wales we need to look both to the West and Ireland and also to the East and South to England. Important developments in those countries may also lead us to re prioritise plans to ensure the right investment is made. The Market Studies currently carried out are complex and cover a considerably long timeframe. A long term network wide plan is needed to show how, where and why investment is being undertaken and the potential benefits.
- Question 6**    **Whether the periodic review process meets the needs of Wales and takes account of the needs of Welsh passenger and freight users, and how this should be developed;**
- Response:**    The review process may well reflect current Wales passenger needs but it is the latent untapped demand that is seemingly never addressed. Poor connection times (over 30 minutes) are often seen to major conurbations which can deter people from what would be a viable commute by rail. We need to analyse far more closely the connectivity that could unlock economic benefits and prosperity and also better access to learning, training opportunities and in some cases access to cross border health services.
- Question 7**    **The effectiveness of the Network Rail Wales Route and whether the approach to delivery of network management, maintenance, renewal and enhancement functions are effective in delivering value for money, capacity, frequency, speed, reliability and handling disruption for passengers and freight users in Wales;**
- Response:**    Recently confidence in both on time and on budget delivery has been undermined with projects almost doubling in costs and unforeseen problems delaying completion. Short notice possession, (not for emergency engineering) has also been experienced and these instances cause unnecessary passenger inconvenience.
- Confidence is also low in what is being expected from certain projects with value for money overall being questioned.
- Question 8**    **The fact that funding for Welsh rail infrastructure is not devolved. The advantages, disadvantages, opportunities and risks potentially associated with devolution.**
- Response:**    With no devolution it is possible that smaller scale schemes that deliver great network benefits are overshadowed by the high profile major schemes of work. An advantage of devolution is that

a greater mix of schemes but even in a smaller devolved area there will always be the threat that the priority schemes will always be seen in the city regions. Sadly that leads to a two tier railway with those often travelling the furthest suffer with poor infrastructure or rolling stock. Devolution does not take away the need to look outside the devolved area to maximise the potential benefits of any scheme. Indeed it adds to the list of priorities.