

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Priorities for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
EIS 25 Rail Delivery Group	EIS 25 Rail Delivery Group

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ECONOMY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

➤ **Capital investment for service improvements and rolling stock on the Wales and Border franchise**

Service improvements for new rail franchises in England, such as the provision of better Wi-Fi capabilities, are increasingly being factored in to new franchise agreements by the Department of Transport.

We would be interested to learn whether the Welsh Government is adopting a similar approach by seeking to ensure that the costs for improvements, which involve significant capital investment, will be mandated through the new franchise agreement. This would enable train operators and owning groups to factor in the cost of these improvements into their franchise bid.

Rolling stock on the Wales and Border franchise is also starting to approach the end of its working lifespan and in 2020 new accessibility requirements will be mandatory across the network. This is another significant capital cost that will need to be addressed in the next franchise agreement and we would invite the Committee to scrutinise how far the Welsh Government has assessed options for financing this.

➤ **Infrastructure priorities for the Welsh rail network**

The Committee's predecessor, the Enterprise and Business Committee, looked at priorities for Welsh rail infrastructure.

There were a wide range of suggestions on what the Welsh Government should focus on in terms of infrastructure investment, these included:

- Improving links between North Wales and the Northern Powerhouse
- Upgrading track at Cardiff Central station
- Upgrading overall station infrastructure across Wales
- Integrating the railway better with local metros, such as the South Wales metro

It would be useful to get a greater level of detail and clarity over where the Committee feels the Welsh Government should be focusing its attention, in terms of rail infrastructure priorities and investment.

➤ **Holding the Welsh Government to account as the franchising authority for cross-border railway services**

With the Welsh Government taking on responsibility for the Wales and Border Franchise, one key issue that remains unresolved is how accountability for 'English' services will be handled by the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government will have authority over the Wales and Border franchise, which will include powers and responsibilities over holding the new franchise operator to account. However, a significant proportion of these services start, terminate at, and serve constituencies in England. It is not clear how English constituents can seek redress with elected officials in Wales.

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Welsh constituents can use their local MP as a channel to take up any concerns with the Department for Transport, where it is responsible for the franchise agreement. There is no channel for English constituents to take up concerns with the Welsh Government, should they have concerns over the Wales and Border franchise, as they will be resident beyond its political jurisdiction.

We would suggest that the Committee seek to gain clarity over this issue and, if necessary, seek evidence on how a process can be implemented to allow English constituents to take up concerns with the Welsh Government if they wished to do so.