

# WELSH GOVERNMENT

## SETTING THE DIRECTION FOR WALES AND BORDERS RAIL CONSULTATION

**Question 1:** Do you agree with the Welsh Government's high level outcomes for rail in the Wales and Borders area? Are there any others we should consider?

1. The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum agrees with the WG's high level outcomes for rail in the Wales and Borders area.
2. Continuation of the current franchise's cross-border services from West Wales to Manchester, Aberystwyth & the Cambrian Coast to Birmingham International & Birmingham New Street, and North Wales Coast to both Manchester and Birmingham. Continuation of services to Cheltenham Spa and a commitment to ensure all Wales & Borders services start from / run through to Cheltenham Spa rather than terminate at Gloucester, in order to maintain good connections to Cross-Country services.

**Question 2:** Do you agree with the top 5 priorities improvements for rail passengers identified by Transport Focus? How would you rank these priorities? If you do not agree, are there others that should take precedence?

1. The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum does not agree with all of the top 5 priorities identified by Transport Focus.
2. Based on the fact that almost all rail passengers travelling to/from Pembrokeshire face journeys of over an hour, our top priorities are:
  - Always able to get a seat on the train (especially for disabled and elderly passengers).
  - Train company keeps passengers on trains and at stations informed about delays.
  - Well maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train.
  - Connections with other train services and, especially in rural areas, with other public transport services at stations are always good.
  - Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage and bikes.
  - Ensure advance notice posters and online information cover all resulting services rather than only showing those services amended, in order to give passengers an overview of the complete proposed service pattern rather than a partial view requiring consultation with other posters / sites to view the complete service pattern.

**Question 3:** Are there changes to the range and frequency of services currently operated, as set out at Annex A that you would consider necessary?

1. The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum wishes to point out that the Sunday service frequency set out for Swansea/Carmarthen - Pembrokeshire in Annex A (1 per hour) is incorrect. The Sunday service frequency for the stations at Fishguard and Goodwick and Fishguard Harbour is 2 per '24 hourly'! 'Would-be' rail passengers continue to tell the Forum that this is why they do not travel to/from Fishguard by train.
2. Changes considered necessary include:

- Additional Sunday services to Fishguard, in particular an early evening return trip that allows connections as far as London to allow for weekend break visits.
- An additional Monday-Saturday mid-afternoon service to Fishguard, to fill the long afternoon gap in services and to allow a later departure providing a link to London than currently provided by the 13:35 up boat train.

**Question 4:** Are there destinations outside of Wales that should be considered for inclusion in the next Wales and Borders franchise?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum suggests consideration of the following destinations for inclusion in the next Wales & Borders franchise:

- Bristol Temple Meads, as the station is a major hub and Bristol has strong links to Wales. The current franchise split results in an enforced change of train at Cardiff for destinations in South West Wales.
- Manchester Airport.
- Liverpool via a re-instated Halton curve which would allow services from North Wales to serve Liverpool South Parkway and John Lennon airport.
- The maintenance of existing destinations outside of Wales is of critical importance; namely through services from West Wales Coast to Manchester Piccadilly and through services from Aberystwyth and the Cambrian Coast to Birmingham International and Birmingham New Street.

**Question 5:** Can better use be made of existing train capacity? What is an acceptable limit for standing times on rail journeys?

1. The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum notes that overcrowding has a much greater impact on passengers making long journeys, than on those making shorter/commuter type journeys. Consequently, it is vitally important that efforts be made to improve existing train capacity, if anything to remove possible disincentives towards travelling by train.
2. In our view there is no acceptable limit for all travellers on these long journeys to/from Pembrokeshire, and not just for disabled and elderly passengers.

**Question 6:** What standards for performance should the Welsh Government consider setting when awarding a franchise for rail services?

Vis-à-vis awarding the new franchise contract by the WG, the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum supports the incorporation in the franchise award of the performance standards set out in the consultation document.

**Question 7:** How could arrangements for dealing with disruption be improved upon and how should these be prioritised?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum believes that arrangements for dealing with disruptions could be improved upon by incorporating performance requirements in the franchise award, prioritised as follows:

- Communicate planned service disruptions in sufficient time to enable people to make alternative travel plans.
- Put systems in place to keep passengers informed at stations and on trains of any unplanned disruption and the expected impact on passengers' travel plans.
- Make alternative arrangements available for passengers so that they can continue their journey and, if this is not possible, explain the rights passengers have to complain or claim compensation.
- Minimise disruption on services.
- A commitment to provide national GPS based train location systems to improve train running real time information, particularly away from multiple aspect signalling areas, and an automatic system to link such real time running information into CIS on stations.

**Question 8:** How should the cost improvements in service provision be met? Will the Welsh Government's approach provide the best value for money for passengers?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum believes that Welsh Government insists on a contractual agreement to receive detailed breakdowns of costs incurred in future service enhancement agreements. This will ensure that any future train service improvements such as services on newly reopened routes not envisaged at the original contract award date are provided at the best value for money possible. The new franchise should include mechanisms designed for incremental service enhancements that may not be envisaged at contract start date.

**Question 9:** Would you prefer to not use a paper-based ticket and, if so, what ticket type would you like to have available?

Even if smart cards, digital ticketing or electronic ticketing, etc. are introduced, the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum believes that paper-based tickets should remain available for those who do not have access to (or do not know how to use) the new technology, in particular elderly passengers and those who live in remote rural areas.

Paperless tickets that rely upon electronic devices need to consider how passengers can be assured their device contains all required tickets and how any system deals with flat batteries rendering any device inoperable.

**Question 10:** How important to you is the availability of a combined ticket for public transport in Wales? Do you have examples of good practice?

1. The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum believes that the availability of a combined ticket for public transport in Wales would be beneficial and hopefully an added incentive for travel by multi-modal public transport.
2. Examples of good practice:
  - At present the only example of good practice in our area is the rail-sale ticket offer for ferry passengers.
  - The Oyster card in use in Greater London, with availability across different modes helps to promote public transport in London as being an integrated alternative to the private car.
3. While combined tickets for urban areas have been shown to work well, such as with the Oyster in London, there needs to be a consideration of how such tickets will work when including longer distance travel, where lower cost advance purchase tickets are commonly used and for youth tickets where the child / adult age boundary might vary across various modes.

**Question 11:** Are there other quality characteristics you would wish to see? How would you prioritise the quality characteristics for the Wales and Borders franchise?

What additional quality improvements to rolling stock should the Welsh Government prioritise for

- Commuter routes?
- Rural routes?
- Long distance routes?

1. The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum agrees with the rolling stock quality characteristics set out in the consultation document. Bearing in mind the long journeys made to/from Pembrokeshire, they are prioritised as follows:
  - Priority seating.
  - On-board accessible toilet facilities (with baby changing facilities).
  - Sufficient space for luggage, including prams/strollers.
  - Visual and audible passenger information systems.
  - Seats aligned with windows.
  - Additional space for bicycles (reduced space for bicycles needn't be an issue if there are enough carriages on the train).
  - Improved and free to use mobile connectivity (including Wi-Fi).
  - At seat mobile device charging points.
2. The quality characteristics above are prioritised for long distance/rural routes.
3. A review of station categorised as request stops needs to be undertaken. Certain request stops have seen large increases in passenger numbers in the last 17 years, and the majority of trains now make regular stops at these stations. Request stops act as a barrier to use of the system, especially by occasional travellers; as they cause anxiety,

particularly for de-training passengers who worry about being over-carried in rural areas with infrequent services. They also impact on timekeeping and cause problems with onboard electronic information which often lists only full station stops. This causes occasional passengers to de-train at unstaffed stations prior to the stop they required. In West Wales Narberth (217% increase), Clunderwen (295% increase), Kidwelly (250% increase) and Johnson (339% increase) would justify having the request stop categorisation removed, while for consistency Ferryside and Clarbeston Road should be considered similarly.

**Question 12:** Do you think the catering provision available in the current franchise is adequate for longer journeys? If not, how should the Welsh Government consider influencing changes to catering services available at stations and on trains?

1. The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum does not think that catering provision in the current franchise is adequate for longer journeys.
2. Changes to catering services on trains and at stations:
  - If not provided by an at-seat trolley service, catering services for longer journeys should be easily accessible for disabled and elderly passengers and for those travelling with children; and should include a reasonable choice of food and drink that is suitable for those on special diets.
  - These factors should also be taken into consideration for catering facilities at stations.

**Question 13:** Which station facilities do you consider to be most in need of improvement and where?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum considers the following station facilities are most in need of improvement at Fishguard and Goodwick station:

- Ticket purchasing (none at present), by the installation of ticket vending machines at the majority of stations.
- Waiting spaces (only a few in an open platform shelter at present).
- Information provision (extremely limited on present CIS), in particular to give real time running information that is automatic and more reliable than current provision.

**Question 14:** Where would you like to see investment in station buildings and how might the Welsh Government encourage this?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum would support efforts by the Welsh Government to encourage:

- A continuing programme to improve step-free access across stations.
- Improvements to facilitate interchange with bus services.

- Provision of sufficient cycling and parking spaces.
- Ensuring that pedestrian access to stations is of a high quality.

**Question 15:** What information should the Welsh Government consider requiring an operator to publish as a priority, and in what format(s)?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum believes that operators should publish as a priority (in all formats, including those required by disabled people):

- Information about delays and disruptions.
- Accurate and timely information should be available on stations and on trains.
- Details of 'passengers in excess of capacity' figures.

**Question 16:** Are there any additional requirements in respect of the Welsh language that the Welsh Government should consider in relation to train operating companies and the services they provide?

Continue progress as at present, with a scheme to encourage on-train and station staff to highlight their ability to use Welsh with embroidered badges as worn for example by nurses in the Welsh NHS.

**Question 17:** What should the Welsh Government consider doing to strengthen community rail activity?

To strengthen community rail activity the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum believes that the WG should implement the arrangements set out in the consultation document.

**Question 18:** Which organisations should the Welsh Government consider requiring the Wales and Borders franchise operator to co-operate with, and in what ways?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum recommends that the franchise should actively co-operate, on an on-going basis, with rail industry organisations, other modal organisations, local authorities, and a broad range of community, transport user and disabled groups, through regularly scheduled open participation meetings, news letters, etc.

**Question 19:** What can the operator of the Wales and Borders franchise do to order improve safety and security, and the perception of safety and security?

In order to order improve safety and security, and the perception of safety and security, the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum recommends that the Wales and Borders franchise

should extend improvements to rural stations and extend the provision of staff at stations in the evenings.

**Question 20:** Are there other matters in respect of sustainable development which it will be important for the Wales and Borders franchise operator to be required or encouraged to focus on?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum supports the points made in the consultation document.

**Question 21:** What steps should the Welsh Government consider taking as part of the next rail franchise to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation on our railways?

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum supports the points made in the consultation document.

**Your name/organisation and postal/email address**

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