

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 11	WRI 11
Cyngor Sir Swydd Gaerloyw	Gloucestershire County Council

Strategic Planning
Shire Hall
Gloucester
GL1 2TH

robert.niblett@gloucestershire.go.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

National Assembly for Wales - Inquiry into the Priorities for the future of Welsh Rail Infrastructure

I have been made aware of the above Inquiry. On behalf of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) I have the following officer comments to make.

GCC's main interest is the Maesteg/Cardiff to Gloucester/Cheltenham service operated by Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) and Lydney station also operated by ATW. Lydney is the only main line railway station within the Forest of Dean and as such is an important component of the area's infrastructure providing sustainable transport options for residents and visitors alike. Lydney has an allocation of approximately 1900 houses along with additional employment land up to 2026 in their Adopted Core Strategy. Consequently, investment in local rail infrastructure is essential to enable sustainable growth and provide connectivity to the wider area.

I have confined my comments to the questions below and they reflect the County's position as a neighbouring 'border' authority.

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

Electrification of the valley lines around Cardiff will improve capacity and connectivity across the city and wider area as well as improving links to other areas of Wales and England including Gloucestershire. The scheme will improve travel opportunities related to leisure and jobs both into and out of South Wales.

Development of the Cardiff Metro scheme will provide opportunities for developing services from Ebbw Vale/Newport to Chepstow/Lydney which would improve connectivity for residents and visitors of the Forest of Dean alike.

Signaling renewals/enhancements in the Newport and Cardiff areas will increase capacity on the network.

A significant improvement for passengers in the Forest of Dean would be the opportunity to travel from Lydney direct to Bristol and surrounding area via the Severn Tunnel. This specific issue is raised on a regular basis by local politicians and residents and would significantly enhance social and economic opportunities for people travelling from the FoD. New infrastructure in terms of track to allow the direct running of these services would be welcomed. It is acknowledged that this is outside of Wales but does fall within the current Network Rail Wales route.

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

Response

As I understand it the Welsh Route comes into Gloucestershire finishing just north of Lydney where it becomes part of the Western Route network. Consequently whatever happens in South East Wales at least will potentially have an impact on the Cardiff to Gloucester/Cheltenham services. A joined up approach appears to be in place as demonstrated by the various Route Studies being produced by Network Rail. Broadly speaking infrastructure improvements in both countries should offer improvements to each Country depending on where the improvements are taking place.

There is discussion in the Route Studies of running new services from Cardiff to the East Midlands and Yorkshire with the possibility of some of them running up the western side of the estuary via Gloucester due to capacity constraints through the Severn Tunnel. This is an example of how infrastructure improvements in both countries would be mutually beneficial by improving connectivity between areas not currently directly served by rail services thus opening up new markets. This is supported as it would also improve connectivity between South Wales and Gloucestershire via Lydney.

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

In theory these developments should improve connectivity and journey times for people travelling to and from Wales particularly via Birmingham in the case of HS2. Similarly electrification schemes such as that along the Great Western Route will improve journey times and capacity between London and South/West Wales and stations in between notably Bristol Parkway.

Presumably one of the impacts will be that of funding for Welsh schemes in terms of ensuring that Wales gets it's share of the available funds for key developments.

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

The most obvious mechanism for achieving this is through the Network Rail Long Term Planning Process Route Studies. Clearly, the Wales Route Study is relevant but also the Western, West Midlands, West Coast and North of England Route Studies will have an impact on the Welsh network. Cross boundary analysis is an integral part of this process.

Clearly close cooperation between the Welsh Government and the DfT is crucial in ensuring that an integrated approach is taken to achieving optimal benefits to both England and Wales with regard to the provision of infrastructure developments to enable the delivery of additional passenger and freight services.

If you would like to discuss any of the officer level comments raised in this letter please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to being kept informed of future developments relating to this matter.

Yours faithfully

Rob Niblett
Planning Officer