

Ken Skates AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref OAQ51830

Aelodau'r Cynulliad

13 March 2018

Annwyl Aelod

Yn ystod y Cyfarfod Llawn ar 7 Mawrth, fe ddywedais y byddwn yn rhannu gydag Aelodau fy ymateb i'r ymgynghoriad ar fasnachfaint rheilffordd Great Western.

Rwyf wedi atodi'r ymateb er gwybodaeth.

**Ken Skates AC/AM**  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

[Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Ken Skates AC/AM  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a  
Thrafnidiaeth  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P/KS/0632/18

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP  
Secretary of State for Transport

transportsecretary@dft.gsi.gov.uk

26 February 2018

Dear Chris

### **Great Western Rail Franchise consultation**

I am pleased to respond to your consultation on the future of the Great Western rail franchise.

The services currently operated by the Great Western franchise are vitally important to South Wales' communities and economy. They provide access to employment and leisure opportunities, and – with significant levels of road congestion on both sides of the Severn estuary - are key to capitalising on the improved economic outcomes which can emerge from stronger links between South Wales and the south-west of England. They also connect South Wales into the UK's economic hub in the south-east of England, as well as the wider world through London's airports. It is clear from analysis work undertaken by KPMG that HS2 has the potential to impact adversely on South Wales' economy so, in this context, it is essential for these services to be developed over the coming years.

The Welsh Government's specific aspirations, some of which I discussed with the then Rail Minister Paul Maynard on 13 December 2017, are as follows.

#### South Wales to London services

The timetable for services between South Wales and London following completion of electrification to Cardiff needs to deliver improved journey times and frequencies (especially at peak times), as well as evenly spaced departure times in both London and South Wales. While having services calling at Bristol Parkway and Reading will continue to be important for connections to the wider rail network, I would like to see other station calls in England removed from services between South Wales and London unless data show that these are destinations frequently travelled to / from by people in Wales. I would then wish to see services stopping at future Cardiff Parkway and possibly Llanwern stations.

There must not be any change to the scope of electrification works in Cardiff so that lines on the west side of Cardiff Central station are electrified to avoid it being necessary for services terminating in Cardiff needing to use diesel traction at the beginning / end of their journeys. Also, the full power potential of the InterCity Express Trains in diesel mode needs to be

unleashed so that journey times between Cardiff and Swansea can be improved insofar as possible in the absence of electrification through to Swansea.

#### South Wales to Bristol Temple Meads and beyond services

Services operating between Cardiff and Bristol Temple Meads have over recent years suffered from poor quality rolling stock and overcrowding. I am pleased that improvements are being made to both the quality and capacity of rolling stock along this corridor, and opportunities for making further improvements to both rolling stock quality and journey times need to be identified. Stopping more services at Severn Tunnel Junction should be considered where connections can be made with services calling at Caldicot and Chepstow, and where they can support journeys to / from work for people travelling to Severn Tunnel Junction using other transport modes. Also, it will be important for these services to stop at future Cardiff Parkway and Llanwern stations.

I would only support any decision to change the destinations of services beyond Bristol Temple Meads if data show that changes would deliver direct services to destinations which are more frequently travelled to / from by people in Wales. I would want my officials to be integrally involved in any consideration of potential options for change.

My officials are engaging with the franchise operator to explore options for extending some services from Bristol Temple Meads and beyond west of Cardiff. I hope you will provide support (including financial) for any proposals which emerge from these discussions.

#### Franchise re-mapping

I would not support implementation of the option outlined in the consultation document for splitting the current franchise. Having an additional operator delivering services to / from Wales would result in more fragmentation and complexity for people travelling to / from Wales. However, I envisage that passengers would benefit from the integration of local and long distance services in Wales and competition among operators of the premium generating services along the Great Western Main Line. Therefore, a far more advantageous change would be for all services operating into South Wales to be re-mapped to a franchise procured and managed by the Welsh Government.

Detailed agreements have now been developed for how cross-border services are to be procured and delivered through the next Wales and Borders franchise in a way which takes full account of both of our interests and accountabilities. As we look towards the post Brexit environment, Wales' connectivity with Britain's economic hub and international gateways in the south-east of England are going to become even more important to Wales' prosperity. High Speed 2 will of course not be serving Wales directly and will result in many towns and cities in the north of England being closer in journey time terms to the south-east of England which has the real potential to reduce the competitiveness of locations in South Wales for inward investment.

In this context, I feel that there is now an overwhelming case for applying the model developed for procuring and managing cross-border services under the next Wales and Borders franchise to the procurement and management of services currently operated under the Great Western franchise between Wales and locations in England. This would enable the Welsh Government to have the role it needs to ensure that services are designed and delivered in a way which will take full account of Wales' interests and would, I believe, result in real competition and genuine choice for passengers in England.

I hope you will agree for our officials to develop this option, along with implementation proposals for us to consider. Over time, I would like consideration to be given to the

arrangements also covering cross-border services currently operated by the InterCity West Coast and CrossCountry franchises.

### Integration between track and train

I agree that close collaboration between Network Rail and franchise operators is essential. While steps have been taken to establish closer relationships between the current Great Western franchise operator and Network Rail's Western Route, these relationships are not so well developed with Network Rail's Wales Route. The proposal I have set out above for re-mapping services operating into Wales would address this issue in Wales by enabling Transport for Wales to manage relationships between operators and Network Rail in order to ensure alignment and collaboration. In England, the railway would be no more fragmented than under the option outlined in the consultation document.

### Wider integration

The Welsh Government is working to develop a fully integrated transport system in Wales. Therefore - in addition to strengthening linkages with Network Rail - close relationships with other rail service providers and operators of other transport modes will be essential. It will be important for there to be full co-operation with Transport for Wales, which will be driving this agenda forward at the operational level, as well the Welsh Government in terms of the policy context.

### Infrastructure investment

Confirmation of infrastructure investment is needed to support the further development of services currently operated by the Great Western franchise. You announced on 20 July 2017 that you had asked Network Rail to develop options for improving journeys for passengers in Wales and mentioned the following specific schemes which are directly relevant to the Great Western franchise:

- Improving journey times and connections between Swansea and Cardiff, and South Wales, Bristol and London
- Direct services from Pembroke Dock to London via Carmarthen on new, state of the art Intercity Express Trains
- Station improvements at Cardiff station
- Station improvements in and around Swansea including looking at the case for additional provision

It is important for it to be confirmed that there will be no break in direct services operating through to Pembroke Dock and consideration needs to be given to expanding services beyond summer Saturdays only.

A Strategic Outline Business Case for the redevelopment of Cardiff Central station has already been submitted to you. Now that a compelling case for investment has been made, I ask that you confirm your support for development work needs to progress at pace. I also ask that you give clear instructions to Network Rail that there can be no de-scoping of electrification works in Cardiff. The scheme must include the electrification of track to the west of Cardiff Central station which is needed to turn back electric trains terminating in Cardiff Central.

The other schemes to improve journey times through to Swansea and facilities in Swansea are also needed urgently following your decision to not deliver electrification between Cardiff and Swansea. We need to see journey times between Cardiff and Swansea, and between Cardiff and Bristol Temple Meads, reduced to thirty minutes. Electrifying the entire route between Cardiff and Bristol Temple Meads and enhancing provision through the Severn Tunnel will be important contributions to achieving this. Without this investment, especially post HS2, South Wales' relative attractiveness as a location for inward investment will decrease and passengers will continue to experience unacceptably long journey times during their daily lives. We understand that, when relying on diesel traction, the new InterCity Express Trains are performing less well than the outgoing High Speed Trains so investment in the infrastructure becomes even more essential in order to deliver journey time improvements.

In addition to these schemes, delivery of the long awaited scheme to provide western access into Heathrow Airport as soon as possible will be beneficial to Wales.

More generally, it will be important for the operator to be required to co-operate fully with endeavours to ensure that any infrastructure enhancements delivered are utilised in the most effective way possible.

#### Major events

Services currently operated by the Great Western franchise are vitally important for enabling the successful delivery of major events in South Wales. It is essential for the operator to be required to participate fully in planning and delivering activities, drawing on all possible resources available. Ensuring that infrastructure enables trains travelling from the east to turn back in Cardiff using electric traction will be necessary, along with the much needed redevelopment of Cardiff Central station.

It will also be important in the future for people travelling to / from Wales to be less affected than currently by the redirection of resources to support events in England. The Welsh Government should be consulted before any decisions are taken to reduce or change services to / from Wales.

#### Meeting customers' needs

In order to reflect the significant effects that service disruption has on passengers' perceptions of an effective railway, the next franchise should take all possible steps to improve the management of both planned and unplanned disruption. This should include clear, well-established passenger communications procedures, protocols for assisting passengers who may be stranded and clear signage of how and when planned disruption is expected to impact services. If service disruption is unavoidable, accessible replacement buses need to be provided.

As many journeys made on services currently operated by the Great Western franchise are for leisure purposes, it will be important for the next operator to work closely with local tourism bodies and businesses to explore how this market can be further developed. Sufficient space for luggage and bicycles on board trains, along with well understood arrangements for transporting these items, will also be important to support this market.

The Welsh Government expects those delivering services in Wales to treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English. One example amongst many of so doing would be to provide audio-visual information in Welsh. Technical guidance is available on offering English/Welsh bilingual services via ICT at:  
<http://www.comisiynyddygyymraeg.cymru/English/Part%201/Pages/Part-1---Overview.aspx>.

In December 2017, I published a policy position statement about improving access to public transport which includes six outcome focused objectives underpinned by a series of actions we plan to progress to advance equality of opportunity and the elimination of unlawful discrimination on the grounds of the protected characteristics introduced by the Equality Act 2010. Our statement and objectives can be viewed by visiting

<https://beta.gov.wales/accessible-and-inclusive-public-transport-objectives>

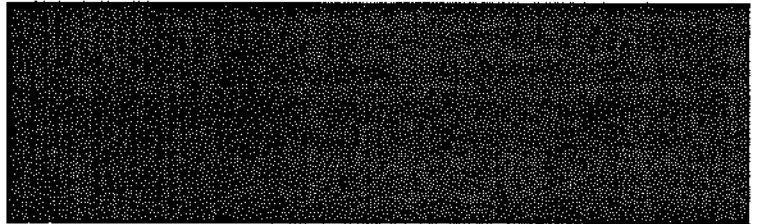
It will be important for the next operator to support the delivery of these objectives which have been developed by groups in Wales representing disabled people.

Moreover, it will be important for the next operator to recognise the substantial support and added value which can be provided by communities in respect of rail. The Welsh Government provides financial support to community rail partnerships in Wales and I would like the next operator to support this agenda. I would also like to see a customer and communities improvement fund to be continued which is configured to enable and incentivise the operator to invest in station facilities (including additional car parking space).

It will be important for our officials to work together as work to determine the future arrangements is progressed. Engagement prior to the consultation being commenced was minimal and I note that the Welsh Government's role is not referred to in the consultation document.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Wales.

Yours sincerely



**Ken Skates AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport



