

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

[Inquiry into the future of the Wales and Borders Rail](#)

Evidence from Maesteg line rail users – WBF 8 7

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Submission on behalf of Maesteg line rail users to Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry

What lessons can be learnt from the current franchise?

Franchise owners can change and there can be takeovers by foreign companies. Profits go to shareholders and are not ploughed back into the business

A no growth franchise is inappropriate. The provision of a faster half hourly electric service from Maesteg to Cardiff and the provision of services on Sundays will see at least a threefold increase in passengers from stations between Maesteg and Cardiff.

What priorities can be identified to ensure that rail passenger services in Wales and the borders provide the best possible service for passengers from 2018?

An integrated transport system, seven days a week, both in Wales and to all parts of Britain and not just London is essential. This includes the need for Swansea to Paddington services to stop at Bristol Parkway.

It is important to provide adequate accommodation at all times for passengers and their luggage including bicycles.

Accurate information is essential and there has been a high standard achieved by rail operators except at times of disruption. However this is not achieved by all bus operators providing connecting services. Travel line Cymru is not fit for purpose and needs improving if it is to continue to provide transport information and the information sites of many Unitary Authorities are either nonexistent or out of date. It must not be assumed that everybody has access to real time information. However information re rail bus connections is variable and a much higher standard than at present must be achieved by Travelline Cymru if it is to be fit for purpose.

The role of Passenger Focus is limited and should be improved with greater contact with passengers. It does provide good research information covering all of Britain.

How can service delivery after 2018 deliver connectivity and value for money for passengers while reducing the burden on the tax payer?

It is not in the national interest to have high fares which deter from travelling by rail.

The key issues to be considered are:-

Whether the current franchise meets passenger needs and what lessons can be learnt from it.

The present franchise does not meet fully passenger needs in the following areas -insufficient capacity on many trains, poor or nonexistent Sunday services, poor conductivity between train services especially with other operators, inappropriate rolling stock for some longer journeys, inadequate station facilities including shelters and toilets, poor station design e.g. Newport,

How passengers should be involved in the franchise development and delivery.

This can be achieved by the continuation of rail partnership schemes and also the expansion of these schemes with funding from the franchise.

Consultation with stakeholders including rail user groups both national, including YHA and local, also community and town councils, with regard to services and facilities.

Continuation of station adopters and customer panels including disabled representation.

By continuing to support for community projects and sponsorship, where appropriate, to charitable organisations.

Consultation of plans proposed by Welsh Government ,Network Rail , other rail operators in Wales and Transport Consortia

How commuters and local government /Regional Transport Consortia should be involved. Could they be involved in specifying the franchise or perhaps even in delivering services?

All rail users and not just commuters should be involved in suggesting service and facility requirements. The specification of the franchise should be carried out on a national basis to enable integration. Local government passenger transport roles are now part of the Transport Consortia and if these consortia continue to exist they should have a role in franchise development but they do not have the expertise to deliver rail services. There must be joined up planning by the Consortia. The Consortia and local communities should have a role in the management of local stations, car parks toilets, taxi services, retail outlets, refreshment facilities and feeder bus services.

The management model to be adopted including the Welsh Government proposal for a not for dividend franchise.

The not for divided franchise proposal is supported. This will retain control in Wales and provide additional funds for investment.

How the franchise specification should improve the passenger experience including issues such as franchise length, targets / incentives and core service standards which should be included.

This requires a long and detailed response. If the not for dividend model is used the franchise length is not important but if it is this is not the case a longer term franchise has advantages but only if the franchise term includes growth and investment.

The half hourly service plan for Maesteg has been supported by Swift then by Sewta and has appeared in all Welsh Government Transport Plans and also in Network Rail Plans as a firm and much needed proposal but still has not been delivered. Even the European Funding approved for the scheme has been diverted to the Ebbw Vale line extension. It is difficult to understand why a scheme that has the potential to increase passengers three fold is not being implemented. A similar scheme between Bargoed and Rhymney has been completed for a line which has fewer passengers than the Bridgend to Maesteg line but more weekday trains and a Sunday service. Even a bus link from Rhymney to Tredegar remains while that well used link from Maesteg to Caerau was withdrawn.

There must be more objective and fairer government involvement.

Core service standards must include improved rolling stock, a half hourly service from Cardiff or beyond to Maesteg and return (ie more frequent regular services) and an hourly service on Sundays. There must be an earlier service to Cardiff to provide for workers starting at 07.00 followed by three more by 08.30 and later services in the evening departing with the last departing Cardiff not before 23.00 or later including Saturdays in line with those provided to other South Wales destinations. The earlier morning service will also provide the opportunity to access connections at Bridgend and Cardiff to other places in Wales and further afield. A Sunday service is essential to maintain the changed social lifestyle and opening of leisure and retail facilities. A bus link should be provided to the Sarn Parc shopping and leisure complex from Sarn or Wildmill.

There must be an adequate provision for cleaning train both inside and out. The present pattern of cleaning trains in Wales is to be commended but greater attention is needed to early evening services.

There must be a good system of connections between services, at Bridgend between Maesteg service and the Vale of Glamorgan and Swansea services and at Cardiff for North Wales, London, Birmingham and Bristol and the west of England. This can be achieved by more frequent services.

Welsh Government must have the role of setting fares and the development of more appropriate forms of ticketing. We support the setting of a maximum fare for the franchise and in some cases for regional travel. Maesteg has a higher fare for travel to Cardiff compared with Ebbw Vale and Rhymney which are a similar distance from Cardiff as Maesteg. There must be a standardised and equitable fare system both locally and nationally in Wales. Fares from Maesteg should be brought in line with those from other Valley stations. Rover tickets must continue to be available including a Cardiff area ticket and the Red Rover system in North Wales could be extended to the whole of Wales. Plus bus tickets should be promoted.

National arrangements provided by ATOC must remain for travel to be compatible with rail travel in England and Scotland.

The routes, particularly cross border routes, which should be included.

It is important that penetrating routes into England are not lost to another franchise. There is need for direct services from Bridgend, Swansea and further west to the West of England. At one time Maesteg had through trains to/from Manchester, Bath, Bristol and Plymouth. Now there is only a through train from Holyhead.

The rolling stock needed for the new franchise. What factors need to be considered and how this should be procured. Will new rolling stock be required?

The standard of rolling stock used in Wales is below the standard of that found in the South East of England and many other overseas countries. The standard of the rolling stock should be the same throughout Wales and equivalent to the best in England. It is important that Wales is not seen as a second rate nation.

The rolling stock should have adequate capacity for passengers at all times and for their luggage. It should have adequate toilets including shaver points and baby changing facilities, luggage storage (people wish to stay close to their luggage) air conditioning, seat back tables, adequate accommodation for disabled and bikes, the fitting of power points and wi-fi, corridor provision, disabled access and information screens. There must be the facility to make announcements including the approach of the next station and the side to leave the train. The single unit trains used in Wales are not suitable at any time for services to Maesteg and four coach trains are required at peak hours and are the maximum that can be accommodated by platform lengths on the branch.

In the long term there must be the ability to extend trains and platforms.

Whether additional lines, enhancements to existing lines, new stations or other infrastructure are needed.

New stations are proposed for Brackla and Llangynwyd but not for St Fagans which should be served by local Cardiff suburban rail, bus or tram network. A crossing loop is required at Gelli Las to provide for a half hourly service and a loop or second line between Bridgend and Wildmill would provide greater flexibility and resilience and could be used to provide a 15 minute service to Bridgend. Car park extensions will be required at stations on the line and a large park and ride car park for the Bridgend area should be constructed at Wildmill. Stations will also require larger shelters and the provision of ticket issuing machines with a ticket office at Maesteg and at Wildmill when the park and ride facility is developed. The bus link from Maesteg to Caerau should be reinstated and extended to Cymmer. Bridgend should consider developing a light rail network to serve the Ogmere and Garw valleys and Porthcawl. A rail bus interchange should be provided at Bridgend and other rail stations such as Sarn and Maesteg.

A longer term aspiration is for a branch from Pontyclun to Beddau a local service which could serve St Fagans and Ely. This will require improved signalling on the South Wales main line.

Whether the new franchise can support an enhanced relationship between Network Rail and the franchise operator and the benefits this might bring.

This is essential and Welsh Government should have greater control over rail infrastructure developments.

Yours faithfully

Submissions are to be made by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013 to  
[enterprisecommittee@wales.gov.uk](mailto:enterprisecommittee@wales.gov.uk)