**​Fforwm Rhanbarthol Rhanddeiliaid Cymru a'r Gororau**

**Wales and Borders Regional Stakeholder Forum**

**06/07/2022**



**Adroddiad o’r cyfarfod**

**Meeting report**

Wales and Borders Regional Stakeholder Forum

The forum met on the 6th of July 2021, 10.30am – 12.40pm

**Attendees**

**Forum Members**

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| Alex Hinshelwood | Programme Manager, Network Rail |
| Alex Woodall | Strategic Rail Officer, Transport for Greater Manchester |
| Andrew Williams | Senior Commercial Manager, Department for Transport |
| Christian Schmidt | Transport Projects & Programmes Manager, Monmouthshire County Council |
| David Jones | Rail Development Manager, Liverpool City Region |
| David Land | Principal Transport Planner, Gloucestershire CC |
| Gwyn Smith | Network Development Manager, Sustrans Cymru |
| Heather Bolton | Transport Planner (Telford and Wrekin Council) |
| Rhiannon-Jane Rafferty | Community Rail, ACORP |
| Rich Middleton | Growth Manager Wales, Great Western Railway |
| Richard Gibson | Stakeholder Manager, Wales & West, Cross County Trains |
| Robert Niblett | Planning officer-transport portfolio, Gloucestershire CC, |
| Steven Gardner-Collins | Director of Visit Gloucestershire |
| Victoria Hammond | Senior Transport Planning Officer, Herefordshire County Council |

**Transport for Wales**

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| Nichole Sarra | Stakeholder Manager |
| Paula Bowen | Community Engagement Officer |
| Alex Chung | Community Engagement Officer |
| Alexander Bryant-Evans | Stakeholder Manager |
| Elise Jackson | Community Engagement Officer |
| Helen Dale | Stakeholder Manager |
| James Price | Chief Executive Officer |
| Ben Clifford | Road Replacement Manager, TfW Rail |
| Adam Terry | Head of Operational Planning, TfW Rail |
| Jamie Warner | Community Engagement Officer |
| Jessica Clement | Community Engagement Officer |
| Lewis Brencher | Director of Communications and Engagement |
| Lowri Joyce | Head of Community & Stakeholder Engagement |
| Ross Whiting | Community Engagement Officer |
| Tomos Davies | Community Engagement Officer |
| Andy Holder | NTDP Lead |

**Welsh Government**

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| Rebecca Johnson | Head of Transport Strategy |

**Agenda**

**Chair: Nichole Sarra, Stakeholder Manager, TfW – Welcome and Housekeeping**

NS welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced Paula Bowen as new Community Engagement Officer for the Borders area, replacing Louis Mertens who has moved onto a new role within TfW as Wellbeing of Future Generations Coordinator.

NS provided an overview of housekeeping and a brief travel safer reminder and shared a screenshot of the agenda posted in the chat function before introducing the first agenda item.

**1.James Price, Chief Executive, TfW – Company Overview and Q&A**

JP said he was glad to be in attendance and advised that he keen to see some future forums hosted in person rather than on Microsoft Teams. He said he welcomed the opportunities during the forums to gain essential insights from the membership.

JP provided an overview of the recent rail industry strikes which impacted TfW rail services- in the main TfW managed as best as we could, feedback was effective communication and that people in the community were understanding of the situation however, stating TfW were working hard to stay out of the dispute as much as possible.

The strikes did have had an impact on TfW’s recovery with a slight knock back on figures, following the Covid pandemic.

JP reported overcrowding on the Marches services, particularly at the weekends, which has been surprising with demand greater than pre-covid. He said the Marches line is a challenge for TfW, which was also impacted by other Train Operating Companies reducing their services however he did confirm that much of these have now been reinstated which has helped the situation.

*Opened to Q&A's.*

Q. LB- Leisure market has improved and recovered but are there any major concerns with the commuter market?

A. JP advised that ‘leisure’ is a very broadly defined topic which may include visiting family and friends, hospital appointment and may even be capturing people going to work in the day. We need to ensure that leisure travel is looked at and we also need to consider that we only have 3% of the commuter market. We also need to look carefully at active travel. Things are changing and we need to keep pace with the changes but really consider the broad terms like ‘leisure’ that people are using.

Q. DJ-. I appreciate service cuts can happen but current information reaching the public is poor and needs to be addressed immediately. DJ identified one service reduced to two-hourly (on the Wrexham -Bidston line) on a Saturday recently with no passenger information. DJ noted that the Rail User Group regularly contacts TfW regularly to complain so TfW are aware of it.

A. JP- Was unaware of this particular issue and stated he was concerned to learn this and expressed his frustration that passengers are still not getting the information they need, as this is especially important to him. JP and LB agreed to take this query away to investigate further.

Q. AW- Regarding recovery, what does this look like for passengers? Also, the profile of how recovery has taken place? Is it in line with UK trends?

A. JP- Revenue is outperforming passenger numbers which were in the high 80%, revenue is at 90-95%, people purchasing less pre-purchased tickets. Weekends vs weekdays are busier but not on all service groups. After providing a high-level overview JP suggested TfW provide a presentation with all the number/trends identified at the next round of forums.

Q. CS- Vast connections on websites but missing links to Traws Cymru also commented regarding metro central in Cardiff but queried if TfW is interested in their bus stations? What about the rest of the network?

A. JP- Advised TfW will take the website comments away to investigate and correct to make sure the TrawsCymru services are visible. Bus interchange: JP advised TfW are devolving the way it works over the coming months, and TfW are looking to be fully modal agnostic. JP said the benefits will be TfW will have one team that is shared across rail and bus. The ambition is Metro Central and Cardiff Central is run in one way. Lot of Local Authority interest to do this. Challenge is interchange does not make money and TfW is not funded by Welsh Government, so needs to be in partnership with Local Authorities and finances worked through.

Q: Gwyn Smith, Network Development Manager, Sustrans Cymru raised (via the chat function): Some infrastructure scheme also have an impact on active travel routes and the national cycle network and these can be closed at short notice. It would be good if TFW as client can remind their contractors of their obligations under the active travel act and providing suitable diversions if closures have to be made.

A:JP: It surprises me if we are doing that. If you are aware of any cases where that is happening, can you email us and let us know. I would want to check if it’s a TfW, Local Authority or WG scheme. Certainly in terms of TfW, particularly given the Deputy Ministers targets that wouldn’t be acceptable for people to be behaving like that. E.g at Taffs Well we’ve had to go to massive lengths to and potentially move a £100m contract back at significant costs, to move a footpath ahead of time. Any examples greatly received and I can dig into it to see if I can make a difference.

GS: Thanks for your response to that, I’ve been quite close to the Taffs Well one. For me I’d be really keen to make sure that contractors are aware of their obligations and primarily from as you say not affecting programmes, as it can have a big effect on it. We are seeing that there’s another potential closure in Nelson - bridge works, I get the message ‘we can’t find a safe alternative we’re just going to close the route’ end of. Quite often when these are challenged they can be significantly changed, I’ve seen this with same issues on the A465 works, it’s just a matter of making sure contractors are aware of it and plan it into their programme early on in the process. I would be very pleased if you could take it away.

**2. Rebecca Johnston, Head of Transport Strategy, Welsh Government (presenting on behalf of Corinna James) – National Transport Delivery Plan and regional transport plans**

*Presentation: 'National Transport Delivery Plan'*

Document created out of Llwybr Newydd to be issued mid-July 2022. Llwybr Newydd fundamental to the NTDP.

Rebecca spoke to the forum members about regional transport plans, which are a requirement of the Transport Act 2000. The duty to prepare transport plans has now transferred from LAs (Local Authorities) to CJCs (Corporate Joint Committees), however the duty to deliver these remails with the LAs.

Rebecca outlined the history of Regional Transport Plans from 2008 to the current situation with the 2021 Wales Transport Strategy. There are nine existing Local Transport Plans, the deadline for replacing these was extended to 2022. But this has now been replaced by the CJCs

The approval of Welsh transport plans must go through Welsh Ministers, must be consistent with the Wales Transport Strategy and the policies must be adequate for the implementation of the strategy.

The Welsh Government (WG) does not have statutory duty to provide guidance. But the CJCs must consider any guidance issued by WG on content, preparation, alteration, and publication of plans, as well as the needs of disabled persons (Equality Act 2010).

Rebecca went through the key points of the Wales Transport strategy and what WG will be expecting the RTPs (Regional Transport Plans) to focus on. CJCs will be expected to look at current and future trends, policies set out in RTPs must maximise wellbeing goals and sustainability, take account of the Road Review NTDP, Active Travel, Bws Cymru and Metro plans.

Rebecca shared the proposed timetable with members and stated the Regional Transport Plans were crucial. There is a question about how they will deliver against what we need to achieve and to really push us forward for integrated transport solutions. She ended her presentation by issuing a plea that we all actively engage in making that regional approach as strong as possible.

Q&A: None from the audience.

RJ advised that a question raised at previous forums was around submitted bus legislation, it is likely that the change might mean WG are looking at the next plan, WG cannot deliver the strategy themselves but that we all make this a regional approach.

**3. Adam Terry, Head of Operational Planning TfW Rail – How we plan our railways**

*Presentation: 'How we plan our timetable' Adam provided an overview of all the work, factors, and considerations, which go into planning the TfW train timetable.*

Adam Terry shared a PowerPoint presentation to members and introduced himself and his role within Transport for Wales. He noted that his presentation would cover timetable planning and provide insight on what influences them. He gave an example of the complexities around small timetable change requests which can have significant knock-on implications for UK-wide railway network, due to the interlinked nature of services. He also illustrated why it is so important to ensure good train planning using recent issues in England as an example. He showed members a blueprint for timetable planning which has many stages going back 100 weeks from going live.   
   
Adam showed slides which covered a range of factors that need to be considered when planning timetables. These included:

* **Unit & Crew Diagrams**   
  These show which services a unit will cover and its requirements, as well as what staff will do on a particular day, their requirements, and which units they can operate.
* **Demand and Capacity**   
  Both need to be matched and the team use comparison data and longer-term forecasts to do this. New trains will have higher capacity.
* **Fleet**  
  This includes the specifications of individual vehicles, and concerns whether trains can meet section run times. This is influenced by top speed, rate of acceleration and braking. Other considerations include couplers, number of seats, toilet facilities, and other elements. This also involves availability of certain vehicles and knock-on effects this can have.
* **Depots and Stabling**   
  The need for the right trains to finish each day in the appropriate depot overnight, which can be influenced by fuelling, ability to empty toilets if required, and the location of crew depots for specific trains.
* **Infrastructure**  
  This can include gauging, which refers to the size and shape requirements of trains, stations, tunnels, bridges, awnings, signals, viaducts, and walls. This can be a particular issue due to the age of the infrastructure on the UK rail network and historical lack of standardisation. The impact of this can mean some trains cannot use certain lines without significant alteration works. The length of platforms is also important, and trains that are too long for a platform cannot stop there unless they have selective door opening due to passenger safety concerns.
* **Track Gradient and Passing Loops**   
  The railway tracks are not flat so performance of train units at different gradients can impact what lines they can operate on if they do not have the required power at full load. Single line tracks require passing loops where trains must be in the right place at the right time to pass each other to allow operation in two directions. This is a particular issue in rural Wales and in the valleys, and the transformation programme includes passing loops to allow increased services.
* **Signalling**  
  This can impact rail planning as signalling can influence which train units and drivers can operate on a line. An example is the Cambrian line, which until recently had a unique signalling system which has now been upgraded to the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).
* **Performance**  
  Colin showed members an example daily performance table which showed the percentage of trains that were on time (within three minutes) at various stations. This can reveal patterns in performance which can impact thinking in future timetable planning.
* **Crew Resource**   
  This includes ensuring drivers, conductors and other crew are available in the right quantity, at the right time, and in the right places to meet increasing timetable demands. There must also be sufficient driver route and traction knowledge to operate specific routes and trains.
* **Other Trains**   
  This includes timetabling to ensure we can share the lines with other passenger rail providers, specialist network rail maintenance trains, materials trains, freight services and charter trains.

Adam summarised his presentation by noting that all these factors must come together and emphasised the need for increased standardisation of infrastructure and trains. He added that planning can be a complex puzzle which is not always possible to get right first time.

Adam also outlined the Real Time Trains website: [www.realtimetrains.co.uk](http://www.realtimetrains.co.uk) a useful website to promote current and future train services. He stated that a specific feature on the website allowed you to look at a particular service to see how many carriages were on that train and whether it was on time.

Q&A

Q. CS-It appears in what you’ve presented includes both the commercial side of timetabling as well as the operational side of making a given timetable work every day - these are two different things. He explained how commercial and operational elements differed in terms of impact on timetabling.

A. AT- Good question. I think one leads to the other, we have strategic objectives around what we are looking to achieve within the network and the level of service we are looking to provide, largely directed by WG and that was built a long time ago, a lot as part of the bid process when KeolisAmey took over the franchise and that’s all been modelled to anticipate demand around that. The by-product of that is that we need to build the rolling stock profile, and the staffing profile to determine what can fulfil that timetable, but also the commercial impact of that has been modelled as well. It’s not just our services that are modelled as part of that, that will include interaction with other services, other train operating companies and connection to other parts of the country. There are all sorts of factors taken into consideration including commercial, demand and operational.

**4. Alex Hinshelwood, Programme Manager, Network Rail – An overview of the Severn Estuary Resilience Programme**

*Presentation: 'Overview of Severn Estuary Resilience Programme'*

Alex shared a video that provided an overview of the upcoming work and a drone video clearly showing previous remedial works to landslips on the line, highlighting the importance of this major resilience work.

Within the 3-mile stretch there will be around one mile of intervention work.

AH advised that the line will be closed for 6.5 weeks from next week. 30,000 tonnes of earth to be moved to Westbury in Wiltshire for further use.

Thousands of metres of mesh to be used over this site. Barriers to be in place. This remediation has a design life of over 50 years with no more emergency interventions required.

Q&A

Q. CS- While work is underway is there any planned disruptions to Severn Tunnel or Birmingham to Hereford

A. AH-No. The summer period was chosen because of the importance of this line for students. Severn Tunnel to Gloucester closed for the first two weeks, then the line will be closed from Lydney to Gloucester for the remainder of the blockade.

Q. RN- Are other possessions planned for next year?

A. AH- We've pencilled in three weeks over the summer period 2023 but do not know just yet if we will need this at this point. We will know after this blockade whether we will need those weeks next summer, but NR are doing all they can to ensure disruption for passengers is kept to a minimum.

Ben Clifford, Road Transport Manager, TfW Rail provided an overview of the TfW rail replacement services during the upcoming Severn Estuary Resilience Project (SERP). Ben explained that it was a large operation for TfW as we will be offering rail replacement between a seven-week period over the summer. Ben explained that TfW are collaborating closely with partners to keep disruption to a minimum. Fully accessible, full-size coaches will be provided.

Ben explained that additional staff will be positioned at interchange points for the first part of the blockade at; Severn Tunnel Junction, Gloucester and Chepstow and second part of the blockade at; Lydney and Gloucester to support passengers. There will also be contingency vehicles for any operational incidents.

Q&A: None

**6. Helen Dale, Stakeholder Manager, TfW - Introduction and overview of community Engagement Officers and the work they do in our communities**

Helen provided an introductory overview of the Community Engagement Officers purpose and objectives. The team of TfW Community Engagement Officers individually presented updates on their work portfolios and projects and details around key priorities.

**7. Nichole Sarra, Stakeholder Manager, TfW**

AOB: No items raised. NS thanked the speakers and attendees for their time and reminded attendees to let her know of any future suggestions for agenda items at future forums before closing the meeting at 12:40pm.

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| **Discussion** | **Action** | **Raised by** | **Responsibility** |
| Some infrastructure scheme also have an impact on active travel routes and the national cycle network and these can be closed at short notice. It would be good if TFW as client can remind their contractors of their obligations under the active travel act and providing suitable diversions if closures have to be made. | James Price and Lewis Brencher agreed to take this query away to investigate further. | Gwyn Smith-Sustrains Cymru | James Price Lewis Brencher |
| The Traws Cymru bus services aren’t clearly visible on the TfW website | TfW will take the website comments away to investigate and correct to make sure the Traws Cymru services are visible. | Christian Schmidt | Nichole Sarra |
| I appreciate service cuts can happen but current information reaching the public is poor and needs to be addressed immediately. | JP and LB agreed to take this query away to investigate further. | David Jones | James Price / Lewis Brencher |

## Next Regional Stakeholder Forum

28th September 2022