**Date issued:** 6th of December 2023

**Freedom of Information Request** 250/23

We are writing in response to your Freedom of Information request. Your request has been considered in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and our Data and Information Management Policy.

**YOU ASKED US…**

1. **How many Class 197 trains are being introduced, and what will be their distribution across the different routes?**
2. **How does Transport for Wales intend to measure the success and impact of the new Class 197 trains once they are in operation?**
3. **Could you provide details on any specific routes or times where passenger demand is exceeding current capacity?**
4. **What steps are being taken to ensure that the continued introduction of the Class 197 trains will alleviate these capacity issues?**
5. **How will feedback from passengers be incorporated into the evaluation of the Class 197 trains' performance and future planning for rolling stock increases?**
6. **What mechanisms are in place for gathering passenger feedback on the current rolling stock? Furthermore, how will this feedback be utilized to inform ongoing and future service enhancements?**

**RESPONSE**

Question 1

A total of 77 class 197 2- and 3-car units are being procured by TfW. These will be used across virtually all of the TfW Wales and Borders network, except the Core Valleys Lines around Cardiff. The lines class 197s are/will be operating is as follows: -

* North Wales Mainline - Holyhead and Llandudno to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Cardiff (20 units)
* Conwy Valley – Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog (1 unit)
* Chester to Crewe and Liverpool (3 units)
* Marches – Manchester to Cardiff, Swansea, Fishguard and Milford Haven (16 units)
* Cambrian – Birmingham International to Shrewsbury, Aberystwyth and Pwllheli (14 units)
* Cardiff local services – Cardiff to Cheltenham, Ebbw Vale, Swansea and Maesteg (these routes will be operated alongside other fleets; 12 units)
* West Wales – Swansea and Carmarthen to Pembroke Dock (3 units)

The deployments above are approximate because many units work across different routes during the course of a day. The remaining 8 of the 77 units are held for maintenance activity.

Question 2

The reliability and availability of all TfW train fleets is continually monitored and reported in regular fleet reliability meetings. These reports highlight the top reliability issues and detail the plan to mitigate these issues.

We conduct a customer satisfaction survey and a mystery shopper programme each period and the results of this are reviewed and analysed and provided to the relevant departments for action. We also gather information on complaints received via all channels (telephone, email, postal and social media) and analyse that data and insight it provides. All data gathered, then feeds into our Voice of the Customer programme which we hold each period where subject matter experts across the business are asked to review their customer contact data and take any action required to deliver customer improvements*.*

Question 3

Passenger demand can exceed current capacity at various points throughout the day, week and season due to the fluctuation of passenger demand flow that we experience against certain factors, for example during industrial action from other train operating companies, where they have a very minimal or no service at all then TfW will end up needing to carry more passengers than usual.

In addition to these varying factors, the capacity provided varies and has varied in the past year as we continue with the transformation of introducing our new fleet by replacing legacy fleet. Therefore the plan as remained flexible to try to best mitigate higher passenger demand flow with the maximum capacity we have available to ensure we look to mitigate any instances of overcrowding.

Reviewing the month of November 2023, it was indicated that Cardiff Central, Cwmbran and Manchester Piccadilly. were the top 3 stations where demand had exceeded capacity. This aligns with

the Cardiff – Manchester line of route that experienced this. Across the week, Saturday was the most frequent day where instances of overcrowding did occur.

For context, the instances where demand did exceed capacity was very low at less than 0.2% of services.

Question 4

77 Class 197 trains will be delivered to TfW for service, replacing 24 Class 158s and 27 Class 175s. This provides us with a significant increase in the number of trains and carriages for Wales and Borders services – going from 118 carriages across those two fleets to 180 carriages across the Class 197 fleet.

Having a uniform fleet of trains also gives us significantly improved operational flexibility, as Class 158s and 175s could not work coupled together due to a lack of compatibility. A single fleet of identical trains across most W&B routes provides a lot more opportunities for running longer trains of four-six carriages than with our legacy fleet. This will become more frequent once more trains are delivered to us, which will continue throughout 2024.

Each train must go through an extensive testing programme before it is accepted into the TfW fleet. Trains are being introduced to passenger service as soon as they have been accepted. We are also currently undertaking an extensive driver and conductor training programme, as well as our standard assurance processes for validating the new trains entering service on each route they are due to operate on. These processes must take place to ensure the safe and reliable operation of our services. The delivery and testing programme is overseen by train manufacturer CAF. The initial batch of 30 two-car Class 197 trains has now been delivered and accepted, and we’re now in the process of accepting three-car trains as they are delivered to us and complete their testing programmes.

We have supplemented the Class 197 fleet by introducing four additional rakes of Mark 4 carriages on South Wales-Manchester services and lengthening them from four to five carriages. This goes above and beyond our original commitment made in 2018 and provides significant improvements in capacity. The first five carriage rake is due to enter service imminently and work to extend all seven Mark 4 rakes to five carriages will be completed in the spring.

The end-state plan is for South Wales-Manchester services to all be planned as five-car and Cardiff-Holyhead services to be planned as at least three-car. This is currently targeted to be achieved by the end of 2024.

Question 5

Feedback from passengers and stakeholders is routinely fed into the rolling stock team and is used to define improvement modifications and the scope of future refurbishments. Also, TfW as starts to consider future fleet requirements beyond the new trains currently being introduced, feedback from the current fleets will be used to inform the design of any future fleets.

Question 6

As above, we have our regular customer satisfaction survey that customers are invited to take part in as well as sending feedback and views through all of our customer contact channels. We also have a survey running onboard as part of our WiFi portal and we run our own adhoc surveys on various services and projects. We also participate in industry wide customer surveys through DfT, GBRTT and Transport Focus.

We hope this information is of use to you.

Yours sincerely,

**Transport for Wales**

**Appeal Rights**

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the Head of Freedom of Information at either Transport for Wales, 3 Llys Cdwyn, Pontypridd, CF37 4TH or freedomofinformation@tfw.wales. Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter. If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision.

The Information Commissioner (ICO) can be contacted at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or you can contact the ICO through the 'Make a Complaint' section of their website on this link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

The relevant section to select will be "Official or Public Information".