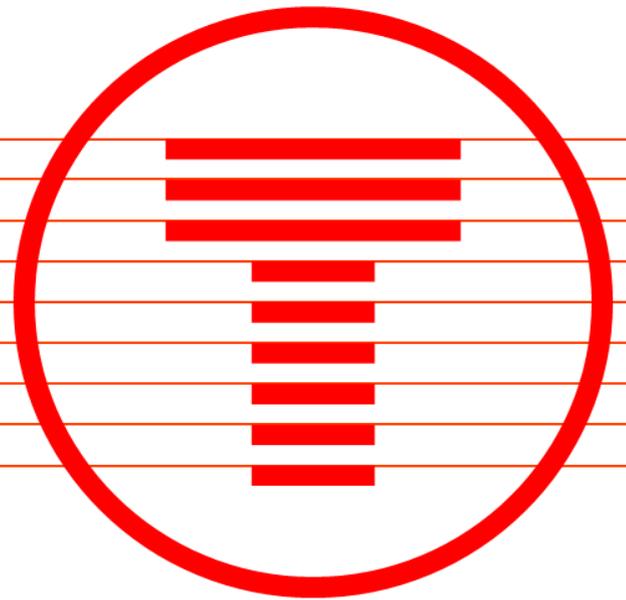


**Fforwm Rhanbarthol Rhanddeiliaid Cymru a'r Gororau**  
**Wales and Borders Regional Stakeholder Forum**  
**23 February 2021**



**Adroddiad o'r cyfarfod**  
**Meeting report**

## Wales & Borders Regional Stakeholder Forum

The forum met on the 23rd February 2021, 10:00 – 12:30

### Attendees

#### Forum Members

Adam Graham	Principal Transport Planner, Warrington Council	
Ann Elias	Regional Engagement Strategic Transport, Mid Wales Growth Forum	
Christian Schmidt	Transport Projects and Programmes Manager, Monmouthshire County Council	
David Beer	Senior Manager Wales, Transport Focus	
David Jones	Rail Development Manager, Liverpool City Region	
Debby Taylor	Contract Support Officer, Cheshire East Council	
Gerard Rhodes	Transport and Infrastructure, Chester and Cheshire West Council	
Heather Bolton	Senior Transport Planner, Telford and Wrekin Council	
Michelle Roles	Stakeholder Manager Wales, Transport Focus	
Neva Mowl	Sustainable Travel Officer, West Midlands Combined Universities	
Sean Croshaw	Strategic Rail Manager, Transport for Greater Manchester	
Sheila Dee	Community Rail Officer (Chester Shrewsbury), Wrexham Council	
Tracey Messner	Public Affairs Manager, Network Rail	
Victoria Hammond	Senior Transport Planning Officer, Herefordshire County Council	

#### Transport for Wales (TfW) – Other members of the TfW team were present to facilitate

Alexia Course	Director of Transport Operations	
James Price	Chief Executive	
Jeremy Whitaker	Network Growth Lead	
Lewis Brencher	Director of Communications and Engagement	
Louis Mertens (Clerk)	Community Engagement Officer	
Matt Sneddon	Service Delivery Analyst	
Nichole Sarra (Chair)	Stakeholder Manager	

#### External Speakers

Andy Scogings	Head of Strategic Planning, Network Rail	11:45 – 12:05
James Jackson	Industry Programme Director, Network Rail	11:45 – 12:05
Michelle Roles	Stakeholder Manager, Wales, Transport Focus	10:05 – 10:20
Richard Gibson	Stakeholder Manager, Wales and West, CrossCountry Trains	12:05 – 12:25
Tracey Messner	Public Affairs Manager, Network Rail	11:45 – 12:05

## Apologies

Alison Torrens	Executive Officer, Universities West Midlands
Andy Moreton	Strategic Infrastructure Works Manager, Shropshire County Council
Eddie Muraszko	Deputy Director, Midlands, North & Wales, Department for Transport
Fay Easton	Head of Stakeholder and Community, West Midlands Railway
Hannah McDonnell	Co-Director, Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership
Jon Harris	Co-Director, Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership
Mark Hooper	Project Lead, Visit Shropshire
Matt Johnson	Executive Manager, Strategic Projects, Shropshire County Council
Matt Powell	Service Delivery Manager, Strategic Transport and Highway Network Management, Telford and Wrekin Council
Michelle Mitchell	Group Leader, Highways and Transportation, Torfaen Council
Mike Learmond	Senior Development Manager Wales, Federation of Small Businesses
Paul Colman	Chief Executive, South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce
Paul Jones	Head of City Services, Newport City Council
Peter West	Senior Commercial Manager, Passenger Services, Department for Transport
Rachel Jones	Economic Development Officer, Visit Herefordshire
Rhiannon Jane-Raftery	Community Rail Development Coordinator, Community Transport Association
Robert Niblett	Senior Planning Officer, Gloucestershire County Council
Sarah Spink	Stakeholder Manager, Midlands Connect
Steven Gardner-Collins	Director, Visit Gloucestershire
Tim Mitchell	Senior Transport Planning Officer, Birmingham City Council
Toby Rackliff	Strategic Lead, Rail Policy, West Midlands Rail Executive
Tom Painter	West Midlands Rail Executive

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## Note from the Chair, Nichole Sarra

*“It was a pleasure to once again chair the Borders Stakeholder Forum. I’m really grateful to all our presenters who provided updates and our members who contributed with their thoughts, feedback and questions. This was a really important forum for sharing operational updates and gathering insight on how we should be bringing people back to public transport post Covid-19, and the input received was invaluable. I’m also really grateful to all our borders membership who reached out to us at points throughout the session with thoughts on how we can collaborate to improve cross-border services and provide a better service to our customers in England and Wales. Thank you for your time and invaluable contributions.”*

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## Agenda

### 1. Introduction & Apologies

Nichole Sarra welcomed the forum members to the fourth meeting of the Wales and Borders regional Forum. Nichole introduced the format of the meeting, including the use of Mentimeter, together with a reminder of the Travel Safer messaging and Welsh Government rules still in place across Wales in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic.



## 2. TfW Highlights and the new approach for Wales and Borders rail

Alexia Course, Director of Transport Operations (TfW) gave an overview of some of the successes over the past two years. Alexia provided an update on key achievements, new fleet, customer service improvements and the recent opening of Bow Street, on the Cambrian Line between Borth and Aberystwyth. The short presentation also discussed the ownership and transformation of the Core Valley Lines since August 2020, as well as TfW's new organisation contract and structure with the Welsh Government.

## 3. TfW Vision for 2021/22

James Price, Chief Executive (TfW), provided an overview of the changes and importance of multi-modal transport for the future. James discussed TfW's responsibilities by the Welsh Government and how these form TfW's strategic objectives, business plan, transport strategy and delivery plan for the year. Future work will bring together stakeholders to create an integrated and multi-modal transport system for Wales. Forum members are also invited to express their thoughts.

David Beer, Transport Focus, asked James how he felt rail devolution would benefit Wales, and how he felt devolution would work in the borders given the overlap between interests of the Welsh Government and the Secretary of State for Wales. James suggested that pre-COVID TfW had maxed out the capability of rail infrastructure in Wales with TfW's plans. TfW need to work with many partners across the borders in order to deliver cross-border services, and he would expect that devolved rail infrastructure could be managed and operated in the same way as the road infrastructure.

Sean Croshaw, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), explained that he felt there was very little in the Wales Transport Strategy that impacted upon the borders. He asked how this would be delivered in the borders, including Manchester. Regarding big investment decisions to meet key aims such as decarbonisation, Sean asked how TfW would handle that decision making to meet ambitions across borders. James explained that TfW wanted Wales to be connected to places on the other side of the border and wanted to work collaboratively so that our services support local needs in TfGM and likewise their services support local needs in Wales. James suggested we put in some time to work through these objectives, and Sean agreed to an external meeting.

*Kate Clark (TfW) who had led on the Wales Transport Strategy on behalf of Transport for Wales, explained following the meeting that the regional delivery of the ambitions set out in the strategy would become much clearer through the Wales Transport Delivery Plan.*

Ann Elias, Mid Wales Growth Forum, suggested that for Mid Wales and the Cambrian line, and connectivity with Shrewsbury was really important. James suggested that for a post-covid world, we needed to ensure we had both a commuter service and a long-distance service that works, and that long distance passengers shouldn't endure commuter conditions. Ann commented that leisure travel will become more important.

Gerard Rhodes, Chester and Cheshire West Council, raised a point and asked for greater collaboration with the TfW Community Rail Team. Whilst there had been good examples of collaborative working from TfW he didn't feel it was consistently being delivered.

## 4. Fares in Recovery

Jeremy Whitaker, Network Growth Lead (TfW) discussed the decrease in passengers using the transport network considering the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Jeremy explained the



impact this has had on fare prices from January 2021. Jeremy provided an overview of a regional strategy by Network Rail on changes to regulated fares, tactical pricing opportunities for a post Covid-19 world and new product developments to encourage people back onto the network when it is safe to do so.

Questions for Jeremy on fares were raised in the chat, which were responded to via email after the session.

Jeremy confirmed that TfW was working on a revised zonal fares structure for the South East Wales Metro that includes both bus and rail and takes into account the South East Wales Transport Commission Report, and commented on further work that was ongoing to revise fares across Wales and Borders.

## 5. Workshop: Building Passenger Trust in Public Transport Post-COVID

David Beer, Senior Manager Wales, Transport Focus, provided an update on the Transport Focus research and insight on passenger travel for the future considering the Covid-19 pandemic. David explained that Transport Focus had been continuing to survey passengers with results highlighting some of the challenges, including the perception of safety and cleanliness on transport, and the changing attitudes of travelling for both leisure and commuting for work/business purposes.

Lewis Brencher, Director of Communications and Engagement (TfW) led on from the presentation held by Transport Focus and provided a second workshop session at based on feedback and three key themes were highlighted by forum members during the last forum. The session explored these themes in more detail and the Sense Maker as a survey tool. Lewis explained that further comments are always welcome and that he can be contacted via [lewis.brencher@tfw.wales](mailto:lewis.brencher@tfw.wales)

Theme 1: Understanding **fear** and the practical steps we can take to reduce this

Theme 2: Exploring potential **fares** initiatives and what may suit future travel needs

Theme 3: Examining **flexibility**; what is the 'new normal' and how can transport adapt to suit

Discussions in the breakout rooms included:

- "In order to encourage people back to public transport, we need to do more to help people share their positive experiences of public transport"
- "Fares are too complicated at present, going forward we need to make them simple and easy to understand"
- "People will want a public transport system that can give them flexibility and respond to their personal needs"
- "Sunday will just become another day, weekday and weekend travel patterns may become very similar"
- "We need to diminish long wait times between modes and deliver real integration"

The workshop feedback will be collated into a wider series of consultation that TfW is conducting across the advisory architecture and as part of its public SenseMaker survey. This is informing a new campaign, The Campaign of Our Lives, which aims to encourage users back to public transport.

## 6. Network Rail Panel Q&A



Tracey Messner, Public Affairs Manager at Network Rail, invited questions and feedback on the development of the railway in Wales and Borders. Tracey asked forum members to give their views on Network Rail and how they could improve services for Wales & Borders Wales forum members.

Ann Elias explained that she felt Network Rail was expensive, and it was hard to communicate to other stakeholders the rationale behind the costs. Ann suggested that the costs should be better communicated to the wider public in order to manage expectations. James Jackson, Industry Programme Director, Network Rail, acknowledged the issues and suggested conversations were being had on this topic within Network Rail. Andy Scogings, Head of Strategic Planning, suggested that Network Rail do look for opportunities to make operations more efficient, but this needs to extend to partners so that when others are doing work at stations, they can deliver value for money.

Sean Croshaw suggested that when TfGM were delivering small case investments, they found it difficult to value future investments. He suggested that it was important to invest the incremental costs of going beyond what's needed now, so that partners needn't go back and invest more later. Andy Scogings suggested that colleagues need to look at the network holistically, beyond the regions that Network Rail are split into, to tackle issues far across the network. James added that a lack of a long-term direction for Network Rail was partly responsible for the issues that Sean was raising.

Gerard Rhodes commented that more needs to be done to consider the interdependencies of regional goals, and what those priorities are rather than which geographical areas are able to invest most in the research and feasibility. Andy suggested that in Cheshire West, TfW are leading a number of workstreams and that Network Rail and working with TfW to work across regional boundaries.

Christian Schmidt, Monmouthshire Council, asked for Network Rail and TfW to come back to the stakeholders with a uniform engagement process for local authorities, rather than them having to deal with them independently. Instead, TfW would be best placed to liaise with Network Rail in relation to investment proposals and projects. James Jackson suggested it was a tangible suggestion, which pointed towards the demand for being more integrated between teams.

## **7. CrossCountry Trains: The Future of Cross Border Travel**

Richard Gibson, Stakeholder Manager West and Wales, CrossCountry Trains, gave an overview of the size of the CrossCountry operation, and how they anticipate the service will change in the future as well as how journey uptake had changed across periods. Richard explained that CrossCountry have recently restructured to allow them to respond to stakeholders in regions such as "West and Wales".

Richard suggested that CrossCountry wanted to build a stronger relationship with the communities they serve, including a stronger focus on stakeholder and community engagement, potential funding opportunities and conducting regular consultations.

## **8. AOB**

Nichole Sarra concluded the forum by welcoming members to contact the Wales and Borders team on any future items that they feel would be relevant and asking them to complete an optional feedback form.

## Actions

The actions below were raised during the forum and will be addressed prior to the next Regional Forum where possible.

Action	What will be done?
To set up a meeting with Sean Croshaw, Transport for Greater Manchester.	We met with Sean Croshaw to discuss how we could collaborate with Transport for Greater Manchester and achieve shared ambitions for regional interconnectivity. A second meeting has also been set up to follow the next round of forums.
To consider going forward an engagement process for rail infrastructure improvements to be addressed at a future Forum.	Will discuss with network colleagues what process is already in place and where we can work together to make handling of rail related projects more straightforward for Local Authority partners.
Jeremy Whitaker to get back in touch with Christian Schmidt to answer queries in relation to fares and ticketing presentation.	Jeremy Whitaker contacted forum members who raised queries directly.

## Forum digital chat highlights

Highlights of the conversation within the chat function of the Forum were:

“[New Rail Services launched between North Wales and Liverpool \(tfwrail.wales\)](https://www.tfwrail.wales) New Rail Services launched between North Wales and Liverpool. Starting today, Transport for Wales will be running hourly rail services between North Wales and Cheshire to Liverpool.”

"Anomalies removal at SEW Metro" - the biggest anomalies within the SEW Metro are the fares difference between Abergavenny, Chepstow, Caldicot & STJ compared to equivalent stations in the regions.”

“One of the consequences of the bus-only concessionary fares scheme is that it encourages wasteful bus services that run in parallel to railway lines.”

“Thank you. Very happy to pick up any issues direct with you if that's helpful. Jeremy”

“Overall I found the ticketing presentation very impressive!”

“Government are consulting on the Manchester Recovery Task Force. One of those proposals will N Wales lose direct connection to Manchester airport and Warrington, Runcorn, Helsby and Frodsham. This goes against the GT360 work and Gov’s own union connectivity agenda.”

“Hi, we (TfW) are preparing a response to the consultation and will raise this in the meeting shortly. Equally, happy to discuss further after the forum. Thank you”

“In my view the current Cardiff-Birmingham timetable is not working well for either long distance IC passengers nor the regional market towns. Are you looking at that? (FWIW I think this may be worth doing jointly with GWR and TfW)”

“In terms of developing new markets, how is this being considered alongside the possible post-HS2 role for CrossCountry?”

[“Timetable options to improve rail performance in the north of England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)”](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/timetable-options-to-improve-rail-performance-in-the-north-of-england)

“Great forum - really impressively managed given the number of attendees”

“well done all, really interesting session”

## Next Regional Stakeholder Forum

The next Wales and Borders Regional Stakeholder Forum is scheduled for Friday 21st May 2021. The meeting will be held virtually over the Microsoft Teams platform between 10:00 – 12:00.