**Date issued:** 5 April 2022

**Freedom of Information Request**

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 for the following information. We have provided information**

1) If there is any franchise specification or service obligation to provide any direct services between Chester, Crewe, Stafford to Birmingham in either direction and, if so, what the requirement is.

2) If there is requirement to consider alternative arrangements or liaise with other operators to provide a service when a removal results in no alternative arrangement for travel within a set timeframe (ie, 60 minutes).

3) What justifications are required to meet approval from Welsh Parliament or Department for Transport to remove a service from the timetable with no suitable alternatives

4) If Transport for Wales has a policy to increase modal share on the railway and how they wish to achieve these goals.

**Having reviewed your questions, we are able to provide the following information:**

1. *If there is any franchise specification or service obligation to provide any direct services between Chester, Crewe, Stafford to Birmingham in either direction and, if so, what the requirement is.*

There was a franchise specification or service obligation to provide one service per weekday in each direction between Chester, Crewe, Stafford to Birmingham in the pre-covid franchise specification. Our Train Service Requirements (TSR) have since been reviewed and an updated TSR will be included in the amended rail service Grant Agreement which will be published in the near future – this forms the basis of our obligations for services throughout our network.

The comprehensive review highlighted that we have some services that have been in place purely to provide a driving training facility (for purposes of ‘route knowledge’ - in case of diversions to be exact - it is not a regular TfW service ‘route’). This included the two booked services a weekday that we operate Crewe to Wolverhampton via Stafford (1G00 0422 Chester – Birmingham New Street and 1D19 22.55 Birmingham New Street – Holyhead). Therefore, the service obligation to provide any direct services between Chester, Crewe, Stafford to Birmingham in either direction will not be included in the TSR going forward.

Our driver trainer programme is of critical importance given the new rolling stock we are shortly to be deploying, but has been severely delayed due to the impact of covid which, has contributed to an increase in the volume of drivers not signing these diversionary or single link routes. It was therefore difficult to justify and continue to operate these unique services.The number of passengers observed using the service pre and during covid, was very low and consideration was also given to the time of day the services run and other options to travel available close to the times.

Once the challenge of undertaking of the driver training program for the new fleet is complete, there may be an opportunity to revisit and review the services in future timetables if demand and value is justified.

1. *If there is requirement to consider alternative arrangements or liaise with other operators to provide a service when a removal results in no alternative arrangement for travel within a set timeframe (ie, 60 minutes).*

This has been discussed with the Department for Transport with input from other transport bodies to consider alternative options and impact to customers.

1. *What justifications are required to meet approval from Welsh Parliament or Department for Transport to remove a service from the timetable with no suitable alternatives*

Whilst there is a TSR for station stops on our network, there is no specific requirement around justification for removal. Any removal of a service would be considered individually – addressing the specific circumstances - but would need to be approved by DfT for English services in particular.

1. *If Transport for Wales has a policy to increase modal share on the railway and how they wish to achieve these goals.*

In Llwybr Newydd, the Welsh Government have set a modal shift target of 45% of journeys to be made by public transport, walking and cycling – by 2040. This represents an increase of 13 percentage points on the estimated current mode share of 32%.

Further investment in electrification across the Wales and Borders network (in addition to the ongoing transformation of the Core Valley Lines network and creation of the South Wales Metro) is required to support modal shift to rail, deliver on decarbonisation commitments and maximise the value of our new electric fleets.

TfW is already exploring and looking to introduce integrated journey planning and tickets, and a zonal fares system is under development to support the launch of the South Wales Metro.

TfW is committed to supporting the Welsh Government’s vision of walking and cycling becoming the preferred ways of getting around over shorter distances for the people of Wales, and is already taking steps to improve integration of rail with active travel opportunities.

As well as providing advice and support to the Welsh Government, including assisting in the review of guidance associated with the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, in December 2020 TfW also became responsible for administration of the Active Travel Fund programme on behalf of the Welsh Government, enabling us to play a much greater role in supporting healthy and sustainable travel across Wales.

In the medium term, achieving significant modal shift will require a holistic, integrated approach to journey planning, working across different modes and sectors to make it easier for people to travel door-to-door using sustainable transport modes.

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".