

Question 1

The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to the development, procurement and delivery of the rail franchise and South Wales Metro, including key risks and how they can be mitigated.

1. The procurement process that is being undertaken differs greatly from other rail franchises recently awarded or in the process of being awarded i.e.

- The Northern franchise
- Greater Anglia

What evidence is there available that the process adopted for the Wales & Borders franchise will deliver a sound and robust rail franchise contract vs. the model adopted by the Department for Transport?

2. The implementation of this franchise process and the engagement with stakeholders is confusing. Workshop invitations appear to be random with many relying on word of mouth to seek an invitation.

3. The 'rules of engagement' with bidders apparently being con-strained to meeting with elected members with a transport port-folio or 'of influence' again has been restrictive.

4. The scope of the stakeholder list is also unclear. This is a Wales & Borders Franchise and this rail franchise will be vitally important for the development of those English Regions.

5. We are advised of a 'data room'. Are we content that the data provided within is robust and accurate and covers the entire Wales & Borders franchise area including the English regions?

6. There are great hopes on this new franchise delivering a great railway. The current franchise being awarded on a no growth basis over a long 15 year period has seen us struggling daily with capacity issues as demand has grown. Passenger expectations that this will be addressed are high particularly with the introduction of new rolling stock in recently awarded franchises in England.

7. There is a lack of clarity on the way forward for Community Rail Partnerships in Wales and the Borders. Community Rail is not part of the current franchise but forms an important part of all the recent Department for Transport franchises with sound financial support for their development being an undertaking. We have the opportunity to finally redress this omission and specify a Wales & Borders Community Rail Strategy that will be cross border serving the railway and the communities of the two countries.

8. There is no information on how the governance of the new franchise will operate. We have highlighted that this is a Wales and Borders franchise and the needs of the English regions need to be appreciated and included both in the specification and the ongoing governance. The English Regions need to be included in any decisions that are made on how the franchise is developed or changes made to the services offered.

Question 2

Priorities for the franchise specification and Metro delivery to ensure rail services meet the needs of current and future travellers throughout the franchise area, and deliver value for money for both passengers and the taxpayer.

1. A franchise specification that includes a process that ensures the needs of passengers both in Wales & England are considered, assessed and addressed. This process should be clear to all stakeholders and also form the basis for ongoing consultations where services enhancements or changes may have a potential adverse affect in another locality.

2. The current franchise map accommodates important cross border services originating in Wales which we need to be maintained and enhanced such as those into Birmingham International, Crewe and Manchester. Many of these cross border services are heavily used and need to have sufficient capacity (based on current and projected demand) for peak time travel for the entire journey. Reliability of services particularly on these long distance services needs to be considered across its entire length whether that is Wales or England. The termination of the train prior to its final destination to ensure the late running does not affect the return journey needs review and consideration given to the passenger inconvenience both those who have their journeys terminated and those who lose a scheduled service.

3. Service provision on much of the Marches lines has not improved since the last franchise, indeed for some stations on the Marches Line they have seen their services decline due to retiming of services and the poor connections to onward long distance services out of Shrewsbury. We wish to see all current cross border services maintained and enhanced, from origin to destination particularly those to important gateways such as Manchester and Birmingham International, ensuring that this franchise provides capacity for growth, at least consistent with that of the new Northern and Trans Pennine Express franchises.

4. Service provision on a Sunday is inadequate and does not meet passenger needs on all routes. Also later services in the evenings are needed to allow passengers to return from long distance journeys or evenings spent at events. At Chester the last service south to Wrexham and on to Shrewsbury is 22.28 far too early for passengers to complete their journeys.

5. We need to be aware that major investment and regeneration projects across the Border in England are being delivered which will give rise to new opportunities for rail travel in particular connections via Wrexham and the

Halton Curve to Liverpool and the airport and along the Borderlands Line and the Enterprise Zones.

6. The need to have a clear mechanism, including funding, in place that allows service and station enhancements to be rolled out throughout the life of the franchise on both sides of the border.

7. The new franchise should be seen as an opportunity for provision for fully funded Community Rail Partnerships to be established. The latest franchises awarded by the Departments for Transport have included significant financial support as a part of the specification. It is also the opportunity for Community Rail in Wales & the Borders to work to a new community rail strategy specifically tailored to the region including the cross border routes.

8. Many rail journeys do not start or end in Wales. The new Wales and Borders franchise needs to significantly improve direct access between a number of points such as:

1. Chester & Wrexham with Manchester Airport
2. Liverpool via the Halton curve to Wrexham and south to Shrewsbury
3. Improving connectivity by contractually extending the services beyond Birmingham New Street to Birmingham International.
4. Crewe Shrewsbury services extending to Telford

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