Wales and Borders Regional Forum

Date:	12 November 2020
Time:	10:00 – 12:00
Location:	Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Adam Graham, Transport Planner, Warrington Council
Alison Torrens, Executive Officer, Universities West Midlands (AT)
Ann Elias, Mid Wales Regional Engagement Team – Strategic Transport, Growing Mid Wales Partnership
David Beer, Senior Manager (Wales), Transport Focus (DB)
David Jones, Rail Development Manager, Liverpool City Region (DJ)
Heather Bolton, Transport Planner, Telford & Wrekin Council (HB)
Mark Hooper, Project Lead, Visit Shropshire
Matt Johnson, Strategic Projects Manager and Rail Lead, Shropshire Council
Michelle Roles, Stakeholder Manager Wales, Transport Focus
Mike Learmond, Senior Development Manager Wales, Federation of Small Businesses (ML)
Neva Mowl, Environmental Officer, Birmingham City University (on behalf of West Midlands Combined Universities)
Paul Colman, CEO, South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Paul Jones, Head of City Services, Newport Council
Peter West, Commercial Manager, Department for Transport
Rhiannon-Jane Raftery, Community Rail Development Coordinator, Community Rail Network
Richard Gibson, Head of Communications, Crosscountry Trains
Ridhi Kalaria, Partnerships Manager, Sustrans West Midlands
Robert Niblett, Planning Officer, Gloucestershire County Council
Sean Croshaw, Strategic Rail Manager, Transport for Greater Manchester
Sheila Dee, Community Rail Officer, Chester – Shrewsbury Rail Partnership
Tim Mitchell, Senior Transport Planning Officer, Birmingham City Council
Toby Rackliff, Strategic Lead Rail Policy, West Midlands Rail Executive (TR)
Tracey Messner, Public Affairs Manager, Network Rail
Victoria Hammond, Senior Transport Planning Officer, Herefordshire County Council (VH)

TfW attendees

Andrew Gainsbury, Rolling Stock Manager (AG)
Arron Bevan-John, Community Engagement Officer
Carolyn Hodrien, Community Engagement Officer
Ceri Taylor, Stakeholder Manager
Dafydd Williams, Rail Performance Manager
Geraint Morgan, Community Rail Manager (GM)
Helen Dale, Community Engagement Officer
James Price, Chief Executive Officer
Kate Clark, Policy Advisor
Katie Powis, Stakeholder Manager
Lewis Brencher, Director of Communications (LB)
Lois Park, Head of Community & Stakeholder Engagement (LP)
Louis Mertens, Community Engagement Officer (Clerk)

Lowri Joyce, Stakeholder Manager (LJ)
Nichole Sarra, Stakeholder Manager
Silke Boak, Customer Insights Analyst (SB)

Apologies

Christian Schmidt, Transport Projects and Programme Manager, Monmouthshire Council
Eddie Muraszko, Midlands, North & Wales Market Lead, Department for Transport
Fay Easton, Head of Stakeholder and Community, West Midlands Railway
Gerard Rhodes, Senior Transport Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Jeremy Callard, Transportation Strategy Manager, Herefordshire Council
Michelle Mitchell, Group Leader, Integrated Transport Unit, Torfaen Council
Matt Powell, Transport Planner, Telford and Wrekin Council
Richard Hibbert, Head of Strategic Transport, Cheshire East Council
Robert Gravelle, Accessibility and Inclusion Manager, TfW Rail (RG)
Sarah Spink, Strategic Partnerships Lead, Midlands Connect
Steve Gardner-Collins, Director, Visit Gloucestershire
Tom Painter, Franchise Delivery Manager, West Midlands Railway

Note: The following minutes were collated by the secretariat for this forum which was Louis Mertens, Community Engagement Officer.

The below is a summary of the presentations and subject matters discussed/questions raised – and not intended to be verbatim of the session.

Item no.	Minutes	Action
1.	**Introductions and Apologies** Nichole Sarra (NS), Stakeholder Manager for the Borders, Transport for Wales, introduced the forum and Louis Mertens (LM) the new community engagement officer for the Borders area. NS invited attendees to introduce themselves in the chat box. NS explained the basic housekeeping guidelines for the meeting along with the opportunity to raise questions throughout. LM inserted the agenda into the chat. Victoria Hammond (VH) Senior Transport Planning Officer at Herefordshire Council explained that she would be attending the forums in place of Jeremy Callard in future. Heather Bolton (HB), Transport Planner, Telford and Wrekin Council asked (in chat) whether the minutes from the previous forum were available. Lowri Joyce (LJ), Stakeholder Manager at TfW, explained (via chat) that following the last meeting a technical issue was experienced with the Microsoft Teams chat function, which TfW have been working to resolve. However, TfW have since been informed that unfortunately the chat from this session is	

	irretrievable. The outcome of this was, without the chat text where the majority of Q&As were conducted, TfW were unable to compile comprehensive minutes for the previous forum, however minutes from this meeting would be shared. Robert Gravelle (RG), Accessibility Manager, TfW Rail offered (via chat) that if anyone had questions that he might need to answer that they could get in touch following the meeting.	
2.1	**Update on the Future of the Wales and Borders Contract – James Price (JP), Chief Executive, Transport for Wales** JP gave an overview of the changes taking place to the contractual arrangements between the Welsh Government, Transport for Wales (Authority) and Transport for Wales Rail Services due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. LM inserted a link to further reading on this item into the chat. • *Link 1 – Welsh Government Take Rail Franchise under Public Control* • *Link 2 – Transformation of the Welsh Transport Network Continues Despite COVID-19* No questions were raised on this item.	
2.2	**Latest Travel Guidance and Timetables – Dafydd Williams (DW), Rail Performance Manager** DW presented the changes to the rail service as a consequence of COVID-19 including factors that impact the timetable. DW explained that COVID-19 had meant that on average TfW were operating 85% of service on the Wales & Borders network, broadly in line with other operators in the UK. DW noted that the timetable had to remain flexible to any potential new demands. DW gave an overview of how the timetable had been amended to date in response to feedback, including the reinstatement of some services and providing bus provision to bolster capacity and maintain social distancing on rail services. LM inserted a link into the chat to a page which outlines new trains joining the network. Following the presentation NS highlighted a question in the chat: VH asked what else had been implemented since the Hereford service had been reinstated if reliance on buses had been reduced. DW answered that TfW has reinstated a rail service between Cardiff / Hereford during the morning peak (which arrives at Hereford approximately 8.15) which had reduced the need to utilise as much of the standby bus provision. DW added that MK 4 rolling stock, when introduced would give more provision from Newport through to Shrewsbury. DW also reiterated that the bus provision was important for contingency	

whilst services continued to have reduced capacity, on occasions when rail services were at capacity to ensure students could get to educational establishments. NS added that TfW had also strengthened a service adding an additional carriage to the Cardiff to Hereford service which arrives in at 8:55. This had also assisted in reducing the numbers of students having to use the standby bus provision. TfW is continuing to closely monitor the situation to make sure that bus provision is where it needs to be, NS explained.

Lois Park (LP) Head of Stakeholder and Community Engagement added in the: On 12 October, TfW reinstated a peak morning train service into Hereford Station from the South (where we see the bulk of the demand). Similar to the timetable prior to the COVID pandemic, this service runs at 06:55 from Cardiff (calling at Newport 07:14, Cwmbran 07:24, Pontypool & New Inn 07:30 and Abergavenny 07:42) and arrives at Hereford at 08:14, where this service then terminates. This is in addition to two other morning peak train services from the south, which includes the 08:55 arrival into Hereford which has been 'strengthened' with an additional carriage recently (as of 29 September) and the 07:38 arrival.   This is in addition to stand by buses which remain in place for the meantime.

Alison Torrens (AT) Executive Officer, Universities West Midlands asked (via the chat) whether TfW are able to plan for the travel of university students around Christmas. LJ answered via the chat: TfW have commenced discussions with universities and are asking for likely direction of travel and timings so that TfW can provide information to students beforehand. TfW are also having conversations internally with the events team who are able to plan and manage large crowds to ensure resilience such as stewards and security staff. A new TfW capacity checker will encourage students to plan ahead as much as possible. (https://tfwrail.wales/planning-ahead/capacity-checker)

Geraint Morgan (GM), Community Rail Manager (South), Transport for Wales, asked (in chat) if a service can be brought in to reflect demand, how long will it take to appear in the public timetable? DW answered: any changes to services are aimed to be uploaded to public timetables as soon as possible but may only appear in the public timetable a few days before running due to the need to validate them with Network Rail.

Mike Learmond (ML), Senior Development Manager, Federation of Small Businesses, asked (in chat) in the longer term, Welsh Government has set a target of achieving 30% of employees working from home. How does that target affect TfWs capacity and demand planning? LP answered in chat that the timetable will remain flexible to adapt to new demands (IE less peak and

	more leisure travel). TfW are slowly phasing in additional rail services as they return towards a fuller timetable with more to be added in the coming months, but the timetable will continue to be 'different' to what it was pre-covid for quite some time. TfW are continuing to review the timetable based on passenger data, the Welsh Government's guidelines and business groups (through roundtables with the likes of CBI and FSB) and business leaders to understand their requirements as we navigate our way through out (hopefully) out of the pandemic.	
2.3	**Update on Rolling Stock – Andrew Gainsbury (AG), Rolling Stock Manager, Transport for Wales** AG provided an update on rolling stock being added to the network and the progress that had been made to date on refurbishing and delivering new trains. LM shared a link in the chat to an interactive tour of the some of the new trains on the Cardiff to Cheltenham lines. Toby Rackliff (TR) Strategic Lead, Rail Policy at West Midlands Rail Executive asked (in chat) which routes are the class 197 with 1st class proposed for? AG answered that 1st class 197s will be used on the Manchester to Swansea services. David Jones (DJ), Rail Development Manager at Liverpool City Region asked (in chat) when in 2021 the D230s are likely to be in operation? AG answered that the class 230 entry into service is heavily dependent on the progress with driver training, but realistically it is likely to be spring or possibly even early summer 2021, though we will be doing what we can to improve on this.	
3.	**Rebuilding Passenger Confidence in Public Transport Post-COVID-19 – Lewis Brencher (LB), Director of Communications, Transport for Wales** LB introduced the communications workshops. LM gave instructions in chat for joining break out rooms. TR, noted that he was unable to access the breakout rooms. DJ was also having issues joining. TR noted some more difficulty with Teams and suggested it might be due to him using Teams on an Ipad. Sheila Dee, Community Rail Officer at Wrexham Council (SD) suggested that her Apple Mac also asked for additional permissions to access the breakout room links provided. Attendees split into five groups to give feedback on two questions:	**TfW team to consider device compatibility issues for future sessions**

Question 1: What are the major barriers which could stop people returning to public transport post COVID?	**Stakeholder feedback will be utilised to help shape plans. A separate feedback report that collates the input from this specific workshop and its repeated sessions with other stakeholder groups will be available in early 2021 and shared at future forums.**

Question 1: What are the major barriers which could stop people returning to public transport post COVID?

Summary of responses below:

- Habits becoming entrenched due to COVID, many people now preferring to use their car

- Ease of use, booking online and capacity checkers

- Identifying new ways people will use rail (more for leisure)

- Fear and lack of confidence in using public transport due to COVID, and lack of confidence in using electronic tickets

- Face mask use putting people off using public transport

- Worrying about previous experiences and reliability in the future, missing connections and waiting around

- Cost of tickets

LM fed back for Group 1 and explained there was a fear of new environments and people had become entrenched in new transport habits, fearing COVID. The car was being seen as a bubble and a safe environment. LM went on to explain that the group also discussed the impact of face mask wearing and whether that would put people off public transport, as well as how offices were changing, blended working habits and how this was changing working habits. Finally, LM added on behalf of group 1 that they were seeing transport behaviours changing in the sense that the commute wasn't as strong, but more were travelling for leisure. There was the sense, LM added, that people at the start of their careers were keen to get back into an office environment.

DJ fed back for Group 4 and explained that people don't want to be close to each other, as you often are on a train and at a busy station. This isn't helped when there are fewer rail services, and more people are waiting at the stations. DJ added that it was difficult to get people back out of cars, and onto trains which added into the first two issues raised.

David Beer (DB) Wales Senior Manager, Transport Focus, for Group 2, explained that Transport Focus were doing research on a weekly basis and they had learned that whilst people were worried about people not wearing face masks and were concerned about COVID, those were the people that were not travelling. The people who were travelling did feel safe, so there was a perception gap that needed addressing. DB added that there was a need to address the messaging around travelling because at the beginning of the UK lockdown, the UK Government told people not to travel, and this message has stuck yet the situation is now far more confused. People are crossing the border regularly, if the local station is in Wales but

they live in England. These people may not be sure whether they can travel so there needs to be far better clarity about what people can and cannot do, and it needs to be all on the same website. DB noted that currently the TfW website directs users to the national rail website to view information about England which DB stated was not fair. DB also explained that people may not have the tools to access online resources, these same people may be travelling from one unstaffed station to another, without ticket machines and they may be wondering what they have to do and what the rules are. DB explained that people have questions and fears about what happens if there is not a guard if they get off and whether they're going to be challenged by revenue protection and those fears need to be addressed. DB said that where guards are not walking down the trains some of these stations don't have services. DB noted that is a shame that it's only Wales where that's happening and called for it to be changed.

LP explained that group 5 spoke mostly about cost, habit and confidence. In relation to cost, LP noted that many customers were left unhappy because people did not receive refunds from season tickets making them less confident about purchasing tickets in future. In relation to habit, many people have chosen to start moving by car and it will be a challenge to move them back and we need to think about how we do that with promotional fares. In relation to confidence, we need to think about those people who will never have used it, young people carted around by mum and dad. LP added that we need to think about how we confidently bring them back up.

ML on behalf of group 3, noted that he struggled to make his way back to the main chat. He explained that the group spoke about confidence of public transport users and encouraging people back on to the public transport system through assurances that they are safe. ML added that they also talked about the changing nature of work, with more and more people working from home and are likely to continue to do so after the pandemic ends. ML suggested that the old season ticket model might struggle if people aren't travelling five days a week and if there is less travel to work, how do we promote leisure travel? ML concluded by suggested that it might be worth looking at a more integrated system with restaurant vouchers and travelling for leisure purposes.

Question 2: What can we all do as partners to encourage use of public transport in the future?

Summary of responses below:

- Improving communication and provision of information

- Flexible ticketing options, and simplified ticketing (inc catering)

- Multi-modal transport opportunities, timetabling that links modes up

- Promoting the advantages, positive messaging around speed and environment

- Greater presence within the community and on social media

- Promotional products to encourage rail use

- Helping people to feel safe

- Making it easier for people not to use their cars

DJ fed back again for Group 4, stating that communication was a key point. People needed to be aware when trains are operating and be assured that the train is going to be there when they go for it. They also need to feel safe on the train and that social distancing is maintained. DJ also called for better integration between modes of transport, including better walking and cycling routes and making sure people drive to the station rather than drive their full journey. DJ noted that the final issue relates to the current ticketing style which isn't fit for the future and we need to consider different types of ticketing.

TR fed back for Group 5, he noted the importance of having a ticket product fit for the new reality, which offered flexibility. TR explained that it was important to reinforce the positive messaging "rail is safe for travel", the chances of being infected on rail is small. It's important to use that data in a positive way, comparing it to other activities, as well as showing how we are minimising risk, TR explained. TR went on to say that in the new reality it'll be more about encouraging discretionary travel, where more people choose rail for activities than previously. TR went on to say that his group talked about sizeable discounts to start with to get people back on rail. Group 5 also spoke about rail cards and whether there were things that could be done there to re-encourage previous rail card users to use the rail system.

ML fed back for Group 3, noting that FSB were in conversation with Transport for Wales about discounts for members and would like to revisit this. He noted larger employers had deals with Transport for Wales. The big issue for ML was making the process of engagement with TfW simpler between TfW, TfW Rail and Keolis Amey. ML explained that during talks with TfW (and co) it couldn't be agreed who would sponsor an item the FSB had put forward for consideration. ML suggested that going forward it needs to be simpler, with clear lines of communication to help organisations support with the narrative of sustainable transport. ML also suggested better consultation on things like the station stops, such as faster routes between Holyhead and Cardiff. ML would like a better consultation here with members and the general public.

LM fed back for Group 1, and spoke about communications to alleviate the fear of COVID and opportunities for flexible

	ticketing, opportunities for multi-modal travel, bikes on trains and giving the public opportunities to get back on to trains and making sure the reservation system and the ticketing system was sufficiently understandable. DB fed back for Group 2. He explained that the view from community rail was that they were waiting to welcome everyone back but they were waiting for a clear lead as well as questions from local communities about how they want to travel and what their fears and concerns are. DB gave an example of what peoples needs might be: "I want to be independent, I want my freedom back, I want to visit places again," and questioned how these should be addressed. He went on to explain that there needs to be a clear strategy led by Government and TfW as well as operators, but the question remains whether the operations will be ready to support people in their desire to travel again. In terms of messaging, it needs to be clear. DB asked "What comes next?" Will people be asked to stay local or will they be able to travel more widely. DB went on to say that the messaging needs to be worked on now across borders so that we can support people. DB suggested that if people feel they can't make their journey by public transport, then public transport isn't doing its job properly. DB noted that public transport should be door to door and there to support peoples journey needs, there should be the tools there to support it such as information and ticketing and with active-travel. DB discussed discounts with the end destination in mind explaining that if people are visiting a tourist site or eating out there are discounts in mind. LB summarised the comments from attendees and provided his contact email address to members: lewis.brencher@tfw.wales	
4.	**Welsh Government – Wales Transport Strategy** – **Kate Clark, (KC) Welsh Government Support at Transport for Wales** Kate Clark, gave an overview of the Welsh Government's Wales Transport Strategy, and considered how it touched upon a range of other Welsh Government policy priorities. Particularly in accessibility and equalities, environmental, economic and cultural issues DB asked to organise a session with the TfW advisory panel to discuss the draft strategy. No further questions were raised on this item. Please find the Consultation on the Wales Transport Strategy	
5.	**Future Forum Items / AOB**	

	NS thanked participants and asked that if there were any items that members wanted to see on future forums, they should get in touch with Nichole or Louis directly before closing the meeting. No AOB or Future Forum Items were proposed. HB asked (in chat) that in future, the minutes be added as a regular agenda item as per the TOR for the meeting, which states that minutes and detailed actions will be circulated to forum members following each forum and reviewed at the next forum meeting. HB also suggested that TfW shares the dates for the next years forum meetings ASAP to avoid a clash with other partnership meetings and forums. NS provided her email address in the chat function: Nichole.sarra@tfw.wales. The next forum is proposed to be held in February/March 2021.	**TfW to have a review of meeting minutes as a standing agenda item. Proposed dates for the next round of forums to be issued to members**