

Railways

Introduction

There are 235 stations in Wales and about 1,700 kilometres of passenger railway lines plus a further 300 or so kilometres of freight only lines.

There were approximately 20.1 million rail passenger journeys which either started or ended in Wales in 2005-06, an increase of 1 per cent compared to the previous year. Around two-thirds (66 per cent) of these journeys were within Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for funding and managing the Wales and the Borders franchise, operated by Arriva Trains Wales (ATW). The ATW franchise started on 7th December 2003 and is for fifteen years, subject to five-year Performance Review assessments. The other organisations involved in the operation of the railways are the Department for Transport, the Office of Rail Regulation, Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies. Apart from ATW, four other Train Operating Companies currently provide passenger rail services to parts of Wales. These are, Central Trains, Virgin Cross Country, First Great Western and Virgin West Coast.

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

The *Railways Act 2005* gave new powers to the Assembly in relation to the railways in Wales. As well as becoming a joint signatory with the Department for Transport for the Wales and the Borders Franchise, the Assembly Government can also:

- Give financial assistance to any organisation for the purpose of developing Welsh railways (including Network Rail and Train Operating Companies);
- Publish guidance jointly with the Secretary of State in relation to, and make any proposals for, closures of services or facilities that it funds;
- Designate, where applicable, new services it funds as experimental for a trial period of up to five years.

In addition, the *Transport (Wales) Act 2006* gave the Assembly new responsibilities for preparing a Wales Transport Strategy and a general duty to “develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, sustainable, efficient and economic transport facilities and services to, from and within Wales.”

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

The *Railways Act 2005* saw a major reorganisation of the railways with the abolition of the Strategic Rail Authority and an enhanced role for Network Rail. The White Paper, *Delivering a Sustainable Railway*¹, was published in July 2007 by the Department for Transport. This looks ahead over a 30 year period but also sets out the UK Government's planned funding for the railways in England and Wales for the period 2009-2014.

EU policy

As part of its common transport policy, the European Community has adopted legislation to pave the way for gradual establishment of an integrated European railway area, both legally and technically. This involves the development and implementation of Technical Specifications for Interoperability and a common approach to questions concerning railway safety. The European Rail Agency has been established to manage the preparation of these measures.

The European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) is one example of such activity that is being piloted on the Cambrian Line in Wales.

¹ Department for Transport, [Delivering a Sustainable Railway](#), White Paper CM 7176, July 2007

Key Assembly Government strategy documents and action plans

*One Wales: Connecting the Nation*ⁱⁱ, the transport strategy for Wales was published in May 2008. This will be followed by a National Transport Plan and four Regional Transport Plans to be prepared by the Regional Transport Consortia.

The outcome of the Welsh Assembly Government's Transport Review announced in 2004 included the commitment to fund additional rolling stock on the Valley Lines and to the reopening of the Ebbw Valley railway for passenger services.

A Rail Planning Assessment for Wales setting out the options for the development of the railway over the next 20 years was published by the Department for Transport and the Welsh Assembly Governmentⁱⁱⁱ. A draft Route Utilisation Study for Wales covering a ten-year period from 2008 was published by Network Rail in May 2008^{iv}. Each of the four regional transport consortia in Wales is also producing a rail strategy, to form part of the Regional Transport Plan.

In November 2006 the Assembly Government announced a pilot scheme to introduce concessionary fares on designated rail services in rural areas.

A Committee established by the Second Assembly produced a report of recommendations for improvements to passenger services and infrastructure^v. The Welsh Assembly Government accepted most of the recommendations subject to funding and feasibility studies^{vi}. The transport strategy identifies as a key action the completion of detailed feasibility studies of the options for rail improvements set out in the Wales Rail Planning Assessment.

Useful links

Welsh Assembly Government website:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/rail/?lang=en>

Arriva Trains Wales

<http://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/?lang=en>

Network Rail

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/?lang=en>

Office of Rail Regulation

<http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/>

Passenger Focus

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/>

South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA)

<http://www.sewta.gov.uk/>

South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH)

<http://www.swwitch.org.uk/default.asp?id=1>

TraCC (Mid-Wales)

<http://www.tracc.gov.uk/>

Taith (North Wales)

<http://www.taith.gov.uk/>

Further information

For further information about transport in Wales, please contact Graham Winter (Graham.winter@wales.gsi.gov.uk), Members' Research Service, 02920 898166

ⁱⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, [One Wales: Connecting the Nation, The Wales Transport Strategy](#), May 2008

ⁱⁱⁱ Department for Transport and the Welsh Assembly Government, [Wales Rail Planning Assessment](#), July 2007

^{iv} Network Rail, [Wales Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation](#), May 2008

^v Railway Infrastructure and Improved Passenger Services Committee, [Interim Report](#), March 2006

Railway Infrastructure and Improved Passenger Services Committee, [Final Report](#), June 2006

^{vi} Welsh Assembly Government, Andrew Davies, Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks, [Written response of the Welsh Assembly Government to the Rail Infrastructure and Improved Passenger Service Committee Report](#), 3 October 2006