

## Comments from Cllr Matthew Dorrance

Whilst I note investment in the rail network over past years, little has been done to expand the network in rural Wales and towns like Brecon that rely heavily on tourism to support the local economy would benefit significantly from a working rail station and access to the network. I feel it would also open a whole new range of jobs and skills up to Brecon residents who could then feasibly commute to larger population bases for employment.

In relation to the current franchise, I feel that ticket prices are too high. As someone who uses rail to access work and leisure services, I find the ticket price can be off putting for many on low or limited budgets and this can result in increased social exclusion.

It would be my preference for the rail network, ticket pricing and rail services to be a not for profit organisation that operates in the interests of Wales. I believe that this would offer the Welsh tax payer better value for money, it would result in services being provided for people not profit and I think that it could lead to better connected communities in Wales being served by a better network.

Currently, I feel that too few carriages are provided and they are overcrowded especially in peak times. I would suggest that the Valley Lines service from Merthyr to Cardiff is a prime example of this.

If rail services and the network are to become a not for profit organisation, I would suggest that the management trust should be democratically accountable to communities in Wales and there should be representatives from Welsh Government, Local Government and the workforce represented on the board. This would ensure that community interests are represented right at the heart of our national rail network.

This trust would then be responsible for awarding franchises to operators. I feel that operators should demonstrate a commitment to investing into the network, reducing carbon emissions and creating jobs and training opportunities for young people in Wales.

For Powys, cross border routes are incredibly important and early discussions would need to be held with English operators about the model that Wales will adopt. If the English operator wishes to bid for a franchise, I would fully expect them to sign up to a not for profit model and the aims for reducing carbon and creating jobs - if this is what the Welsh Government adopts.

Where possible, stock should be procured from within Wales to support local jobs and our Welsh economy. Where that is not possible, it is important that the

process is one that delivers value for money for the Welsh tax payer and one that can be beneficial to other reciprocal elements of foreign trade. The stock could be leased on a rolling stock basis to help drive down long term costs but it is important to procure the most environmentally friendly stock and this must run from fuel consumption, emissions right down to the toxicity of the paint used in and on carriages etc.

Cllr Matthew Dorrance