

This Council would strongly request a link from Brecon to Merthyr or to Abergavenny be considered for both community and tourism purposes being the biggest town in the National Parks.

The lines in rural areas are mainly still in existence on farm land and could be accessed with a small park and ride system and link bus. This could be a very viable and profitable line which would allow good access by public transport to Brecon which currently does not exist.

Comments from Cllr Ieuan Williams

I believe this to be a worthwhile proposal having lived in the town of Brecon when the railway station was located on the site of Brecon Fire Station and the Goods Marshalling Yard where the Offices at Cambrian Way are now sited. However a lot of the land that carried the original rail lines have within the town limits been built over and those beyond the town have all but disappeared.

There would need to be a fairly long and in-depth consultation in respect of where a station could be located and where the rail lines to and from it were to be laid down. Land is at a premium so could the rail even come into the town or would the station like Builth Road Railway Station have to be located somewhere on the out-skirts of the town? These are questions that would have to be put to those carrying out the Consultation process.

Having said that I do feel that if a railway can be reintroduced to the Brecon area we shouldn't allow ourselves to get too emotional over whether or not its location is inside or outside of the town.”

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.

Comments from Cllr Robin Lewis

- 1) Increase in capacity in key stations in Cardiff gives an opportunity to expand the network. The Welsh Government has made progress in this, by extending lines and increasing frequency of services. However, there is an opportunity here to further expand the network, by, for example returning rail service provision to Brecon. In terms of rail provision for Brecon, it is clear that provision does not meet need. There is also a good case for investment in park and ride services, which are of particular importance to the hinterland around Brecon, and for close co-operation with other public transport providers.
- 2) This need would increase work, leisure and educational opportunities. In light of our town's reliance on tourism, this would also play an important reverse effect in promoting economic prosperity locally. This would also make Brecon more sustainable in terms of population demographic.
- 3) Not for dividend is an excellent idea. Dwr Cymru is recognised as a good business model providing excellent service. Public transport should be operated on a similar basis.
- 4) It is also clear that the current model of fixed term franchises leads to inadequate investment with a focus on profit maximisation. For example, there is no impetus to

invest in rolling stock when a franchise could be lost in a few years, which is of detriment to the service offered to the passenger. As well as the comfort of rolling stock, this could lead to access issues and overcrowding.

5) It is clear that rail users do not a good deal, with regard to increasing ticket costs. To assume that increasing ticket charges increases value to the tax payers is the worst sort of short-termism - in terms of costs of road maintenance, lesser economic prosperity and the environmental consequences of lower public transport usage.

6) It is important to approach this issue from a long-term perspective. If large-scale eletrification is intended, it is better value for money if line extensions are in place before electrification occurs.

All other Councillors would strongly support any proposal to achieve a rail link to Brecon.