

## Liverpool & South Wales Railway (L&SWR) Industry Consultation Responses

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Page</b>
Transport for Wales response to L&SWR	2
L&SWR response to Transport for Wales	7
West Midlands Rail Executive response to L&SWR	9
L&SWR response to West Midlands Rail Executive	10
CrossCountry response to L&SWR	11
L&SWR response to CrossCountry	12
Department for Transport response to L&SWR	13
L&SWR response to Department for Transport	15
Transport Focus response to L&SWR	17
L&SWR response to Transport Focus	18
GB Railfreight response to L&SWR	19
L&SWR response to GB Railfreight	20
First Trenitalia West Coast Rail response to L&SWR	21
L&SWR response to First Trenitalia West Coast Rail	23
Great Western Railway response to L&SWR	25
L&SWR response to Great Western Railway	27
CVL Amey response to L&SWR	29
L&SWR response to CVL Amey	30
Northern Trains response to L&SWR	31
L&SWR response to Northern Trains	32
Freightliner response to L&SWR	33
L&SWR response to Freightliner	34

SLC Rail  
Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager  
Network Rail

**By email**

12 March 2025

Dear

**Transport for Wales and Transport for Wales Rail Ltd response to the Industry  
Consultation on L&SWR, Section 17 Application, Liverpool Lime Street-Rhoose  
Cardiff International Airport**

Thank you for consulting us on the proposals from the Liverpool & South Wales Railway (L&SWR) to submit a Section 17 application for a new Track Access Contract. This response is from Transport for Wales (TfW) as the Transport Authority and Transport for Wales Rail Limited (TfWRL) as the train operator for the Wales & Borders network.

TfW and TfWRL are unable to support the proposal on account of numerous concerns regarding network capacity, pre-existing funded commitments and revenue abstraction.

**Summary of our Concerns**

*Network Capacity and Pre-Existing Commitments*

- The application increases the number of conflicts on the network, impacting a significant number of TfW and other industry services. Absent any additional investment to alleviate current infrastructure limitations, there are no headways to accommodate the new services.
- In that regard, TfW is already actively collaborating with Ministers and Network Rail on prioritising funds to enable investments in signalling improvements at Gobowen and in level crossing mitigations. These link to existing TfW commitments to deliver a Cardiff – Liverpool service, agreed with both Welsh and UK Governments. In contrast, the application makes no commitment to investment in support of facilitating additional services.
- The application is likewise at odds with TfW's future obligations to run more services between Cardiff and Rhoose.

*Revenue Abstraction*

- MOIRA1 analysis indicates that TfWRL would lose more than 10% of its revenue earned on Wales & Cross-Border (WCB) services, were this application taken forward.
- Indeed, the extent of these losses may be higher than MOIRA 1 would suggest, given the expected deterioration in operational performance which would detract from delivery of a reliable service by all operators on the route.
- Losses on such a scale threaten the integrity of funding settlements agreed between Welsh and UK Governments. The arrangements are complex and would undoubtedly require re-negotiation, with inevitable increased costs to the UK taxpayer. Otherwise, it would be impossible to meet commitments already made by TfW to both Governments.

In the light of the above, TfW is concerned that the proposals align poorly with the Secretary of State's letter to ORR of 6 January, and argues strongly that they should not be approved in their current form.

We elaborate on our key concerns below.

## 1. Economic and Subsidy

Whilst we have not attempted to pre-empt the Not Primarily Abstractive test, we would highlight that **TfWRL stands to lose more than 10% of its entire WCB revenue from this application**, which will flow directly, pound-for-pound, to a likely minimum subsidy increase over the seven-year term **of just under £140m**.

This figure is based partly on analysis from MOIRA1, but also includes likely **additional negative impacts**, not recognised by MOIRA, which will inflate abstraction from TfW. These include impacts on TfWRL's Advance market, with any loss of demand in this market falling wholly on TfW.

Furthermore, the wider **deterioration in operational performance expected as a result of this application would have a further negative impact on both TfW and industry revenues**. The impacts would likely result in a reduction in passenger revenue and restriction of future growth on impacted routes, together with severe reputational damage to all parties. Further detail on the operational performance risks linked to this application are covered separately and in more detail further on in this response.

In addition to the above, there are **complex and unique obligations and funding arrangements** between the Welsh and UK Governments, and this application would necessitate a **significant and politically difficult re-negotiation** with inevitable cost to the taxpayer. Such costs ultimately translate into difficult choices between funding for rail versus other public services, clearly not the intention in considering an application from a new private-sector rail operator.

## 2. Commercial impacts on TfW

To model the likely commercial impacts of this application on TfW (including the impact on TfW's Advance market referenced earlier), MOIRA1 runs have been combined with separate revenue modelling that evaluates the current value of TfW's Advance market on impacted flows (and likely value in future years, after accounting for pricing and volume growth). This suggests that in addition to results from MOIRA, more than £17m per annum of TfW Advance revenue (based on current demand levels) would be placed at direct risk as a result of this application. Based on indicative service patterns we believe that L&SWR may be capable of abstracting around 30% of this market, equating to an additional abstraction rate of circa £5m per annum (based on current demand levels), in addition to the MOIRA1 figure. This level of additional abstraction would inflate in future years in line with pricing and volume growth.

This appraisal suggests that the **MOIRA1 impacts on TfW revenue may only capture around half of the total abstraction on TfWRL's farebox position**.

Our current appraisal suggests that if the L&SWR application were approved then (in total) around **£140m of TfW farebox revenue would be abstracted over the planned seven years' of operation**.

In MOIRA we have identified TfW losses across over 11,500 different flows, directly linked to this application, which demonstrates the widespread negative impact that this application would be expected to have on TfW's revenue and overall subsidy position.

In considering the significant levels of abstraction that would be expected from this application, the most acute impacts on TfW would likely be felt on TfW's key interurban services that serve the Marches route and connect north and south Wales. Abstracting this income may have a knock-on impact on the continued viability of other lower demand but socially important services across the wider TfW network. On this point it should be noted that **all TfW services are delivered as part of a fixed funding envelope that relies on a base level of income being achieved each year.**

### 3. Operational Considerations

Our analysis from the application data, noting a lack of detailed pathing information, identifies numerous operational concerns from TfW's point of view. We are very concerned that the L&SWR application is **in conflict with both our current services and future already-funded commitments**. These manifest themselves in:

- network performance degradation, with a knock-on effect into the Cardiff Valley Lines (CVL) network;
- a need for capacity enhancements which will require significant investment in signalling and in management of Level Crossing facilities; and
- fleet berthing and maintenance issues, noting that Canton TMD is at capacity and we would expect there to be a significant level of empty coaching moves to suitable maintenance facilities.

TfW is very concerned about **the implications of the proposed paths between Cardiff and Rhose on our future increased service commitments** as part of more than £1bn investment in the South East Wales Metro, which includes a half-hourly service between Bargoed, Cardiff Queen Street, Cardiff Central and Rhose for Cardiff International Airport. Our initial analysis suggests that the L&SWR application and our SE Wales Metro commitments would be incompatible with each other.

TfW's commitment offers considerably more services between central Cardiff and the Airport than does the L&SWR proposal. The proposed paths do not appear to consider even TfW's existing service on this route.

Our analysis **suggests the proposed paths would also have multiple conflicts and increase congestion with other TfWRL services particularly between Frodsham and Chester, and between Chester and Craven Arms.**

We have also noted that the L&SWR proposal conflicts with other open access proposals including Wrexham, Shropshire and Midlands Railway paths between Shrewsbury and Wrexham, and Grand Union paths between Cardiff and Newport.

Further we do not understand how L&SWR will be accommodated at Cardiff Central at their proposed times among existing services. We cannot foresee a timetable solution where all these services and TfW's current service and future commitments could be accommodated on the available infrastructure.

Notwithstanding our concerns over pathing raised above, TfW is very concerned about **the impact on performance from L&SWR services**. The proposed paths are close to our existing paths and the Absolute Block signalling and limited headways on much of the route mean delays will propagate more severely than on other routes.

We are also concerned about the impact on congested stations such as Liverpool Lime Street, where L&SWR have given no indication of how their services would be accommodated in the station, and the very limited turnaround for L&SWR at the south end of the route which would further worsen any delays to services.

TfW's principal aim to provide Wales with a more reliable and dependable railway while increasing services, has driven a conscious decision to separate the South Wales and Borders services from the South East Wales Metro lines (including the line between Cardiff and Rhose). The L&SWR proposal would reinstate that link and **propagate any delay across multiple service groups that would otherwise be avoided.**

#### 4. Political and future service provision aspirations

TfW is concerned that a significant **drain on its finances as a result of this application** would prevent it from making future investments which seek to augment its service network and future services.

TfW's recent consultation "*Have your Say – Strategic future timetable review*" identifies investments required to speed up current longer-distance services and provide enhanced connectivity and journey opportunities in North Wales, Cheshire and Merseyside. TfW is in dialogue with Network Rail and with both Welsh and UK Ministers on how it prioritises investment to meet stakeholder and passenger aspirations.

**TfW has a long-standing commitment to both Governments to deliver a Cardiff – Liverpool service**, a promise that is found to require significant investment in both Level Crossing mitigations and additional signalling in the Gobowen area. The L&SWR application has been submitted while funding for this >£20m capital cost continues to be explored. By proposing a limited stop service the applicant may be able to avoid the signalling interventions, **but we expect that the level crossing mitigation measures will still need to be funded.** We understand that there **has been no dialogue** from the aspirant applicant and any relevant Network Rail Route to explore how infrastructure upgrades might be funded or enabled.

The limited-stop service pattern would also mean far fewer areas of Wales and the Borders would see benefits from new Liverpool-Cardiff services. For example, TfW's long-standing commitment would provide journey opportunities at Gobowen, Hereford, Abergavenny and Cwmbran that are absent from the new proposal.

#### 5. Other concerns

TfW has negotiated a significant and **industry-leading multi-year pay deal with union partners for all its key traincrew and frontline groups**; necessitated by a peak of driver training for our £800m new train investment, timetable uplifts and recognition that Sunday needed to be part of the working week, rather than a day for overtime and voluntary working. TfW has worked tirelessly to ensure we have full establishment at all driver and conductor depots, and we are now concerned that **this application would result in a significant level of "poaching" at key traincrew locations close to the L&SWR route such as Cardiff, Barry, Shrewsbury, Chester and Crewe.**

#### 6. Impact on other applications for Access Rights

The L&SWR application is for a service which would pass through **four locations on the Wales Route that have been declared Interacting Locations by ORR and Network Rail**, meaning that it is **currently unclear to the industry if there will be capacity to accommodate all applications at those locations in upcoming timetables.**

These locations are Cardiff (included in ORR's letter to industry in April 2024), together with Chester, Wrexham and Shrewsbury (these three having subsequently been declared as Interacting Locations by Network Rail).

L&SWR's proposed commencement date is December 2026. In its letter to industry of 24 April 2024, inviting applications by 20 May 2024 for additional rights for December 2024, May 2025 and December 2025 at Interacting Locations, ORR wrote: *"ORR plans to approve or direct access applications received after 20 May in the identified locations for December 2024, May and December 2025 only where there is clear evidence they do not interact/conflict with the applications which have already been received. It is therefore less likely that we will be able to assess and determine applications for additional capacity in the identified locations received after 20 May, for inclusion in timetables before the end of 2025."* In its letter to industry of 1 November 2024, ORR further wrote: *"...it may not be possible to consider changes to applications before decisions are reached on those submitted by 20 May 2024. For the avoidance of doubt, **where changes are made to applications which change the use of capacity or interact with existing applications in the process, it is likely the changes will only be considered following decisions on applications which were submitted by 20 May.**"*

Currently, ORR has **not** made decisions relating to existing applications in these Interacting Locations while it waits for further capacity analysis from Network Rail. To ensure that existing timetables are fully supported by access rights, Network Rail has sold any such required access rights to operators on Contingent and/or time-limited basis only (normally to the next timetable change date).

On Cardiff, **Network Rail has set out timescales for undertaking a Cardiff Central Capacity Study. This is not due to complete until December 2025, with a Final Report due in January 2026.** We are not aware of any timescales for Network Rail to assess capacity in the Chester, Wrexham and Shrewsbury areas.

On the basis of ORR's public statements, therefore, **we do not expect ORR to consider applications such as this**, for longer-term, Firm Access Rights, declared after May 2024 until it has decided on existing applications that were submitted before then.

## **Conclusion**

TfW and TfWRL remain committed to improving passenger services and increasing journey opportunities on both our Core Valley Lines and Wales & Cross-Border services.

We remain a fully collaborative partner with Network Rail and Government departments on how to unlock the potential of the North to South Wales rail network and feed into both the South East Wales Metro and aspirations for improved services in North Wales.

The L&SWR application brings multiple conflicts with these key strategic aims and existing commitments made by TfW to both Governments. The operational considerations are significant, as are the disbenefits to performance and the financial abstraction from TfWRL. For these reasons, TfW and TfWRL are unable to support this application.

Yours sincerely

Chief Commercial Officer, on behalf of TfW  
Chief Operations Officer and Managing Director, TfW Rail  
CC: Planning and Performance Director, TfW  
Route Director, Wales and Borders Route, Network Rail



Chief Commercial Officer  
Transport for Wales

Chief Operations Officer and Managing Director,  
TfW Rail

11th April 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR) - Section 17 Open Access application  
TfW and TfW Rail response to Network Rail industry consultation**

Many thanks for your feedback of 12 March 2025 on our LSWR application. At the outset, may I say that we very much want to work with rather than compete with TfW to deliver a better, value-for-money railway for passengers.

It is our aim to share our innovative investment approaches to services, stations and infrastructure, our 'Third Party' new stations model creating 'new to rail' markets and modal shift such as Worcestershire Parkway (2020) (and, to come, Cardiff Parkway), as well as our own experience as investing train operators.

We would thus welcome meeting with you to discuss LSWR's benefits and challenges before we make any formal Section 17/18 submission. Indeed, a core purpose of our application and the Network Rail-led consultation was to enable us to understand industry partners' strategic plans and then fully develop our proposition and timetable options collaboratively with them.

We note your comments about network capacity, timetabling and performance, revenue abstraction, TfW's commercial status, train crew industrial relations, your future service aspirations and supporting infrastructure investment, the current access rights application process, integrity of funding agreements between Welsh and UK governments and the wider politics of railway investment, and that for these reasons neither TfW nor TfW Rail support our application at this time.

DfT has also indicated that it does not support our application whilst recognising the passenger benefits of direct services to the 2 airports and major visitor destinations of Liverpool and Cardiff. We have responded to DfT in a similar form to this letter.

We'd hope to be able to talk through how we see LSWR doing 4 key things:

- Complementing rather than competing with government-contracted services.
- Unlocking earlier joint, incremental delivery of new Liverpool-South Wales connectivity with private sector service, station and infrastructure investment avoiding 100% of cost and risk being held by the taxpayer.
- Positively supporting industry value for money rather than being a detriment to it.
- Accelerating benefits to the economy, growing communities and the environment in partnership with yourselves.

In our discussions, we would also like to confirm to you that we are committed to:

- Undertaking full timetable development alongside rather than separately from yourselves and Network Rail, bringing in GWR, Merseyrail, Avanti West Coast, Northern and

Transpennine Express colleagues, and rigorously modelling options and testing performance using industry-standard tools such as Railsys.

- Demonstrating how our targeting of underserved and new rail markets enables us to meet the 0.3 Non-Primarily Abstractive score and, in parallel, address the range of abstraction issues you raise in your feedback.
- Considering how we can work with yourselves and Network Rail to address some of the specific infrastructure investment issues such as Shrewsbury-Wrexham block sections, level crossings or use of the Halton Curve/Frodsham Single Line (although we believe our services can be delivered without waiting for completion of such investments).

More widely, we believe our approach actively, specifically and distinctively aligns with the expectations of Heidi Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport, in her letter to the ORR of 6 January 2025 that Open Access serves new markets, drives innovation and offers choice to passengers<sup>1</sup>, together with the principles set out in the 14 January 2025 letter to Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales from Jo Stevens MP, Secretary of State for Wales and Heidi Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport<sup>2</sup>. The latter recognises “*that railways in Wales have seen low levels of enhancement spending in recent years*”, notes that “*better cross-border connectivity [...] should better serve the overall economic and social needs of the whole of the UK*”.

In parallel Rachel Reeves MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer was clear on 28th January 2025 that the government wishes to go “*further and faster to kick start the economy*.”

We believe LSWR’s proposal can be one part of swift, early, cost-sharing delivery of new and real connectivity, economic and environmental benefits to north, mid and south Wales, Merseyside and the borders with England.

We look forward to meeting with you at the earliest mutually convenient opportunity.

Yours sincerely  
Managing Director



**From:** @wmre.org.uk

**Sent on:** Tuesday, March 11, 2025 12:41:18 PM

**To:** @networkrail.co.uk

**CC:** @slcrail.com

**Subject:** RE: Industry Consultation – LSWR, Section 17 Application, Liverpool Lime Street-Rhoose Cardiff International Airport

Dear

WMRE notes this application which has the potential to provide useful new connectivity from Hereford and Shrewsbury to both Liverpool and Cardiff Airport. However, we are uncertain as to what the impacts will be on the existing TfW services from North Wales and Chester to the West Midlands, or whether the existing Cardiff to Manchester service will be affected in terms of its performance and future public sector subsidy requirements given the significant overlap with the proposed new service.

WMRE is also strongly supporting plans as part of the Midlands Rail Hub project to improve the Birmingham to Cardiff service, and we are in discussion with TfW about how this could align with their plans for an enhanced Cardiff to Cheltenham service including new stations between Newport and Cardiff. We would be seeking comfort that this application would not conflict with these plans and thus potentially undermine the Midlands Rail Hub project to which £123M of public funding has already been committed.

Kind regards

**Head of Rail Policy and Strategy**



Head of Rail Policy and Strategy  
WMRE

19th May 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)  
Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff  
International Airport)**

Thank you for your comments on our Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff International Airport) Section 17 Open Access application as part of the industry consultation undertaken by Network Rail.

Firstly, please accept our apology for the late response to your feedback – the letter had been prepared but had been missed in the finalisation of responses.

We note your comments about our proposals and in particular about the potential interaction with associated Midland Rail Hub aspirations linked to services between Cardiff and Birmingham.

Part of the purpose of our application and early Network Rail-led industry consultation was to enable us to understand other industry members' strategic plans and perspectives and thence fully develop our overall proposition and full timetable options in a collaborative rather than competitive manner with yourselves, DfT, Network Rail and other passenger and freight operators.

Following the consultation, we propose to move forward with further detailed planning whilst at the same time engaging in detailed discussions with key stakeholders including DfT and Network Rail. Once this work is complete we would be happy to share this with WMRE. As you will be aware we hold a good level of knowledge on your aspirations and proposals within the SLC team and I will ensure that this is brought to bear on our considerations.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss these proposals more as they develop through our regular interactions.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director

**CrossCountry**  
5th floor, Cannon House  
18 Priory Queensway  
Birmingham B4 6BS  
[crosscountrytrains.co.uk](http://crosscountrytrains.co.uk)

7th March 2025

Dear

**XCTL's response to Proposed Application under Section 17 between Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd and Liverpool & South Wales Railway.**

This letter constitutes XCTL's formal response. Unfortunately, we are unable to support this Section 17 Track Access Application at this current time. We do not have sufficient information or clarification to demonstrate to us that the proposal is viable.

There are some timetable conflicts between Cardiff Central and Newport that raise concerns – from the information provided, the LSWR services would only be two minutes apart from current CrossCountry services.

We also need to see some performance modelling from LSWR as they are arriving into Newport five minutes ahead of the CrossCountry services. Due to several limitations of the route such as the single line at Halton curve and absolute block sections on the Welsh Marches, we need assurances that mitigations are in place to ensure the services arrive into Newport on time.

XCTL would like Network Rail/Liverpool & South Wales Railway to resolve the above before we will be in a position to support this application.

Yours Sincerely

Track Access Manager



Track Access Manager  
CrossCountry  
5th Floor, Cannon House  
18 Priory Queensway  
Birmingham  
B4 6BS

11th April 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)  
Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime Street to Rhooose (Cardiff  
International Airport)**

Thank you for your comments on Liverpool Lime Street to Rhooose (Cardiff International Airport) Section 17 Open Access application as part of the industry consultation undertaken by Network Rail.

We note your comments about our proposals and in particular about the issues around the detailed timetabling.

Part of the purpose of our application and early Network Rail-led industry consultation was to enable us to understand other industry members' strategic plans and perspectives and thence fully develop our overall proposition and full timetable options in a collaborative and complementary rather than competitive manner with yourselves, DfT, Network Rail and other passenger and freight operators.

Following the consultation, we propose to move forward with further detailed operational planning whilst at the same time engaging in detailed discussions with key stakeholders, including DfT and Network Rail. Once this work is complete, we would be happy to share this with CrossCountry to demonstrate how we have addressed specific concerns raised.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director



Department  
for Transport

Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager  
by email

Dear

**Industry Consultation – Liverpool and South Wales Railway, Section 17 Application,  
Liverpool Lime Street-Rhoose Cardiff International Airport**

Thank you for sharing the above track access application from Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR), and for providing the Department for Transport (DfT) the opportunity to respond to the industry consultation.

The Secretary of State has been clear that Open Access will continue to play a role in the future GBR managed railway where services encourage growth, improve connectivity and capacity and provide more choice for passengers. However, these benefits must not come at the cost of performance of the network, better services for passengers or value for taxpayers. The Department remains committed to supporting Open Access where these conditions are met.

Analysis undertaken by the Department predicts approximately £8.4m (2023/2024 prices) of revenue would be abstracted from other operators per annum by this application against just £2.3m (2023/2024 prices) of new revenue generated. This results in a 'Not Primarily Abstractive' (NPA) Test ratio of 0.27, which falls short of the 0.3 threshold set out in the ORR's guidance. We also note that, whilst the application would be subject to standard variable charges, it would not be subject to an Infrastructure Cost Charge (ICC) and therefore not contribute towards fixed network costs.

The Department recognises that the proposals from LSWR offer certain passenger benefits such as new direct services to international airports as well as offering additional services to the major visitor destinations of Liverpool and Cardiff. The Department is concerned, however, that additional Open Access services along this corridor would have an overall adverse impact on performance of the railway by reducing capacity and risking knock-on impacts across the wider Great Western network and neighboring CrossCountry and Transport for Wales (TfW) services. This includes at Cardiff, where the Open Access service would be required to cross multiple other lines, in conflict with up to 9 passenger trains per hour, in order to operate the proposed route. Any performance pressure also adds risk of adverse impacts to freight services to and from South Wales. These risks are further exacerbated as Class 22x trains currently see very limited use in South Wales and rolling stock currently operated by GWR would be unable to assist with rescue of a failed train.

The Department also notes specific capacity limitations that may prevent additional services from operating on the Halton Curve beyond the existing 1 train per hour and have, to date, prevented contracted operators from enacting their own service uplifts, which would likely require significant expenditure on infrastructure to overcome.

Given the potentially significant impacts of the points outlined above, the Department asks and expects Network Rail to ensure that it has conducted a careful examination of the operational consequences of this application so that a robust timetable can be delivered.

Other operators also already have committed to develop services along LSWR's proposed route. In particular, the Department is aware of TfW plans to implement service enhancements. These include a number of new stations between Severn Tunnel Junction and Cardiff, and, as outlined within the application from LSWR, a deferred commitment to introduce a new Cardiff Central - Shrewsbury - Liverpool Lime Street service. As such, the Department would encourage both NR and ORR to fully engage with TfW to understand its plans and enable full consideration of impacts that LSWR's proposals may have on existing commitments and stakeholder objectives.

Whilst the Department acknowledges the improved direct connectivity that would be provided under LSWR's proposal, we do not feel that these benefits outweigh the costs to taxpayers or impacts to network performance. Therefore, **the Department does not support this application.**

We would also note that LSWR seeks a 7-year track access contract from December 2026 to December 2033, but provides no clear explanation why a duration beyond the standard length of 5 years is required.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions about the Department's response or the points raised.

Yours sincerely,

**Deputy Director, Rail Reform Coherence and Cross Cutting Policy**



Deputy Director  
Rail Reform Coherence and Cross Cutting Policy  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

11th April 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)**  
**Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime St-Rhoose Cardiff International Airport**

Many thanks for your feedback of 25 March 2025 on our LSWR application. At the outset, may I say that we very much want to work with rather than compete with Transport for Wales (TfW), Great Western Railway (GWR), or Merseyside operators to deliver a better, value-for-money railway for passengers.

It is our aim to share our innovative investment approaches to services, stations and infrastructure, our 'Third Party' new stations model creating 'new to rail' markets and modal shift such as Worcestershire Parkway (2020), as well as our own experience as investing train operators.

We would thus welcome meeting with you to discuss LSWR's benefits and challenges before we make any formal Section 17/18 submission. Indeed, a core purpose of our application and the Network Rail-led consultation was to enable us to understand industry partners' strategic plans and then fully develop our proposition and timetable options collaboratively with them.

We note your comments about operational and performance issues for LSWR's proposed services, capacity of the Halton Curve, TfW's service aspirations, your calculated NPA score marginally missing the 0.3 threshold, and conclusion that the DfT is not supportive of our application at this time. We also value your recognition that our proposal offers passenger benefits, including direct services to international airports and the major visitor destinations of Liverpool and Cardiff. TfW and TfW Rail have also indicated that they do not support our application, to which we have responded in a similar form to this letter.

We'd hope to be able to talk through how we see LSWR doing 4 key things:

- Complementing rather than competing with Welsh and UK governments' contracted services.
- Unlocking earlier joint, partnership-based incremental delivery of new Liverpool-South Wales connectivity with private sector service, station and infrastructure investment avoiding 100% of cost and risk being held by the taxpayer.
- Positively supporting industry value for money rather than being a detriment to it.

- Accelerating benefits to the economy, growing communities and the environment in partnership with DfT, TfW, TfW Rail, Network Rail, GWR and Merseyside and freight operators.

We hope a meeting would be useful in confirming our intentions which include:

- Undertaking full timetable development alongside rather than separately from yourselves and Network Rail, bringing in GWR, Merseyrail, Avanti West Coast, Northern and Transpennine Express colleagues, and rigorously modelling options and testing performance using industry-standard tools such as Railsys. *We should note that we are grateful for Network Rail's detailed and helpful commentary supplied together with its letter of 21 March 2025 to the Office of Rail and Road.*

- Considering how our proposal's principal targeting of underserved and new rail markets can be strengthened to enable it to increase its NPA score from your calculated 0.27 to the required 0.3 minimum threshold, noting that we do believe a market-focused approach can achieve this.

- Consider if and how LSWR can work with yourselves, TfW and Network Rail to support infrastructure investment addressing issues such as Shrewsbury-Wrexham block sections, level crossings or use of the Halton Curve/Frodsham Single Line (although we believe our services can be delivered without waiting for completion of such investments).

More widely, we believe our approach actively, specifically and distinctively aligns with the expectations of Heidi Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport, in her letter to the ORR of 6 January 2025 that Open Access serves new markets, drives innovation and offers choice to passengers<sup>1</sup>, together with the principles set out in the 14 January 2025 letter to Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales from Jo Stevens MP, Secretary of State for Wales and Heidi Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Transport<sup>2</sup>.

The latter recognises “*that railways in Wales have seen low levels of enhancement spending in recent years*”, notes that “*better cross-border connectivity [...] should better serve the overall economic and social needs of the whole of the UK*”.

In parallel Rachel Reeves MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer was clear on 28th January 2025 that the government wishes to go “*further and faster to kick start the economy*.”<sup>3</sup>

We believe LSWR's proposal can be one part of swift, early, cost-sharing delivery of new and real connectivity, economic and environmental benefits to north, mid and south Wales, Merseyside and the borders with England.

We look forward to meeting with you at the earliest mutually convenient opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director

1. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/677bc388d119b345376654a4/dft-letter-sos-orr.pdf>

2. [committees.parliament.uk/publications/46278/documents/232577/default/](https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46278/documents/232577/default/)

3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/reeves-i-am-going-further-and-faster-to-kick-start-the-economy>



**From:** @transportfocus.org.uk>

**Sent on:** Friday, February 14, 2025 11:31:04 AM

**To:** @networkrail.co.uk>

**Subject:** Re: Industry Consultation – LSWR, Section 17 Application, Liverpool Lime Street-  
Rhoose Cardiff International Airport

Hi

Thanks - interesting proposal! We're happy to support this application on the basis of open access operations having demonstrated that they improve passenger satisfaction and value for money through increased choice and competition.

Best regards

From:  
Sent: 26 February 2025 22:01  
To: @transportfocus.org.uk

Subject: Industry Consultation – LSWR & MCWR Section 17 Applications

Many thanks for your positive comments about our 2 proposed open access operations. We look forward to engaging with Transport Focus as our proposals develop.

Kind regards

**From:** @gbrailfreight.com  
**Sent on:** Friday, March 14, 2025 4:20:10 PM  
**To:** @networkrail.co.uk; @slcrail.com  
**Subject:** Re: Industry Consultation – LSWR, Section 17 Application, Liverpool Lime Street-Rhoose Cardiff International Airport

Hi,

It is not clear from this application what the likely effects on network capacity will be, and especially over the Shrewsbury to Newport route.

Form P Section 4.1 Benefits does ask: *please set out what specific benefits the proposal will achieve. Please describe the benefits to passengers and any impact on other operators, including freight operators.* Consultees do need to understand the answer to this question as part of this application and I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

---

**GB Railfreight**

**Head of Strategic Access Planning**

5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 62-64 Cornhill | London | EC3V 3NH



Head of Strategic Access Planning  
GB Railfreight  
5th Floor, 62-64 Cornhill  
London  
EC3V 3NH

11th April 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)  
Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff  
International Airport)**

Thank you for your comments on Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff International Airport) Section 17 Open Access application as part of the industry consultation undertaken by Network Rail.

We note your comments about our proposals, particularly about the relationship between our proposals and strategic freight plans for the routes.

Part of the purpose of our application and early Network Rail-led industry consultation was to enable us to understand other industry members' strategic plans and perspectives and thence fully develop our overall proposition and full timetable options in a collaborative and complementary rather than competitive manner with yourselves, DfT, Network Rail and other passenger and freight operators.

Following the consultation, we propose to move forward with further detailed operational planning whilst engaging in detailed discussions with key stakeholders, including DfT and Network Rail.

We will happily share the next stage of planning at the appropriate time.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director

Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager  
Network Rail

12<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Dear

**FTWCRL Response to LSWR's Section 17 Application for Access Rights**

1. Introduction

I am writing on behalf of First Trenitalia West Coast Rail Limited (FTWCRL), trading as Avanti West Coast, in respect of Liverpool & South Wales Railway's (LSWR) application for access rights to operate train services between Liverpool Lime Street and Rhosneigr Cardiff International Airport.

Following a careful consideration of your application, we currently cannot provide our support to your proposal. This is due to the fact that there remain concerns regarding capacity, performance and rolling stock.

2. Timetable, Capacity & Network Performance

FTWCRL are not confident that the proposed southbound path between Liverpool Lime Street and Runcorn is viable, and would welcome further detail around LSWR's timetable development cited in Section 4.2 of the Form P.

We are particularly interested in more information from LSWR on intended platform occupation at Liverpool Lime Street, noting that the timetable proposed indicates a turnaround time of 51 minutes. Can LSWR provide any information to confirm its intentions in this regard, and how it would mitigate any capacity concerns identified?

FTWCRL are also interested to understand the intended arrival and departure lines into Liverpool Lime Street. By the time of proposed operation, FTWCRL will be operating two trains per hour from Liverpool Lime Street, and as such given the criticality of the West Coast Mainline, we are keen to ensure that proposed services do not present any unintended consequences for WCML operators.

FTWCRL are keen to understand how LSWR's proposals fit with station capacity challenges at Chester where a pinch point already exists – with an additional platform under consideration. We'd like to understand how LSWR intends to address this.

We note that LSWR have proposed their operation without current consideration to operational performance. Without a clear understanding of the performance and capacity impact, especially between Liverpool Lime Street and Runcorn, we do not have the clarity to make an informed judgement.

There are several constrained areas on the northern end of the proposed route that link together as one system, with little opportunity for on the day service recovery through regulation / holding of trains. An increase in the number of trains operating within this system has the potential to result in an increased performance risk on connected routes both in the immediate area and the wider network. FTWCRL would want the opportunity to assess LSWR's performance modelling outputs as they become available.

FTWCRL requests more information on LSWR's modelling of performance, with a view to understanding mitigations in the event of unplanned perturbation – especially on parts of the network where our service operates. We are specifically interested in the recovery time if LSWR trains are held waiting for access to or are late from the single line at Halton Curve. Beyond this, we are also concerned regarding implications for our North Wales service group. How would LSWR intend to address concerns regarding line capacity between Saltney Jn and Wrexham, which could see a number of services waiting access to the single line linking services onto the North Wales coast.

Given the route proposed by LSWR, we are keen to understand how they would seek to address on-route delays caused by any potential level crossing issues in the section between Wrexham and Shrewsbury, specifically as they manifest at the Liverpool end of the proposed route.

Given these factors, we are keen to attain more information from LSWR on how they would address these concerns before we could change our position.

### 3. Proposed Rolling Stock & Depot Facilities

We note that LSWR are proposing utilisation of Class 22x related fleet. As FTWCRL understands it, the only available class within the 22x family would be the Class 222 Meridians. In the event that these fleets were unavailable, what type of rolling stock would LSWR intend to use?

In the event that Class 22x units were available, FTWCRL believe that LSWR's current proposed station dwell time of one minute is not achievable, as the minimum station dwell time in the TPRs is 90 seconds and any amendment to this would need to go through a formal change/agreement process with Network Rail.

FTWCRL also notes that depot capacity in the areas proposed is already limited. LSWR have not provided any details on where it intends to maintain its fleet. Can LSWR provide any further details in this regard?

### 4. Concluding Remarks

We thank LSWR for the opportunity to provide our feedback on their application. At the current time, we are unable to provide it our support. This is because of a number of factors, including Network Capacity, a lack of Performance modelling or consideration, and lack of clarity surrounding proposed utilisation of rolling stock.

We would be grateful if LSWR could provide answers to our questions, upon receipt of which we will provide further consideration to their application.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Operational Readiness  
Avanti West Coast



Head of Operational Readiness  
Avanti West Coast

11th April 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)  
Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff  
International Airport)**

Thank you for your comments on Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff International Airport) Section 17 Open Access application as part of the industry consultation undertaken by Network Rail.

We note your helpful comments about the application, particularly your concerns around the detailed timetabling.

Part of the purpose of our application and early Network Rail-led industry consultation was to enable us to understand other industry members' strategic plans and perspectives and thence fully develop our overall proposition and full timetable options in a collaborative and complementary rather than competitive manner with yourselves, DfT, Network Rail and other passenger and freight operators.

Following the consultation, we propose to move forward with further detailed operational planning whilst at the same time engaging in detailed discussions with key stakeholders, including DfT and Network Rail.

However, we hope that the following feedback on your specific observations is useful to help you better understand our proposals in the meantime:

**Timetable, Capacity and Network Performance**

The full consultation timetable was developed based on a single detailed hourly path and planned using industry systems. This hourly path was applied across the day. We fully appreciate that this method was likely to throw up conflicts on the other hourly paths and recognise that the next step is to undertake detailed operational planning work for the whole day. As stated above, this work will begin shortly, and your specific comments will be addressed during that process, particularly in relation to:

- Platform occupation and whether it will be necessary to vacate the platform between services.
- Detailed planning of the intended arrival and departure lines into Liverpool Lime Street.
- Chester platforming – noting that our initial planning has demonstrated that platforming appears to be available at the relevant points in the hour.

In relation to performance modelling, LSWR commit to undertaking a full RailSys model of the whole route once the full detailed timetable plan is completed. However, whilst the questions about performance are legitimate, we note that all those issues would apply in order for TFW to achieve their stated goal of an hourly service between Liverpool and Cardiff,

including the North Wales service group around Chester and the single line section between Saltney Jn and Wrexham General.

LSWR is aware of the issues around level crossings between Shrewsbury and Wrexham General. However, these relate to the risk of interaction with other users rather than because they generate performance issues.

### **Proposed Rolling Stock**

LSWR's current assumption and the basis of this consultation is the use of Class 22X units and as observed, this is likely to be Class 222s. In the event that Class 222s are unavailable then it is very likely that the timetable work would need to be completely re-visited and this would generate the need for a further consultation at the time.

We note the comments about dwell time, but LSWR can confirm that the consultation timetable was based on passenger timings and that the detailed assumptions in the timetabling use compliant dwell times for these units.

LSWR can confirm that some initial plans exist for maintenance and will be shared as soon as we are in a position to do so.

In summary, we welcome Avanti West Coast's comments and will give further consideration to the issues raised during the next stages of our planning. LSWR firmly believes that our proposals present an opportunity for both the travelling public and the taxpayer. We look forward to presenting further plans in the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director



**Great Western Railway**  
Milford House  
1 Milford Street  
Swindon, SN1 1HL  
GWR.com

**COMMERCIAL CONFIDENTIAL**

Ref: TK0032 \GWR\NRC\DfT

Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager  
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited

12 March 2025

Dear

**LIVERPOOL AND SOUTH WALES RAILWAY (“L&SWR”) – APPLICATION UNDER SECTION 17 SEEKING A TRACK ACCESS AGREEMENT FOR SERVICES FROM LIVERPOOL LIME STREET TO CARDIFF INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

We refer to the Section 17 application in respect of Liverpool Lime Street – Cardiff International Airport services submitted by L&SWR (the “**Application**”) and thank you for inviting GWR to submit a consultation response regarding the Application.

GWR has no specific grounds for concern regarding the Application but wishes to raise the following matters, some of which would benefit from further clarification.

Whilst there will be an overlap with services between Newport and Cardiff Central, GWR does not believe that this proposal will have a materially abstractive effect on its own revenues. However other operators, including both Transport for Wales and CrossCountry, are likely to be more directly impacted due to the geography of the proposal with resultant impacts on GB Rail revenues as a whole.

As with previous applications of this nature, it is important that the rolling stock that is proposed to be used meets the exact safety, speed and configuration requirements, etc. to fit into the timetable and meet the needs of the network. GWR believes that there is a discrepancy in the current application, which refers to both CI.221 and 222 as “Voyagers”. The latter are Meridians rather than Voyagers and have not previously operated on this part of either the Wales or Western Routes.

Whilst GWR has no current concerns with regard to the impact of these services on engineering access, we do note that there could be potential capacity issues if and when work starts on South Wales Relief Line speed enhancements, as well as improvements to Cardiff Central. There is a question of the diversionary route which may be via the Severn Tunnel and which may therefore involve a need for GWR-ATP fitment or speed restriction.

GWR requires more detail on the interaction of the proposed L&SWR services with major events in Cardiff in particular. GWR works closely with Transport for Wales (TfW) on providing sufficient capacity in out and of the city for such events. It is not clear what L&SWR are proposing to do in order to accommodate the significant passenger numbers that arise from such events Given the volumes and planning that such events necessitate – and the potential impact on GWR that result - we would welcome sight of L&SWR’s proposals for managing them and ensuring that they are able to provide the significant capacity that is required (noting that the Application is for use of 5-car CI.222 DMUs). This includes understanding how they will prioritise the movement of people in such instances, given the

specific restrictions that they are likely to have in place for customer conveyance on their services.

We also note that L&SWR is not a registered legal entity and does not hold a Passenger Operating Licence or safety certificate.

I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this particular application and would welcome consideration of the above in L&SWR's response.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director



Managing Director  
Great Western Railway  
Milford House  
1 Milford Street  
Swindon  
SN1 1HL

11th April 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)  
Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff  
International Airport)**

Thank you for your comments on Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff International Airport) Section 17 Open Access application as part of the industry consultation undertaken by Network Rail.

We note your comments setting out that you have no specific grounds for concern with the application.

Part of the purpose of our application and early Network Rail-led industry consultation was to enable us to understand other industry members' strategic plans and perspectives and thence fully develop our overall proposition and full timetable options in a collaborative and complementary rather than competitive manner with yourselves, DfT, Network Rail and other passenger and freight operators.

Following the consultation, we propose to move forward with further detailed operational planning whilst at the same time engaging in detailed discussions with key stakeholders, including DfT and Network Rail.

In the meantime, we hope that the following feedback on your specific observations is useful to help you better understand our proposals:

**Rolling Stock type**

LSWR has used the generic term "Voyagers" to describe both Class 221 & 222 rolling stock. Whilst it is the case that the Class 222's were often referred to as "Meridians" this was largely a brand name and it is well understood that the Class 222 units are of the same family as the Class 220 and 221 units originally built by Bombardier (now Alstom) and share many common features that would be directly relevant to their compatibility with the appropriate parts of the network relevant to this application. It is recognised and accepted that a Compatibility exercise will be required once the final rolling stock is identified, but with the backing of the OEM for these vehicles we do not believe that this should present any significant difficulty.

In respect to the issue about diversionary routes and the need for ATP, we are aware of the Sectional Appendix requirements and propose to have detailed conversations with Network Rail and ORR safety team about any issues. We also note that many trains currently operating through the tunnel are not fitted with ATP.

**Major Events**

LSWR can confirm that we are happy to work with GWR, TfW and other local operators to contribute positively to passenger experience during major events.

We look forward to presenting further plans in the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director

**From:** CVL Track Access <CVLTrackAccess@amey.co.uk>

**Sent on:** Tuesday, February 25, 2025 10:06:14 AM

**To:** @networkrail.co.uk;

**Subject:** RE: Industry Consultation – LSWR, Section 17 Application, Liverpool Lime Street-Rhoose Cardiff International Airport

Hi

We would be grateful if we could be included in any outputs on Performance modelling, as the proposed paths south of Cardiff would interact with Barry Island, Penarth and Bridgend (via the Vale of Glamorgan) lines of route, which form cross boundary services onto the CVL Network.

The high frequency service on the CVL Network is particularly sensitive to any late presentation at the boundaries, when trains in the HL05 Service Group are delayed on the Network Rail side of the boundary.

Kind regards

**Rheolwyr Mynediad At Gledrau | Track Access Manager**



Track Access Manager  
CVL Amey

19th May 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)  
Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff  
International Airport)**

Thank you for your comments on our Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff International Airport) Section 17 Open Access application as part of the industry consultation undertaken by Network Rail.

Firstly, please accept our apology for the late response to your feedback – the letter had been prepared but had been missed in the finalisation of responses.

We note your comments about our proposals and in particular the request to share the Performance Modelling outputs.

Part of the purpose of our application and early Network Rail-led industry consultation was to enable us to understand other industry members' strategic plans and perspectives and thence fully develop our overall proposition and full timetable options in a collaborative rather than competitive manner with yourselves, DfT, Network Rail and other passenger and freight operators.

Following the consultation, we propose to move forward with further detailed planning whilst at the same time engaging in detailed discussions with key stakeholders including DfT and Network Rail. Once this work is complete we would be happy to share this with yourselves for further consideration.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director

Northern Trains Limited  
George Stephenson House  
York  
YO1 6JT

Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager  
System Operator  
Network Rail  
(By email only)

12th March 2025

Dear

Northern Trains Limited (NTL) formal response to LSWR proposal – Liverpool Lime Street to Rhooose Cardiff International Airport

With reference to the above application shared by Network Rail on 12th February 2025, this letter constitutes NTL's formal response to the consultation.

NTL are not able to support this application at this time. There is insufficient data provided in the application for us to properly assess capacity utilisation both in the near and future terms. NTL are concerned particularly around platforming capacity at Liverpool Lime Street. NTL do not believe that there is capacity to allow a unit to berth in a platform for nearly 2 hours or capacity for a unit to shunt to a location which has not been disclosed within the application.

It is not clear from this application how the proposal aligns with Manchester Taskforce CS3b which includes infrastructure changes and service enhancement on the CLC route.

To summarise, NTL do not support this application on capacity (both current and future) grounds. We would welcome a response on the points raised above.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

Track Access Manager



Track Access Manager  
Northern Trains Ltd  
George Stephenson House  
Toft Green  
York  
YO1 6JT

11th April 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)  
Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff  
International Airport)**

Thank you for your comments on Liverpool Lime Street to Rhose (Cardiff International Airport) Section 17 Open Access application as part of the industry consultation undertaken by Network Rail.

We note your comments about our proposals and in particular about issues around platform occupation at Liverpool Lime Street.

Part of the purpose of our application and early Network Rail-led industry consultation was to enable us to understand other industry members' strategic plans and perspectives and thence fully develop our overall proposition and full timetable options in a collaborative and complementary rather than competitive manner with yourselves, DfT, Network Rail and other passenger and freight operators.

Following the consultation, we propose to move forward with further detailed operational planning whilst at the same time engaging in detailed discussions with key stakeholders, including DfT and Network Rail. Once this work is complete, we would be happy to share this with Northern Trains Ltd to demonstrate how we have addressed specific concerns raised.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director



**From:** @freightliner.co.uk  
**Sent on:** Wednesday, March 12, 2025 10:15:36 AM  
**To:** @slcrail.com  
**CC:** @networkrail.co.uk  
**Subject:** RE: Industry Consultation – LSWR, Section 17 Application, Liverpool Lime Street-Rhoose Cardiff International Airport

Hi

Unfortunately at this point in time Freightliner cannot support this application – we need a better understanding of the paths this application would use and how they interact with other services/what level of flexing would be required to accommodate.

We also have concerns over capacity utilisation between Chester and Newport between this and other timetable aspirations, and how these will be accommodated while providing capacity for both existing freight services and capacity for growth in line with the legal commitment to grow volumes by 75% by 2050.

Once we have some further information on paths and interactions we will, of course, review this.

Regards

Head of Planning (Long Term)  
Freightliner Group Limited



Head of Strategic Access Planning  
GB Railfreight  
5th Floor, 62-64 Cornhill  
London  
EC3V 3NH

11th April 2025

Dear

**Liverpool and South Wales Railway (LSWR)  
Section 17 Open Access application: Liverpool Lime Street to Rhooose (Cardiff  
International Airport)**

Thank you for your comments on Liverpool Lime Street to Rhooose (Cardiff International Airport) Section 17 Open Access application as part of the industry consultation undertaken by Network Rail.

We note your comments about our proposals, particularly about the relationship between our proposals and strategic freight plans for the routes.

Part of the purpose of our application and early Network Rail-led industry consultation was to enable us to understand other industry members' strategic plans and perspectives and thence fully develop our overall proposition and full timetable options in a collaborative and complementary rather than competitive manner with yourselves, DfT, Network Rail and other passenger and freight operators.

Following the consultation, we propose to move forward with further detailed operational planning whilst engaging in detailed discussions with key stakeholders, including DfT and Network Rail.

We will happily share the next stage of planning at the appropriate time.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director