



Ein cyf/Our ref MH/PO/00152/26

Gareth Clancy
Head of Access and Licensing
Office of Rail and Road

By email only: [REDACTED]

20 August 2026

Dear Gareth,

Welsh Government response to Department for Transport Operator (DfTO) letter regarding Transport for Wales Rail Ltd (TfWRL) proposal to operate train services between West Wales and Bristol Temple Meads

Thank you for sharing DfTO's response regarding the proposed TfWRL West Wales to Bristol service, which we note is also on behalf of DfT (Department of Transport). I'm pleased that both DfT and DfTO are supporting the application by TfWRL to operate the service on the basis of the improved cross-border connectivity it will provide.

We note that this support is contingent on joint work with DfT, DfTO and other stakeholders in the industry to conclude some areas of concern raised within the letter.

I'm writing to confirm Welsh Government's strong commitment to working collaboratively to conclude these points and deliver improved train services that benefit passengers in both Wales and England.

Taking each of these three points in turn: -

1. *Reliable operation alongside planned December 2026 services*

We believe that the timetabling concern is now resolved on the basis of recent industry collaboration between Network Rail and TfWRL, and this has allowed Network Rail to declare that there is sufficient capacity on the network to accommodate the proposed 2-hourly West Wales to Bristol Temple Meads service from December 2026.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn yr iaith honno ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

TfWRL has applied to ORR for permanent rights for the service. Subject to ORR's determination, Welsh Government will continue to support TfWRL in reinforcing the case for establishing permanent rights, including by working collaboratively with stakeholders to monitor operational performance and implement any agreed changes once the service has commenced.

2. *Engagement between TfW, DfT, DfTO and other stakeholders on resolving the revenue implications of the service*

Welsh Government is committed to better cross-border train services between Wales and England and in principle supports improvements that both Welsh (TfWRL) and English operators (Avanti and GWR) have implemented or proposed. Whilst each of these impacts the revenue of other operators, we are confident that a sensible compromise can be reached which satisfies all parties and benefits passengers. I am keen that this includes maximising the potential of Pay-As-You-Go schemes in both Wales and England.

Officials from Welsh Government and TfW will therefore continue to engage with DfT and DfTO to progress solutions that do not inhibit service development across the border.

3. *Ensuring that the Proposed Services are compatible with the planned future growth of services in the area*

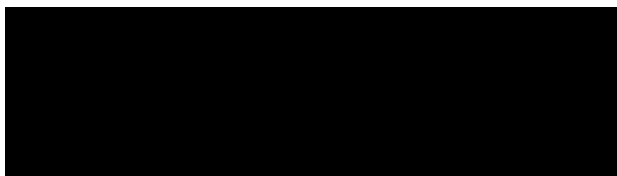
The Welsh Government has a clear remit to make the lives of those in Wales better and tackling congestion on the M4 in South Wales is a key priority. A working group is currently considering near-term solutions, including public transport options.

Therefore, we are keen to support improved rail capacity along the South Wales Mainline. Delivery of the Burns stations and the new services for those stations is a high priority for us. We also recognise the importance to English stakeholders of realising aspirations for the Bristol area, particularly those related to the Brabazon development.

Therefore, Welsh Government and TfW are committed to collaborating with stakeholders across the industry to ensure a balanced approach which enables the optimised delivery of service enhancements to meet all aspirations. Recent workshops have seen good collaboration between stakeholders across the industry to reach a common understanding of the challenges in delivering all proposed service enhancements on the Bristol – Cardiff corridor as well the likely interventions required to deliver these. Welsh Government and TfW are committed to supporting the next phase of these workshops to agree a joint strategy for delivering these services in the most effective manner.

In summary, I welcome the support from ORR, DfT and DfTO for the proposed West Wales to Bristol services, which will provide significant benefits to the economies at both ends of the route. TfWRL has applied to ORR for permanent rights and, subject to ORR's determination, we are keen to secure these so this service can form the first of many rail service improvements in South East Wales as well providing a permanent direct link between Bristol and West Wales, which can currently be a difficult journey by rail or road. We are committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders to put in place effective operational arrangements and appropriate cross-border funding adjustments.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Hooper AS/MS

Dirprwy Weinidog dros Drafnidiaeth
Deputy Minister for Transport