

Report

Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

Part 1

Date: 16 January 2024

Subject **Transport for Wales Consultation - New stations between Cardiff and Severn Tunnel Junction with improved cross border services**

Purpose To seek Cabinet Member approval for our proposed response to the Transport for Wales public consultation regarding the proposed development of five new Railway Stations on the South Wales Main Line and enhancements to cross-border rail services.

Author Head of Infrastructure

Ward All, with station specific proposals within Pillgwenlly, Lliswerry and Llanwern wards

Summary The South East Wales Transport Commission (SEWTC) was established by the First Minister to investigate sustainable ways to tackle congestion on the M4 in South East Wales. The recommendations of the Commission were published on 26th November 2020 and were accepted in full by the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government has established the Burns Delivery Unit to take forward the SEWTC recommendations, which includes several transport proposals within the City of Newport. Officers continue to work closely with the unit, including our role as the appropriate Planning and Highway Authority.

The Burns Delivery Unit are undertaking a high-level public consultation exercise to obtain feedback on their proposals to enhance rail service provision linking South East Wales with Bristol and Cheltenham, with the addition of five new railway stations on the South Wales Main Line, of which three are located within Newport.

Whilst the Council is broadly supportive of the proposed enhancements, which are consistent with our declaration of an Ecological and Climate Emergency, the proposals as presented include several unresolved issues, including local access and facility design / operation. Accordingly, our proposed response sets out concerns where appropriate. In parallel, we continue to discuss proposals with representatives from the Burns Delivery Unit and wider Transport for Wales representatives.

This Paper seeks Cabinet Member approval to submit the response at Appendix A

Proposal **To seek Cabinet Member approval for the proposed consultation response at Appendix A**

Action by Head of City Services

Timetable Immediate – consultation response required by 21st January 2024

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Head of Infrastructure
- Service Manager (Transport)
- Bus Coordinator
- Head of Law and Standards
- Head of People, Policy and Transformation
- Head of Finance

Signed

Background

The Welsh Government established the South East Wales Transport Commission (SEWTC) to investigate sustainable ways to tackle congestion on the M4 in South East Wales following the decision not to proceed with an M4 Relief Road around Newport.

The Commission published their report on the 26th November 2020, which included 58 recommendations to provide options for travel within and through South East Wales that do not require the use of the M4 or a car. The recommendations were accepted in full by the Welsh Government, which established the Burns Delivery Unit (BDU) within Transport for Wales (TfW) to progress these.

There are several infrastructure recommendations applicable to the city of Newport, these include:

- Create a new South East Wales 'rail backbone' by significantly increasing the capacity and flexibility of the South Wales Main Line
- Transform access to the rail network by increasing the number of stations between Cardiff and the River Severn from three to nine
- Create new rapid bus and commuter cycle corridors across Cardiff and Newport, connecting to the rail backbone and Cardiff Council's public transport proposals
- Establish a 'hub and spoke' network of bus and cycle corridors within Newport city

Newport City Council officers are engaged in the collaborative development of these recommendations, with recognition of our role as the relevant authority and statutory consultee for planning and highway matters.

TfW have held consultation exercises for active travel and public transport improvements on the National Cycle Network Route 88, A48 between St Mellons and Celtic Springs and Newport Central (encompassing Old Green and Queensway).

This consultation exercise considers rail service enhancements linking South East Wales with Bristol and Cheltenham, with the provision of five new Rail Stations on the South Wales Mainline. Three of the stations are located within the Newport administrative boundary:

- Newport West (adjacent to the Saracens Rugby ground)
- Somerton (on part of the current freight sidings off Fairfax Road)
- Llanwern (site designated in the current LDP, adjacent to the CAF factory)

The schemes are being promoted by TfW / Welsh Government, with Newport City Council a statutory consultee. The proposals are of strategic importance and broadly consistent with the Council's declaration of an ecological and climate emergency; however, they must also consider the potential impact on surrounding residents.

Accordingly, Officers have prepared a draft response at appendix A for consideration.

Financial Summary (Capital and Revenue)

- The consultation proposals are being progressed by TfW on behalf of Welsh Government. The full business case is currently being developed, with the likelihood of a funding bid to UK Treasury. The scheme construction cost and on-going management costs would be attributable to Welsh Government and Network Rail. As such, there are no direct costs applicable to the authority.
- There is a residual financial risk to the authority in respect of subsequent traffic / parking restrictions that may be required should the stations be constructed. At this stage, the likelihood or implications cannot be quantified; however, officers continue to work with TfW to minimise any such risks.

Risks

Our response highlights potential issues for consideration by the Welsh Government as part of the consultation process; therefore, it is not appropriate to develop a risk register at this stage.

The provision of the stations themselves are subject to planning approval and will be required to complete the appropriate processes to mitigate construction risks.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The provision of transport is key in supporting cross cutting council services and social inclusion. Increasing the use of more sustainable modes will support the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency.

The proposals would provide new opportunities for travel by more sustainable modes, with links to/from key employment sites.

The consultation proposals are included in the final recommendations of the South East Wales Transport Commission, which was established to investigate sustainable travel options to address existing issues on the M4 around Newport.

Opportunities to provide an alternative to use of the private car will assist the Authority address existing air quality issues in the city.

The proposals are consistent with our membership of the Cardiff Capital Region and Western Gateway.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

As a consultation response, the report is not asking members to approve any financial implications.

Future actions may impact upon Council activities but those would be subject to any appropriate agreement at the time of consideration.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. As is set out in the report, this project is to be funded and delivered by the Welsh Government and Network Rail and therefore those parties will be responsible for procuring the necessary works. Noting that planning permission will be required for the three projects referred to, it may be prudent to consider at this stage whether there is any major inconsistency with the Council's Local Development Plan in terms of what is being proposed (albeit making clear that such would not be a substitute for the detailed consideration that would be applied when a formal planning application is received).

Overall this proposal complements a number of the objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan, particularly with regard to ensuring that accessible infrastructure and transport solutions are put in place and reducing the use of the private car.

Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

The Council has set out, in multiple strategies, its commitments to enhance sustainable travel, reduce carbon emissions and improve transport connectivity.

The proposed consultation response welcomes the plans for enhanced services and the three new stations in the Newport area, whilst noting that there are some specific details that require further discussion. The Council is working with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales partners and will continue to support the development of proposals to enhance transport provision in the city and wider region. The Council's local knowledge of the proposed sites will be important in ensuring the future stations are attractive and well-functioning options so as to achieve the modal shift in travel necessary to support the Welsh Government's and Newport City Council's Strategic objectives.

There are no direct human resources implications.

Comments of Non-Executive Members

Councillor R Howells:

Just one comment: The Newport West station is going to be located in our ward (TP&M)?

The report says “station specific proposals within Pillgwenlly, Lliswerry and Llanwern wards”

Response:

The station location will be in the Tredegar Park Ward, close to the border of the Pillgwenlly ward.

Councillor Fouweather:

I welcome extra railway stations but must raise concerns that Caerleon has not been included. The Welsh Assembly are very keen on their active travel plan yet they have missed a huge opportunity to have a station in Caerleon where we know and have evidence that air quality is poor.

The residents of Caerleon would greatly benefit from a direct line to Newport and then onto Cardiff and an opportunity to change at Newport to travel onwards to Bristol.

This is yet another missed opportunity by Transport for Wales who really should consider a name change to Transport for Nobody

Response:

The Transport for Wales consultation is targeted at new stations and rail service opportunities on the South Wales Mainline. Whilst the provision of a new station is outside the scope of this particular consultation, we continue to work with all stakeholders to deliver the recommendations of the South East Wales Transport Commission and wider transport enhancements. These include opportunities to provide new and enhanced railway stations serving Newport.

The adopted NCC Local Development Plan includes the protection of a site to provide a rail station at Caerleon; however it is dependent on upgrades to the Marches Line to provide the necessary line speed and capacity to accommodate stopping services at new stations.

Officers will contact Network Rail to ascertain their latest position.

Councillor Cocks:

The case for reopening a railway station in Caerleon has long been recognised. The South-East Wales Transport Alliance proposed a new station in Caerleon in 2006 and land for a station was identified in the Local Development Plan in 2011. In 2012 SEWTA included a Caerleon station in plans to enhance local rail services. The South-East Wales Transport Commission recommendations of 2020 also recognise the potential for a station in Caerleon. The case for reopening a railway station is now even stronger. This should be recognised by Transport for Wales and incorporated within its planning for new stations. Although one stop off the main line, a station in Caerleon has the potential to make a significant contribution to the aims of the SEWTC objectives.

A railway station in Caerleon will also make a significant contribution to the Council's strategic objectives of reducing car use, reducing pollution, creating sustainable infrastructure and enhancing Newport station as a key interchange. Caerleon is a growing community of 9,000 people and residents travelling to work do so overwhelmingly by car. The historic centre of Caerleon experiences a major traffic problem which detracts from its potential as a heritage site of international importance and creates a serious air quality issue.

A series of recent developments further enhance the case for a station in Caerleon. Caerleon is an ideal location for a “walkway” station as proposed in Magor. There is a distinct and compact community, significantly larger than that of Magor, virtually all of whom could walk or cycle to a station in 15 minutes. Caerleon already receives in excess of 70,000 visitors each year and this number is set to greatly increase under proposals being discussed by the Council, Amgueddfa Cymru and Cadw. A station will have a vital role to play in these developments. The proposal to extend the Ebbw Vale – Newport train service to Abergavenny also offers an opportunity to incorporate Caerleon into a local rail network without having a significant impact on existing services.

Response:

The Transport for Wales consultation is targeted at new stations and rail service opportunities on the South Wales Mainline. Whilst the provision of a new station is outside the scope of this particular consultation, we continue to work with all stakeholders to deliver the recommendations of the South East Wales Transport Commission and wider transport enhancements. These include opportunities to provide new and enhanced railway stations serving Newport.

The adopted NCC Local Development Plan includes the protection of a site to provide a rail station at Caerleon; however it is dependent on upgrades to the Marches Line to provide the necessary line speed and capacity to accommodate stopping services at new stations.

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Scrutiny Committees

No consultation taken to date. The report will be subject to a 5-day standstill period for comment prior to submission.

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Socio-economic Duty**
- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

At this stage the council is commenting on the Welsh Government's proposals for providing improved rail services and new stations, which were contained in the recommendations of the South East Wales Transport Commission. There is no change to existing council policies or service delivery; therefore, the completion of a Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment (FEIA) is not applicable to our consultation response.

Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken with the Leader and Cabinet Member in the preparation of this draft

Background Papers

Appendix A – Draft Response

Further details of the SEWTC and Consultation are available publicly:

Welsh Government - South East Wales Transport Commission: final recommendations ([South East Wales Transport Commission: final recommendations | GOV.WALES](#))

Transport for Wales - New stations between Cardiff and Severn Tunnel Junction with improved cross border services – Consultation material

(<https://haveyoursay.tfw.wales/26833/widgets/80090/documents/48706>)

Dated: 26 January 2024

Appendix A – Draft Consultation Response

New stations between Cardiff and Severn Tunnel Junction with improved cross border services

Your name: Stephen Jarrett

Organisation (if applicable): Newport City Council

Email / telephone number: Stephen.Jarrett@newport.gov.uk 07773 657426

Your address: Civic Centre
Godfrey Road
Newport
NP20 4UR

We are pleased to respond to the Consultation regarding the planned enhancements for stations and services between Cardiff and Severn Tunnel Junctions, which follow the recommendations of the South East Wales Transport Commission.

Three of the proposed stations are located within the Newport City Council administrative area, namely:

- Newport West
- Somerton
- Llanwern

Accordingly, our consultation response is focused on these stations and the proposed rail service patterns in our role as a statutory consultee. At this stage our response is independent from the considerations of any future applications and / or permissions that may be required, e.g. planning, SAB or highway access considerations.

General comments

We strongly support the proposals for the enhanced transport links to increase the opportunity for more sustainable travel within and beyond the Newport Administrative boundary. These will enhance opportunities to access to employment, healthcare and leisure facilities.

The provision of park and ride facilities at the proposed Newport West and Llanwern stations provide the potential to intercept car-based trips that would have otherwise utilised the M4 around Newport. It is also imperative that suitable opportunities to access all stations through active and public travel modes are maximised. This will ensure residents and visitors without access to a car can utilise the facilities and provide a more sustainable option where a car is available.

We recognise the proposed stations are part of a wider strategy to provide additional sustainable travel opportunities that were recommended by the South East Wales Transport Commission. These will also assist Newport City Council in addressing the climate emergency that was declared by the council on 23rd November 2021.

Train Service Proposals

The City of Newport is strategically located on the South Wales Mainline, at its confluence with the Marches and Ebbw Valley Lines. The provision of additional rail services and new stations will enhance the role of Newport Railway Station as an interchange location and support wider Burns initiatives to provide enhanced bus and active travel provision at the facility.

We support the proposed rail service frequency increases between Cardiff Central and Bristol Temple Meads / Cheltenham Spa. There is significant regional and inter-region travel originating / terminating in Newport, reflecting our membership of the Cardiff Capital Region and Western Gateway. The full rail recommendations of the Western Gateway are contained in the 2050 Rail Vision¹. The Cardiff Capital Region is currently preparing its Regional Transport Plan.

Higher frequency rail services have the greatest propensity to achieve modal shift; therefore, our preference would be the highest level that is possible. Rail offers the potential to provide the fastest city centre-to-city centre travel times of any mode.

General Comments regarding Stations and Facilities

We note the proposed station designs have similar form and function; therefore, this section contains general observations.

We welcome the provision of passenger facilities including, cycle storage, passenger help points and the ability to purchase tickets. We understand the stations will not be staffed. The general locations of the stations provide limited opportunities for natural surveillance; therefore, it is imperative that customers have a high perception of personal security. The provision of measures such as CCTV and good sightlines are key requirements.

We note that many rail users have restricted mobility and the provision of Blue Badge parking and step free access are welcomed.

Station Specific Comments:

Newport West

The proposed location of Newport West offers a significant opportunity to intercept strategic car trips that may otherwise utilise the M4. The proposed car park capacity of 250 spaces constrains the potential of the facility to meet the objectives of the South East Wales Transport Commission. Opportunities to expand capacity on an incremental basis should be considered.

We welcome the provision of a bus link that will future proof provision for local bus and rail replacement services.

Whilst the proposed connection to Lighthouse Road will assist access from large residential areas in Duffryn, there is a risk of introducing opportunities for 'rat running' through the site at peak times to try and by-pass peak time congestion in the vicinity of Pont Ebbw Roundabout. We welcome the consideration of traffic control measures to restrict through access to appropriate vehicles (primarily bus, rail replacement and emergency services).

¹ [WEST-ARP-XX-RP-TP-0001_03_Western Gateway Rail Spreads Reduced-compressed.pdf \(western-gateway.co.uk\)](https://www.western-gateway.co.uk/WEST-ARP-XX-RP-TP-0001_03_Western_Gateway_Rail_Spreads_Reduced-compressed.pdf)

The station is located in the vicinity of existing Active Travel links and offers an opportunity to provide excellent connections. The provision of secure cycle storage at the station will maximise the potential to access the station through cycling.

The proposed site is located in an environmentally sensitive area and we expect the appropriate processes to be undertaken as proposals develop.

Somerton

The primary vehicular access to the proposed station is via Fairfax Road, adjacent to the main entrance for St Patricks Roman Catholic Primary School. The proposals include the provision of up to 50 car spaces, with a drop off area for arrival / pick up by car.

Current Welsh Government 'School Streets' policy advocates the reduction (and where possible elimination) of motor vehicles movements during school start/finish times in streets where there is a school entrance. The proposals would result in an increase of motorised traffic in the vicinity of the school and residential properties therefore, it would be preferable if there were no car parking provision and that Active Travel options are considered as an alternative.

The site is in close proximity to residential properties. Whilst this provides good opportunities to access the site by non-motorised modes, it will be imperative that properties in the vicinity of the site are not adversely affected by excessive noise and / or light pollution. The facility will require appropriate detailed design and management to mitigate these risks.

In respect of active travel, we welcome the provision of direct pedestrian access from Somerton Road Bridge; however, the route for less mobile users appears relatively circuitous, with an extended route via Cromwell Rd / Fairfax Rd as there is no footway on Somerton Lane.

As a general comment, opportunities to access the station from the north are limited, with limited access from the significant residential areas located in the Conway Road / Chepstow Road area.

There are large number of residential properties in the vicinity of the proposed site and due regard will be required to minimise the impact of noise and lighting. The design of the access bridge will also need to consider potential privacy concerns where properties could be overlooked.

We are in the process of reviewing Active travel provision in the area and would be pleased to discuss future opportunities to link the site with wider facilities.

Llanwern

The location of the proposed Llanwern site offers a significant opportunity to attract modal shift from the M4 in line with the objectives of the South East Wales Transport Commission. Therefore, it is imperative the facility provides a welcoming interface for users, with high quality provision to attract modal shift. Whilst the plans as presented include a total car park capacity of 1000 spaces, which is consistent with the LDP allocation, it is disappointing the majority will not be surfaced, with formalised provision for just over a quarter of spaces.

The relative lack of formal car parking provision will reduce the perception for potential users, with informal, unsurfaced provision generally having a lower practical capacity, as people park

in a less uniform way. It is also imperative that the parking surface provides a clean and attractive facility, that minimises the risk of damage to vehicles.

We understand there is limited opportunity to provide parking facilities to the north; however, there is a risk that demand from this direction will increase illegal parking and / or parking in residential areas.

The main concern with the proposed arrangement is the relative isolation between the car park and platform, with limited, if any natural surveillance. This is likely to reduce the perceived level of personal safety – particularly at night and off-peak periods. The provision of comprehensive CCTV coverage and elimination of blind-spots is imperative.

There are good opportunities to link with active travel. We presume the station will not be gated and the overbridge will serve a secondary function to provide new north-south active travel routes.

Summary

In conclusion, we are supportive of the general principles for enhanced services and the three stations in our administrative area. We note there are some details that require further discussion and refinement. We welcome further engagement to develop proposals to enhance transport provision in the city and wider region.