

Transport Secretary calls on UK Government to invest in Welsh rail

In May, Ken Skates announced Cardiff University's Professor Mark Barry would lead on the case for investment in rail infrastructure in Wales, against the backdrop of the UK Government's £50bn investment in HS2.

The Transport Secretary will summarise the case in the Senedd this afternoon (Tuesday 17 July).

He will tell Assembly Members:

"The initial findings of this work are stark. Wales has not received an equitable share of UK rail investment over a sustained period, denying us the economic benefits enjoyed elsewhere in the UK.

"Network Rail's Wales Route, which makes up 11% of the network, has received little more than 1% of total spend on enhancements in England and Wales.

"This has resulted in low lines speed on the South Wales Mainline, capacity and speed constraints along the North Wales Coast, infrequent commuter services for the Swansea Bay city region, and inadequate cross-border services in both North and South Wales.

"I continue to support HS2, but call once again on the UK Government to make the right choices to benefit north Wales, and exert pressure on them to mitigate against the probable impact of HS2 on the economy in South Wales."

The work carried out by Professor Barry highlights the use of old, inefficient, and unreliable infrastructure constraining the number, speed, and quality of services.

"These constraints dampen demand, restrict economic growth, and increase costs to passengers and tax-payers.

"I will continue to set out a broader vision for a successful rail network. One that helps us meet our obligations to the environment, responsibilities for Well-being and Future Generations, delivers the goals of the Economic Action Plan, and meets the UK Government's commitment to rebalance the economy.

"The work undertaken has identified direct transport user benefits of at least £2bn, generated by reducing journey times for rail passengers. Additional benefits also arise from reduced road

congestion leading to environmental and safety improvements.”

James Price, Chief Executive, Transport for Wales said:

“The success of the Wales and Borders rail service relies on efficient and reliable infrastructure with the ability to transport more people more efficiently. We look forward to working with the Welsh and UK governments to deliver improvements that meet the needs of passengers in Wales and across the border.”

Cardiff University Professor of Practice in Connectivity, Mark Barry said:

“Wales’ railways are stuck in second gear. Long-term under-investment compared to the UK as a whole has left them unfit for purpose.

“It’s no great surprise fewer people in Wales choose to use the train than in the rest of the UK, leading to less efficient rail operations, higher subsidies per passenger and more road congestion. This is a brake on our economic growth, improvement of air quality and carbon reduction.”