

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Late Submission
Date: 19 March 2017 14:37:47

Dear Sir or Madam

My apologies for the lateness of this submission; I hope it is not too late for my suggestions to be accepted for consideration.

My name is Rhobat Bryn Jones and I have an amateur interest in railway development in Wales.

My suggestions can be broadly categorised as coming under two headlines: Capital Connections and Connecting Towns to the Welsh Railway Network.

Capital Connections

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My first suggestion is the opening of a new line between Merthyr Tydfil and Brecon. Currently Mid-Wales has no railhead connecting the region and the capital city. If we are to have a truly national rail network and one that helps to develop the rural economies of Wales, then I believe this connection is essential. Mid-Wales is largely isolated from the South-East both in terms of good road and rail connections which risks the area becoming a desert in terms of investment and, more importantly, unable to benefit from the economic development and investment taking place in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR).

There are also potential local benefits to consider. If Brecon had a good railway connection to the capital, it would make it a more attractive proposition as a commuter town for the CCR. This cannot be viewed in isolation since it would depend on important upgrades taking place on the line between Merthyr and Cardiff. A journey time of more than an hour between Brecon and Cardiff would have a negative effect of the demand for such a service. It would also enable the CCR population to visit both Brecon and the Beacons by rail. There is potential for developing Brecon as a tourist centre for those who see the Beacons as a barrier to travelling north. Equally it would enable car-free access to the National Park to be available if there were an intermediate station at a location close to the Storey Arms, as an example.

My suggestion would be for a scoping study to be commissioned to study the idea. I believe a similar study for the Carmarthen to Aberystwyth cost £30,000. It is worth noting that a new line between Merthyr and Brecon would be considerably shorter (19 miles) than the one being considered between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen (45 miles)

Connecting Welsh Towns

There are other improvements to the network which I believe would not involve a great deal of effort or cost to make travel facilities easier for the rural populations.

The first of these is would be a spur between Builth Road and Builth Wells with a triangular connection making it possible for trains to continue their journey southward to the next station, Cilmeri. The original station was closed in 1962 before the opening of the Royal Welsh

Agricultural Showground in 1963. A railway station, which would be next to the Showground, following the old formation, would mean visitors not having to use cars as much and ease the traffic congestion at that time of the year. However the Showground is only used for a few weeks of the year. But there is a case for saying that the passengers using Builth Road, about 8,000 a year, would be increased if the station was much nearer to the town centre thus increasing the revenues for the Heart of Wales line. The length of the spur would be about 2.5 miles

The second town worth considering is Dolgellau. Again this would require a spur from Morfa Mawddach, approximately 8 miles in length, with both economic benefits for tourism and facilitating travelling to work in the region reducing dependency on the car.

Finally I would suggest a junction with the Cambrian at the sight of the old Moat Lane Junction for a line to Llanidloes with a population of about 3,000. This has the advantage of encouraging people away from car use and could conceivably improve the train frequency between Newtown and Shrewsbury on the Cambrian Line. The distance of this line would be about 11 miles.

Summary

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Current political attention is being paid to the South-East Wales Metro where the majority of the population live. I should perhaps add that, as the decision as to the future mode of transport is considered, the future development of the Cardiff to Merthyr mainline should be protected and not given over wholly to a tram system. A tram-train system would be much more appropriate. Because the line between Cardiff and Barry to Bridgend is a diversionary route for the Great Western mainline, it will not be possible for this to be a tram only operation. In order for through running from the Valleys to Barry to continue while at the same time allowing for street running in Cardiff and elsewhere, a tram-train system is the only viable option.

However new rural lines would need to be assessed on a different basis from the one used for assessing urban and post-industrial settlements in the south. Economic and social isolation can in part be overcome by connectivity, whether this is railways or broadband. But I would suggest that social and economic inclusion with the rest of the Welsh economy and society should be given a high priority in deciding upon the viability of the different projects I have outlined. It will be interesting which criteria are adopted in the feasibility study of the Aberystwyth – Carmarthen line.

Once again, I apologise for the lateness of the submission, however I only got to hear about the consultation yesterday. I hope therefore that my submission has not arrived too late to receive consideration.

Yours faithfully

Rhobert Bryn Jones