

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:

20/2017

PUBLICATION DATE:

05/04/2017

# National Station Improvement Programme for Wales (NSIP+): Phase 2 Evaluation Executive Summary

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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National Station Improvement Programme for Wales (NSIP+):  
Phase 2 Evaluation  
Executive Summary

AECOM

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 AECOM was commissioned by the Welsh Government in June 2015 to undertake a final evaluation of the National Station Improvement Programme for Wales (NSIP+). The programme, part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Welsh Government, Network Rail, and Arriva Trains Wales, was developed to improve railway stations and their connections with other transport modes across the ERDF West Wales and the Valleys area over a 5-year period (2010-2015).
- 1.2 Individual projects consisted of improvements including station modernisation and upgrades (such as new or modernised station buildings), new or improved passenger facilities (such as ticketing), general station access improvements (such as cycle parking facilities) and easier access improvements (including lifts and ramps).
- 1.3 The programme was delivered in two phases, with Phase 1 schemes funded under the 2007-2013 ERDF programme and Phase 2 schemes funded under the 2014-2020 ERDF programme. This report focuses on the Phase 2 schemes which were predominantly delivered by a direct delivery model, with Welsh Government contracting the work to Network Rail to delivery via third parties.
- 1.4 NSIP+ Phase 2 consisted of improvements to five intermodal facilities; Pontypridd, Rhyl, Ystrad Mynach, Port Talbot and Aberystwyth, in line with the Business Plan target.
- 1.5 This evaluation has considered the results and impacts of the programme in terms of the numbers of stations improved and the nature of the improvements made, as well as the results of these improvements for users in terms of the change in passenger kilometres. The perceptions of station users have also been gauged by

way of a review of the National Rail Passenger Survey and face to face surveys undertaken at a sample of two stations improved as part of NSIP+ Phase 2.

- 1.6 Additionally, a process evaluation has been undertaken based upon interviews with key project staff and stakeholders and available project data sources, to establish key lessons learnt and examples of best practice from NSIP+ Phase 2.
- 1.7 In terms of the impacts of the programme on passenger kilometres the methodology adopted for the Business Plan was repeated utilising ticket sales data for the period following completion of the schemes. Although a full years' worth of ex-post ticket sales data is not yet available interim analysis of gross passenger kilometres indicated no strong evidence that the enhancements have influenced passenger levels, with some stations experiencing reduced levels of use, despite growth across their corresponding rail lines, particularly in the case of Rhyl.
- 1.8 Face to face surveys were undertaken at Port Talbot and Pontypridd. The results of this indicated relatively high levels of satisfaction with the improvements delivered at both stations, with over a third of those surveyed either fairly or very satisfied with the projects delivered, however levels of awareness of the improvements made at Pontypridd was low. Safety was a key area where the schemes were considered beneficial, though fewer respondents considered increased awareness of rail services as a recognised benefit of the projects.
- 1.9 Whilst over 60 per cent of respondents had always used the corresponding station for their stated journey, between 14 per cent and 21 per cent had switched to rail from car, indicating that the stations were helping to encourage modal shift away from car use. Only three of the passengers surveyed had specifically started using the stations as a direct result of the improvements made at the stations.
- 1.10 A broad range of stakeholders were interviewed as part of the process evaluation including the Welsh Government, Network Rail, Arriva Trains Wales, as well as Disability Wales and a sample of local authorities. Available project documents were

also reviewed to establish the processes utilised to deliver the projects and how performance compared against plans.

- 1.11 Cost increases were experienced on all of the projects, with the exception of Rhyl, which was delivered within budget. Across the five projects a cost increase of £2.24m was experienced, part of which related to additional items of scope which were funded by WG and other delivery partners. Key cost variances included costs associated with unanticipated utilities diversions at Port Talbot and the decision to utilise Chinese granite at Pontypridd. Cost savings were achieved through measures such as the external financing of the steel cladding utilised at Port Talbot. Cost management exercises were also utilised.
- 1.12 Significant delays were experienced across the Phase 2 programme totalling 791 days. The largest delays were caused by utilities diversions at Port Talbot and delays in the hand back of assets to the Train Operating Company.
- 1.13 Development and delivery of the NSIP+ Phase 2 Schemes was overseen by Local Delivery Groups utilising a collaborative approach. This was considered an effective means of project delivery in ensuring the needs of various stakeholders were considered from design development through to the final delivered schemes. This helped to reduce costly redesign, although it was acknowledged that some issues were still experienced.
- 1.14 Stakeholder involvement across the programme has been widespread, with a number of different organisations engaged in helping to shape the schemes delivered. Examples of where this engagement have resulted in positive impacts for the delivered schemes include the taxi waiting arrangements at Pontypridd, which were modified following stakeholder input to ensure waiting taxis did not queue onto the road.