

# West Wales Direct

The forgotten rail route

*Yn Syth i'r Gorllewin*

*Y gledrffordd anghofiedig*



Railfuture South Wales

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*A possible site for Morrision Parkway station*

*Cover photo: A Fishguard Harbour to Cardiff train crossing Ynysforgan viaduct at Morrision : one possible site for Morrision Parkway station would be to the west (left) of the viaduct*

# 1 Executive summary/Crynodeb weithredol

- .1 This report makes a case for regular use by passenger trains of a section of existing railway, known as the Swansea District Line, which runs from Briton Ferry (Port Talbot) to near Llanelli. It carries no regular passenger traffic currently, and, in these days of ever-greater demand for transport, may be regarded as a wasted asset.
- .2 The aim of the proposals in this report is to improve rail services to and from a wide area of west Wales, the northern parts of Swansea, and the Heart of Wales line (HWL).
- .3 The existing rail network, and the level of service provided, is such that it is difficult for rail to realise its full potential in west Wales (including Swansea). Service frequency is currently sub-optimal (though some welcome improvements are planned to commence in December 2005) and the circuitous route of the main line makes it difficult for the railway to compete with travel by car for journeys such as Carmarthen to Cardiff.
- .4 In three stages, these proposals would result in regular hourly long-distance trains (from east of Cardiff to Pembrokeshire) traversing the Swansea District Line and calling at new stations to be opened at Llandarcy Enterprise Park, Morriston Parkway and Grovesend Parkway. These services would be **additional** to existing trains, there being no question of diverting any services away from Swansea High Street station.
- .5 Service improvements between Cardiff and Swansa and between Swansea and west Wales are proposed as essential components of the scheme. Some of these trains should be routed via the Vale of Glamorgan line to serve Rhoose (for Cardiff International Airport), thus improving access from the airport to the west, with a potential for increased inward tourist traffic.
- .6 Proposals are made to tackle the circuitous route and unattractive service frequency at the southern end of the Heart of Wales (Crewe - Shrewsbury - Llandrindod - Llanelli - Swansea) line. As a first step, service frequency would be doubled (from 4-hourly to 2-hourly), with some of the additional trains running via the Swansea District Line to Port Talbot, instead of via Llanelli. From Port Talbot, they could reverse to serve Swansea or continue eastwards to Cardiff.
- .7 In the longer term, a section of former railway would be rebuilt from Pontarddulais via Gorseinon to Gowerton, where it would link with the existing main line. This would allow a more direct approach for HWL trains to Swansea, with connections both eastwards and westwards available at Grovesend Parkway (new station). A 2-hourly local service from the Amman Valley to Swansea would complement the longer distance services. The resulting hourly service south of Ammanford would facilitate development of commuter and other traffic in this part of Swansea's travel to work area.
- .8 The network benefits to be realised from these proposals also have potential impacts in a wider context, and these impacts are outlined.

- .1 Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn dadlau dros wneud defnydd cyson gan drenau cludo pobl o ddarn o reilffordd sy'n bod eisioes, a adweinir fel Lein Ardal Abertawe, sy'n rhedeg o Lansawel (Aberafan) i gyffiniau Llanelli. Ar hyn o bryd nid yw'n cludo unrhyw deithwyr yn rheolaidd, ac yn yr amserau hyn o alw cynyddol am drafnidiaeth, gellid dweud bod hyn yn wastraff adnoddau.
- .2 Amcan y cynigion yn yr adroddiad hwn yw gwella gwasanaethau rheilffyrdd i ardal eang o orllewin Cymru, rhannau gogleddol Abertawe, a lein Canolbarth Cymru.
- .3 Mae'r rhwydwaith rheilffyrdd sydd ohoni, ynghyd â natur y gwasanaeth a gynigir yn ei gwneud yn anodd i'r dull hwn o drafaelio gyrraedd ei allu dichonadwy yng ngorllewin Cymru (gan gynnwys Abertawe). Nid yw amllder y gwasanaeth ar hyn o bryd cystal ag y gallai fod ( ond bydd croeso i'r gwelliannau arfaethedig sydd i fod i gychwyn yn Rhagfyr 2005). Hefyd, mae natur amgylch-ogylch y brif lein yn ei gwneud hi'n anodd i reilffyrdd gystadlu â theithiau car i lefydd fel Caerfyrddin a Chaerdydd.
- .4 Mewn tri cham, byddai'r cynigion hyn yn esgor ar drenau hir-daith rheolaidd bob awr (o'r dwyrain i Gaerdydd hyd Sir Benfro), yn teithio dros lein Ardal Abertawe ac yn galw yn y gorsafoedd newydd fyddai'n agor ym Mharc Mentr Llandarcy, Parkway Treforus a Grovesend Parkway. Byddai'r gwasanaethau hyn yn **ychwanegol** at y rhai presennol, heb dynnu unrhyw wasanaethau o orsaf Prif Heol Abertawe.
- .5 Cynigir gwelliant ar wasanaethau rhwng Caerdydd ac Abertawe, a rhwng Abertawe a gorllewin Cymru fel rhan annatod o'r cynllyn. Dylai rhai o'r trenau hyn fynd ar hyd lein Bro Morgannwg i wasanaethu Rhws (ar gyfer Maes awyr Rhyngwladol Caerdydd). Byddai hyn yn gwella'r mynediad i'r maes awyr o'r gorllewin, gan greu'r gallu i ddenu mwy o dwristiaid.
- .6 Gwneir cynigion i wella'r ffordd hir-faith a'r gwasanaethau anaml an-neniadol ym mhen deheuol Lein Canolbarth Cymru (Lein Crewe - Amwythig - Llandrindod - Lanelli - Abertawe). Fel cam cyntaf, byddai amllder y gwasanaethau yn cael eu dyblu (o bob 4 awr i bob 2 awr), gyda rhai trenau ychwanegol yn defnyddio Lein Ardal Abertawe i Aberafan, yn lle mynd trwy Llanelli. O Aberafan, gallent droi'n ôl i wasanaethu Abertawe neu mynd yn eu blaenau tua'r dwyrain i Gaerdydd.
- .7 Yn y tymor hir, byddai darn o hen gledrffordd yn cael ei ail-adeiladu o Bontardulais trwy Orseinon i Dregwyr, lle byddai'n cysylltu â'r brif lein bresennol. Byddai hyn yn hwyluso cyswllt mwy uniongyrchol i drenau Lein Canolbarth Cymru ag Abertawe, gyda dewis cysylltiadau dwyreiniol neu orllewinol yn Grovesend Parkway (gorsaf newydd). Byddai gwasanaeth bob dwy awr lleol o Ddyffryn Aman i Abertawe yn asio â'r gwasanaethau i lefydd pellennig. O ganlyniad byddai'r gwasanaeth awrol i'r deau o Rydaman yn hwyluso datblygiad trafnidiaeth cymudo a symudiadau eraill yn yr ardal hon o Abertawe lle mae pobl yn trafaelio'n ôl a blaen i'w gwaith.
- .8 Byddai gan y buddiannau rhwydwaith a ddeilliai o'r cynigion hyn ganlyniadau tebygol mewn meysydd eraill, ac amlinellir y rhain.

## 2 Introduction

- .1 In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Britain is caught in a cleft stick. People want ever greater freedom to travel and yet they do not want more and more money spent on new roads, nor the attendant pollution which extra traffic would cause.
- .2 Rather than attempting to expand the road network ad infinitum to meet demand, the answer could lie in making full use of the transport infrastructure which exists already. Some of this – the rail network in particular – is greatly underused.
- .3 Some parts of Wales are penetrated by railway lines which carry only freight traffic. One of these is the route between Briton Ferry and Pontarddulais, which passes through the northern suburbs of Swansea and crosses the Swansea Valley at Morriston. This route, known in railway circles as the ‘Swansea District Line’, was built by the then Great Western Railway in 1912 to provide a fast route between London and Fishguard, in connection with the recently opened harbour at the latter. The railway – the last main line railway to be built in Wales – was therefore laid out for fast running.
- .4 The Swansea District Line has the potential to make a significant contribution to the transport system of (and to/from) south-west Wales. This report shows how that potential might be realised, with benefits to Swansea and environs, and to the whole of west Wales.

## 3 The problems

- .1 The government has stated frequently that it wants to see substantial modal shift to rail, both passenger and freight. But for this to happen, the railways must offer services which their customers – actual and potential – find attractive and in accordance with their needs.
- .2 Some parts of the rail network are operating at or near capacity. These are mainly commuter belts around large cities, especially London. Other parts of the network are seriously under-utilised, and for a variety of reasons do not offer a sufficiently attractive service to achieve growth in usage.
- .3 There are grounds for regarding much of the rail network west of Bridgend as falling into the latter category. Among the reasons for this are:
  - Cardiff and Swansea are Wales’s two largest cities, and, together with the principal intermediate towns, have a combined population of over half a million people. Yet the train service between them for most of the day consists of only an hourly fast (limited stop) train, and a two-hourly ‘stopping’ train (serving the local ‘SwanLine’ stations). Services to and from west Wales (this term here meaning all points west of Swansea) often necessitate a change of train at Swansea, with attendant problems of maintaining connections between the services of different train operators. It is true that improvements planned for December 2005 will address some of these problems, but we believe that the service then provided will still be far from adequate to appeal to people living

west of Swansea who currently prefer to use their cars rather than to travel by train;

- many through trains from Cardiff and beyond to west Wales have lengthy timetabled waits at Swansea;
- the existing passenger railway has a geographical disadvantage (i.e. a longer route) compared with road, for journeys between west Wales and Cardiff etc, and this has been exacerbated by substantial expenditure on the road system in recent decades. Thus both journey times and service frequencies by rail are less than optimal, and often compare unfavourably with road travel for east-west journeys;
- Swansea has one main station (High St.) which is reasonably (though not ideally) sited for the city centre, but is inconvenient for many other parts of the city. There are only three other stations within the city boundaries - Llansamlet, Gowerton and Pontarddulais - but trains call at all of these (especially Pontarddulais) too infrequently for rail to play a significant role in satisfying travel needs in the vicinity. For comparison, Cardiff has 20 stations within the city, all of which have at least an hourly train service, and in most cases more frequent than that;
- over-reliance on the car has caused a spiral of congestion and gridlock in Swansea and its environs, with inaccessibility to jobs compounded by poor public transport links;
- other relatively populous areas around Swansea have either been deprived of direct access to rail services through past closures (e.g. the Swansea Valley, Amman Valley, and Gorseinon) or have infrequent services by an indirect route (e.g. Ammanford);
- hitherto there has been no direct rail link from west Wales to Cardiff International Airport. Re-introduction of passenger trains on the Vale of Glamorgan line (Bridgend – Rhoose – Barry) has the potential to meet this need, but only if through trains to and from west Wales are operated;
- several of these problems have a negative impact on tourism in west Wales, so there is a strong economic argument for improving the rail service.

## 4 The solutions

- .1 If rail is to play a greater role in south-west Wales, an overall strategic view must be taken of the rail network in the area, in order to determine how best to utilise it to optimum effect. Any such study may also suggest some modifications to the network to achieve that optimum.
- .2 The existing network consists of:
  - the main line through Port Talbot, Neath and Swansea to Carmarthen and beyond, with its three-way split thence to Pembroke Dock, Milford Haven and Fishguard Harbour;
  - the ‘Heart of Wales’ line from Swansea via Llanelli to Pontarddulais, Ammanford and Shrewsbury via mid Wales;
  - the ‘Swansea District Line’ which leaves the main line at Briton Ferry and rejoins it east of Llanelli.

- .3 The **main line** follows a somewhat circuitous route, via Neath, into Swansea from the east. Through trains then have to reverse in Swansea station and soon have to traverse single-track sections near Landore and from near Cockett to the eastern outskirts of Llanelli. These constraints limit route capacity.
- .4 The **Heart of Wales line** shares the Swansea District Line route from Llanelli as far as Morlais Junction whence it heads north west to Pontarddulais etc. The existing route of trains to Swansea via Llanelli arises because the Pontarddulais-Gowerton-Swansea Victoria section of line was closed in the 1960s. The result is a very indirect journey for Swansea or Cardiff passengers, which, with infrequent trains, means commuting from Pontarddulais and Ammanford by rail is not viable, even though these places are certainly within Swansea's 'travel to work' area. Also, the existing stations at Ammanford are poorly sited for the town.
- .5 The **Swansea District Line** is used only for freight traffic except during the summer 'peak' period. It is double track throughout, with relatively high-speed junctions at both ends. Currently there are several speed restrictions on the route which need attending to if regular passenger trains are to traverse the line. But despite these restrictions, the Cardiff-Fishguard Harbour service which used this route in some recent summers achieved a journey time reduction of 15 to 20 minutes (Bridgend-Llanelli) compared with the small number of fast through trains at that time which ran via Swansea station, and reversed there.
- .6 As observed previously, none of these lines is currently used to full potential. To rectify this, a three-stage approach is proposed:

## 4.1 Stage 1

- .1 A second hourly limited stop service between Cardiff and Swansea is due to be introduced in December 2005. This is a sensible first step, but further radical improvements are necessary.
- .2 A further hourly Cardiff - west Wales service should be operated to run via the Swansea District Line to secure reduced journey times and so make rail more attractive. This service could originate east of Cardiff, for example at Birmingham.
- .3 The facts that the line splits into three west of Carmarthen, and that under these proposals trains will reach Llanelli from the east by two different routes, means that several permutations of services are possible. The additional hourly fast services via the Swansea District Line could run alternately to Pembroke Dock and Milford Haven, and could alternate with the hourly east of Cardiff - Swansea - west Wales services. The existing 'SwanLine' local services, upgraded to hourly frequency, could be extended from Swansea to Llanelli. In combination, these arrangements would provide a half-hourly service between Swansea and Whitland. Some trains should be routed via the Vale of Glamorgan line and so offer through services between west Wales and Cardiff International Airport.
- .4 To increase capacity for the additional services suggested in 4.1.3 between Swansea and Llanelli, the line between Cockett and Llandeilo Junction (east of Llanelli) should be redoubled, as should the short section at Swansea Loop East Junction where the west Wales route joins the main line from Cardiff.
- .5 The Heart of Wales line (HWL) service needs increasing from the present four daily trains to at least a train every two hours, possibly with some additional 'short'

workings to serve work, education and leisure markets in ways which the present service does not. Some of these additional trains should be run via the Swansea District Line to Port Talbot, where they could connect to Swansea and Cardiff (or run through to those places). This will improve access to the HWL from Cardiff and points east. Further development of the HWL service is covered in Stage 3.

## 4.2 Stage 2

- .1 This stage consists of opening new stations in the Swansea area, to make rail services more accessible for a much greater proportion of the population.
- .2 On the Swansea District Line, parkway-style stations should be built at or near Llandarcy, Morryston and Grovesend.
- .3 **Llandarcy Enterprise Park** station would serve the Coed Darcy Urban Village development, with its substantial house-building proposals and development of employment opportunities. Provision of good quality public transport will be essential, and the existing railway has the potential to play a significant role in this.
- .4 **Morryston Parkway** station (near M4 junction 45 at Ynysforan) would serve north Swansea and the Swansea Valley, for which it would be much more convenient than the existing Swansea High St. station. Possible sites include alongside the A4067 road at Ynysforan, or west of Llangyfelach tunnel at the former Felindre steelworks site. Both these locations have their advantages. The former site is in a populous area and close to the A4067 so that bus-rail interchange would be easy to provide. The Felindre site would be ideally placed to serve future development of that site and is closer to Morryston Hospital and the DVLA. The intended use of the Felindre site to host the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 2006 could be a pointer to future development and use of this area of land.
- .5 **Grovesend Parkway station** (near M4 junction 48 at Hendy) would serve the Pontarddulais/Gorseinon area, allowing residents fast and convenient rail access to Cardiff and beyond. This would be much more attractive than the existing circuitous rail route from Pontarddulais via Llanelli and Swansea.
- .6 These new stations would be served by the trains referred to in stage 1, in addition to which they may become destinations/originating points in their own right, for some services. **It must be emphasised however that the trains which call at Llandarcy, Morryston and Grovesend would be *additional* ones, there being no question of diverting any *existing* services away from the present Swansea (High Street) station.**
- .7 Good bus links would be essential to enable these stations to secure real economic and social benefit for the greater Swansea area. This could be achieved by a combination of diverting existing bus services and possibly introducing some new ones. Development of through rail-bus ticketing has been quite rapid in recent years. The existing 'Swansea PlusBus' add-on ticket would need to be available on buses linking with all rail stations in the greater Swansea area. A practical consequence of this would be that passengers could travel to either of the main stations (High St. and Morryston) by any train and know that they could continue by connecting bus to whichever part of the city they need. Similar arrangements would need to apply with regard to the pairs of stations at Neath and Llandarcy, and at Pontarddulais and Grovesend.

- .8 In addition, both Llandarcy and Morriston could be served by a Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system for the greater Swansea area. An outline of how this might develop is included in an earlier publication (*reference 1*).
- .9 On the existing main line west of Swansea, new stations should be opened where appropriate. These could include **Cockett**, **Loughor** and **Trostre**. The last-named would replace Bynea on the Heart of Wales line and would be sited on the section of route common to the main line, the Swansea District line and the Heart of Wales line. Trostre station would be well placed to serve the Millennium Coastal Park and the Penclacwydd wildfowl centre, as well as the proposed site for the new Llanelli rugby stadium.

### 4.3 Stage 3

- .1 This stage addresses the problems already alluded to with regard to the Amman Valley area and Heart of Wales line services.
- .2 At present there is no direct route into Swansea from the Ammanford direction. Trains travel via Llanelli to the west, or could travel via Port Talbot to the east, reversing then in both cases to reach Swansea, which is by far the largest population centre in the area. The route via Llanelli is of course appropriate for those for whom that is their destination, or for those wanting to travel onwards to Carmarthen and Pembrokeshire (provided connections are available at Llanelli). Similarly, a route via Port Talbot would offer much faster journeys to Cardiff than the Llanelli route, even allowing for changing trains at Port Talbot.
- .3 To provide adequate services and journey times to and from Swansea, we propose:
- diversion of Heart of Wales trains from Pontarddulais via the existing freight route to the Swansea District Line, where they would call at Grovesend Parkway station;
  - they would then use the rebuilt section of line from Grovesend via Gorseinon to Gowerton;
  - construction of a new connection at Gowerton to the existing main line.
- .4 To facilitate this, protection of land occupied by the former rail route through Gorseinon is vital.
- .5 The following services and enhancements would then become possible:
- a new station to serve Gorseinon on the rebuilt section;
  - Heart of Wales line trains, increased in frequency, would call at Grovesend Parkway and interchange there with east-west trains, to give connections to/from Llanelli/ west Wales and Cardiff, and then proceed to Swansea via Gorseinon and Gowerton.
  - additional (two-hourly) 'short' workings should operate on the HWL and part of the existing disused railway from Pantyffynnon to Ammanford Town and Glanamman or Gwaun-cae-Gurwen. These also would run via Gorseinon. This would facilitate development of commuter and other traffic in this part of Swansea's travel to work area. When combined with the through HWL trains to and from Shrewsbury/Crewe, a more attractive hourly frequency of service would then apply at the southern end of this line.
  - these additional services would enable Gowerton station to begin to reach its potential, located as it is in a well-populated area.

## 5 Implementation of solutions

- .1 The solutions proposed will necessarily require some expenditure on infrastructure and on additional rolling stock, and there are implications for the subsidy profile of the Train Operating Company (TOC) which operates the Wales & Borders franchise (currently Arriva Trains Wales). There is no reason to apologise for this. If the government's aim of securing significant modal shift from road to rail is to be realised, some of the over-zealous 'rationalisation' of the past must be reversed, and the railway made fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 5.1 Infrastructure

- .1 **Stage 1** (see above) involves increased frequency of service on existing lines, and a detailed capacity review will be needed to determine where 'pinch points' occur and to develop measures to overcome them. But it is possible to exaggerate capacity and other infrastructure problems. Some points to consider are:
- the Vale of Glamorgan line plus the Swansea District Line, together with the main line, in effect result in a four-track railway between Cardiff and Bridgend, and partially between Port Talbot (Briton Ferry) and Llanelli. Restoration of the second track at Swansea Loop East Junction and between Cockett and the eastern outskirts of Llanelli would complete the latter four-track section;
  - therefore the only double-track section would be from Bridgend to Briton Ferry, approximately 16 miles, but with much freight traffic terminating/originating at Margam, it is likely to be the Bridgend-Margam section which may need more running lines or loops;
  - the Swansea District Line has an overall line speed of 50 mph, but with some severe speed restrictions at several points. The latter are not too serious for a freight-only line, but there is a need to raise line speeds for passenger trains if the maximum benefit in journey time reductions is to be achieved. As noted previously, the summer Cardiff-Fishguard train, hauled by a 40-year old locomotive and subject to these speed restrictions, nevertheless achieved a faster journey than scheduled through services via Swansea High Street. Modern diesel trains are capable of much higher acceleration and would need to reach higher speeds in order to offset the time taken in calling at three new stations on the District Line, while still maintaining a journey time advantage – both perceived and actual;
  - some upgrading of the District Line was undertaken during 2004 by Network Rail in evaluating new track ballasting equipment, and this should make possible the easing of some speed restrictions;
  - a journey over the District Line reveals clearly that when built by the then GWR a century ago, it was built not to a *minimum cost* specification, but rather to a *maximum speed* objective, and the potential remains for fast running.
- .2 **Stage 2** involves building a number of new stations in the greater Swansea area. The exact siting of these needs detailed investigation to take account of the various travel needs to be served. But it is important not to slavishly follow the 'minimum cost' approach which characterised some of the 1980s/1990s reopenings, such as the Aberdare and Maesteg lines, where expansion of services to meet greater demand is not possible without a further round of capital investment. Facilities for passengers using the stations must be attractive rather than merely adequate.

- .3 Major Parkway-style stations such as those proposed for Llandarcy, Morriston and Grovesend must have large, heated waiting rooms, 'real time' train running information systems which include the connecting bus and LRT services, adequate and secure car parking, and easy rail-bus interchange. Swansea's 'park & ride' terminals at Landore and Fabian Way show what can be done. Moreover, platforms must be long enough to accommodate all trains which potentially would call. To achieve customer confidence it is essential that these stations be staffed, either by the rail operator's staff or by those of a ticket agency, such as applies at, for example, Pembrey, Ludlow, Ledbury and Gobowen.
- .4 Smaller stations such as Cockett, serving mainly local travel, will not need such extensive facilities but 'real time' information systems, security measures and adequate waiting rooms are essential if rail is to stand any chance of persuading people to forsake their cars.
- .5 In all cases, the environment for passengers can be improved by attracting other businesses to the station, such as ticket agencies combined with refreshment sales, newspapers and magazines etc. A station such as Llandarcy, which would be built to serve major residential and commercial developments planned for the area, would lend itself to a partnership approach, where one might expect the developers (perhaps via a section 106 arrangement), the local authority and the rail industry to contribute to its building, since all would benefit from it.
- .6 **Stage 3** involves rebuilding an abandoned railway, reopening at least part of a currently disused railway, constructing a new connecting curve at Gowerton, and building several new stations. No instance of rebuilding an abandoned standard gauge line has occurred in Wales as yet (though there are indeed candidates) but this has been done in England. Two notable examples are the 'Robin Hood' line in Nottinghamshire, where the central section had been not only abandoned but also buried, and the 'Jewellery' line in Birmingham. Both these projects were very much larger than what is proposed here. They serve to demonstrate that such developments are not impossible, provided that the will exists to pursue them.

## 5.2 Rolling stock

- .1 The developments proposed involve more frequent services on all the routes under consideration, and inevitably this will necessitate additional trains being procured.
- .2 South Wales has not fared well on the rolling stock front since railway privatisation. The TOCs (past and present) which provide the regional / local services are among the very few in Britain which have not obtained any new trains. So any increase in rolling stock needed to cater for growth (as has happened on the Cardiff Valley Lines) has had to consist of other operators' cast-offs. This is still the case in 2005 and is in marked contrast to, for example, Anglia Trains (as it was known until 2004), who introduced a new train service between Norwich and Cambridge (aided by Rail Passenger Partnership funding) and *obtained brand new trains to operate it*. Another example is Hull Trains, which has brought new trains into service. Scotland also continues to benefit from large-scale introduction of new trains.
- .3 These examples show that there is no need for south Wales to continue to endure its 'Cinderella' status, and the service developments proposed here will be an

excellent opportunity to correct this state of affairs.

- .4 Meanwhile, it is accepted – and welcomed – that relatively new class 175 trains will operate through services between west Wales and Manchester, and between Cardiff and Holyhead, from 2006.
- .5 Any new trains should be suitable for the markets they purport to serve, and on the lines in west and mid Wales with a high tourist potential this must include all passengers being able to see comfortably out of the windows.

### **5.3 Franchise subsidy profile**

- .1 All the railways in Wales, as in most of the UK, are operated by TOCs who receive a government subsidy. Services are funded therefore partly by passengers' fares and partly by taxpayers generally.
- .2 Increasing the frequency of services as proposed here will necessarily increase costs, but will also increase revenue as more people are attracted to the improved services. It should not be assumed that the latter would not keep up with the former. If the new improved services achieve the objective of securing greater use of rail and increased modal shift from road, the gap between operating costs and revenue will actually decrease. This would be to everyone's benefit, and the subsidy would be shown to represent better value for money. This in turn would go a long way to securing the future of the rail network in west Wales.
- .3 The current Wales & Borders franchise, operated by Arriva Trains Wales, is for a 15-year term (from December 2003) divided into three 5-year stages. This approach appears to fit well with phased developments such as those proposed here.
- .4 However, it should not be assumed that only the W&B operator would run trains to and from west Wales. The greater penetration of the Swansea area, with the faster journey times to tourist and other destinations in west Wales which use of the Swansea District Line will allow, should provide incentives for the 'inter-city' operators (currently First Great Western and Virgin Cross Country) to expand / extend their services accordingly.

## **6 A wider context**

- .1 The railways in south and west Wales are part of a network. In such a network any development in a particular area will be affected by developments in other areas and will itself catalyse changes elsewhere.
- .2 Some factors relevant to the present report, but outside its scope for detailed discussion, are:
  - the widely-recognised need to upgrade and increase speeds on the London to west Wales main line. It has been observed that Swansea and York are equidistant from London, but the train journey to Swansea takes 3 hours, and

to York only 2 hours! Similarly, London to Carmarthen generally takes over 4 hours, whereas London to Darlington (8 miles further) is routinely scheduled in 2½ hours, while London to Llandudno Junction (the same distance as London to Carmarthen) is now achievable in 3 hours several times each day. Many of the services covered by this report would benefit from such upgrading.

- improvements in services west of Swansea should prompt an evaluation of how best to utilise the rail network there. Potential station reopenings include St Clears, Templeton and Fishguard & Goodwick. The Fishguard line comes second only to the Swansea District Line in under-utilised railways, and with foot ferry passengers seemingly a declining market at present (in the face of low-cost air services) it is essential that the line also caters for local residents and visitors, not only for ferry passengers. This would be to the ultimate benefit of both these markets. The present service of one train in the middle of the day and the other in the middle of the night manifestly does not cater for non-ferry traffic. Reopening of Fishguard & Goodwick station as a transport interchange would be an essential component of such improvements;
- transport to, from and within Swansea will be improved by the proposals in this report but they do not provide the complete answer by themselves. A Light Rapid Transit system (see reference on page 10) within the city and bay areas, linking the all the strategic sites (including most of the rail stations) would complement these proposals admirably and would play a major role in Swansea becoming a vibrant European-style city.

## 7 The consequences of inaction

- .1 A failure to implement service enhancements would have serious implications for the future of the rail network in west Wales. This is because the problems identified earlier (Section 3) will not merely remain - many of them will get worse. Continued over-reliance on the private car will continue to increase congestion and worsen the city environment. It will in turn lead to continued pressure for further road 'improvements', including the A40 dualling in Pembrokeshire. If the latter were carried out, at substantial public expense, without also upgrading the railway, the problems of uncompetitive journey times by train would be exacerbated, leading to a fall in passenger numbers and hence increased subsidy per passenger. These circumstances would also boost the notion, already too widely held, that Cardiff represents the end of the main line and everything west thereof is peripheral.
- .2 Reference has already been made to the need to secure the future of the Fishguard line by widening its appeal and usefulness. Similar comments apply to the Heart of Wales line. Therefore it is considered that the 'do nothing' option is unacceptable.

## 8 Conclusions

Here we review how well the solutions proposed above would answer the problems listed at the beginning of the report.

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Answer</b>
West Wales connections at Swansea are unreliable	Higher service frequencies will reduce the effects of poor connectional reliability, and the proposals would also result in many more through trains
Through trains to / from the west often have long waits at Swansea, though this will be less true from December 2005	Additional through trains from east to west would run hourly via the District Line (serving north Swansea), hence avoiding long waits in High St. station
Rail has a geographical disadvantage compared with road for east-west journeys	Route to/from west Wales will be shortened by using the District Line
Journey times by rail are often uncompetitive compared with road	Use of the District Line will produce time savings to/from west Wales, and to/from north Swansea and the Amman Valley
Swansea has only four stations, three of which have infrequent services	In Stage 1, two of the three infrequently-served stations would have their services at least doubled. Three additional stations are proposed in stage 2, (with train frequencies at least hourly in all cases), and two more in stage 3
Congestion & gridlock in Swansea streets	More frequent train services and greater accessibility to rail as a result of new stations being opened will increase rail's potential role and help to reduce road traffic. But complementary measures are also needed, including (e.g.) a Light Rapid Transit scheme
No rail services for the Swansea Valley, Amman Valley, or Gorseinon	Swansea Valley towns would have bus link to Morriston Parkway station. Amman Valley and Gorseinon would have train services under stage 3
No fast direct rail link to/from Cardiff International Airport, though potential exists following Vale of Glamorgan line reopening	Could be provided by routing some west Wales - Cardiff trains via the Vale of Glamorgan line
Rail not catering adequately for tourist market in west Wales	Higher frequency, faster services will help rail to increase its role. Direct fast trains to/from Cardiff International Airport would encourage incoming tourists to visit west Wales

## 9 Bibliography

- .1 On Track for the 21st Century: a Development Plan for the Railways of Wales and the Borders, Railfuture Wales, September 2004 (*can be viewed at [www.chartist/demon.co.uk/rdsw/dev-planupd.htm](http://www.chartist/demon.co.uk/rdsw/dev-planupd.htm)*).
- .2 New Stations: a Guide for Promoters, Strategic Rail Authority, September 2004.
- .3 Great Western Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy, Consultation Document, Strategic Rail Authority, January 2005.
- .4 National Assembly for Wales, Economic Development and Transport Committee proceedings, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2005.
- .5 Coed Darcy Urban Village Environmental Statement, February 2005.



*A Cardiff to Fishguard Harbour train passes the site of the proposed Grovesend Parkway station*

For further information about Railfuture South Wales, please apply to the branch secretary at 61 Chantal Avenue, Penyfai, Bridgend CF31 4NW, or visit [www.chartist.demon.co.uk/rdsw/rdsindex.htm](http://www.chartist.demon.co.uk/rdsw/rdsindex.htm)

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# Diagrammatic map

