

**Debate Pack**

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# Railway infrastructure in Wales

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# 1 Background

A Westminster Hall debate has been scheduled for Wednesday 10 May on railway infrastructure in Wales. The debate will be opened by Christina Rees MP.

## 1.1 Devolution

The operation of the railway in Wales is a Welsh Government responsibility. However, infrastructure planning and the funding of Network Rail in Wales remains reserved to the UK Parliament. The situation is different in Scotland, where infrastructure planning is also devolved.<sup>1</sup>

Network Rail is a public sector company. It owns, repairs and develops most of the railway infrastructure in Great Britain, and is primarily funded by the UK and Scottish Governments.<sup>2</sup> The Secretary of State for Transport is accountable to Parliament for its activities and performance.<sup>3</sup>

The Welsh Government has the following key responsibilities regarding rail in Wales:

- responsibility for procuring an operator, Transport for Wales (TfW), for the Welsh rail franchise, and for setting TfW's terms and conditions.<sup>4</sup>
- responsibility, through TfW, for the Wales and Borders rail franchise. This was previously operated by a private joint venture, KeolisAmey Wales, but was taken into public ownership in February 2021.<sup>5</sup>
- deciding on annual increases to regulated train fares in Wales (which include most season tickets on commuter journeys, some off-peak return tickets and some anytime tickets).<sup>6</sup>
- responsibility, through TfW, for the Core Valley lines infrastructure (also referred to as the South Wales Metro), since this was transferred from Network Rail in 2020.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Schedule 7A, Part II, Head E of the [Government of Wales Act 2006](#) prescribes those areas reserved to the UK Parliament

<sup>2</sup> Network Rail, [How we're funded](#) [Accessed 4 May 2023]

<sup>3</sup> Department for Transport, [Network Rail framework agreement](#), 21 June 2019, para 2.1

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#), 6 July 2021, HC 438 2021-22, para 42

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government Press Release, [Welsh rail franchise now in public ownership](#), 8 February 2021

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, [Written Statement: Regulated Rail Fares 2023](#), 22 February 2023

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#), 6 July 2021, HC 438 2021-22, para 42

All rail infrastructure in Wales, apart from the Core Valley lines, remains the responsibility of the UK Government Department for Transport as managed through Network Rail.<sup>8</sup>

A [2021 report](#) [PDF] from Cardiff University's Wales Governance Centre was critical of this arrangement, describing it as a "misalignment between devolved responsibility for rail operations and more convoluted arrangements for rail infrastructure", which "becomes a more pressing concern, particularly given the direct implications of current arrangements on funding for rail projects in Wales."<sup>9</sup>

The UK Government's 2021 [Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#) proposed that Network Rail be absorbed into a new public body, Great British Railways (GBR), to own and manage the network as well as setting fares and drawing up timetables. The precise implications for Wales of this plan are not yet clear, but the UK Government has said that the devolved Government in Wales would continue to exercise its powers in relation to rail.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.2 Infrastructure funding

There are two key forms of infrastructure funding:

1. **Operations, support, maintenance, and renewals (OSMR) activities**—these are funded through five-yearly control period (CP) settlements given to Network Rail. CP settlements cover expenditure on signallers and operation managers, and work to repair and replace existing infrastructure.

The industry is currently in control period six (CP6), which runs from 2019 to 2024. Network Rail was allocated £48 billion for the current control period.<sup>11</sup>

2. **Enhancements.** This includes activities such as electrification and new signalling. Since 2017, enhancements have been part of a separate process called the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP).<sup>12</sup> The pipeline applies to all publicly-funded rail enhancements in England and Wales. Enhancements are also carried out by Network Rail.

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<sup>8</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#), 6 July 2021, HC 438 2021-22, para 42

<sup>9</sup> Cardiff University's Wales Governance Centre, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales: Written evidence submission to the Welsh Affairs Committee](#), March 2022, p3 [PDF]

<sup>10</sup> Department for Transport, [Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail](#), 20 May 2021, p25

<sup>11</sup> National Audit Office, [A financial overview of the rail system in England](#), HC1373 April 2021

<sup>12</sup> Department for Transport, [Rail network enhancement pipeline: a new approach for rail enhancements](#), 20 March 2018

The first update of projects within this pipeline was published in October 2019,<sup>13</sup> but sections of the rail industry have been critical of the Government for failing to provide more regular updates of the pipeline since.<sup>14</sup>

The UK Government generally combines infrastructure spending for both England and Wales in its reporting, making it difficult to disaggregate what spending goes only to Wales.<sup>15</sup> However, the Welsh Affairs Committee – in their [2021 inquiry into railway infrastructure in Wales](#) [PDF] – heard that historical funding was “disproportionately low whether measured against the total UK budget, track length or population share.”<sup>16</sup> A 2018 report by Professor Mark Barry, carried out for the Welsh Government, estimated that the Wales route, which covers 11% of the UK network, received just over 1% of the enhancement budget for the 2011-2016 period.<sup>17</sup>

The Welsh Affairs Committee report on railway infrastructure in Wales recommended the UK Government reform RNEP to speed up the delivery of enhancement projects in Wales. The UK Government said it is “always looking to improve systems and processes to make them more efficient” in its response to the committee.<sup>18</sup>

The committee report also recommended that further devolution of rail infrastructure should be considered only if there were “clear benefits for both passengers and freight users”, which currently have not been identified. The report noted that there are great economies of scale available via the existing management structure which benefited Wales and limited the Welsh Government’s financial liabilities. The UK Government agreed with this recommendation and said that – apart from the Core Valley lines – most rail services in Wales operate on a cross-border basis and so it makes sense for enhancements to be planned on a holistic route and network-level basis.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, Cardiff University’s submission to the Welsh Affairs suggested that under a fully devolved system, Wales could have received an extra £514m investment in its rail infrastructure between 2011-12 and 2019-20.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Department for Transport, [Rail network enhancements pipeline: autumn 2019 update](#), 21 October 2019

<sup>14</sup> Rail Industry Association, [Be SURE: Show Us the Rail Enhancements](#) [Accessed 4 May 2023]

<sup>15</sup> PQ 181113 [[Railways: Infrastructure](#)], answered 20 April 2023

<sup>16</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#), 6 July 2021, HC 438 2021-22, para 86

<sup>17</sup> Welsh Government/Mark Barry, [The Rail Network in Wales: The Case for Investment](#), 18 September 2018 [PDF]

<sup>18</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales: Government response to the Committee’s First Report of Session 2021– 22](#), 16 September 2021, HC 715 2021-22, Recommendation 9

<sup>19</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales: Government response to the Committee’s First Report of Session 2021– 22](#), 16 September 2021, HC 715 2021-22, Recommendation 11

<sup>20</sup> Cardiff University’s Wales Governance Centre, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales: Written evidence submission to the Welsh Affairs Committee](#), March 2022, p3 [PDF]

## 1.3

## HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail

## HS2

High Speed 2 (HS2) is the UK Government's plan for a high speed-rail project to link major cities in England including London, Birmingham and Manchester.<sup>21</sup> The Government has suggested that HS2 will improve connectivity to Wales, even though HS2 services will not stop there.

As part of the Crewe to Manchester leg, the Government is planning to introduce a junction north of Crewe (the Crewe northern connection) between HS2 and the west coast main line, which is due to reduce journey times to North Wales.<sup>22</sup> The Government has also suggested work on the midlands rail hub, a collection of proposed regional rail improvements designed to maximise the benefits of HS2, could improve connectivity to South Wales by improving links with HS2 services at Birmingham Curzon Street.<sup>23</sup> However, Professor Mark Barry from Cardiff University informed the Welsh Affairs Committee that the DfT's business case for HS2 shows that the project will result in a disbenefit to Wales.<sup>24</sup>

Unlike Scotland and Northern Ireland, Wales doesn't receive [Barnett consequentials](#) (additional funding given to devolved Governments as a consequence of additional spending by the UK Government) from spending on HS2, because national rail infrastructure in England and Wales is reserved to the UK Government.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, HM Treasury has assessed HS2 as a 'national project' which benefits both countries.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Welsh Government does not receive Barnett consequentials directly from spending on HS2, it does receive them indirectly from increases in the DfT's budget that stem from spending on HS2. This amounted to £755 million between 2015-2019.<sup>27</sup> The Welsh Affairs Committee in July 2021 recommended:

HS2 should be reclassified as an England only project. Using the Barnett formula, Wales' funding settlement should be recalculated to apply an additional allocation based on the funding for HS2 in England. This would help to ensure that Welsh rail passengers receive the same advantage from investment in HS2 as those in Scotland and Northern Ireland.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Commons Library Briefing CBP-9313, [High Speed Rail 2 – an overview](#)

<sup>22</sup> PQ [89677](#) [Railways: Wales] answered on 13 December 2021

<sup>23</sup> PQ [89677](#) [Railways: Wales] answered on 13 December 2021

<sup>24</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#), July 2021 HC 438, para 99

<sup>25</sup> Commons Library Briefing CBP-7386, [The Barnett formula and fiscal devolution](#)

<sup>26</sup> National Audit Office, [Investigation into devolved funding](#), March 2019 HC 1990 figure 7

<sup>27</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#), July 2021 HC 438, para 102

<sup>28</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#), July 2021 HC 438, para 106

The Government's official response stated HS2's classification as an England and Wales project is consistent with other UK Government reserved responsibilities. The Government added that it invests in rail infrastructure in Wales and that the Welsh Government has received a "significant uplift in its Barnett-based funding due to UK Government spending on HS2."<sup>29</sup>

## Northern Powerhouse Rail

Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), sometimes referred to unofficially as High Speed 3, is a proposed major rail programme designed to better connect major cities in the North of England. The Government [Integrated Rail Plan \(IRP\) for the North and Midlands](#), published in November 2021, sets out its NPR plans in detail.<sup>30</sup> As with HS2, the Government has confirmed that NPR is an England and Wales project and therefore the Welsh Government will not receive Barnett consequential. In response to a written parliamentary question in March 2023, Parliamentary Secretary (HM Treasury), Baroness Penn, gave the following justification for this arrangement:

The Barnett formula determines changes in devolved administration funding for responsibilities that are devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The UK Government is responsible for heavy rail infrastructure across England and Wales so spends money on this in Wales rather than funding the Welsh Government to do so.

This is consistent with the funding arrangements for all other policy areas reserved in England and Wales as set out in the Statement of Funding Policy. For example, the Welsh Government similarly does not receive Barnett funding in relation to UK Government spending on prisons in England because the UK Government also funds prisons in Wales directly.

The UK Government's existing rail investment in Wales includes upgrading the signalling on the Cambrian Line, developing upgrades for Cardiff Central Station, re-opening Bow Street Station, and the electrification of the Severn Tunnel.<sup>31</sup>

According to a recent article in WalesOnline, the classification of NPR as an England and Wales project means that the Welsh Government will 'lose' £1 billion of Barnett funding. The article notes that Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has also given no guarantee that a Labour Government in Westminster would match this funding.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, [Railway infrastructure in Wales: Government response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2021–22](#), HC 715, September 2022, recommendation 15

<sup>30</sup> Department for Transport, [Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands](#), 18 November 2021

<sup>31</sup> PQ HL6695 [Railways: North of England], answered on 29 March 2023

<sup>32</sup> Wales Online, [People are furious Wales is missing out on another £1bn in rail funding](#), 21 March 2023

## 2

## Press Articles

The following is a selection of news and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

[HS2: Wales should get windfall cash, says Senedd](#)

BBC News

26 April 2023

[Trains in Wales 'will get less reliable in the next five years', transport minister warns](#)

Wales Online

20 April 2023

[Wales misses out on £1bn as UK Government defines a second major English rail project as 'England and Wales'](#)

Wales Online

17 March 2023

[Plaid slams UK Govt and Labour for 'robbing Wales of £5bn' HS2 funding](#)

Nation Cymru

14 March 2023

[UK Government minister defends giving Wales £50m for a train station but not £5bn as a share of HS2](#)

Wales Online

20 January 2023

[Shameful lack of rail funding sees Wales short-changed by £5bn](#)

The Leader

2 February 2022

[MPs call for new Wales rail body to tackle 'slow services and inadequate stations'](#)

ITV Wales

14 July 2021

[Plaid Cymru calls for trans-Wales railway to boost economy](#)

The Guardian

7 December 2019

## 2.1

## Press releases

[Network Rail announces £25m investment to secure future of critical Wales and Borders transport link](#)

Network Rail  
30 September 2021

[Wales' Transport Minister critical of Westminster's package of 'new' investment](#)

Welsh Government  
25 September 2020



# 3 Parliamentary Material

## 3.1 Parliamentary Questions

### Railways: Infrastructure

20 April 2023 | UIN 181113

**Asked by: Rob Roberts**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much has been spent on heavy rail infrastructure in (a) England and (b) Wales in each of the last five years up to and including the 2022-23 financial year.

**Answered by: Huw Merriman**

**Department: Department for Transport**

Between 2018-19 and 2021-22, £46.7bn was invested on High Speed Two infrastructure; Network Rail Operations, Maintenance and Renewals; and the Rail Network Enhancements Portfolio. Figures are sourced from DfT and NR published accounts and Network Rail reporting is consolidated for England and Wales. By its nature, expenditure on the railway in any one particular part of the country is likely to also benefit passengers from outside that immediate area who use that railway.

An annual breakdown is included in the table below:

2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
10.3	10.0	12.0	14.4

\*Figures are in £billions, in nominal prices

\*\* Rail Network Enhancements Portfolio figures do not include 3rd party-funded delivery

\*\*\* 2022-23 outturn data is provisional and excluded

### Rail Infrastructure

19 April 2023 | 731 c234

**Asked by: Kevin Foster**

With meal deal bans, tourism taxes and road charges, it is no surprise that many Welsh residents will be thinking of getting the train for a holiday in Torbay to avoid all of them. What discussions is the Secretary of State having

to ensure that the rail infrastructure between south Wales and the south-west of England will be able to cope with the demand?

**Answered by: David T. C. Davies**

**Department: Wales**

I am sure that Torbay is a wonderful place, but I would still recommend that people come to Wales instead to enjoy its coastline. To do that, they would need to go either by train or by car, so it is unfortunate that the Welsh Labour Government have also decided to stop all road building, whereas the United Kingdom Government are getting on with building roads and railways.

### **Rail Funding: HS2 Barnett Consequential**

**29 Mar 2023 | 730 c1004**

**Asked by: Geraint Davies**

In other words, Wales has only had 1.5% of rail enhancement investment for the UK for 5% of the population, while Scotland gets 8% for its 8% of the population. That is why wages in Wales are something like 73% of the UK average, compared with 92% in Scotland. Will the Minister give an undertaking that Wales should get its fair 5% share of HS2—£5 billion—in the same way that Scotland will get its 8%, or £8 billion? Will he raise that with his colleagues in the Cabinet?

**Answering member: John Lamont**

**Department: Scotland**

The Welsh Government have actually received a significant uplift in their Barnett-based funding due to UK Government spending on HS2. I also point out that the UK Government have committed £2 billion for the period 2019 to 2024—more than double the £900 million invested between 2014 and 2019.

### **Public Services: Government Support**

**1 Mar 2023 | 728 c767**

**Asked by: Christina Rees**

Will the Minister urge his colleagues to accept the Welsh Affairs Committee's recommendation that HS2 be reclassified as an England-only project? Wales will then receive Barnett consequentials estimated at £5 billion, allowing the Welsh Labour Government to continue to expand public transport services, and people in Wales can then receive the same benefits from HS2 as those in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

**Answered by: James Davies**

**Department: Wales**

The hon. Lady knows that HS2 is an England and Wales project and is an important backbone of Britain's rail infrastructure, and the important thing for Wales is to be able to plug in to it and take advantage of it. We also need to see the roads review that the Welsh Government have brought forward scrapped. We need to see investment in our roads.

**Railways: South Wales**

**9 February 2023 | UIN 140090**

**Asked by: Jessica Morden**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2023 to Question 133961 on Railways: South Wales, when funding will be made available for the delivery of the South Wales relief line upgrades.

**Answered by: David T C Davies**

**Department: Wales**

The Government will publish an update to the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline as soon as possible to provide clarity on funding for the delivery of rail upgrades in Wales.

We are fully committed to rail infrastructure improvement in Wales with recent investment totalling £390m. This is in addition to our recent announcement of £2.7m in funding to develop improvements along the South Wales Main Line in order to ease transport congestion along the South Wales corridor.

**Railways: South Wales**

**3 February 2023 | UIN 133961**

**Asked by: Jessica Morden**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on (a) upgrades to the South Wales relief line and (b) the rail-related recommendations in the report by Lord Burns entitled South East Wales Transport Commission: final recommendations, published on 26 November 2020.

**Answered by: David T C Davies**

**Department: Wales**

The Government will publish an update to the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline as soon as possible to provide clarity on funding for the delivery of rail upgrades in Wales.

We are fully committed to rail infrastructure improvement in Wales with recent investment totalling £390m. This is in addition to our recent announcement of £2.7m in funding to develop improvements along the South Wales Main Line in order to ease transport congestion along the South Wales corridor.

### Railway Modernisation

19 Jan 2023 | 726 c511

**Asked by:** Stephen Doughty

I understand the Secretary of State will be in my constituency later today to announce the successful £50 million bid, which I backed alongside Cardiff Council, for improvements to the links between Cardiff Central and Cardiff Bay—a crucial missing link in our rail infrastructure. It is obviously very welcome, notwithstanding the wider criticisms of the levelling-up scheme. One of the positive things about the bid is that it involves close working between the UK Government, the Welsh Government, the council and Transport for Wales. Will he assure me that he will work co-operatively with them to get that scheme up and running as quickly as possible, for the benefit of our local community?

**Answered by:** Mark Harper

**Department:** Department for Transport

I am grateful for the positive tone in which the hon. Gentleman has welcomed that announcement. Wales will receive the highest amount of funding per capita from the levelling-up fund under the announcement that has been made today. I am indeed visiting that scheme later today and I will meet officials from the council. I will of course continue to work closely with them to turn the money into effective transport connectivity as soon as we can

## 3.2

## Committee inquiries

### Railway Infrastructure in Wales

Welsh Affairs Committee

We will look at where responsibility lies for the management of rail infrastructure in Wales, how funding is allocated to rail infrastructure projects across the UK and the share of investment Wales has received since 1994. We will also look at the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the rail network in Wales, and the potential opportunities of the Union Connectivity Review.

## 3.3

# Written statements

### Settlement for the next five-year funding period for railway infrastructure in England and Wales

1 December 2022 | UIN HCWS407

#### **Mark Harper, Secretary of State for Transport**

Maintaining and renewing our country's rail infrastructure is critical to delivering the railway that passengers and freight countries expect, and for supporting economic growth. Every five years the Government is required to set out what we wish to achieve from the operations, maintenance and renewal of the railway. This is done through a document known as a High-Level Output Specification, and the funding available is set out through a Statement of Funds Available.

I am today (December 1) publishing the objectives and funds available for operational railway infrastructure in England and Wales for the next Control Period - Control Period 7. This covers the period April 2024 to March 2029.

The Government fully recognises the critical role rail services played for business, key workers and our society during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the vital role they play in connecting communities and supporting economic growth.

The High-Level Output Specification makes it clear that the Government will press ahead with rail reform, addressing the challenges facing the sector, such as fragmentation and outdated working practices, with a strong continued focus on operations, maintenance and renewal. This strong continued focus is important in supporting a safe, efficient and reliable railway for passengers and freight customers.

Achieving these objectives will be facilitated by significant Government investment as set out in the Statement of Funds Available, with Network Rail spending around £44 billion over the period April 2024 to March 2029. The Government now expects Network Rail to develop detailed plans to deliver on these objectives, working closely with its customers. These will then be subject to strong and effective scrutiny by the Office of Rail and Road, as independent regulator, to develop robust, credible, value for money plans for the next Control Period.

## 4

# Further Reading

### [200 to 1: English Rail Investment V Wales Rail Investment](#)

Professor Mark Barry

(Accessed on 5 May 2023)

### [Enhancing Rail Connectivity in North Wales](#)

James Davies MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales Office

(Accessed on 5 May 2023)

### [OPIN-2023-0339 Welsh rail: undervalued and underfunded by the UK Government](#)

Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru Statement of Opinion

31 March 2023

### [The future of bus and rail](#)

Welsh Parliament/Senedd Research article

13 January 2023

### [Rail FAQs](#)

House of Commons Library Briefing Paper

7 September 2022

### [Northern Powerhouse Rail](#)

House of Commons Library Briefing Paper

25 August 2022

### [High Speed Rail 2 – an overview](#)

House of Commons Library Briefing Paper

16 June 2022

### [Transport funding for Wales and HS2](#)

House of Commons Library Debate Pack

22 October 2021

### ['Double whammy' on Rail funding: £500m lost to Wales since 2011 and a future funding squeeze to come, says new report](#)

Cardiff University

22 March 2021

### [Railway Infrastructure in Wales](#)

Written evidence by Cardiff University to Welsh Affairs Select Committee

March 2021

### [Historical investment in rail infrastructure enhancements](#)

Welsh Government Research Report

19 September 2020

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