



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu
The Enterprise and Learning Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 4 Medi 2007
Tuesday, 4 September 2007**

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg. Mae hon yn fersiwn ddrafft o'r cofnod. Cyhoeddir fersiwn derfynol ymhen pum diwrnod gwaith.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included. This is a draft version of the record. The final version will be published within five working days.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Alun Davies	Llafur Labour
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Mick Bates	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Mike Bagshaw	Cyfarwyddwr Masnachol, Trenau Arriva Cymru Commercial Director, Arriva Trains Wales
Ian Baxter	Uwch Noddwr Masnachol Cynlluniau, Network Rail Senior Commercial Scheme Sponsor, Network Rail
Tony Burton	Prif Ddeisebydd, Deisebwyr dros ailagor gorsaf reilffordd Carno Principal Petitioner, Petitioners for the reopening of Carno railway station
Mike Gallop	Rheolwr Gwella'r Llwybr, Network Rail Route Enhancement Manager, Network Rail
Philip Jackson	Rheolwr Trafnidiaeth a Rheoli Datblygu, Cyngor Sir Powys Transport and Development Control Manager, Powys County Council
Tim James	Pennaeth yr Uned Rheilffyrdd, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Rail Unit, Welsh Assembly Government
Dai Jones	Cadeirydd, Cyngor Cymunedol Carno Chairman, Carno Community Council

Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol
Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance

Dan Collier	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Dr Kathryn Jenkins	Clerc Clerk
Graham Winter	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

Cynhaliwyd y cyfarfod yn y Ganolfan Gyumunedol, Carno
The meeting was held at the Community Centre, Carno

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.34 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.34 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

- [1] **Gareth Jones:** Bore da. Estynnaf groeso cynnes iawn i aelodau'r pwyllgor, i'r tystion ac i'r cyhoedd i'r cyfarfod hanesyddol hwn. Mae'n hanesyddol gan mai dyma'r tro cyntaf i un o bwyllgorau craffu'r Cynulliad gymryd tystiolaeth ar ddeiseb. Mae hynny'n bwysig i'w gofnodi.
- [2] Atgoffaf bawb, gan gynnwys fy hun, i ddiffodd ffonau symudol ac unrhyw ddyfais electronig arall. Atgoffaf Aelodau hefyd na ddylent gyffwrdd â'r meicroffonau—mae popeth yn cael ei wneud drosom, a diolch i'r staff am hynny. Os bydd argyfwng o unrhyw fath—yr ydym yn gobeithio na fydd—dilynwch gyfarwyddyd y tywysyddion, a dylid ymgynnull ar y maes chwarae cyfagos.
- [3] Fel yr ydych eisoes yn gwybod, cynhelir y cyfarfod yn ddwyieithog ac yr wyf yn cymryd bod popeth yn iawn â'r cyfarpar. Bydd clustffonau ar gael ar gyfer y ddarpariaeth honno, a hefyd er mwyn chwyddleisio sain.
- [4] Yr wyf hefyd yn eich atgoffa y darperir cofnod o'r cyfan a ddywedir, felly mae popeth yr ydym yn ei drin a'i drafod yn y cyfarfod yn cael ei gofnodi.
- [5] Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau gan Christine Chapman, David Melding, Janet Ryder, Sandy Mewies, Alun Cairns a Kirsty Williams. Yr ydym yn hynod o falch o groesawu Mick Bates i'r cyfarfod, sy'n dirprwyo ar ran Kirsty. Yr ydym yn falch iawn o'ch gweld, Mick, ac edrychwn ymlaen at eich cyfraniad fel un sy'n gyfarwydd â'r rhan hon o Gymru—byddwn yn dibynnu dipyn ar yr hyn fydd gan Mick i'w ddweud.
- [6] Yr wyf hefyd yn croesawu staff y Cynulliad, ac yn diolch iddynt am yr holl waith a wnaethant i baratoi ar gyfer y cyfarfod hwn, ac i bawb sy'n ymwneud â'r ganolfan fendigedig hon. Diolch i'r unigolion hynny a fu yn paratoi ar ein cyfer.
- Gareth Jones:** Good morning. I extend a very warm welcome to members of the committee, to the witnesses and to the public to this historic meeting. It is historic because this is the first time that an Assembly scrutiny committee has taken evidence on a petition. That is important to note.
- I remind everyone, including myself, to switch off mobile phones and any other electronic device. I also remind Members not to touch the microphones—everything is done for us, thanks to the staff. If there is an emergency of any kind—and we hope that there will not be—you should follow the ushers' instructions, and assemble on the nearby sports field.
- As you already know, the meeting will be held bilingually and I am assuming that everything is okay with the equipment. Headphones will be available for that provision, and also to amplify sound.
- I also remind you that a verbatim record will be produced, so everything that we will discuss in the meeting will be recorded.
- Apologies have been received from Christine Chapman, David Melding, Janet Ryder, Sandy Mewies, Alun Cairns and Kirsty Williams. We are very pleased to welcome Mick Bates to the meeting, who is deputising for Kirsty. We are very pleased to see you, Mick, and we look forward to your contribution as someone who is familiar with this part of Wales—we will rely a great deal on what Mick will have to say.
- I also welcome the Assembly staff who are here, and thank them for all the work that they have done in preparing for this meeting, and to everyone who is involved with this fantastic centre. I thank those individuals who have been making the preparations for us.

9.37 a.m.

Tystiolaeth i'r Pwyllgor ar y Ddeiseb i Ailagor Gorsaf Reilffordd Carno Evidence to the Committee on the Petition to Reopen Carno Railway Station

[7] **Gareth Jones:** Yr ydych wedi gweld yr agenda, ac un eitem arni yw gwranddo ar y deisebwyr, dan arweiniad Mr Tony Burton, yn cyflwyno yr hyn sydd gan y grŵp gweithredu i ailagor gorsaf reilffordd Carno, a fu ar gau ers y 1960au, i'w ddweud. Yr ydym am geisio cadw at yr amserlen, ond yr wyf am ffafrio rhoi ychydig mwy o amser i'r deisebwyr fel bod Mr Tony Burton yn cael cyflwyno'r hyn sydd ganddo i'w ddweud. Bydd hynny'n cymryd rhyw hanner awr ar y mwyaf, a bydd gennym ryw chwarter awr wedyn i ofyn cwestiynau. Yr wyf yn gobeithio gallu cadw at yr amseroedd hynny.

[8] O ran cefndir y cyfarfod hwn, yn sgîl cyfarfod cyntaf y Pwyllgor Deisebau ar 4 Gorffennaf, sef y pwyllgor newydd a sefydlwyd dan weithdrefnau newydd y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol—ac yr ydym yn hynod falch o gael cyhoeddi hynny—ysgrifennodd Cadeirydd y pwyllgor, Val Lloyd AC, at y pwyllgor hwn, sef y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu, yn gofyn iddo ystyried y ddeiseb a gyflwynwyd dros ailagor yr orsaf reilffordd yng Ngharno. Yn dilyn trafodaeth yng nghyfarfod y pwyllgor ar 11 Gorffennaf, barn yr Aelodau oedd bod yr achos a gyflwynwyd yn y ddeiseb yn haeddu sylw gofalus. Felly, penderfynwyd dod i Garno i gymryd tystiolaeth gan y deisebwyr a rhanddeiliaid allweddol eraill, y byddaf yn eu cyflwyno i chi.

[9] Felly, i egluro trefn y cyfarfod, byddwn yn rhoi ychydig mwy o amser i Mr Tony Burton yn y rhan gyntaf i wrando ar ei dystiolaeth. Byddwn wedyn yn cymryd tystiolaeth gan bob corff a gynrychiolir yma. Yr ydym yn gofyn i dystion a chynrychiolwyr wneud cyflwyniadau mor gryno ag y bo modd er mwyn i'r Aelodau allu gofyn cwestiynau. Mae'n bwysig ein bod yn cael y gyd-ddealltwriaeth honno a'r cyfathrebu hwnnw ar rai agweddau pwysig—mae rhai ohonynt yn faterion technegol, ond mae materion pwysig hefyd y dylem fod yn glir yn ein meddyliau yn eu cylch. Dyna'r math o gyfarfod fydd hwn—derbyn tystiolaeth, gwranddo ar y cynrychiolwyr ac

Gareth Jones: You have seen the agenda, one item on which is to listen to the petitioners, under the leadership of Mr Tony Burton, who will present what the action group to reopen Carno railway station, which has been closed since the 1960s, has to say. We will try to keep to time, but I am in favour of giving a little more time to the petitioners so that Mr Tony Burton can tell us what he has to say. That will take about half an hour at the most, and we will have some 15 minutes after that to ask questions. I hope that we can keep to those times.

In terms of the background to this meeting, following the first meeting of the Petitions Committee on 4 July, the new committee set up under the National Assembly's new procedures—and we are very proud to announce that—the committee's Chair, Val Lloyd AM, wrote to this committee, the Enterprise and Learning Committee, asking it to consider the petition presented for reopening Carno's railway station. Following a discussion in the committee meeting on 11 July, Members were of the opinion that the case presented in the petition merited careful consideration. So, we decided to come to Carno to take evidence from the petitioners and other key stakeholders, whom I will introduce to you.

So, to explain how the meeting will be organised, we will give Mr Tony Burton a little more time during the first part so as to hear his evidence. We will then take evidence from each body represented here. We ask the witnesses and representatives to make their presentations as succinct as possible so that Members can ask questions. It is important that we have that mutual understanding and communication on some important aspects—some are technical matters, but there are also important matters that we should be clear about in our minds. That is the type of meeting that we will have—we will take evidence, listen to the presenters and then have the opportunity to question them. We

wedyn cael cyfle i'w holi. Byddwn yn cael egwyl tua 11 a.m., a bydd paned ar gael i bawb. will break at around 11 a.m., and refreshments will be available for everyone.

[10] Yr wyf yn gwahodd Mr Tony Burton, sef y prif ddeisebwr—os y cyf feirio atoch felly—i roi'r cefndir i ni ac i gyfleu'r achos dros ailagor gorsaf reilffordd Carno. I invite Mr Tony Burton, the main petitioner—if I may refer to you as such—to give us the background and to present the case for reopening Carno railway station.

[11] **Mr Burton:** Thank you, Mr Chairman and members of the committee. You asked me to set out the background of how we got to where we are today. We can perhaps do that with the evidence provided by Mr Phil Jackson of Powys County Council, who has provided quite a succinct history of the development of our campaign; I would hope that that was adequate and would allow me to get straight on to the case itself.

[12] I wish to give the chairman of Carno Community Council the opportunity to welcome you all here and to thank you for coming. After he has spoken, I will get into the evidence properly. I present Dai Jones.

[13] **Mr Jones:** Chairman and members of the Enterprise and Learning Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, as chairman of Carno Community Council it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Carno. To Carno Community Council, the day marks the end of the last staging post on a very long journey to try to reopen Carno station. We approved Mr Tony Burton's efforts to campaign for the reopening in the mid-1990s. Some work was done at that time, but it was not until the millennium that the campaign was officially designated as a sub-committee of Carno Community Council. There was a series of committee and public meetings at the time but, due to financial constraints, the campaign came to a temporary standstill until Mr Burton saw what could be a viable opportunity to press on with the campaign.

[14] At present, the added facility of a railway station would throw the community a much-needed lifeline. Make no mistake, Carno is a growing, thriving and vibrant community, but at the moment we are being denied some oxygen that would make the place hum once more. The presence of the railway station would enable the inhabitants to cast their net for employment much wider. With a train available, job opportunities as far afield as Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth and everywhere in between would become realistic choices. This would lead to a strengthening of the housing market, which should, in turn, aid commercial life, and we could once again watch with pleasure new local businesses succeeding with an attendant feel-good factor within the community.

[15] It might be argued that Carno is remote, but we have already proved that it is not. This building is a very successful conference centre, hosting conferences from all over Wales and a few from England. Because of the central location, think what a convenience a train station would be for business delegates to alight from the train and walk here. Many Carno ladies walk with their heads held high because of the success of the catering co-operative at the centre. Just think how much of a difference a little train station would make on a community-wide basis. Thankfully, the Assembly's new petitions initiative has made it possible for the subject to be ventilated here today.

[16] As a community, we hope that your decision will be positive. Thank you—diolch yn fawr.

[17] **Mr Burton:** Thank you, Dai.

[18] Before getting into the technical detail, I am not going to go through all the arguments in favour of the station that are in the written evidence; I will just highlight two. There is the issue of sustainability and the fact that we are, inevitably, moving into a new way of life, which I think is not yet recognised by the authorities or by Government, except that the Welsh Assembly Government has a duty under Section 121 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 to promote sustainable development. That gives me hope that there may be movement on this front. Opening a railway station, obviously, enables people to travel without using their cars. It is often argued that buses are a cheaper means of providing transport, but the fact is that most car owners would not consider using the bus. I know of only one other person in Carno who regularly uses the bus to go to Newtown, to give you an anecdotal example. However, car owners are happy to use the train. If there is to be a switch away from car use, then more railway facilities is the answer.

[19] The second aspect is Carno's present situation, as Dai alluded to. It is a growing community; an estate of 40 houses opened only a few years ago behind the Aleppo Merchant Inn, with many other new houses appearing here and there at odd places, which indicates growth. Also, at the moment, we feel that we are a community that is embattled, because the Laura Ashley factory was closed a couple of years ago, and no replacement economic activity is on the horizon. Now, as you probably know, the school is under threat. So, we feel that regeneration is the name of the game for Carno. It needs something to kick-start that regeneration and, obviously, a station would be ideal as it would encourage developers, in particular, to make use of the old Laura Ashley factory site, which is in danger of becoming moribund, derelict and a blight on the community over time.

[20] I will also add to that the concept of green tourism. Instead of us, as residents, going out, going to work, visiting family or going away on business, this means people coming to Carno, as it is in beautiful countryside and because people want to get away from the cities. A new business, started up in Carno only this year, is a village of tepees in the valley behind where I live. It is called, Cledan Valley Tipis, and I am going to show you a letter from the person who runs that business on the overhead projector. I apologise for not having a PowerPoint presentation, but I had to go on holiday immediately before the hearing and so I decided that I could not quite fit in learning how to produce a PowerPoint presentation—I will probably get this wrong as well. No, it seems to be all right.

[21] I will show a summary of the first half of my presentation. I have spoken about sustainability and, briefly, benefits. I will go on to mention the Wales spatial plan, but not talk about it. I will not say very much, really, until we get into passenger demand forecasts, revenue forecasts and station costs.

9.50 a.m.

[22] The first half of my talk focuses just on the case for the station, trying to leave out the issue of where the passing loop should go, because the two are intimately linked. However, it is helpful to try to separate the two as much as possible. These are the subjects for the first half of my talk.

[23] Reverting to Cledan Valley Tipis, the projector is showing a letter from Hywel, Betty and Beth Jones, written to the Carno station campaign. Addressed 'to whom it may concern', it states that it is an open letter of support for the campaign to reopen Carno railway station from the owner and operators of Cledan Valley Tipis based in Carno, mid Wales. They say that many of their customers are based in large towns and cities, where the ownership of a car is often unnecessary or undesirable. Some of these customers currently get collected at the nearest station, Caersws, meaning extra car journeys for people who often try to avoid this means of transport. The letter continues that, unfortunately, some people decide to spend their time somewhere else with better local transport systems, and they state that this loss of

potential business affects not just themselves but other local enterprises, including the local store, the local pub and the post office—the local pub is, I think, a reference to the club, which is also a place that sells alcohol, but which is not a pub—all of which offer services to their customers. That is, of course, costing the rail network customers, too. They say that many of their customers wish to explore the local area, and that, again, a station at Carno would help these potential customers reach the coast or towns such as Machynlleth, which seem to be very popular destinations with their visitors, again spreading the benefits of their business to others in the general area. They continue that, from their point of view, reopening the station at Carno could only benefit the community. I would just add to that that many people want to go to the Centre for Alternative Technology, which has a good bus connection from Machynlleth station.

[24] The next subject is the Wales spatial plan. I have included in the written evidence those extracts that seem to strongly support the opening of a station to enable people to commute to work in nearby towns. I will not repeat that.

[25] With regard to Powys County Council policy, it is not, I do not think, formally written down anywhere that its policy is to reopen the station, and that is alluded to by some of the other people giving evidence. However, I would report or record a meeting with John Owen, the chief executive of the technical services division, on 16 December 2003, at which he stated that Powys County Council wished to see Carno station reopened because of the recognised social and environmental benefits. That is something that I minuted and sent to him, and I did not receive a reply saying that I got it wrong, so—I am subject to correction from Phil Jackson, who will be speaking later—I think that we should take it that it is county council policy to reopen Carno station.

[26] Passenger demand forecast is the big one, and it is really important because, obviously, we have to have a financial case, and it has to produce a return that is justified. I think that there is a view that we are not interested in that and are just waving our hands and saying, 'We want a station'. Well, in the modern world, we cannot do that, and we have to make a proper case. Passenger demand is driven by catchment-zone populations, depending on the distance of those zones from the station. So, obviously, if I live in Llanbrynmair, I will be less keen to travel to Caersws than if I live in Carno, because it is twice as far away. So, you get a gradual decay of propensity to travel, the further away from a station you are. The other demand driver is train frequency and train speed, relative to other modes. You can then add comfort, and so on.

[27] Before we go any further, I would like to point out that the demand forecast that we have come up with is based on a train service every two hours, not hourly. I know that an hourly service is planned, but we did not think that we could expect an hourly service in a smallish place like Carno. It is important to make that clear. That means that we can actually use the current usage of Caersws station to work it out—assuming that people around Caersws, Llanidloes, Trefeglwys and Carno have similar travel objectives to people around Carno and Llanbrynmair. We can look at populations in the zones around Caersws station and weight those populations according to distance away from the station. That gives us one weighted population using Caersws station. Then, you consider the situation after Carno station is opened, and that subtracts quite a few catchments from Caersws, as people from those catchments suddenly find it easier to go to Carno. So, there is, obviously, an abstraction of traffic from Caersws, which is based now on the reduced weighted population. Similarly for Carno, you look at the catchment for Carno and work out what the weighted population is there. You end up with three numbers for distance-weighted populations: Caersws without Carno, Caersws with Carno, and Carno itself. I hope that that is clear.

[28] This slide is a plot of the weighting factor according to access time. There is an access-time elasticity there of -0.6, which is recommended by the Institute for Transport

Studies at Leeds University. I have seen it in more than one place, and I think that it is for the case of rural areas. It seemed appropriate at the time; I stand to be corrected if I am using the wrong figure. If it is the wrong figure, it does not affect the results very much if you take a slightly different elasticity. Then, I have assumed that, if you are within five minutes of a station, you would use it and would not be influenced by the time, because you know that the train may be a few minutes late and you must have time to park and so on. These are all fixed things that would be there anyway. So, for the first five minutes, I am assuming that the weighting factor is one, and it then decays 0.6 per cent per 1 per cent increase in access time. I hope that that is clear.

[29] You then make an assumption about the average speed—I am assuming that most people drive to the station; I know that a lot of people drive to Caersws station. You then assume an average driving speed, which I have taken at 40 mph. Again, if you assume a slightly different speed, it does not make much difference to the answer. You then get a population weighting factor varying against distance. So, if you are 12 miles away, people are only 40 per cent as likely to use the train. Intuitively, that seems about right, but I do not know.

[30] So, we move on to this dense chart. At the top, I am calculating Carno's population, based on the census and new houses built since then. Section one shows the Caersws catchment, weighted by distance, to give you a weighted population. We have taken Caersws, Llandinam, Trefeglwys, Carno, Llanidloes, Llanidloes without, Llangurig, Llanbrynmair and Glantwymyn—added them all in. So, there is a total catchment population of 10,000 there, but a weighted population of only 6,000. Then, we do the same exercise for the Carno area—Carno, Llanbrynmair, Glantwymyn. We have also added in Cefn Coch, because it is not that far from Carno, over the hill; it becomes nearer to go to Carno than to Welshpool. There is a population of 3,300 and a weighted population of 2,000; it is about a third. Finally, there is the changed Caersws situation.

10.00 a.m.

[31] The new Caersws catchment and Carno catchment weighted populations add up to 7,000, which is an increase of about 900 over what it was before, representing new passengers to the railway. The others are people who were probably travelling to the east, who will, therefore, be travelling 6 miles further on the railway.

[32] I have not put all the figures in my presentation but they are in the written evidence. Those weighted populations are used to scale the existing usage of Caersws, which is about 28,000 single journeys per year. The result of that is that there are about 11,000 single journeys predicted for Carno station, per year—about a third of the Caersws figure. However, unfortunately, 6,500 of those are abstractions from Caersws.

[33] Network Rail has stated that abstraction is contrary to Department for Transport principles. However, I argue that the Department for Transport principles on this are outdated, given the escalating threat of climate change. It is worth reducing the distance that people drive, and I do not think that 6 miles is a negligible distance. The abstraction from Caersws produces important benefits in terms of reduced traffic, reduced noise, reduced accidents, reduced greenhouse gas emissions on the winding road between the two villages—much less straight than the railway line.

[34] I will now talk about Beauly station in some detail. It is a station in Scotland that has a short platform, which cost a very small amount of money in today's terms—under £250,000. In this context, I would note that that station, which was opened five years ago, is only three miles away from the nearest station, at Muir of Ord, and only 10 miles from Inverness itself, where the bulk of the people wanted to get to anyway. So, there will have

been a lot of abstraction from other stations when Beaulieu station opened, but, still, they thought it worth doing.

[35] This slide gives us the predicted traffic through the station, in terms of new journeys and abstracted journeys. I then work out the revenue; for the new journeys, £4.26 per journey, based on the UK mean fare, and for the abstracted journeys, 90p per journey, which is 15p per mile. That gives you revenue of £25,000 per annum.

[36] That is the revenue side of it, but what about the costs? I have a document that I could hold up—Ian, could you hold up the Strategic Rail Authority document? That is it. This is a key document for people aiming to promote the opening of new stations. Thank you, Ian. In this document, published in 2004, table 4.4 gives indicative station costs. It gives a figure of between £2 million and £4 million for a single platform station. I would like you to compare that with the Railtrack figure, produced in 1998, which was provided in a letter to Phil Jackson of Powys County Council, which was £0.5 million including level crossing modifications. So, without wanting to criticise anyone unduly, my conclusion from that is that the SRA, which drew up that document, is not really all that keen on getting new stations open. Why quote such an inflated cost figure for a new station, particularly when we know that the Beaulieu station, which opened before the SRA document came out, only cost £250 million? *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, the figure was £250,000. I was just checking whether you were paying attention.

[37] **Gareth Jones:** Can you try to conclude in about 5 minutes?

[38] **Mr Burton:** Do you want me to conclude the first half of my presentation?

[39] **Gareth Jones:** We are overrunning on time, and we need to make time for questioning.

[40] **Mr Burton:** I am sorry, I did not realise. That is just a picture of Beaulieu station. I will not be able to manage to conclude in the time that I have.

[41] **Gareth Jones:** Take your time, but we want the essential points.

[42] **Mr Burton:** The issue of platform length is an essential point. Section 5(19) of the new station guide says that platform lengths should be 2m longer than the longest train anticipated to stop at the station. That was taken from the document ‘Railway Safety Principles and Guidance—part 2 section B Guidance on Stations’ published by the Health and Safety Executive in 1996, with the web version published in 2005. The foreword to that document says that the document is

[43] ‘intended to give advice and not set an absolute standard’.

[44] That is the key sentence and the reason why, in Beaulieu, it was thought prudent and wise to open a station that was much shorter than the length of the longest train likely to call. Because of the safety implications, they have taken sensible precautions there, which are simply that the train conductor controls one door to open and keeps the others closed, and the train is stopped so that that door is opposite the platform. There are notices to explain that to passengers. An objection has been raised that a wheelchair passenger might be in the wrong two-car unit of a four car train, but train staff who load wheelchairs would know the correct part of the train and they already have to worry about this, because the trains that go on our line must split between Aberystwyth and Pwllheli portions, so it is not new science—it is something that they are already doing.

[45] Although the guidance was not followed at Beaulieu, the overarching objective of the

rail safety principles and guidance of maintaining safety was achieved in a different way, eminently appropriate to the local circumstances. Similar circumstances apply at Carno, in that it is a long distance, rural, single-track route, there is a locality with modest passenger demand and there is commuting potential. So, I put a question to Network Rail that I hope it will be able to answer later, asking it to explain why the short platform at Beaulieu compromises safety? I am also hoping that it can explain why the provision of a short platform is unacceptable in Wales, but acceptable in Scotland. I will conclude by saying that, in this situation, the best is the enemy of the good.

[46] So, as a result of that, we come to a cost estimate for the station. I will not repeat it, because it is all written down. In fact, I will not repeat anything other than to say that we come with a cost benefit ratio of 2.5 based on the assumptions outlined so far. There are also environmental and social benefits under four headings that are over one and a half times the financial benefits. There is one other overhead that I want to show.

10.10 a.m.

[47] Going back to the issue of the short platform, on the screen is a letter from Frank Roach, the rail development manager for the Highland Rail Partnership, to the former Minister for the Economy and Transport, Dr Gibbons. It says that Beaulieu station was opened in 2002 at a capital cost £237,000, with funding from the Highland Council. It states that Beaulieu's 15m platform station has operated successfully, and that it now carries over 35,000 passengers a year. When the train calls, a conductor makes an announcement on the PA system that the rear door of the leading vehicle only will be opened. This procedure is well known locally, and it has operated without incident. Let us hope that we can go with something like that at Carno.

[48] As you know, this is a talk in two halves. I have almost reached the end of the first half, and the last little bit of the first half is on the suitability of the station site. The grade into Carno station is level over 400m. These words showing now say 'level', and they are opposite that little level bit at Carno station. That is the same profile as Network Rail presented in appendix B. I am therefore asking Network Rail to explain why a derogation from the standards for grading would be required if we have level track at Carno. Also, the radius has been raised as an objection, but the radius of curvature of the track is 1,100m, which exceeds the minimum recommended radius of 1,000m given in section 5.32 of the Department for Transport/SRA guide on new stations. I would also point out that the radius at Beaulieu station is less than that minimum, at only 750m—so, Carno seems to be well in there.

[49] Finally, Network Rail has described the gradient between Caersws and Talerddig as being steep. However, the gradient is only 1:155 on average, and 1:149 immediately west of Carno. Compare this with the 1:52 between Llanbryn-mair—where trains used to stop—and Talerddig. In its letter to Phil Jackson in 1998, Railtrack said that there were no insurmountable problems in reopening the station at Carno. That is the end of part 1.

[50] **Gareth Jones:** I would just explain at this juncture, in case members of the public might feel that we are pressurising speakers, that we have a timetable that we must adhere to. I also remind you that we have written evidence before us in some detail, and an excellent case has been presented. You may worry that we might be seeking advice from somewhere with a biased approach, but we would not do that as Members; we have our own research officers and experts in their fields to whom we can turn as well. It is essential today that we, as Members, and you, as members of the public and representatives, provide the key valid points for full discussion in an open, transparent way. That is the key and the essence of what we are trying to achieve.

[51] I will make an exception this time, Tony, but I can only grant you five minutes to sum

as best you can, because we need an open dialogue and questions need to be asked. Do your best.

[52] **Mr Burton:** I will have to miss out important information.

[53] **Gareth Jones:** It may come up during questioning.

[54] **Mr Burton:** Right. The pictures are of Talerddig loop, but we can do without those. We now move to the case for relocating the passing loop at Carno. The existing timetable is unbalanced. First, I had better show you what I had wanted to say in the second half of my presentation. I wanted to talk about the unbalanced existing timetable, how the loop relocation is crucial to Carno station reopening, the question of whether Carno stops would delay trains, the feasibility study into the hourly service, the relative costs of the two options of footbridge and alternative scenario, the engineers' siding, questions for the Welsh Assembly Government and the new petitions system. In my defence, I would say that I think that you will be hearing very much the same story from Network Rail, Arriva Trains Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government. I would hope that I could have parity with them.

[55] This slide is just to show you the difference in speeds between east of Talerddig and west of Talerddig. The bottom line—or nearly bottom line—is that it is 49 mph with the current timetable, east of Talerddig and only 35.7 mph west of Talerddig. Trains currently do the round trip between Aberystwyth and Birmingham in six hours in order to provide a two-hourly service. That has required very fast running east of Talerddig. These works were done in the 1990s, but they did not do any significant work to increase line speed to the west of Talerddig, hence the large disparity in scheduled speeds. The current timetable is far from robust, and small delays easily multiply. It is aggravated by congestion between Wolverhampton and Birmingham. It is often necessary to turn around trains at Wolverhampton so that they can get back on time again. As a passenger at Caersws station, it is my regular experience that trains from Birmingham are five or 10 minutes late. Mr Chairman, it might be interesting, later in the proceedings, to ask for a show of hands from people in the audience on what their experiences are of lateness of trains at Caersws. Eastbound trains tend not to be late at Talerddig, on the other hand, because there is five minutes recovery time, each way, in the timetable between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth. So, even if a train going to Aberystwyth is 10 minutes late at Talerddig, it can still turn around at Aberystwyth and get back on time at Talerddig. So, the familiar is that trains coming from Aberystwyth wait at Talerddig for the late-running Birmingham train.

[56] This is a fundamental plank to our case, that moving the loop to Carno would save five minutes on the round trip from the loop to Birmingham, which is the critical leg of the journey. There is the slack in the timetable now to enable you to do that without any improvement works west of Talerddig. So, in short, Talerddig loop is too far to the west and makes the whole timetable lopsided. Relocating the loop would save five minutes, would give improvements in timekeeping and would mean a reduction in the dreaded Wolverhampton turnarounds.

[57] The next subject is the criticality of loop relocation to the reopening of Carno station. The running time between passing loops needs to be about 28 minutes for an hourly service—that is 30 minutes less a two minute safety margin, because nothing ever runs precisely to time. The current Talerddig-Welshpool running time is 32 minutes, if you look at the timetable. So, there is a four minute deficit. You cannot pass trains at Talerddig and Welshpool and have an hourly service. The solution is to extend the loop from Welshpool 4.3km in this direction, so that the trains would be able to pass much nearer here and get that running time down to 28 minutes. I believe that there is also an improvement to a level crossing in view to increase the speed there.

10.20 a.m.

[58] Network Rail stated at the Cambrian coast railway liaison committee meeting on 31 July that the selection of Talerddig instead of Carno as the loop location would neither make it easier to reopen the station at Carno nor make it more difficult. This is what we cannot understand. Along the same lines, Aeron Hawkins has written to me on behalf of the Deputy First Minister stating that in respect of the selection of the Talerddig loop for enhancement, nothing in this makes the potential future development of a station at Carno less practicable or possible. I can see that Phil is looking at me. I think that it was concluded many moons ago that the only way that Carno station could open without a delay to the service would be to move the loop to Carno. However, we now have an additional problem with the hourly service. Whereas before there was flexibility at each end of the line, you now have to run to Welshpool in 28 minutes. So, I am asking Network Rail to explain how an additional stop can be fitted in between passing loops that are optimally spaced for an hourly service in each direction. Presumably, if the loop locations have been chosen so that the target running time between the loops is 28 minutes, an extra stop costing three minutes just cannot be accommodated. If, on the other hand, an extra stop can be accommodated, Network Rail has not followed its brief, which was to come up with the optimum passing loop pattern for the hourly service without considering any spin-off opportunities to open new stations. It was not asked to open new stations and so it will not have put the three-minute slack in the timetable.

[59] Obviously, stopping a train is inimical to the interests of other passengers who do not want to get out, and Network Rail has stated that, with the loop at Carno, the insertion of an additional station call at Carno instead of having trains passing through the loop at line speed—ladies and gentlemen, you may not understand that this is an imaginative idea that Network Rail has brought forward, which is that the first train that arrives at the passing loop diverts into the loop and the next train can just run straight through, whereas at the moment they both stop; this is a good idea—would compromise all the output benefits realised by the infrastructure enhancement project. We do not agree. The first train to arrive goes into the loop at the side of the straight-through running line, enabling the second line to run through at line speed. Hence, stopping trains at Carno every two hours would, in theory, impose a three-minute delay for a station stop on a quarter of the trains run, because it is an hourly service and half the trains stop at Carno and half of the trains have to stop anyway to pass. So, a quarter of the trains would be subject to a three-minute delay in theory.

[60] If the trains run to time, however, this would not matter, because the running time between Dyfi junction and the passing point at Welshpool has to be the same for both trains—in both directions, that is—for a regular-interval, hourly service. So, if there is time to stop one, there is time to stop the other if the trains are running to time, but we all know that they are not running to time, so there is a benefit to having the train running through and not stopping. However, in practice, the westbound train would be likely to arrive late at Carno for the reasons that we have already discussed. These trains would then be subject to an additional three minutes delay if they stopped at the station, but that could be recouped by omitting the Dyfi stop for those trains that were scheduled to stop at Carno. The usage of Dyfi junction is about 1,000 passengers a year, so Carno would trump Dyfi junction in that regard and people there would still have a train every two hours anyway, which is what they have at the moment. I have called this section, ‘Delay to the second train stopping at Carno—real or imagined?’.

[61] I will move on now to the Network Rail feasibility study into the hourly service. These are slides that Ian Baxter used in a presentation given in Porthmadog on 24 November about the guide to railway investment projects 3 option selection study, looking at the various passing loop patterns and which would be the best. I will not read these out in order to save time. That slide just shows that it had around five or six different passing loop options, which it then subjected to close scrutiny. Some were fairly easy to rule out; others were not so easy

to rule out. So, it concluded that four sub-options were worthy of detailed consideration, namely Dyfi junction, Talerddig and Welshpool, and Dyfi junction, Carno and Welshpool with a shorter extended loop. There were two other options involving moving the Dyfi loop, but that was left to the Assembly Government to decide on; it is not of interest to us here. That slide shows you the plan with the Talerddig loop. You will notice the reference to Weig Lane—I believe that that is a level crossing near Caersws, through which the line speed needs to be increased in order to gain a bit of time. I should correct myself—it is 4.2 km; I sometimes said 4.3 km. I have made the mistake of saying 4.3 km all the way through. This is the Carno variant, and it is only a 2.3 km loop. It is shorter because you have more time. The next slide shows what needs to be done: relay, recant and improve turnout speed; or provide a new loop at Carno. This slide is diagrammatic, showing the different degrees of extension of the Welshpool loop. So, this is towards us—this is the degree of extension, namely the 4.2 km if you have the loop at Talerddig, and this is the alternative if you have the loop at Carno.

[62] So, we then come to the cost comparison, and this is the fundamental comparison in terms of 1.1 and 1.2, Talerddig and Carno. There is a £1 million saving with Talerddig, but not if you include the risk cost. If you add those costs, namely the possible overspend, I suppose that there is a difference of only £0.1 million. However, the maintenance cost is missing. If you have an extra 2 km of track at Welshpool, you will have an annual maintenance cost, which, discounted, is also a significant sum of money—it may be £1 million. That basically means that there is very little to choose between the two options in financial terms. I have not shown all the Network Rail slides, you will be glad to hear, but I have just shown the main ones. I want to highlight the third point, namely that the Talerddig/Carno and Welshpool loop location can be included within the GRIP 4 process. In other words, there appears to have been an intention to continue looking at Carno in the work that carried on from December until now, but it needed a decision on Dyfi North from the Welsh Assembly Government. So, presumably that was made.

[63] I am now three quarters of the way through—

[64] **Gareth Jones:** You now have a minute left, Tony, in order to be fair to everyone here. We are running way beyond our allotted time. Just sum up as best you can and then we will have to move on.

[65] **Mr Burton:** I am afraid that the kernel of what I have to say is in these last pages.

[66] **Gareth Jones:** I will look to fellow AMs for guidance.

[67] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I would hate to have come here and for the principal petitioner to feel that he has not got his message across.

[68] **Mr Burton:** I am three quarters of the way though.

[69] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, but I accept your point, Chair, that we have to be fair to the other presenters and we have certain limits. However, my initial view is that if someone is not far away from the end of their presentation, then I would rather, in terms of fairness, ensure that we have heard the key points.

[70] **Gareth Jones:** Let us be quite clear about this then. The next presenter is Mr Phil Jackson and I believe that he has prepared a brief and will have about five minutes.

[71] **Mr Jackson:** I have prepared a brief.

10.30 a.m.

[72] **Gareth Jones:** If that is the case, Mr Burton, I can allow you to continue until 10.40 a.m., and I will then invite Mr Jackson to give his five-minute presentation, before we have 15 minutes of questions. Network Rail will be invited to contribute after the break. I see that no-one objects to that. This is all about time keeping now, Mr Burton, and you have until 10.40 a.m..

[73] **Mr Burton:** Thank you.

[74] Despite what you have just seen and despite the local rail passengers' group writing to the stakeholder consultation held by the Welsh Assembly Government, arguing that there was a need to marry up the infrastructure provided for the new service with centres of passenger demand, so that you do not have the present phenomenon of trains stopping in open countryside with nobody being able to use them, Carno was excluded from the GRIP 4 study. That letter ended by saying that the group urged that the remit of the feasibility study be amended in favour of selecting passing places at either existing stations or locations where there is a clear need for a new station. Gareth Marston never had a reply to that and, given that it was a stakeholder consultation, it surprises me that there was not at least some dialogue or, at the very least, an acknowledgement. That letter, which was about common sense really, was completely ignored.

[75] We did not learn that Carno was left out of the GRIP 4 study until March and, since then, we have been trying to find out why it was excluded as Network Rail had evidently intended that it should be included. No explanation has been forthcoming.

[76] On the relative costs of the Talerddig and Carno options, this slide shows the bottom lines. I have broken down the two alternatives into the different cost elements and I have invited Network Rail to tell us what the breakdown is. I would be interested to know how the cost per kilometre of this extra 2 km of loop compares with the £2.5 million per kilometre, including signalling cost, estimated for loop extensions on the Salisbury-Exeter line in a study commissioned by the South West of England Regional Development Agency into the introduction of an hourly service there. I have a web address for that if anyone needs it. Finally, I would like to know what the estimated annual extra-maintenance cost of this 2 km of extra track is.

[77] Moving on to the footbridge question, I will show you a slide of the arrangement that we envisage for the station. There are two platforms and a level crossing. I would have thought that if people are allowed to use the level crossing at the moment to get from one side to the other, they would also be allowed to do that to get to the station platforms, but I am told that that is not so, and I have tabled a number of questions about the safety guidance and so on, and Kathryn Jenkins has received a copy of those.

[78] **Dr Jenkins:** They have been distributed to Members.

[79] **Mr Burton:** Let us hope that we can have those set out when Ian comes back. I will not waste time on that now; I am trying to save time.

[80] If this footbridge really is essential in this location, there is an alternative scenario, which I am afraid I have not put in my written evidence, so this point is new. Remember that the two sides of the loop are going to be reversible. The idea is that the first train goes in there and the second train goes in there. In order to provide a two-hourly service to Carno without the need for a footbridge, why not just provide one platform on this side of the loop? So, the trains on the odd hours would divert into the platform going in one way and the trains on the even hours—this is with an hourly service—would divert into the platform going the other way. In that way, you save a platform, reduce the costs of the project dramatically and still provide the train service every two hours, which is what we are aiming for. So, if the

footbridge turns out to be essential—although I cannot see who would use it—I would propose that alternative scenario.

[81] Network Rail has stated that one of the problems with Carno—and I am surprised that this was not mentioned earlier—is the need for the engineer siding, there being one currently at Talerddig. This is the plan of Carno before the trackwork was stripped out, and I have added the road by the Laura Ashley factory, which could provide access to this former siding, which could be the new engineer siding if there was a wish to dispose of the Talerddig facility entirely; although, why not keep the Talerddig facility? It does not have to be maintained to the Rolls Royce standard of the running lines, after all.

[82] I have three questions for the Welsh Assembly Government: first, why was the stakeholder consultation not followed through with a proper dialogue on the representations from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers Association? Secondly, on the GRIP 3 'next steps' slide, which stated that Carno and Talerddig could be considered together, why was it decided not to pursue that in GRIP 4 as proposed by Network Rail? Although Network Rail originally gave an undertaking to provide a written answer to this question, it recently stated that our group should seek the answer from the Welsh Assembly Government, which was the client for the feasibility study. Finally, on the GRIP 3 report, we have asked to see a copy of this report for many months, and Mick Bates' office knows this because I keep pestering it about it. We were told that it would be out in a fortnight, but a fortnight elapses and it is the same story.

[83] I am going to finish before your deadline.

[84] **Gareth Jones:** Well done. [*Laughter.*]

[85] **Mr Burton:** I have some comments on the new petition system, of which I am proud to be one of the first petition presenters invited to speak, not to the Petitions Committee, but to your committee, which is better still in a way, because it is best to go to the heart of the matter. We do not know whether or not the Deputy First Minister is prepared to review his decision to retain the passing loop at Talerddig, which we believe precludes the reopening of Carno station. If the Deputy First Minister is not prepared to carry out such a review, the welcome avenue for influencing Assembly decisions provided by the new petition system will be lost, with the risk that the petition system itself is brought into disrepute.

[86] The petition system has been newly instituted and holds great promise for reconnecting the electorate with the Assembly. Our petition is one of the first to be dealt with under the new procedures, but there is a risk that these procedures will be pre-empted. If that were to happen, what message would that send out to an electorate that already, by its low turnouts, undervalues its National Assembly? That is all I would like to say.

[87] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you, Mr Burton.

[88] Yr wyf yn diolch i Mr Tony Burton am y cyflwyniad hwnnw. Yr wyf yn ymddiheuro os ydym wedi rhoi gormod o bwysau arnoch, ond mae'n anodd cadw at yr agenda pan fod mater pwysig i'w drafod a dyna pam yr ydym wedi ymestyn yr amser. Yr ydych wedi codi pwynt pwysig, ac yr wyf yn siŵr y gallaf siarad ar ran fy nghyd-Aelodau a'r staff sydd yma yn ein gwasanaethu, cyn belled ag y mae'r pwynt olaf yn y cwestiwn ar weithdrefnau newydd y

I thank Mr Tony Burton for that presentation. I apologise if we have put too much pressure on you, but it is difficult to keep to the agenda when there is an important matter to be discussed, and that is why we have extended the time. You have raised an important point, and I am sure that I speak on behalf of my fellow Members and the staff who are here to assist us, so far as the last point is concerned with regard to the National Assembly's new procedures. We have come

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol. Yr ydym yma â meddwl agored. Yr wyf am ichi wybod hynny. Pa bynnag datganiadau sydd wedi'u gwneud, yr oedd ein penderfyniad ni i wrando ar y dystiolaeth a'r achos yn un diffuant, ac mae'n ddiffuant o hyd ac yn gwbl agored a diduedd. Yr ydym yma i wasanaethu'n cymunedau gorau y gallwn ni; dyna'r broses ddemocrataidd. Gwnawn ein gorau i gynnal y broses honno mewn ffordd deg a chwbl dryloyw. Mae materion pwysig i'w trafod, ac yr wyf am eich sicrhau nad ydym yma â meddyliau caeedig. Yr ydym yma i wrando, pwysu a mesur, a gwneud argymhellion.

[89] Wedi dweud yr ychydig eiriau hynny, diolchaf ichi am eich brwdfrydedd ac am y dull proffesiynol yr ydych wedi mynd ati i baratoi'r achos pwysig hwn. Hefyd, mae wedi bod yn addysgiadol inni, ac yn hanesyddol cyn belled ag y mae'r cyfarfod ei hun yn y cwestiwn.

[90] Fe'i gadawaf yn y fan honno ar hyn o bryd a gwahodd Mr Philip Jackson, rheolwr trafniadaeth a rheoli datblygu Cyngor Sir Powys, i siarad am ryw bum munud, a wedyn, efallai, gyfle i'r Aelodau ymateb mewn sesiwn agored o gwestiynau naill ai atoch chi neu at Mr Burton.

[91] **Mr Jackson:** Thank you very much, Chair and members of the committee. I shall try very hard to keep to your deadline.

[92] I have prepared a note in evidence, as you will have seen. You will also notice that it has not delved into the technical discussion, partly because I was assured that that would be fully dealt with by other presenters, and also because I quite honestly do not feel qualified in railway engineering terms to enter into too much detail. I am very happy, however, that I can provide some context in which the committee can consider the petition that has been made to it.

[93] I will just give you a summary of the note, and perhaps raise one or two additional points. The main idea of the note that has been put in is to give the full background to the county council's support for the Carno community and, as it later developed, the station action group, over 11 years in their efforts to try to establish the case for reopening the station. It is important to point out that, since 2003, there has been similar support from Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru—TraCC, the mid Wales consortium—which represents the three authorities of mid Wales. It is also true that there have been a number of major changes to the rail industry and to the circumstances surrounding the Cambrian railway, some of which have been extremely welcome, not least the decision to bring along the ERTMS European funding and the Assembly Government's own announcement of the additional infrastructure investment with Network Rail of £13 million, which will at least make the hourly service operation feasible, although we know that we have to make another case to

here with open minds. I want you to know that. Whatever statements may have been made, our decision to hear the evidence and the case was made sincerely, and it remains so and is completely open and unbiased. We are here to serve our communities as best we can; that is the democratic process. We will do our best to exercise that process fairly and in a completely transparent manner. There are important matters to discuss, and I want to assure you that we have not come here with closed minds. Our role here in this regard is to listen, evaluate, and make recommendations.

Having said those few short words, I thank you for your enthusiasm and for the professional manner in which you have gone about preparing this important case. Also, it has been educational for us, as well as a historic occasion as far as the meeting itself is concerned.

I will leave the matter at that for now and invite Mr Philip Jackson, the transport and development control manager for Powys County Council, to speak for some five minutes, to be followed, perhaps, by an opportunity for the Members to respond in an open session of questions either to you or to Mr Burton.

actually establish that service in due course. We are heartened by the fact that the recent investment at the depot in Machynlleth and the new jobs that that brings and, indeed, last night's announcement of a service between Wrexham and Marylebone station all add to the fact that there is a great momentum behind the development of railway services.

[94] To pick up on the point that, perhaps, Mr Burton raised about county council policy, it is true that there has not been a specific policy mentioning the reopening or reinstatement of the station at Carno, but the council has long held the policy of developing the rail network in whatever ways it can—obviously, in supporting access to and from services for its residents, outgoing, and for tourists incoming. It does that through a number of line liaison groups and, as I say, latterly through the TraCC consortium as well.

10.40 a.m.

[95] The synopsis of events that I provided within the evidence speaks mainly for itself. The points that it raises are that there have been at least three phases of activity, which I try to identify, in making the case for a station at Carno. At each turn, I suppose, there have been reasons—perhaps outside the control of everyone—that have led to frustrating the progression of these to their natural conclusion. That hoped-for conclusion was a full feasibility study into the ins and outs of station provision. Those events—such as privatisation, the demise of Railtrack and so on—were major and significant in terms of continuity, not only of dialogue but also of the reasoning that we would get back in relation to our inquiries about the likely costs of providing either improved infrastructure or improved services. I think that that is fairly well laid out for you.

[96] The conclusion that we presented on behalf of the council is that we will continue to support the aspirations of the local community, subject only to its not compromising the introduction of the long-awaited hourly service and the continued growth in traffic. It is worth noting—it may have been mentioned by others—that the Cambrian Line has seen significant and unique growth in passenger numbers, year on year, for several years. As we come to a conclusion from that, there are two main avenues of thought that have remained a bone of contention. One of those is that the level of use cannot justify the station, and, the second argument, irrespective of that, is that the introduction of a station would introduce what I have called in the evidence unacceptable operational difficulties; hence, the petitioners' proposals either show reduced costs or show that the level of local benefit is greater than had previously been thought.

[97] I would, perhaps, conclude by saying that there are two likely stages in your considerations. One is the discussion, as has been outlined at some length and in great detail, about the question of whether Talerddig or Carno is the proper position for a loop, and secondly, the question of Carno reopening or being reinstated as a railway station. The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, although we have heard arguments—from both sides—that they may be helpful one way or the other. Of course, in the same way that our hourly service is not a foregone conclusion on this line, even after we have the infrastructure that makes it possible, the introduction of a station at Carno is not a foregone conclusion even if the loop is put back into Carno. There will be a second stage, under the SRA guidelines, presumably, as has been mentioned, where the case for that would have to be made.

[98] I would conclude by saying that if Members feel that there is any doubt as to the conclusion of this committee, while we would not want to see—and it is perhaps not possible to expect—any delay to the ERTMS investment programme, it may well be that a concurrent small review of the case for Carno station could be considered as an option by Members. I am happy to provide additional information on any of the topics that I am able to that have been mentioned—bus services, road accident levels, or anything on the information that we have provided in this paper.

[99] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr. Yr **Gareth Jones:** Thank you. I will now turn to wyf am droi yn awr at Aelodau am Members for questions. I understand that Jeff gwestiynau. Deallaf fod Jeff Cuthbert am Cuthbert will ask the first question. ofyn y cwestiwn cyntaf.

[100] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I thank both presenters, particularly Tony, for the clear level of detail that they went into, which I found very helpful. I understand how difficult it is to get across the key points of a matter that is felt as passionately about as this, in a relatively short period of time. Nevertheless, you have done very well. I have some questions and please do not think that the tone of them suggests what my eventual view may be, as that is not necessarily the case.

[101] I do not want to question the figures that you have put down, as I do not feel able to do that, but I have some broader issues to raise. One is about the level of use and the comparison with the existing Caersws station. In the written submission, you say that although there is a station six miles away at Caersws, the inconvenience of getting there is a considerable disincentive, yet, in your oral presentation, you said that a lot of people drive to Caersws station. So I would like clarification about that. I will ask all my questions and get them out of the way. That will be easier, I think.

[102] One of the other big issues, of course, is that of cost. You have alluded to—and I am sure that Network Rail will explain this more fully when its representatives give their presentation—why there is such a difference between your assessment of the station cost, which is £346,000, and that of Network Rail, which is £5 million. There is no middle ground there. Those are massively different costs. In its written statement, Network Rail refers to compliance with current regulations and I would want to feel sure that, in calculating your cost, you have included, for example, the full disablement access that would be required now and issues such as lighting. Why do you think there is such a massive difference between your estimate of the cost and that of Network Rail?

[103] The next question is to Mr Jackson. During his presentation, Tony said that the group is now talking more in terms of a two-hour service rather than an hourly service. You referred—and it is written here in your submission—to an hourly service. Do you feel that that is a fundamental difference between you and the group in terms of its aspirations?

[104] Finally, you said, in your oral presentation, that the county council continues to support the community's aspirations. It is not clear to me whether or not you support the case that the petitioners are putting forward. Do you have reservations about the case before us? If so, what are they?

[105] **Gareth Jones:** I will turn to Mr Burton first to answer the questions pertaining to Caersws and the costs.

[106] **Mr Burton:** It is inconvenient to drive to Caersws. Some people are prepared to do it; other people do not like to leave their cars in unfamiliar territory, in a rough car park and do not want to do one part of the journey and then another. So, the only way of delving into that, I felt, was to use a fairly dispassionate method, which is just looking at distances, the access time and the elasticity concept, which seems to be fairly well accepted in the industry, as a way of coming up with an idea of how many new passengers you would get at Carno station, namely those people who do not like driving to Caersws, who do not want to leave their car in a strange car park or whatever and those people, like me, who already use the station at Caersws regularly and who would find it much better not to have to drive to there. So, that is why I have gone into the detailed exercise of estimating demand and abstraction. I hope that that answers the first question.

[107] On station costs, I think that I was trying to suggest—and some people will say that I was being mischievous—that this document, ‘New Stations: A Guide for Promoters’, is intended to put people like me and communities like ours off asking for a new station, as it sets pretty high hurdles over which you have to jump.

10.50 a.m.

[108] There is a paragraph about sustainability, but I do not think that its heart is in it. You can judge the animal by its performance since 1997, when Labour came into power, with its rhetoric about the transport White Paper—getting people out of their cars and onto public transport. During all of that time, no office in the Government looked at our rail network, evaluating where freight lines should be reopened, prioritising the ones that had the best, most cost-effective case, looking at the huge town of Kennilworth, between Coventry and Leamington Spa, through which a railway runs, where there are frequent services, but no station. No-one in Whitehall was saying, ‘We have some win-win situations here, so let us exploit them’. No, this document tells me, ‘Go away’.

[109] In fairness to Railtrack, it did not quote £2 million, £3 million, £4 million or £5 million for a station when the question was asked in 1998; it said £0.5 million. It would have been thinking in terms of a four-platform station because, even back then, there was guidance that the station platform should be as long as the longest train likely to call. So, they would have been thinking of a four-carriage long platform, which is, say, 100m long. If we could get a four-carriage long platform for £0.5 million, one might say that you could make a case for it and, financially, it would wash its face here. However, now we are being told, in the SRA document, that a single platform will cost £2 million to £4 million; I hate to think what it says about a double platform. As you said, Network Rail has given a figure of £5 million for a double platform. It is so high because both platforms would be long enough for four carriages and there would be a footbridge, which would not only have steps, but would also have long ramps for disabled access, because Network Rail believes that it is not satisfactory for people to walk over level crossings to get to a platform. Leaving aside the fact that no-one will bother to go up this footbridge if they can walk across the level crossing, that may be the reason for such a cost difference.

[110] I should explain that we are thinking of a platform that is 10m long, with ramps of 2.5m at each end.

[111] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I asked about disabled access and lighting.

[112] **Mr Burton:** The cost estimate that I came up with is extrapolated from the Beaulieu cost estimate, which included disabled access and lighting as well as a car park and an access road. In my written evidence, I say how I arrive at the £346,000 and that also allows for inflation since 2002. So, it is taking a station that already has those facilities and doubling the platform cost, because there are two platforms, and subtracting the access-road cost, because there is no access road. That is how it was arrived at.

[113] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you. Mr Jackson, there are two questions for you.

[114] **Mr Jackson:** Your first point was on the Carno station action group’s discussions about the two-hourly service and I had mentioned on behalf of the authority and, I must say others, an hourly service. I do not think that there is any conflict there. Essentially, I think that almost everyone is hoping for the introduction of an hourly service. The infrastructure costs will now be met by the Assembly to make it physically possible, and, as I said, we will then have to make a case for it to be provided on an operational basis. However, the group is anticipating that it may be possible for alternate trains to serve Carno, in which case they

would get a two-hourly service from the hourly service that travels along the main line, which would therefore reduce delays to the operation of the train. That is why that point has arisen.

[115] As to the council's continued support for the local aspirations and whether or not we have any reservations about the petitioners' case, we share this committee's views on the disparity in the costings, in some ways, and we would like to see that issue resolved. Over the decade or so that we have been discussing this issue with the rail industry and the residents, we have offered to provide funding, in partnership with other interested parties, to do just that and to conduct feasibility studies, but for a variety of reasons that has not happened. It would be useful to see that case tested within the new circumstances that currently prevail, not least because of the point raised in the final paragraph of the submission, that the current level of investment going into this railway line is about £70 million, which is unprecedented and highly unlikely to be repeated for a very long time, if ever. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that, if the issue is not looked at now, it will not be looked at for a considerable time, and an opportunity may well be missed to give it the full consideration that it merits.

[116] **Alun Davies:** You sound lukewarm, Mr Jackson. You say in your written submission that Powys County Council has supported the action group for a period of 11 years in its intention to establish a case. It sounds as if you are saying that it still has not been established. I would be interested if you would come back on that. What vision does Powys County Council have for this line? I represent Mid and West Wales so I represent this line from the border with England down to Aberystwyth and across and up the Meirionethshire coast to Pwllheli. It is extraordinarily important, in social and economic terms, to this part of Wales. I would be interested to hear what your views are on how it will develop in the future. Arriva Trains seems to be saying that it is an inter-urban service that drains, if you like, mid and north Wales through to Wolverhampton and Birmingham and takes people the other way in terms of tourism. Do you also see it developing as a commuter service serving intermediate destinations along the line?

[117] I would be interested in understanding how Powys County Council wants to see the railway develop, because, as you say, the £70 million investment is very impressive and it is not so long ago that I remember going to various meetings in Aberystwyth, trying to save the railway line in the first place. So, we have certainly moved on in the last few years and this investment is something that all of us across the whole of the line welcome greatly, but it would be interesting to see how Powys County Council wants to take that forward.

[118] Tony, I enjoyed your presentation and I think that you made a very strong case for reopening the station in Carno. This matter falls, possibly, into three different issues. There is a technical issue, and Network Rail, in its submission, mentions the technical difficulties in establishing a passing loop in Carno. I would be interested to know what your views are on this issue—Network Rail mentions the gradient and other things. I would like you to come back on that and explain how you see the technical feasibility of it.

[119] Jeff has already raised the issue of the cost of the station. When we take evidence at these committees, there is often a coincidence of evidence—people say the same or similar things—but we have here two entirely different costs. We may want to take that up with Network Rail when we listen to its evidence.

[120] I have great concerns about the impact on services, in terms of how an additional stop in Carno would impact on services to Aberystwyth and across to Pwllheli. In terms of the wider use of the line, that is important for all of us.

[121] The final issue that I will raise is that of the demand for services in terms of the numbers of people. There are communities along the line with greater numbers and greater population centres that are not served by rail—I am thinking in particular of the communities

to the north of Aberystwyth. Do you realistically see a demand for services and this railway developing as something that will enable people in Montgomeryshire, shall we say, to communicate with each other rather than go from one end to the other of the line in the future?

[122] **Gareth Jones:** Mr Jackson, those were very long questions, but I appeal for brief answers.

[123] **Mr Jackson:** I will do my best.

[124] My apologies if I sound lukewarm. I am perhaps unconvinced either way in my personal view, but the council has not been lukewarm in its support: it has been positive. If you like, the fact that a case has not yet been established is really in the formal sense, in that it has not gone right through the process to the point at which Network Rail—or Railtrack as it would have been, had we been able to get to that company before its demise—has been able to give a full formal response to it.

[125] The vision of the council and of TraCC for all lines in mid Wales is for continued development. As you said, it was not too long ago that we were fighting to ensure retention, and we are now in the position where we have an embarrassment, almost, of patronage and we are having to have trains, again with the Assembly's assistance, strengthened. Of course, anything that happens to this line, as you will appreciate, strengthens the coast links as well, as they are interdependent to some extent.

[126] In terms of the two-way traffic and the development of commuting and so on, it is two-way traffic; it will work both ways. We see Shrewsbury as being a hub for the future—not just the midlands—hence, too, the investment that is going into reopening platform 3 at Shrewsbury to make it easier for mid Wales services to get in and out of what is a very congested centre. It is a common feature that the more you co-ordinate transport service, the more congestion you end up with for your pains, and that becomes another problem that you then have to resolve.

[127] As I said, it is a struggle that we want to take up to increase two-way traffic, so that commuting can happen in both directions, and we would look to this line to support the growth of Aberystwyth, for instance, as a regional centre, and the move in staff that has taken place there. We would want people to travel by rail rather than by other means. With regard to tourism, of course, it is important that, if we can persuade people either to come without their cars in the first place or to come in their cars and then leave them, there is a rail alternative for them to travel around this part of mid Wales. I hope that that answers your questions.

[128] **Mr Burton:** The first question was about Network Rail's perception of technical difficulties with opening the station at Carno. We can break that down into two. We know that it looked in detail at having a loop at Carno in the GRIP 3 phase of its study, and selected it as one of two preferred options. That means that, although there may be technical difficulties with the 1.1 km radius and the gradient on to Talerddig, they are not showstoppers, or it would not have shortlisted the Carno option. The only difference with a station is that, given that the trains would stop on the loop anyway, passengers could get on and off at the station. Given that there was a station at Carno in the past, I find it difficult to see any real technical difficulty in having a station there.

[129] With regard to the costs, although there is a range of views on the costs of a defined piece of railway structure—a station or whatever—there is also a great difference in the kinds of station being discussed. There is the strictly-by-the-book station that follows all the rules and ticks all the boxes, in which there is no imagination, or there is the route that they took in Scotland, where they realised that the demand did not warrant the expenditure on a large, all-

singing, all-dancing station. So, we are talking about different objects, and that explains the cost difference in large measure, but not all of it. Within that, there will still be, for any one station design, uncertainty.

11.10 a.m.

[130] Then there was the question of other stations on the line. I would point out, with regard to the hourly service, that reopening the station at Carno would not prejudice the reopening of the station at Bow Street. The reason for that is that, with the hourly service, you will have a scissors effect—trains will cross at predetermined locations, and they will have to spend 28 minutes getting from one loop to the next. In other words, what happens on this part of the line does not affect how long it takes to get from Dyfi junction to Aberystwyth. If you want, if Bow Street needs to be opened and it is not thought that there is time for that, there is plenty of scope for increasing the speed of the line, because no real work has been done on that section of line yet. There is quite a lot of straight track, I believe, between Dyfi junction and Aberystwyth.

[131] **Gareth Jones:** Fine. To conclude this first session, there will be a brief question from Mick Bates.

[132] **Mick Bates:** I too extend my thanks not only to the presenters, but to Dai Jones for his welcome here to Carno, and to the local community council for its vision in pursuing the reopening of Carno station; let us hope that there will be a positive conclusion.

[133] I noted that you said in your presentation, Philip, that the recent announcement by the Minister and the reopening of Carno station were not mutually exclusive. Can you explain how on earth we could reopen Carno station if the Minister's announcement about having the loop at Talerddig is the end of the story?

[134] **Mr Jackson:** Was that in my evidence?

[135] **Mick Bates:** Yes.

[136] **Mr Jackson:** I did say it. I do not think that they are mutually exclusive in a practical sense. I am taking that from what I have learnt and read about this over the last few months. It is quite possible to go ahead with Talerdding and to construct a loop and/or station at Carno too. Whether that translates into something that is affordable, either in terms of operational timing or cost, is one of the issues that are still undecided. We have heard both sides of that today so far, and we will hear a lot more about it. Far be it from me to query the timing of the Minister's decision.

[137] **Alun Davies:** I would be interested, Tony, in your view on this.

[138] **Mick Bates:** I was about to ask for that.

[139] **Alun Davies:** Sorry. Many of us were quite disappointed to hear that statement being made on 8 August, given that we are meeting here on 4 September.

[140] **Gareth Jones:** Mick, I will allow you to come back on that. As Chair, it is not for me to express disappointment, but to reaffirm what I said initially. That statement has been made, and we are here discussing a vital component in the development of this community. There may be a cost involved, but that is for future reference, whatever the outcome of the statement made by the Deputy First Minister. Mick, do you want to come back in?

[141] **Mick Bates:** Only to put the same question about mutual exclusivity to Tony. What

are your views, Tony, on the Minister's announcement and the view that it may be possible to construct a loop in Carno and to reopen the station?

[142] **Mr Burton:** It is possible, but it is prohibitively expensive to spend the money on improving the loop at Talerddig and then to come back, a few years later, and build another loop at Carno. I do not think that the rail industry is—the essential thing is that Carno station can be opened on the back of the hourly service upgrade because infrastructure improvements are needed, and that provides the opportunity for change. If we set the wrong changes in stone now, the opportunity is lost. One caveat to what I say is that you could stop alternate trains at Carno and the other trains at Caersws, and that would, basically, be saying to the people of Caersws that they would not get an hourly service. I do not know that that is supportable, which is why we come back to the conclusion that the loop needs to be at Carno.

[143] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch i chi i gyd. Yr ydym am gael egwyl fach yn awr, ychydig yn hwyr efallai. Byddwn yn ailymgynnull am 11.30 a.m.. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you all. We will take a short break now, a little late perhaps. We will reconvene at 11.30 a.m..

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11.15 a.m. a 11.35 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 11.15 a.m. and 11.35 a.m.*

[144] **Gareth Jones:** Croeso nôl.

Gareth Jones: Welcome back.

[145] Fel y gwelwch, mae'r amserlen wedi newid yn sylweddol erbyn hyn, ond yn awr mae gennym gyflwyniad hollbwysig i'r achos hwn gan Network Rail. Felly, hoffwn estyn croeso cynnes i'r ddau gynrychiolydd sydd yma, sef Mike Gallop, rheolwr gwella'r llwybr, ac Ian Baxter, yr uwch-noddwr cynlluniau masnachol. Ni wn sut yr ydych am gyflwyno, ond awn at y ddau ohonoch chi yn awr. Diolch.

As you can see, the timetable has changed substantially, but we now have an extremely important presentation on this case by Network Rail. Therefore, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the two representatives here, namely Mike Gallop, who is route enhancement manager, and Ian Baxter, the senior commercial scheme sponsor. I do not know how you would like to make your presentation, but it is now over to you two. Thank you.

[146] **Mr Gallop:** Thank you for extending the opportunity to come to Carno today to take part in this meeting. We welcome the opportunity. My name is Mike Gallop. As you say, I am the route enhancement manager for the western route. We have submitted written evidence to the committee. I have no doubt that you have a significant number of questions for us. If you would allow me, we will just have a five-minute preamble to our submission, and then Ian and I will take questions.

[147] Ian has had significant involvement in the development of the scheme and has a detailed technical grasp of all the issues pertinent to the Cambrian line. Let us first consider what the modern Cambrian railway is, what purpose it fulfils and what its future role will be. The railway is a fast link from mid Wales to the English border and on into the conurbation of the west midlands. It provides important regional connectivity. That is the fundamental purpose of this railway line. It is a social railway; it does not cover its running costs, but relies on the public purse. The concept of a social railway is well established. Barbara Castle, in the 1960s, established the principle of the social railway, and we, as a company and as a society, are able to monetise the benefits of running a social railway. Network Rail fully recognises the importance of the social railway, and we fully recognise the importance of the Cambrian line.

[148] Let us celebrate the recent announcement of a significant investment in this railway

line. I am from Aberystwyth; I was schooled in Aberystwyth and I went to university there. I am fully aware of the significance and importance of this railway line to the community of mid Wales. Let us celebrate the fact that the railway is expanding. Ian's job and my job are to grow the railway. That is why we come to work in the morning. I am here for no other purpose than to enhance the capacity and capability of Network Rail's railway in the western route.

[149] A significant investment of £13 million has been made in this railway line, £5 million of which has come from Network Rail because we can see the benefits of investing in this railway both in terms of the social benefits and in terms of delivering the kind of performance that this railway should deliver and the level of performance that the travelling public quite rightly expects. Our colleagues in Arriva Trains Wales routinely deliver best-ever performance: they achieve 92, 93 and 94 per cent on the public performance measure on a daily basis, with one exception: the Cambrian line. That line is the black sheep of the ATW performance family and there are several reasons for that, but it is primarily down to the disposition of the infrastructure and the availability of the infrastructure provided by Network Rail to support that train service. The £13.5 million investment will set that infrastructure right and will enable ATW to deliver the kind of service that its customers expect. Crucially, it will unlock the potential for a future one-hour service.

11.40 a.m.

[150] On the European rail traffic management system, £66 million is currently being spent by Network Rail to re-signal the Cambrian railway. This re-signalling provides us with a window of opportunity to amend the infrastructure on this line. It is a window of opportunity that is intensely constrained. ERTMS is a pilot roll-out on the Cambrian line. Following the Cambrian line roll-out by December 2008, the western route will commence the re-signalling of the Great Western main line using that technology. The eyes of the Network Rail signalling fraternity are on the Cambrian line for the next two years, and, quite frankly, the Cambrian line enjoys a level of detail and a level of scrutiny in Network Rail way beyond its importance. The Cambrian line is the precursor to a wholesale re-signalling of Britain's railways. ERTMS is a vital precursor to that. With that in mind, the delivery of ERTMS is vital. December 2008 is a drop-dead date. I cannot go beyond that with the infrastructure enhancement, and the delivery of the infrastructure enhancement is intimately bound up with the switch-on of the signalling system.

[151] There are many locations for new stations on Britain's railways. Ian and I are working extensively on new station locations throughout Wales and on the western route. However, it may be that Carno is not one of those locations. A cursory inspection of the bus timetable reveals that only two buses connect with the train service at Caersws. I would put it that there are opportunities to vastly improve public transport access to Carno without the construction of a new station.

[152] Furthermore, being a business-case-led company, we must have a business case that is sustainable and realistic. We do not believe at present that there is a business case for Carno railway station. Using the figures put forward by the petitioner, it is interesting to note that the construction of the station would deliver only 14 additional passengers per day to the railway, once abstraction from Carno station is taken into consideration.

[153] Finally, we are unable to recognise the costs for station construction put forward by the petitioner, and I draw the committee's attention to the new station that is currently under construction in Llanharan: a two-platform station with an overbridge, due for completion at the end of November, at a cost of £4 million. Ian and I have been involved with a variety of new station constructions, all of which are around that quantum.

[154] That concludes my preamble; thank you for your time. Ian and I will now take questions.

[155] **Gareth Jones:** Thank you for that, Mike. I will turn to Alun first, then Jeff and Mick.

[156] **Alun Davies:** Thank you, Mike. I appreciate what you said, in particular your clear commitment to the Cambrian main line to Aberystwyth. As you said, it is an essential part of our infrastructure in mid Wales. I have a couple of questions on the arguments that you make about the technical feasibility of a new station and passing loop in Carno. It is my understanding that when this station existed prior to the Beeching cuts, there were facilities such as a passing loop and platforms and so on here, but you seem to be saying in your evidence that it is no longer possible to have such facilities, given the topography of the area. It seems to me that if it could be done whenever that infrastructure was built decades ago, we can do it today.

[157] **Mr Gallop:** I will answer the first part of the question and hand over to Ian on the detail that underpins it. We need to look at what the railway is now, and what its purpose is now, and at what it was 40 or 50 years ago, when it was a common carrier of goods and when freight trains reached a maximum top speed of 15 to 20 mph, when passenger trains required banking up Talerddig bank, and they took 45 to 50 minutes to go from Machynlleth to Talerddig. The past is another place; we cannot visit it. What we need to look at—

[158] **Alun Davies:** I accept what you are saying, but we can learn from the past. If we were able to do something in the past, I do not understand why, technically, we cannot do it today.

[159] **Mr Baxter:** If I can help you with some of that, first, the whole structure of what is called the Rule Book in the railway is based on accidents from the 1830s and 1840s onwards. So, all the standards that we have to work to are not plucked out of the air, but are based on experience and, often, tragedy. On this line, we know that the tragedy at Abermule was an important incident in determining how we on the railway deal with single lines.

[160] The issue of the standards of stations constructed in the 1850s to 1860s and those constructed now are very different. You heard from the petitioner, Mr Burton, about a number of the standards set down by various government bodies. We actually have to work to three sets of standards, plus our own. The three we currently work to are, first, Her Majesty's Railways Inspectorate's 'Railway Safety Principles and Guidance'; secondly, in new stations, we work to the guidance set out by the former Strategic Rail Authority, and which is Department for Transport policy; thirdly, we have to work to guidance that is also set out by the SRA but which has been adopted by the Department for Transport on responding to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Taking those together, we also have within the rail industry something called 'Railway Group Standards', which are approved and agreed not only by Network Rail, but with Her Majesty's Railways Inspectorate and with the train operating companies, freight and passenger. So, we are very closely regulated in those terms, and for good reason.

[161] The standards that we work to are generally ones against which derogations can be made. Mr Burton and I have talked about this before, and I can give you examples, such as Warwick Parkway station, between Birmingham and Leamington Spa, which was built on a gradient that was outside the standard required by Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate. However, that went through an extensive and detailed risk assessment, and it was also based on a judgment reached about value for money, the numbers of passengers who would use it and so on. There is, therefore, a core linkage in that, when you ask a body such as the Department for Transport or Her Majesty's Railways Inspectorate to allow you a derogation, it has to understand that there is an exceptional case for doing so. With regard to Carno, with

the figure of 14 passengers new to rail, of the 30 to 35 passengers a day overall who would use the station, it is difficult for us to conclude that we should not provide safe access for disabled people, that we should not provide the right form of access, be it lifts or ramps, or that we should have a different arrangement for a disabled person who needs to go to Shrewsbury from the other side of the level crossing. We believe firmly that when you start at this early stage in station development, you have to take it as read that you start attempting to meet the principles of all the safety planning and guidance generated over more than 100 years.

[162] **Alun Davies:** I appreciate that. I am delighted, by the way, to hear what you said about ERTMS and, while you are before the committee, I would like to say that I hope that you have solved the issue of a mast in Llandre. However, you considered the option of a Carno loop at length before you determined that it was not a practical solution. You have given very clear and precise answers to the questions today, but I am at a loss to understand why you took the Carno option so far before rejecting it if all of this is already known. We know what the gradient is; we know the topography here; we know where we are in terms of distance and where it sits on the line, yet it must have satisfied all the base criteria for infrastructure investment here rather than elsewhere for you to have taken it through a number of different hoops and through various processes. It appears that a decision was taken quite recently, in the last few months, to reject the Carno option on cost grounds, which are rather technical grounds, and those cost grounds are challengeable.

11.50 a.m.

[163] **Mr Baxter:** The distinction between the use of Carno as a passing loop and Carno as a location for a station is the pertinent point here. Yes, in what was called GRIP 3—Mr Burton referred to it; it is the guide to railway investment projects, and is an eight-phase process through which all our projects go, large or small, from putting a new footbridge in at a station to resignalling the Cambrian main line—there is a major distinction between meeting the standards for trains simply passing and building a railway station. Trains can pass on a gradient; the curve of the railway at Carno does not preclude trains stopping or passing there. There is a different set of standards to insert a station there. These are important things; again, they are not simply plucked out of the air. They relate to things such as the stepping distance between the side of a train and the platform, and the stepping height between the train and the platform. I am sure that many of you, and many of the public behind me, will have been to stations where the platforms are much too low; people might fall or trip—I have even seen a child fall down between the side of a train and a platform. The standards are there to ensure that we do not have that kind of problem. So, the reason that we took Carno as a loop into GRIP 3, which is where we choose the options and try to select the best, was that, as a passing loop, it was perfectly viable.

[164] It is also worth noting that the remit to Network Rail from the Welsh Assembly Government was not to look at stations. In May and November 2006, when I presented our work to the various stakeholder groups at both Shrewsbury and Porthmadog, I talked about the fact that, if the ideal location, operationally, for the passing loop was to be at Carno, we would naturally, when undertaking the detailed design, look at whether we could make passive provision for a station. So, we would have ensured, had we found Carno to be the right location for the loop, that we would not have designed it so that you could not have a station in the future. We were careful and cautious to do that. I know that, to some extent, that is probably what excited and raised the hopes of the Carno station action group, but there is a big distinction between the use of that location for a station and for a passing loop.

[165] **Alun Davies:** May I come back on something that you said? Indulge me, Chair.

[166] **Gareth Jones:** Jeff and Mick want to come in, and we have around five minutes.

[167] **Alun Davies:** If a loop had been designed for this place, would it have been possible to build a station as well?

[168] **Mr Baxter:** It would be possible to consider whether it could have been designed. In the GRIP process, we go through outline feasibility. First of all, we ask why you want to do something. That is the crucial question, I would argue, for Carno station. What is the business case? Is there social or environmental justification for spending a significant amount of money when there is a station relatively close? So, the first question that we ask is why you want to do something. The second question, in what is called GRIP 2, is whether anything will really stop you. If you are in the south Wales Valleys, is there a hidden mine that would prevent you doing something? The third process is looking at the real options that we have. We do not start detailed design then. We have costs that are plus or minus 30 per cent, because there are levels of uncertainty. When we get to what Mr Burton talked about—GRIP 4—which is single-option development, we have chosen the option that we are going to look at, and we start its basic design. That is when we can start to get into the real detail about how you meet all the standards. We in the rail industry work really hard to ensure that we can do what is right for passengers. We are constantly debating with Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate derogations from standards, where that is sensible and safe, so we are not at all inflexible.

[169] What I am saying to you is, had we chosen Carno loop we would then have asked our detailed designers to tell us what the issues would have been about passive provision for a station. They might have come back to us and said, 'You need to breach this, this and this standard'. Then we would make a decision: do we want to spend an extra amount on design now, and include that, when the station may never happen, because there was no funding for it in any event, or do we try to include it now? We try to take a balanced judgment on what is sensible to do.

[170] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you for the presentation and for the written information that we received beforehand. I understand the issues, and particularly that of safety, with regard to the railways. Before becoming an Assembly Member, I did a lot of work with the railways and I understand how important safety is and that it must be paramount in your considerations.

[171] Three or four weeks ago I was on holiday in Scotland and I travelled from Edinburgh to Oban. The journey from Edinburgh to Glasgow took 45 minutes, straight through. A similar-length journey from Glasgow to Oban took just over three hours, because the train stopped at every station on the way—many of them were very small; almost all of them I could not pronounce. The important thing was that that was a valid social railway. The train was quite full at all times. No-one objected to the fact that it travelled slowly, because that was necessary, and it served all those communities between Glasgow and Oban, which is something like 10 stations. So, I do not see, from the information that I have had so far, why the action group's proposals can be ruled out in terms of a social need for such a facility here. I appreciate that it is a link between Aberystwyth, Shrewsbury, Birmingham and other parts of the United Kingdom and I too celebrate the expansion of the railway—which I think is the best form of surface transport that we have, when done in combination with public buses—but it is not clear to me why the proposal is so unacceptable. The petitioners referred to Beaulieu station in the north of Scotland as an example of what could be constructed here, and I would welcome your comments on why you feel that that is not appropriate, although I accept that if your figure of £5 million is right, it casts a massive question mark over its construction, because we have to be realistic in terms of finance.

[172] There is also the issue of there being another station relatively close. I live in the Rhymney valley and the Rhymney valley line has had considerable investment. I welcome

and support that but part of it is the development of a new station just outside Caerphilly. Admittedly that is in a densely populated area. I accept that—[*Interruption.*] Yes, at Energlyn. However, that is part of your thinking; why is it not the case here?

[173] **Mr Gallop:** We are in a different scenario here. Let us look at south Wales for a minute. We are in a travel-to-work area for Cardiff, it is an intensely used suburban railway, and road traffic congestion on the A470 is horrendous, so we have a different economic case for Energlyn. Here, we are in the middle of mid Wales, where there is a sparse population, particularly in the empty quarter around Carno. The railway provides a significant lifeline for the principal communities along this route and also those stations that act as rail heads.

[174] Referring back to your question on Scotland, yes there are many stops and a long transit time on the line to Oban. Again, that is a different scenario to the railway that we have here. This railway is all around connectivity across mid Wales and into the mainline services at Wolverhampton and Birmingham. That is the purpose of this railway line. So, the railway line here is doing a different thing to that in Scotland.

[175] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I also asked you about Beaulieu.

[176] **Mr Gallop:** I will hand over to Ian to come back on Beaulieu.

[177] **Mr Baxter:** Beaulieu station was opened, I think, in 2002, in the days of Railtrack. As Mr Burton noted, it was a short station. It breached multiple standards. My colleagues in Scotland and I have done some investigative work into it to understand how they came to the conclusions that they did. First, its risk assessment was made on the basis of a very low anticipated footfall and it was opened with the expectation of its having about 15 passengers a day. One could look at this in two ways. It has been much more successful than that. Were it reassessed now, on exactly the same basis, it would fail the risk assessment on the basis of allowing it to be a short platform.

[178] 12.00 p.m.

[179] Secondly, it is based upon a process of the guards or conductors on the train manually opening the middle two doors, or one of them. They are the same trains as you have here in mid Wales—class 158 units—but it is a process that they are well used to at several other stations on the Kyle of Lochalsh line and the far north lines. It is a process that has what is called ‘grandfather rights’—it has been happening before certain standards were written. We have a situation where certain things would not be allowed now that are currently allowed at existing stations, and we invest a lot of money to remove them gradually. Mr Burton and his colleagues asked what the actual risk was and indeed, thankfully, nothing untoward has occurred to any passenger at Beaulieu since it was opened, but the risk essentially is that a conductor of a train may forget that he has to open only certain doors and may therefore open all of the doors. I am a qualified guard on the national railway and, as such, I understand the processes. I can tell you that when you are on duty, you must provide constant attention and it is always possible that you may make a mistake. The risk at Beaulieu that a conductor would forget and would open all the doors has been calculated at 1:7,500, thereby enabling someone, certainly in the dark, to possibly fall out of a train. That may sound very insignificant, but over the 40-year life of Beaulieu station, that statistic suggests that, given the number of passengers, it could happen on 27 occasions. That simply sounds like statistics, but again, we are charged with ensuring that we have made very proper assessments of the risk to our passengers.

[180] I travel on your trains and am an enthusiast for your railway—I live in Shropshire, so I use your trains as often as I can—and the third element here is that if you look at your trains, you will see that they are well utilised: people have baggage and luggage and there are

students and tourists. If you only have one door open on a four-car service travelling down on Saturday in summer and there are some people who have found themselves in the wrong part of the train, there is a risk that, when they get out at Carno or want to get on at Carno, the dwell time—the time that it takes people to get on and off—will be very long and extended.

[181] We are investing this £13.6 million with the Welsh Assembly Government to get your railway working as normally as Arriva Trains work elsewhere, namely that over nine out of 10 trains should arrive on time. I stress that only around six or seven out of 10 trains arrive on time on the Cambrian line, which we do not find acceptable. We would be very reluctant to invest all of this money and then find that we have to invest extra money simply to maintain that steady state that we have just achieved.

[182] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I do not quibble about the issue of safety and indeed there is a management of risk, but are you stating categorically that the type or model of station that exists at Beaulieu could or would not be built by you in Carno now?

[183] **Mr Gallop:** No, we would not wish to build a station like Beaulieu at Carno. I can state that now.

[184] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You say that you would not wish to do so.

[185] **Mr Gallop:** We would not want to build a station like Beaulieu at Carno.

[186] **Mick Bates:** Thank you for your evidence. There were some interesting issues there. I will start with your proposition that this is a social line. The example that Jeff gave demonstrated quite adequately what was meant by a social line, namely that there are small stations along the line at which people get on. That, in my view, answers your first question.

[187] You then said that this is a commuter line that links urban centres. It seems to me that that point is something of a paradox. You accept that it is a social line, but when there is a social need, as there is here in terms of sustainability—and we well know that the Government in Wales is trying to promote that—you refuse to accept a social argument here on the back of which, of course, there are also economic arguments. Why is that?

[188] **Mr Gallop:** I think that my point was that the line links centres of population and rail heads such as Caersws, which serves a large hinterland of population. The point is that social railway comes with a price and the cost of that has to provide value for money. As a rail industry and as a country, we are willing to bear a certain cost for social benefit. However, our contention is this: the business case for Carno is so out of balance given that the benefits are so small compared with the costs, that there is not a case for a station at Carno, particularly when there is a perfectly good station six miles down the road at Caersws that serves a hinterland including Carno. So, that allows access to the railway for a very wide area of population in a rural area.

[189] **Mick Bates:** Thank you for that. One point of information is that we have the greatest distance between our stations on this line—it is much less, on average, in other places. You mentioned effective cost; what is the effective cost for reopening the station?

[190] **Mr Gallop:** At Carno, it is £5 million.

[191] **Mick Bates:** Is that the effective cost?

[192] **Mr Gallop:** That is the capital cost.

[193] **Mick Bates:** Okay, so we need £5 million. The figures that I have looked at

demonstrate that your estimates for reopening stations are always subject to massive inflation. Why is that the case?

[194] **Mr Baxter:** You have heard me mention the guide to railway investment projects, which is the eight-phase process. The first four parts of it are the difficult bits—the rest of it is about building it; you have the money, the case for it, all the agreement and the planning and it is happening. On the first four processes, you start with a plus or minus 30 per cent cost, because you will not know what problems you might come across. There are major significant problems that are not unreal, and I have opened two stations in Warwick Parkway and Coleshill—with which I was involved before I came to work for Network Rail—which opened in the west Midlands three weeks ago. I have direct experience of all of the costs, the pitfalls and problems, so the prices that we have come up with have not been plucked out of the air. I stress this, Chair: none of the things that we are talking about today are fantasy and they have not been produced to simply knock down this proposal—they are real. Llanharan station is costing around £4 million. If you look at the components of that, you first have to build platforms that will have to be four cars long, because that is the length of the trains. We do not believe that there is a case for the Beauly station approach, nor do we believe that we would get the derogations from HMRI.

[195] The issue about going across the level crossing and not having a footbridge is unacceptable. You will know that at Elsenham in east Anglia, two girls were killed last year running for a train. That has placed further correct pressure on Network Rail to look at how we reduce the risk at crossings. If we had a passenger platform at Carno on the other side of the railway for people to go Shrewsbury, we could not have half barriers on the level crossing, because people will walk around them and run across. So, part of our cost for Carno station—and it would have been included in the cost for the Carno loop—would have been to enhance the level crossing.

[196] Secondly, not only must we remove the safety issue for people, but we also have the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It would not be acceptable to the Department for Transport or to the Welsh Assembly Government if we designed a station at which the fit and healthy could leg it across the crossing when they wanted to, while the disabled person was stuck behind the barrier.

[197] Thirdly, if two trains came to a stop at Carno, if there were a station there, that level crossing would not just go down for the first train and then go back up again; it would also stay down for the second train because of the obvious risk that people might run across the crossing for the train on the other side and not be aware of the train approaching them. It is exactly what happened at Elsenham, and we are not willing to compromise on that type of standard. If you look at building a footbridge, or ramps, which are visually intrusive, or having lifts, which are expensive to provide and maintain, that is where this level of cost comes in. So, I stress to the committee that these are not figures that we have simply plucked out of the air.

[198] **Mick Bates:** So, are the costs of £8 million that you have put forward to the Welsh Assembly Government also subject to your figure of plus or minus 30 per cent?

[199] **Mr Baxter:** Do you mean the figures for the delivery of the infrastructure?

[200] **Mick Bates:** Yes.

12.10 p.m.

[201] **Mr Baxter:** That is now completed GRIP 4—the single-option development—and that now has specified contingency in it with detailed elements of quantified and qualified

risk. It also has a 5 per cent contingency, which is what you have before you go into detailed design. We would acknowledge that, during the Railtrack days, our prices tended to start low and go up. We now work on a different principle, which is to make sure that we have sufficient risk in at the beginning of a project, and then we progressively strip out risk. To give you an example, at an earlier stage in this overall project for the hourly service, with risk in, the figure was more like £18 million. The figure that is now being jointly funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and Network Rail is £13.6 million, and that is because we have gone through a diligent, thorough process that is subject also to the rail regulator auditing us on these kinds of projects.

[202] **Mick Bates:** As an anecdote as regards footbridges, when Gobowen station was refurbished, the footbridge was removed, in a similar situation.

[203] **Mr Baxter:** That is again, as Mike said, a matter of ‘That was then, and this is now’. That happened in the early 1980s. It would be a listed footbridge if it still stood, so we would not have removed it anyway, and I do not think that two wrongs make a right, if you see what I mean.

[204] **Mick Bates:** I accept that. I have a final point to make, Chair, if I may.

[205] **Gareth Jones:** This must be your final point, Mick.

[206] **Mick Bates:** You were aware, obviously, of the desire to reopen the station here in Carno before GRIP 3 and, crucially for me, before the decision was made on GRIP 4. When you recommended to the Minister that he accept GRIP 4, was any thought given to delaying the announcement on GRIP 4 until this democratic process had been completed?

[207] **Mr Gallop:** The situation with the programme is that we are governed by the ERTMS signalling. If the decision to fund the infrastructure had been delayed beyond the end of July, we would not have been able to deliver the infrastructure enhancement to provide one train an hour; it is as simple as that. The absolute primacy in this process is the delivery of ERTMS within Network Rail. If the decision for funding the enhancement had been delayed beyond the end of July, we would have installed the signalling system on a like-for-like basis using the existing infrastructure.

[208] **Gareth Jones:** Very briefly, Alun, do you want to come back on a specific point?

[209] **Alun Davies:** It has been interesting listening to the answers—we could spend the rest of the day doing this, could we not? In your answers, you seem to be ruling out having any new stations anywhere on this line. Am I picking up on how Network Rail feels about this?

[210] **Mr Gallop:** We would take some convincing as to the benefit of any new station on this line.

[211] **Alun Davies:** So, the answer is ‘yes’.

[212] **Mr Gallop:** No; that is not what I said. I am never going to say ‘never’, but, at present, we would take a lot of convincing to open any new stations on the Cambrian line.

[213] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch i’r ddau ohonoch am eich cyflwyniadau ac am eich atebion. Diolch hefyd i’r Aelodau, wrth gwrs, am eu cwestiynau. **Gareth Jones:** Thank you, both, for your presentations and for your answers. Thanks also to the Members, of course, for their questions.

[214] Gwahoddaf dystiolaeth Trenau Arriva Cymru yn awr. Deallaf fod Mr Mike Bagshaw, cyfarwyddwr masnachol Trenau Arriva Cymru, yma. Gofynnaf i Tim James ddod at y bwrdd hefyd. Mae Tim James yma ar ran Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru, ac ef yw pennaeth yr uned rheilffyrdd. Gyda chaniatâd yr Aelodau, fy mwriad yw gofyn i Mr Bagshaw wneud ei gyflwyniad yn gyntaf. Gwn fod gan Tim James hefyd gyflwyniad byr i'w wneud, a chawn gwestiynau wedi hynny. Yr wyf yn mawr obeithio y gallan orffen ymhell cyn 1 p.m., ond cawn weld. Felly, fe'ch gwahoddaf chi, Mr Bagshaw, ar ran Trenau Arriva Cymru, i gyflwyno'r hyn sydd gennych i'w ddweud.

I now invite evidence from Arriva Trains Wales. I understand that Mr Mike Bagshaw, the commercial director of Arriva Trains Wales, is here. I also ask Tim James to come to the table. Tim James is here on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, and he is the head of the rail unit. With the permission of Members, my intention is to ask Mr Bagshaw to make his presentation first. I know that Tim James also has a short presentation to make, and then we will have questions. I sincerely hope that we can finish well before 1 p.m., but we shall see. So, I invite you, Mr Bagshaw, on behalf of Arriva Trains Wales, to present what you have to say.

[215] **Mr Bagshaw:** Thank you for inviting me to give evidence to this committee. I will keep it brief. Many of the issues that I will cover have been mentioned by colleagues from Network Rail and others, so I will keep my presentation short. As many of you are aware, Arriva Trains Wales is predominantly funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. We run a social railway, as described previously. Very few of the trains that we run actually make money, in a commercial sense, and, therefore, the majority of the services that we run are subsidised, and that certainly applies to the Cambrian route.

[216] Our focus is very much on running a safe and reliable train service. Our performance has improved significantly over the last few years, through a lot of hard work, ensuring that our fleet is more reliable, working with Network Rail to improve the quality of the infrastructure and making changes to the timetable, to ensure that we can be as reliable as possible. Our least reliable service is the Cambrian service, as has already been alluded to by Network Rail. However, our performance has improved over the last year, and a lot of work has been done on raising line speeds, making minor tweaks to the timetable, and looking at regulating practices—lots of very small things that do not cost a lot of money to try to make the service more reliable than it was, say, a year ago. We have managed to do that. It is still not at the standard that we would like it to be, as we are still turning too many trains around at Wolverhampton because of late running on single lines and congestion into Birmingham, but the problem is not as bad as it was before. We are working hard to continue to improve that performance.

[217] Passenger numbers on the route are also growing at a high rate—over 10 per cent. That is positive and has clearly been helped by the additional capacity funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. This line is growing fast—it is one of our fastest-growing lines, predominantly because performance is improving slowly, although it is still a long way behind the standards on other lines. We are providing the capacity to give passengers a seat and a reasonably comfortable journey as far as we can. That is some background on where we are.

[218] Clearly, our priority, as a train operator going forward, is all about running a safe, reliable service, continuing to provide reliability and allowing the passenger growth that we have seen on our lines to continue. I will not go over the debate held about the location of passing loops; everyone understands the issues and the arguments regarding Talerddig versus Carno. What I would add is that, when considering any new station on any route, we must consider not only the passengers who will benefit—clearly, a station at Carno would have great benefits for the local community—but that any increase in journey times can deter passengers from using train services. Journey times are crucial when people consider

medium-distance to longer-distance journeys in particular. We need to be mindful of that. For example, someone facing a slightly longer journey to Aberystwyth might decide to use his or her car. Carno is only one station, but that context needs to be looked at when Carno and other possible station reopenings along the route are considered.

[219] I would go back to the point about the Birmingham to Aberystwyth service being predominantly an inter-urban service, that serves rail heads. That is important. Many of our other lines are different; for example, the coastal line up to Pwllheli serves a very different market, and has far more frequent stops. However, the Cambrian line, as it is, is predominantly a fast, inter-urban line that serves a number of key communities that act as rail heads to smaller communities. That point is a key factor in the growth that we have seen on the line: journey times to these key destinations are attractive, and that is why more people are coming back to the line.

[220] We welcome Network Rail's investment in the extra infrastructure that will, eventually, facilitate an hourly service. That is a fantastic opportunity that will help the performance of the line and will help us in going forward. We would be reluctant to see anything taking away the benefit in terms of the performance provided by that infrastructure.

[221] To touch upon other issues, we talked about whether a station could be built with a shorter platform, and we would be reluctant, from a performance point of view, to stop a train at a station where the platform is not as long as the train. There is the safety issue that Ian talked about, and there is also a performance issue. We have that situation in terms of other services, particularly, for example, when we run four-car trains along the Cambrian coast line when it is busy in the summer; all too frequently, we will have passengers at one end of the train with luggage, perhaps, who have not managed to get to the right section of the train. This all takes time. If you are running a train service on single-line tracks with passing places, it is crucial that trains get to the passing loops at the right time if you are to run a reliable service and ensure that the train services complete their through journey to Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton or wherever.

12.20 p.m.

[222] In conclusion, we are subsidised by the Welsh Assembly Government, which specifies the service that we run. Essentially, we will run the service that we are specified to run. If a station is built in Carno and we are asked to call there, we will do so. The purpose of giving evidence today is to draw attention to some of the issues from the train operator perspective, certainly in terms of passenger growth and performance, so that we can come to the right conclusions with regard to this proposal.

[223] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch yn fawr iawn, Mr Bagshaw, a diolch am fod gryno ac am gadw at y sgript. Gwn fod Mick Bates am gyfrannu, ond yr wyf am wahodd Tim James i wneud ei gyflwyniad ar ran Llywodraeth Cymru, ac wedyn cawn gwestiynau.

Gareth Jones: Thank you very much, Mr Bagshaw, and thank you for keeping it succinct and to the script. I know that Mick Bates wants to come in, but I now invite Tim James to make his presentation on behalf of the Government of Wales, and we will then have questions.

[224] **Mr James:** Diolch, Gadeirydd a phwyllgor. **Mr James:** Thank you, Chair and committee.

[225] Good afternoon, and thank you for the invitation to speak today. I would like to explain my role in the history of this scheme. I am head of the rail unit in the Assembly Government. I am a specialist employee, having had railway competency experience. I used to work for Railtrack and, latterly, Network Rail, and one of my jobs was not only to operate

the Cambrian line but to maintain it, so I know the infrastructure like the back of my hand, which helps.

[226] In the lead-up to the project, there were four drivers for change. On punctuality, we have heard that only six out of 10 trains arrive on time, so, clearly, there was a need to do something. There was a history, as Phil Jackson alluded to, of failed attempts. There was a lot of theory and little practice. There was a lot of talk about making improvements, yet nothing ever developed. There was an opportunity to ride on the back of the European railway traffic management system project, which was a bigger project that was driven centrally. It was the pilot signalling project for the UK.

[227] There was stakeholder expectation. We met as a group with the Cambrian coast liaison committee, which, as many of you know, is chaired by Councillor Trevor Roberts. He hosted the fora, and we consulted very widely with stakeholders on what their priorities would be.

[228] Finally, there was the availability of resources for the project—people, money and expertise—and for staff to engage in it. That is the background.

[229] As project manager, I have to comply with the three principles of project management: the project should be on time, to budget and to specification. To enable that to happen, we had to have a remit, which was as follows: to listen to stakeholders, hence the public events, and to take advantage of the ERTMS window. To give you an analogy, it is like squeezing through a window that is about to close for the next 40 years. That is what ERTMS presented us with.

[230] Another part of the remit was to improve punctuality; to get from the bottom of the class to the top. The next point of the remit was to provide infrastructure for an hourly service at some point in the future, and the final point was to provide passive provision for known aspirations. One of those was a station at Dyfi north, between Dyfi and Machynlleth. We concluded that, due to land issues and cost, we could not get the answer within the deadline. However, provision was made for that development in the future. So, we have future-proofed the project. That is the background to it.

[231] I would now like to go into detail about the case for the Carno loop's not being considered as a GRIP 4 option. The reasons were as follows. Initially, there was the cost implication of its being between £0.6 million and £1 million more. Secondly, that retention of the engineer sidings at Talerddig was very important to Network Rail to maintain the line. We would have to make provision for that. Insufficient performance benefits existed in relocating the loop from Talerddig to Carno and, in addition, the passing loop was premised on the basis that not all trains would stop there, so, in other words, it would be a passing loop with one train proceeding through at line speed and the other train stopping. So, you could not impose a station upon that option. That is why they were discounted. Clearly, costs and time were important.

[232] While new stations were not part of the project's remit, we looked at the case for the new station itself, as we identified, to understand whether or not we could make the case within the timescale and in terms of affordability and through complying with the technical scope. Again, the business case seemed very poor. Let us compare Carno's population, at around 750 people, with other locations where new stations are currently being built. Seven new stations are currently being built in Wales, all of which are in areas with populations that are at least 20 times bigger than Carno's. It was essentially down to that factor.

[233] Secondly, there were clearly significant design standards, as my former colleagues at Network Rail explained, which were difficult to overcome and would have been even harder

to overcome within the narrow, compressed timescale that we had in which to make the decision. The other issue was affordability. I work to a constrained budget and adding £5 million for a station would have meant that the project could not have proceeded.

[234] I reiterate to the committee and to the Chair that if you set the decision as to why Carno station was not part of the Minister's announcement against the election and against the timescale to form a Government and the need to get Ministers in place, that made the timescale even more compressed in which to present an argument and to get the authority with which to proceed. So, in fact, the window got increasingly tighter and we had to squeeze through it. There was insufficient time to understand whether Carno had a business case for inclusion. Of course, that does not rule out a future station for Carno, but, to pre-empt some questions, I would say that a business case needs to be made and Carno would need to join the priorities within the overall rail programme for Wales, which is quite substantial, to see where it fits within that in terms of its value for money, technical compliance and relativity.

[235] **Gareth Jones:** Diolch, Tim. Yr ydych wedi tanlinellu'n gwbl glir y sefyllfa bresennol a'r berthynas â'r datganiad y mae sawl un wedi cyfeirio ato. Trof at fy nghyd-Aelodau a gofyn i Mick Bates am y cwestiwn cyntaf.

Gareth Jones: Thank you, Tim. You have clearly spelled out the current situation and the relationship with the statement that many have referred to. I turn to my fellow Members and ask Mick Bates for the first question.

[236] **Mick Bates:** Thank you for both presentations. First, Mike mentioned in his presentation the need to improve the timetable and so on, but the petitioners consider that the position of the Talerddig passing loop results in an unbalanced timetable, because of the significantly tighter times to the east than those to the west. There are congestion problems between Wolverhampton and Birmingham. What is the distribution of waiting times for eastbound and westbound trains at Talerddig?

[237] **Mr Bagshaw:** We looked at that point and if you were to start from scratch, you would probably go for a loop at Carno instead of Talerddig, because it is slightly more optimal in terms of position.

[238] **Mick Bates:** That is a promising statement.

[239] **Mr Bagshaw:** That has been acknowledged by all, but the fact is that there is already a loop at Talerddig—that is where it is at the moment. The costs that Network Rail has incurred to build a new bit of infrastructure are quite substantial, but if you were starting from scratch and building this railway from new, you would probably not have it at Talerddig, but would build it at Carno, but we are where we are.

[240] **Mick Bates:** What are the different times for eastbound and westbound trains? Do they wait in the loop for three, five or 10 minutes?

[241] **Mr Bagshaw:** It depends what else is going on, but, generally, the eastbound train will tend to wait slightly longer than the westbound train. It clearly depends what is going on. Again, if you were to start from scratch and ask, 'Where do you want a loop?', you would do all kinds of different things. However, colleagues at Network Rail have to work within the infrastructure that we already have and make those judgments accordingly.

[242] **Mick Bates:** So, you are saying that there is an imbalance and that the loop would be much better placed in Carno.

[243] **Mr Bagshaw:** Yes, we have had a look at it and you can see a slight imbalance. I think that that has been reflected in Network Rail's work.

[244] **Mick Bates:** Thank you. Turning briefly to Tim, I thank you for your presentation, but I was disturbed by your statement that seven new stations are being built in Wales and that they are all in areas with massive populations. So, is it Government policy to discriminate on size when opening stations?

12.30 p.m.

[245] **Mr James:** No, it is not. It is Government policy to review business cases to understand the need and to prioritise schemes within a national programme. I would not say that there is any evidence of discrimination, but, if it helps, I can point out some populations where new stations have been built or are being built. Llantwit Major has a population of 10,800 people directly within the town centre, Rhose has a population of 5,611, and Llanharan has a population of 3,421, which demonstrates the point that I was making.

[246] **Mick Bates:** These are in south Wales.

[247] **Mr James:** Yes. [*Interruption.*]

[248] **Mick Bates:** I have one more question, Chair. Great play has been made of the tight timetable with the ERTMS, which is quite a flagship system. What discussion did the Government have about upgrading the radio electronic token block signalling system, which they have done in Scotland at a cost of £5 million?

[249] **Mr James:** The decision to proceed with ERTMS almost preceded the formation of the Welsh Assembly Government. It was a decision made by the SRA and when I worked with Railtrack I was very active in lobbying for the Cambrian line to have ERTMS, lest it struggled on with the outdated RETB system. I am not aware of a like-for-like modern equivalent form for replacement of RETB.

[250] **Mr Gallop:** There is none.

[251] **Mick Bates:** However, it has been upgraded in Scotland.

[252] **Mr Gallop:** There have been minor upgrades to the system, whose life has now expired.

[253] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I do not see this as a mid Wales versus south Wales issue; if that were the case, as a south Wales Assembly Member, I would not have come, but I have come because I am concerned about the provision of rail transport throughout Wales and I am delighted to be part of this process. By the way, most of those places were not in south-east Wales but in south Wales central.

[254] Mike, to a degree Mick has asked the questions that I wanted to ask you, but I have a question about the evidence. You talked about punctuality and the length of journeys, and it is logical that if there is an extra stop a few more minutes will be added to the journey time. However, what evidence do you have that that would put people off using the line? If there was a station in Carno, you said that you would cope with it, but would it be a serious problem for Arriva Trains if a new station were built? What evidence have you gathered, independently, about the likely usage of the station?

[255] In terms of my question to Tim from the Assembly Government, I take your point that there must be business cases—every new project that has a serious cost must be thought through and it is right that it is delivered to budget. My question is on the key issue that the new station would cost £5 million. Do you agree that that is the likely cost?

[256] **Mr James:** I agree that the cost of the station, based upon current experience of building stations, is of that order. I think that £5 million would be the maximum and I would expect the costs of a new station to be around £4 million to £5 million on the basis of the costs that we are currently incurring at Llanharan, for example, which is coming in at between £3 million and £4 million. So, it is within those figures, bearing in mind that it would also involve a level-crossing modification, which can cost between £0.5 million and £1 million on current experiences.

[257] **Jeff Cuthbert:** May I briefly follow up? I asked Network Rail earlier about the Beaulieu model in Scotland, and it said that it would not be keen—or words to that effect—on building such a station in Carno. Do you agree with that?

[258] **Mr James:** Yes, I would agree with that, in the sense that, as a Government, we have no responsibility for what is known as safety of line, so we are unable to make any competent decisions as to what Network Rail should do to comply with the HMRI guidance, the Department for Transport guidance and its own rule book. So, we must look to Network Rail as the asset owner to provide essential safety information. So, yes, I would not be able to disagree with, or challenge, that.

[259] **Mr Bagshaw:** On additional journey times, the key thing is that, on a single-track railway—it was mentioned earlier that the units effectively do a six-hour cycle between Aberystwyth and Birmingham—any extra stop, even for a minute or two, has a significant impact and will result in a fall in reliability. Recently, we managed to increase line speeds in about three locations—only small minutes here and there; one minute at one location and perhaps a couple of minutes at another location—and that has enabled us to improve performance from a pretty dire 40 per cent punctuality on this line to a still-not-particularly-good-but-more-acceptable 70 per cent. That is how vulnerable this line is with regard to performance, because it has a single track. That is a valid point, and performance is a critical driver for passenger growth as well. If we turn trains around at Wolverhampton, and people have luggage, they are unlikely to want to use the line again. So, that is particularly important.

[260] Also, people do take passenger journey times into account when travelling, and on other parts of the network a lot of money is being invested to shave a minute off journey times, and there are proven calculations to show how many extra passengers you can generate with a shorter journey time. We have looked at the figures presented, and I cannot say how many people would not travel because of a journey time of two minutes longer, but it is something that we need to consider with any new station scheme.

[261] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You do not have independent evidence that an extra station would necessarily put people off travelling on this line.

[262] **Mr Bagshaw:** There is evidence that extra journey time on any line would deter some passengers from travelling.

[263] **Alun Davies:** I will not follow that up, although I have to say that I am not convinced by that argument. When I take decisions, I am equally influenced by cost, by convenience of timetables and by the experience of travelling by train. Travelling very slowly, being stuck waiting for no apparent reason, a train being dirty and all sorts of other reasons are equally important in terms of people's choice of transport. I am not, therefore, necessarily convinced that one or two additional stations on this line would put people off travelling on it. I also find it unconvincing that having to move your bag from the seat to the door to get off is a reason. It is not beyond the wit of human beings to get on and off trains, and I do not accept that carrying baggage precludes opening a station here. I do not accept that, quite honestly.

[264] I am more interested in what you have to say about the future of this line, because you have said clearly in your evidence that you see it as being an inter-urban service and not a commuter service within Wales or along those parts of the line that are in England. I am quite concerned about that. You make money by carrying passengers, but you seem to be saying that the only way to run an efficient railway is not to stop to pick them up in the first place. It seems that there is an opportunity here—and not exclusively at Carno, but elsewhere on the line as well—to develop this line, which you have described as a social railway, but providing an economic, social and environmental benefit for the people who live and work here and who want to travel within this region. That means enabling people to get on and off a train at more stations, and not just here in Carno, which is a good example, but not the only one, of how this railway can be developed to be a much more important transport link than it is at the moment. There is a great opportunity, and I would be interested in your views on that.

12.40 p.m.

[265] Also, in terms of the Welsh Assembly Government, Tim, I was interested and pleased to hear that you are future-proofing the project in terms of the investment on this line. First, what exactly do you mean by that in terms of stations and developing the use of this line in future? You talked about Dyfi north, but are any other parts of the line future-proofed for potential station stops? It appears to me that it becomes more difficult, and that we are placing obstacles in the way of people who may wish to make a business case in the future by developing and investing in such a way as to preclude and prevent such cases being made.

[266] **Mr Bagshaw:** Shall I answer that point? I will start by saying that, essentially, we are funded by, and the service is specified by, the Welsh Assembly Government. What I am giving now is our advice as a train company. We have seen a lot of growth on the line—it is one of our fastest-growing routes. We believe that one of the reasons for that is that it is attractive in terms of journey time, bringing visitors into the region, and playing a vital link. Unfortunately, I do not think that the railway can be all things to all people. The line passes through many communities that would probably like a train service, and that would have a lot of benefits, but if we did that the railway would be doing that rather than something else. It cannot do all things.

[267] We believe that the growth that we have seen is the result of our providing an attractive service that is competitive and that journey times compare well with journey times by road. Passenger numbers are increasing as a result of that, which is good for the line. The case for things like investment in extra infrastructure to make the service better has been made stronger by the fact that passenger numbers are growing. Many of the stations that we serve act as rail heads for a number of other communities, and our recommendation would be that those rail heads are developed. We look at other things, such as bus links, to feed into those communities so that more people get access to the train services, and we enhance those services. We work with the Welsh Assembly Government on extra capacity, longer trains and so on, to encourage more people to travel, but we think that adding lots of extra station stops—Carno is only one, but there may be calls for others—will make journeys less attractive for some people, and we could see fewer people using the line.

[268] **Alun Davies:** But you have no evidence of that.

[269] **Mr Bagshaw:** There is evidence in other parts of the country where journey times have declined, passengers have stopped using the rail service—

[270] **Alun Davies:** In terms of journey times, I do not think that people mind stopping in a station; they mind stopping in a field.

[271] **Mr Bagshaw:** Clearly, stopping in a field is not ideal either. Indeed, one of the

benefits of the ERTMS scheme is that fewer trains will need to do that.

[272] **Mr Gallop:** May I add something to that?

[273] **Gareth Jones:** It may be difficult to do that now. We have had an opportunity to hear from Network Rail. I am sorry, but Mr Burton would then want to come back, and we would be starting all over again. I appreciate that this is a serious and interesting matter, but we must try to keep to our guidelines. Thank you for your response. Tim, would you respond?

[274] **Mr James:** Yes, of course. I will respond to Mr Davies's question about future-proofing. What it means is that, within the design for the current project, which Network Rail's designers are currently working on, there is capacity for the signalling or infrastructure to be modified to allow some additional stations or an hourly service. To answer your specific question on what future-proofing we did, it was for a station in the vicinity of between Dyfi and Machynlleth, for an hourly service, and for a station at Carno or any other location on a single line where standards would allow that.

[275] **Alun Davies:** So, in your planning and your investment, there is the capacity to open a station here or elsewhere, where the case is made.

[276] **Mr James:** There is capacity, where the case is made and where timetabling and so forth allows that, and where there is a business case. What we currently have on the line, with the RETB signalling, is no capacity to modify it. So, if we were stuck with that, you have what you have for the next n number of years.

[277] **Gareth Jones:** Ar y pwynt hwnnw, rhaid dod â'r cyfarfod i ben. Yr wyf yn hynod ddiolchgar i bob un o'r tystion am gyflwyno gwybodaeth mor eglur—gwybodaeth sydd, ar adegau, yn anodd i leygwyr fel fi ei hamgyffred. Yr wyf yn sicr ein bod ni, fel Aelodau, wedi cael darlun trylwyr o'r her sydd yma yng Ngharno. Diolch i chi am eich cyflwyniadau, a diolch i fy nghyd-Aelodau am eu cwestiynau. Yr wyf yn mawr obeithio bod y cyhoedd wedi cael blas ar y drafodaeth hollbwysig hon i gymuned Carno.

Gareth Jones: On that point, I must bring the meeting to a close. I am extremely grateful to all the witnesses for presenting their information so clearly—information that is, at times, difficult for lay people such as me to understand. I am sure that, as Members, we have been given a thorough illustration of the challenge here in Carno. Thank you for your presentations, and thank you to my colleagues for their questions. I sincerely hope that the public have enjoyed this debate, which is vital for the community of Carno.

[278] Bydd copi o'r Cofnod yn cael ei anfon at bob un ohonoch sydd wedi cyflwyno tystiolaeth, a gallwch wneud unrhyw sylwadau neu gywiriadau cyn i'r Cofnod terfynol gael ei gyhoeddi. Bydd y Cofnod yn cael ei anfon atoch am sylwadau tua dydd Llun nesaf.

Copies of the Record will be distributed to all those who have given evidence, on which you will be able to comment and make corrections before the final Record is published. The Record will be sent to you for comment around next Monday.

[279] Fel yr wyf eisoes wedi'i ddweud, mae hwn yn fater dyrys. Mae'n amlwg bod gwaith o'n blaenau ni, fel Aelodau. Cafwyd cyfeiriad at y datganiad sydd wedi'i wneud, ac mae'n rhaid i ni, fel Aelodau, ystyried y cyd-destun hwnnw. Yr wyf yn addo y byddwn yn rhoi sylw arbennig i'r amseru ac i'r broses ddemocrataid yr ydym ni yn

As I have already said, this is a complex matter. It is clear that we, as Members, have some work to do. Mention has been made of the statement, and we, as Members, must consider that context. I promise that we will pay particular attention to the timing and to the democratic process that we are keen to promote. I do not wish to avoid that

awyddus i'w hyrwyddo. Nid wyf am osgoi'r her honno—os oes her i ni, fel pwyllgor ac fel Aelodau, mae'n rhaid i ni ei hwynebu, a mynd â'r her honno i Lywodraeth y Cynulliad.

[280] Byddwn yn ystyried y dystiolaeth ac yn ei thrafod gyda holl aelodau a swyddogion y pwyllgor cyn penderfynu ar gyflwyno naill ai adroddiad neu argymhellion i'r Pwyllgor Deisebau. Fel y dywedais ar y cychwyn, mae'r mater hwn wedi codi o'r Pwyllgor Deisebau. Fe'i cyfeiriwyd at y Pwyllgor Menter a Dysgu, sy'n gyfrifol am gludiant, a byddwn yn adrodd yn ôl ar ffurf adroddiad neu argymhellion.

[281] Yn ddiddorol, fe'ch atgoffaf mai cyfarfod ffurfiol nesaf y pwyllgor fydd hwnnw a gynhelir ar fore Mercher 19 Medi, ac mai'r pwnc dan sylw fydd cynllunio ar gyfer rheilffyrdd at y dyfodol. Felly, mae rhywbeth i bob un ohonom yn y pwnc hwnnw hefyd.

[282] I gloi, yr wyf yn ddiolchgar i chi fel cynulleidfa. Yr ydych wedi bod yn gynulleidfa hynaws. Diolch hefyd i bawb sydd wedi cyfrannu ac sydd wedi sicrhau bod y ddarpariaeth yma ar ein cyfer ni heddiw. Diolch i staff y Cynulliad, gan gynnwys y cyfieithwyr, ac i staff y ganolfan fendigedig hon am y croeso. Yr wyf yn mawr obeithio y byddwch chi, wedi'r holl drafod, yn edrych ar y cyfarfod hwn yn ei gyd-destun hanesyddol, lle'r ydym ni, fel Cynulliad Cenedlaethol, yn ceisio estyn allan at y bobl, fel eich bod chi'n rhan o'r hyn sy'n digwydd o ran llunio gwell dyfodol i bob un ohonom yng Nghymru. Diolch.

challenge—if there is a challenge for us, as a committee and as Members, we must face it, and take that challenge to the Assembly Government.

We will consider the evidence and discuss it with all committee members and officials before deciding on either preparing a report or recommendations for the Petitions Committee. As I said at the outset, this matter was raised through the Petitions Committee. It was referred to the Enterprise and Learning Committee, which is responsible for transport, and we will report back by way of a report or recommendations.

Interestingly, I remind you that the committee's next formal meeting will be held on the morning of Wednesday 19 September, when the subject under consideration will be railways planning for the future. So, there is something for every one of us in that subject.

Finally, I am grateful to you as an audience. You have been an excellent audience. I also thank all those who have contributed and who have ensured that provision was made for us here today. I thank Assembly staff, including the translators, and the staff of this excellent centre for their welcome. I sincerely hope that you, when all the talking is done, will look at this meeting in its historical context, where we, as a National Assembly, endeavour to reach out to the people, so that you play a part in what happens in terms of building a better future for all the people of Wales. Thank you.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12.49 p.m.
The meeting ended at 12.49 p.m.*