

## Agenda – Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau

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Lleoliad: I gael rhagor o wybodaeth cysylltwch a:  
Canolfan Addysg a Chelfyddydau Gareth Price  
Gateway, yr Amwythig Clerc y Pwyllgor  
Dyddiad: Dydd Iau, 9 Mawrth 2017 0300 200 6565  
Amser: 09.45 [SeneddESS@cynulliad.cymru](mailto:SeneddESS@cynulliad.cymru)

**Rhag-gyfarfod preifat (09:45–10:00)**

**1 Cyflwyniad, ymddiheuriadau, dirprwyon a datgan buddiannau**

**2 Gogledd Cymru a Glannau Merswy – Ymchwiliad i ddarparu  
masnachfrait y rheilffyrdd a'r metro**

(10:00–11:00)

(Tudalennau 1 – 37)

Iwan Prys Jones, Rheolwr Rhaglen, Bwrdd uchelgais economaidd gogledd Cymru  
Huw Jenkins, Rheolwr Datblygu Polisi, Merseytravel  
Councillor Samantha Dixon, Cadeirydd, Tasglu Rheilffyrdd Trawsffiniol Gogledd  
Cymru a Merswy Dyfrdwy

Dogfennau atodol:

Y Briff Ymchwil – Papur cefndir

Y Briff Ymchwil – Gogledd Cymru a Glannau Merswy

EIS(5)–07–17 (p1) Growth Track 360, Tasglu Rheilffyrdd Gogledd Cymru a  
Merswy Dyfrdwy (Saesneg yn unig)

EIS(5)–07–17 (p2) Merseytravel (Saesneg yn unig)

**Egwyl (11:00–12:00)**



**Digwyddiad i Randdeiliaid i drafod y fasnachfrait rheilffyrdd newydd a'r Metro**  
(12:00–14:00)

Dogfennau atodol:

Y Briff Ymchwil – Digwyddiad i randdeiliaid

## Eitem 2

Mae cyfyngiadau ar y ddogfen hon

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Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau/ Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Masnachfrait Rheilffyrdd a chyflwyno Metro / Rail Franchise and the Metro

Ymateb gan Growth Track 360, Tasglu Rheilffyrdd Gogledd Cymru a Merswy Dyfrdwy / Evidence from Growth Track 360, the North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Task Force

Response to the National Assembly for Wales Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee Inquiry into Rail Franchise and Metro Delivery from Growth Track 360, the North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Task Force.

The North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Task Force (RTF) is a partnership of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, the Mersey Dee Alliance, Merseytravel, the North Wales Business Council and the Chester and North Wales Chamber of Commerce. The purpose of the RTF is to campaign for better rail services in the cross-border North Wales and Mersey Dee area and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry.

Growth Track 360 sets out an ambitious programme that demonstrates how improved rail services can contribute to economic growth and job creation in the region. The prospectus sets out how improved network connectivity can help increase economic activity by £25bn and support the creation of up to 70,000 jobs.

[www.growthtrack360.co.uk](http://www.growthtrack360.co.uk)

It is noted that the Committee's inquiry is focused on the following issues:

- The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to the development, procurement and delivery of the rail franchise and South Wales Metro, including key risks and how they can be mitigated; and
- Priorities for the franchise specification and Metro delivery to ensure rail services meet the needs of current and future passengers throughout the franchise area, and deliver value for money for both passengers and the taxpayer

**The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to the development, procurement and delivery of the rail franchise and South Wales Metro, including key risks and how they can be mitigated**

The current rail franchise was let in 2003 on the basis of a zero growth in passenger numbers basis. This has left the area served by the franchise with inadequate rail services and in our view also suppressed passenger demand. The refranchising offers an opportunity for transformational change over the next franchise period. The new franchise must improve the frequency of rail services to key destinations, reduce key journey times and offer better quality services through improved rolling stock.

The Welsh Government (WG) must ensure that the next Wales and Borders (W&B) franchise will meet current and future passenger growth projections. Growthtrack 360 has stressed the importance of local authorities and the business sector using their local knowledge to help develop the prioritised outcomes for this franchise. This approach worked successfully with Rail North Ltd, making a transformational difference in the renewal of the Northern and Trans Pennine Express franchises from April 2016. It is

appreciated that the bidding process is different for this franchise, but nevertheless the level of stakeholder involvement to date has been disappointing.

It is essential in our view that cross-border arrangements for consultation and stakeholder representation are in place before the franchise is let and then subsequently. There should be cross border compliance and a strategic forum established, with appropriate representation from the Welsh Government, Department for Transport, the franchise operator, Network Rail and Transport Focus, lead officers and portfolio local transport authority Councillors throughout the franchise duration.

The RTF wishes to see a flexible approach to the new franchise that will allow improvements to services to be delivered in an incremental way that also allows for changing circumstances to be addressed. We would wish to see the franchise operator work closely with stakeholders so as to maximise the potential of our network and to be rewarded for initiatives that drive increased usage of the network. Because the bidding process has the outcomes identified some way into the process, it is not clear at this stage whether the outcomes sought by Growthtrack 360 will be incorporated in the franchise.

We have a positive working relationship with the Welsh Government and have been able to articulate our priorities clearly to key decision makers. It has been more difficult to engage with other key players involved in the franchise renewal.

**Priorities for the franchise specification and Metro delivery to ensure rail services meet the needs of current and future passengers throughout the franchise area, and deliver value for money for both passengers and the taxpayer**

The WG must ensure that the next Wales and Borders (W&B) franchise will meet current and future growth projections. Additional and more frequent services, better quality rolling stock and reduced journey times are at the core of our case. This will require funding for new services and also improvements to infrastructure. The WG and the Department for Transport (DfT) need to accelerate the implementation of a prioritised programme of critical infrastructure works.

**Infrastructure Improvements**

**Wrexham General Station:** Track and signalling improvements, creating a train turn back facility and provision of an additional platform.

**Chester Station:** One additional through platform with track and signalling improvements increasing the capacity for the number of trains to simultaneously approach or leave the station.

**Crewe Station:** Capacity, track and signalling layout to accommodate at least three trains per hour (in each direction) between Crewe and Chester, with a hub station to enable close proximity for transfer of passengers between HS2 and rail services to Chester, North Wales and Warrington.

**Line speed and Signalling Improvements:** especially along the North Wales Coast line

**Service Improvements**

Improved service frequencies and reduction of journey times. Having the ability to connect / split trains would maximise efficient use of capacity and improve connectivity. The current service provides poor peak time journeys for commuters to Chester. This needs to be addressed to serve unmet demand and investment being made within the city and surrounding areas.

The new committed service to Liverpool via Halton Curve must extend beyond Chester to Wrexham and along the North Wales coast.

Our work recommends that the following minimum connectivity requirements are needed, provided by a combination of connecting and through services:

GT360 has proposed a North Wales / Chester 4 or 5 per trains (including ICWC services to London) per hour minimum service providing connecting or through services to:

- Warrington and Manchester (some to airport) 2 trains per hour
- Crewe 3 trains per hour
- **Liverpool via Halton Curve 1 trains per hour**
- Birmingham International or Cardiff alternate hours

In addition improved services on the following routes are sought

- Wrexham – Bidston 2 trains per hour
- Llandudno – Blaenau Ffestiniog 2 trains per 3 hours

Importantly, links to the main airports serving the region at Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool John Lennon need improving with regular through rail services. Improvements to services **on Sundays and Bank Holidays**, are needed, including Boxing day services, to service frequency and the times of first and last trains. TfW should work with other franchises to improve connectivity for example, by assessing extending the Arriva Northern Connect service (from Leeds) beyond Chester along the North Wales Coast, and considering options for extending the Crewe service to Stoke / Stafford.

The franchise operator must adopt a better approach to **holding connecting trains** when it is known that passengers will be transferring, particularly if late at night and without being penalised for late running.

The WG must ensure that **performance monitoring is enforced**, with punctuality performance measured at all stations as opposed to the final destination station. This should also include performance in providing the correct type of rolling stock (and seating capacity), timescales for repairing defects at stations, revenue protection and management of disruption.

Performance monitoring should include positive performance measures such as **commitments to increase passenger satisfaction** and evidence of how the franchise operator is actively engaging and supporting local communities and economies in each region.

The operator franchise must have minimum requirements to **manage planned and unplanned service disruption** including full use of technology, social media; availability of staff who are able to help; ensure that clear announcements at all stations and easy processing of compensation claims, including automation where possible.

The **fare structure** (and supporting technology) must always give the passenger the best value fare for their journey(s), including giving value for money to make travel by families or small groups by rail more viable. Fares to make rail travel by young adults and those on low income more affordable are required

The franchise operator needs to be committed **helping passengers to make increased use of technology for ticket payment**, particularly mobile devices. This provides scope to better understand passengers' travel patterns, direct and real time journey information and reduces cash handling. Commitments should also be made to introduce two way through ticketing with a prioritised network of bus services (and community transport) that are commonly used at either end of the rail journey.

Income generation (from fares or other sources) above a predetermined amount by region or line should be reinvested in to services or facilities.

## **Station facilities**

All stations must meet requirements of the broadest range **of needs for people with mobility or sensory impairment**. Toilet provision must be fully accessible, and be cleaned and maintained on a regular basis and be available for use free of charge. Platform length and height need to provide easy access with trains.

**Minimum criteria should be applied for all stations based on passenger number categories**. This should include specifying minimum opening hours (and days of operation) of staffed ticket offices, directions to nearby bus stops, sheltered waiting accommodation, contact details for taxi operators, provision of CCTV, live journey information including audible messages to each platform and welcoming waiting facilities

The WG should make available to the franchise operator, a residual value funding mechanism to enable major station improvements schemes. This would allow payment of major schemes to be made beyond the franchise duration.

Growthtrack 360 also proposes that the franchise operator is committed to delivering **improvements to station car park facilities and capacity**.

### **Community rail and delivery models**

The Welsh Government should encourage the franchise operator to make **community rail development** a strong feature of the franchise, improving financial security to existing community rail partnerships and enable expansion of the community partnership model. The franchise operator must collaborate with other franchise operators on overlapping schemes such as the emerging North Cheshire Community Rail Partnership with Arriva Northern.

Growthtrack 360 would like to work with the WG and DfT to broaden the community rail concept to include bus service operators and community transport, as well as strengthening engagement with small and medium enterprises to encourage more use station buildings, to **increase use of the public transport network** and to help prioritise investment.

A Growthtrack 360 working group has prepared a draft proposal of an **alternative management model for the Wrexham – Bidston route**, setting out the benefits of a dedicated customer focused team building interest and involvement from communities and businesses along this largely self-contained line.

### **Rolling stock**

We are concerned that little progress is evident of WG addressing the urgency of **introducing new rolling stock**, bearing in mind potential delivery lead times. This investment is essential to respond to the continual passenger growth and must keep pace with the quality and capacity improvements being made in other franchises, notably the Northern and Trans Pennine Express. Other options for funding rolling stock investment in addition to the current practice should be considered.

New diesel powered rolling stock should be capable for **adaption for potential powering from overhead electrification and stored electrical power** as those options become available.

**Comfortable seat availability** with adequate leg and elbow room in a clean and well-ventilated environment accompanied by welcoming (and visible) staff, free Wi Fi availability and plug in sockets are basic expectations for passengers.

Rolling stock should be designed for the varying needs of passengers on individual routes. Examples include the demand for luggage accommodation, catering options, capacity for cycles and toilet provision.



1. Merseytravel welcomes this important opportunity to submit evidence to the National Assembly for Wales's Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's Inquiry into the Rail Franchise and South Wales Metro.
2. It is noted that the Committee's inquiry is focused on the following issues:
  - The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to the development, procurement and delivery of the rail franchise and South Wales Metro, including key risks and how they can be mitigated; and
  - Priorities for the franchise specification and Metro delivery to ensure rail services meet the needs of current and future passengers throughout the franchise area, and deliver value for money for both passengers and the taxpayer
3. Merseytravel's evidence will focus upon the latter point, namely priorities in respect of the rail franchise, rather than on the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's procurement processes. Neither does this submission comment upon the delivery of the South Wales Metro, as Merseytravel would not wish to comment on devolved issue, and one with no direct bearing on the LCR.
4. Merseytravel is the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's (LCRCA's) lead advisory body and executive body on transport issues. It also advises the LCR's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on transport matters. The LCRCA is a statutory body covering the local authority districts of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral with a collective population of 1.5 million. The LCRCA is responsible for strategic transport planning across the city region, together with other strategic policy areas such as economic development, housing and planning, and employment and skills.
5. Operationally, Merseytravel has responsibility for managing the devolved Merseyrail concession, developing public transport infrastructure, such as new bus and rail stations, operating the tolled Mersey Tunnels and procuring non-commercial bus services. It is also responsible for administering concessionary, pre-paid and 'smart' ticketing and providing travel information. One of the largest projects now in development concerns the £460 million replacement of the 40-year old Merseyrail rolling stock. The new fleet will be owned by the Liverpool City Region and leased to the train operating company. Notably, the new fleet also has the flexibility to operate beyond the current confines of the Merseyrail 750V DC-electrified network<sup>1</sup>.
6. Merseytravel, as part of the LCR Combined Authority (which has a river boundary with Wales) recognises the fundamental linkages between North Wales and North West England in terms of jobs, retail, tourism, education and healthcare. North East Wales, West Cheshire and parts of the Liverpool City Region form part of a common, recognisable economic and travel-to-work-area, which necessitates safe, affordable and efficient cross-boundary, multi-modal east-west movements.
7. Furthermore, transport networks rarely respect administrative boundaries, meaning that cross boundary travel planning can be fragmented and prove complex to deliver. As a result,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/Pages/New-Trains-For-Merseyrail.aspx>

Merseytravel enjoys a close working relationship with adjoining local authorities and key alliances such as the Mersey Dee Alliance, the Growth Track 360 Alliance and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to address these cross-boundary issues in a strategic and co-ordinated way. At a wider geographic level, Merseytravel played a key role in the Rail North governance arrangements and processes, in respect of the re-franchising of 'Northern' and 'Trans-Pennine Express'. This led to transformational improvements to the specification of these franchises. As a related point, the effectiveness of the Rail North process, in drawing together relevant partners from local and central government is one that Welsh Government may wish to replicate in respect of the Wales and Borders franchise.

8. Merseytravel has a long history of working jointly with Welsh Government on cross boundary transport issues<sup>2</sup>, and has contributed significant evidence to relevant consultations and inquiries. These include: the Enterprise and Business Committee's into cross border rail infrastructure priorities<sup>3</sup> and input to the Welsh Government's development of the new Wales and Borders franchise<sup>4</sup>. Evidence has also been submitted to the Welsh Affairs Committee of the UK parliament on key cross boundary rail issues<sup>5</sup>. This evidence is consistent with these earlier submissions.
9. The current Wales and Borders franchise was specified on a "no growth" basis, and the actual growth that has been experienced has led to congested trains, cancellations and poor service levels overall. Equally, the static nature of the franchise has meant that services have not been able to respond to changing work and travel patterns, especially in cross-boundary terms. Transport is now firmly recognised as a core component of sustainable economic growth, through enhanced access to goods and services, for the workforce and in supporting agglomeration – these being fundamental principles that underpin the creation of 'Transport for the North'. More locally, the strong evidence base that exists compels the next Wales and Borders franchise to be specified not just on a growth scenario, but on one that is reflective of functional economic geographies extending beyond arbitrary administrative boundaries and service patterns.
10. Equally, at a strategic level, the new franchise should provide for an enhanced level of service that will better connect the major towns and cities and across the border in England, and not just those within Wales. Services in North Wales should also better serve international gateways in the form of Manchester Airport and Liverpool John Lennon Airport, recognising that these airports enjoy a significant market share from North Wales and the Marches. This is discussed further below in respect of the reinstatement of the Halton rail curve.
11. Consideration must also be given to improving and increasing rolling stock levels, to support growth and address issues of overcrowding and reliability. The new franchise should provide the additional capacity to bring crowding levels in line with Rail Executive's standards, but more importantly, to support growth and modal shift. It is appreciated that 'cascading' rolling stock from other franchise areas is needed to support this. However, building on the strong business case developed by the LCR, innovative rolling stock solutions should be explored, including the acquisition of new, bespoke rolling stock by the Welsh Government, which would be leased to the franchisee(s). From Merseytravel's experience, this approach will be 30% cheaper than a conventional ROSCO model over the lifetime of the fleet, with no risk that the new stock is subsequently cascaded to another franchise area. The new fleet, which will become operational by 2019-2020 is also a highly relevant consideration, given its potential to extend beyond the existing electrified Merseyrail network.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/media-centre/news/Pages/View-from-Merseytravel-chair---cross-border-rail.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s48046/EBC4-03-16%20p.3%20Evidence%20from%20Merseytravel.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://moderngov.merseytravel.uk.net/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=326&MID=1331#AI9536> – item 73

<sup>5</sup> <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/welsh-affairs-committee/wales-and-borders-rail-franchise/written/36343.html>

12. At a more specific geographic level, Merseytravel's priorities are to promote an enhance two key cross-boundary routes that fall within the scope of the franchise:-
- a) The Borderlands Line between Wrexham and Bidston; and
  - b) The development of the Halton Curve and new services into Liverpool South Parkway and Liverpool Lime Street from Chester and North Wales
13. Looking at (a) in more depth, Merseytravel is working closely with the Welsh Government to improve service quality and train frequencies on the Borderlands line between Wrexham and Bidston. The service currently takes the form of a sub-standard, hourly diesel service to Bidston, where it connects with Merseyrail services to Liverpool. This line should be recognised as a high priority by the Committee and by the Welsh Government in terms of its economic importance in linking three mutually supportive Enterprise Zones (Liverpool Waters, Wirral Waters and Deeside Industrial Park) and in supporting access to leisure, culture, health facilities and retailing on both sides of the border. It links university and college sites in Wrexham, Deeside, Wirral and Liverpool, and will serve an increasingly important social and economic role for HMP Berwyn in Wrexham which is scheduled to open shortly.
14. Many work-based trips in the Deeside area are typically made by car at present, exacerbating congestion and associated costs and disbenefits on cross border road links such as the M53, M56, A494, A55 and A483. The 'Growth Track 360' Prospectus estimates that 1 million cross bore commuter trips are made each month, whilst 85% of these are made by car.
15. Equally, evidence shows that lack of access to a car can lead to worklessness if convenient and affordable transport options do not exist. As a cross-border example, residents in Rock Ferry, east Wirral, live around 12 miles from significant employment opportunities at Deeside Industrial Park. Deeside Industrial Park is served by Hawarden Bridge station, but only 4 services each weekday call from Bidston, and the three leg rail journey takes around 70 minutes. This is not considered a viable or attractive proposition. The Growth Track 360 prospectus estimates that 1 in 5 people will turn down job offers due to inaccessibility<sup>6</sup>. As the Borderlands line directly serves Deeside Industrial Park, an enhanced service specification, linked to a new transport hub in the Hawarden Bridge area, would open up access for all from across the travel-to-work area.
16. A recent technical demand study commissioned by Merseytravel and the Welsh Government highlights the positive benefit-to-cost ratios and economic returns that would arise from enhanced service levels on the Borderlands line. A multi-party steering group has been established under the Growth Track 360 governance structures to oversee the next steps, where the clear priority is to improve the existing hourly diesel service to a 30 minute frequency. Operationally, this may require the second train to operate as a semi-fast service, calling at the busiest stations only, but this would offer a faster journey time and improve performance. This should be a clear specification within the new franchise in recognition of the strategic potential of this line.
17. As a related issue, the franchise specification should also seek to equalise the fare scales and ticketing options that apply across the wider city region; fares from stations in south Wirral (e.g. Neston) are considerably greater than fares for trips of a similar distance on the Merseyrail network (e.g. from Hooton). These are issues that arise from differences in the franchise specifications, but from a passenger perspective, they are barriers to growing patronage on the Borderlands line. They also distort travel patterns when residents living adjacent to the Borderlands line opt to drive to Merseyrail stations such as Hooton or Birkenhead North for onward travel to Liverpool and beyond.
18. Turning to (b), the long-standing ambition to reinstate the Halton Curve, together with capacity enhancements in the surrounding area, will facilitate direct rail links from the North Wales Coast

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.growthtrack360.com/home/key-facts/>

Line and from Wrexham to Liverpool. The rail link has specific economic importance in improving rail access to Liverpool John Lennon Airport and linking three mutually supportive Enterprise Zones (Sci-Tech Daresbury, Cheshire Science Corridor and Mersey Waters), and in supporting access to education, leisure and retailing.

19. In recognition of its importance, the LCR has committed £16 million from its devolved Growth Deal funding to reinstate the link and deliver associated signalling and junction works<sup>7</sup>. It is anticipated that work will be completed by May 2018, with services starting from December 2018. Initially, Merseytravel will subsidise an hourly Chester-Liverpool service via the Halton Curve, as a first step in the development of enhanced services using the Curve. This initial service provides value for money, and benefits rail users in the West Cheshire area and in serving Liverpool South Parkway (the interchange for Liverpool John Lennon Airport), but is clearly is not the optimal solution. Neither is it a sustainable solution in the long term to the LCR, given the element of duplication that exists with Merseyrail services operating between Chester and Liverpool.
20. As such, a priority for the new Wales and Borders franchise will be the inclusion of enhanced, regular cross-border services along the Halton Curve to Liverpool South Parkways and Liverpool Lime Street from significant stations in North Wales including Bangor, Llandudno and Wrexham. These have been shown to enjoy positive benefits in the scheme's business case<sup>8</sup>. Merseytravel would wish to see such cross-border services forming part of the base franchise, in recognition of the significant benefits afforded to Welsh residents, and in order to fully complement the LCR's significant capital investment in the Halton Curve.
21. It is recognised that service enhancements are hindered by infrastructure capacity constraints. In respect of the Halton Curve, these constraints stem from lack of capacity and the poor configuration of Chester rail station, together with track and turnback constraints in the vicinity of Wrexham General. The significant capital scheme promoted by Welsh Government to partially redouble the Wrexham-Saltney Junction line in the Rossett area is clearly welcomed, and its role in improving north-south journey times in Wales is fully appreciated. However, as the line will remain singled between Rossett and Wrexham, with capacity constraints in Wrexham and Chester, this situation does not currently support enhanced service provision to Liverpool and Liverpool John Lennon Airport from Wrexham and destinations south, and from the North Wales Coast line.
22. Merseytravel would strongly urge the Committee to identify the above infrastructure constraints as very high funding priorities, to release much needed rail capacity to support growth and to secure modal shift. The specification of the rail franchise is considered an ideal opportunity for potential solutions to these infrastructure constraints to be scoped and addressed by prospective franchise operators, in conjunction with the Welsh Government.

Huw Jenkins  
Merseytravel

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<sup>7</sup> <http://councillors.knowsley.gov.uk/documents/s42372/Final%20Liverpool%20City%20Region%20Growth%20Deal%20Schemes.pdf?StyleType=standard&StyleSize=none>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/local-transport-delivery/Documents/Halton%20Curve%20FBC%20-%20Final%20Version%20Feb%202016%20REDACTED%20VERSION3.pdf>

# d i'r Agenda

Mae cyfyngiadau ar y ddogfen hon