

## ROCP 17, Rail Freight Group

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

### **Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee**

Adolygiad o flaenoriaethau'r Pwyllgor ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd | Review of the Committee's priorities for the Sixth Senedd

Ymateb gan Y Grŵp Cludo Nwyddau ar y Rheilffyrdd | Evidence from Rail Freight Group

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### **Your views**

1. Rail Freight Group (RFG) is pleased to respond to the invitation from the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee to contribute to its consultation on the review of its priorities for the remainder of the Sixth Senedd. No part of this response is confidential.

2. RFG is the representative body for rail freight in the UK, and we campaign for a greater use of rail freight to deliver environmental and economic benefits for the UK. We have around 120 member companies including train operators, end customers, ports and terminal operators, suppliers including locomotive and wagon companies and support services.

#### **1. What are your views on the Committee's three strategic priorities: Climate Change; Sustainable Communities; and Protecting and enhancing the natural environment?**

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3. In its previous submission (September 2021) in response to the consultation on what should be the Committee's priorities for the full five years of the Sixth Senedd, RFG highlighted two themes it commended for inclusion in the Committee's programme.

- a. That freight movements by road and by rail are essential for the Welsh economy and that modal switch to rail is a key contributor to freight decarbonisation.
  - b. That rail freight movements should be planned alongside passenger services on the mixed-use rail network to ensure effective choices are made.
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4. Although the three priority areas on which the Committee chose to focus were, and remain, apposite in the context of the Committee's wide remit, the opportunities and challenges presented by freight movements, whether by rail or by road, and their potential contribution to delivering both the priorities of climate change and sustainable communities were not included

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**2. To what extent are the Committee's three strategic priorities still relevant, reflecting on social, economic and environmental developments since they were set at the start of the Sixth Senedd?**

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No response.

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**3. What are your view on the Committee's detailed priorities/outline programme of work for Years 3 to 5 of the Sixth Senedd (set out in its report, [Priorities for the Sixth Senedd?](#))**

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5. The last two years have demonstrated that in the transport field, Welsh Government's focus remains very much on passenger movements, reflecting the contents of Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy. However, RFG welcomes the positive words from the Deputy Minister during the Zoom Roundtable session organised by RFG in March 2023 and notes the increased engagement in freight issues by Senior Officers. Nevertheless there has been no progress towards the development of a Freight and Logistics Strategy for Wales, so the case for freight in Wales and for the benefits of freight and for the positive contribution it can make to delivering the priorities of both climate change and the development of sustainable communities goes largely unheard. RFG would suggest this omission is an issue the Committee might wish to investigate.

6. Welsh Government remains wholly committed to decarbonisation, "Net Zero" and improved air quality through reduced emissions. Nevertheless, while the decarbonisation of transport is widely recognised in the UK as a key priority, and the rail freight sector is already working to reduce its emissions further and understand how it can move forward to full decarbonisation, the benefits that can be delivered through freight decarbonisation do not form part of Welsh Government policies. This omission is something the Committee might wish to explore as part of its programme for the next few years.

7. Similarly, the immediate priority elsewhere in the UK is for freight modal shift from road to rail, which is well proven to reduce carbon emissions by up to 76% and also substantially reduce the emission of particulates. However, such opportunities and benefits continue not to feature in Welsh Government policies and announcements and transport policy remains almost wholly passenger focussed, sometimes with potential dis-benefits for rail freight. RFG suggests the

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current review of its priorities provides the opportunity for the Committee to include freight decarbonisation, particularly modal shift, in its scope and to understand whether Welsh Government is giving sufficient attention and priority to this potentially significant benefit.

8. In this context the Committee might also wish to add the issue of further electrification of the rail network in Wales to its agenda for the rest of this Senedd. Investment in wiring more of the network would bring immediate decarbonisation benefits for passenger services and also medium term benefits for rail freight, providing the installed power supply provided is appropriate and sufficient.

9. In its policies and announcements Welsh Government continues to make little reference to longer distance freight movements, mostly cross-border, by rail and by road. This is unfortunate, particularly in the context of ensuring continuing deliveries of consumer goods to shops and doorsteps, raw materials to factories and finished products to customers. Without these movements there can be no sustainable communities. The Committee may wish to seek the reasons for this continued omission in the Government's strategies.

10. Meanwhile. Transport for Wales, in line with its remit, remains disengaged from freight matters but this separation can create situations where plans for enhanced passenger service provision can potentially have a detrimental effect on the ability of the mixed-use rail network to handle existing freight flows, quite apart from increased or new freight flows. This disconnect is also something the Committee might wish to explore in more depth in the remaining years of the Sixth Senedd.

11. Although the announcement earlier this year regarding the establishment of two Freeports in Wales was welcomed by RFG, there was very little reference to the implications for land-side freight movements and to the opportunities created to develop policies that take forward the climate change agenda. As an example, in the medium term, rail freight can support proposals for these Freeports to drive economic decarbonisation by facilitating the movement of liquid hydrogen. Ensuring the opportunity to pursue such spin-off benefits is not overlooked is a matter the Committee might wish to explore.

12. Even with positive support through Welsh Government policies and actions, growth in rail freight is also dependent on the availability of suitable terminals for trans-shipment between road and rail. Rail freight is a private sector operation and where demand is identified the market will invest in appropriate facilities, based on proven economic viability. However, the identification and protection of potential sites for terminals and encouragement for such investments are very

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much influenced by Government policies. The Committee may wish to investigate what planning policies are currently in place in Wales, or are being developed, to encourage growth in rail freight and to safeguard both existing and potential terminal sites.

13. As noted in our previous submission, Welsh Government's approach to rail freight appears to be distinct from Scottish Government, who have set targets for rail freight growth, and from Westminster Government who plan to do so later this year. RFG therefore suggests the Committee might consider reviewing the role of Welsh Government, and its agencies, in the movement of freight within, to and from Wales, and in particular on how modal shift to rail is to be encouraged.

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**4. To what extent are the Committee's detailed priorities/outline programme of work still relevant, reflecting on social, economic and environmental developments since they were set at the start of the Sixth Senedd?**

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14. RFG supports the three priorities adopted by the Committee for the first years of the Sixth Senedd and gives its support to their continuation for the remainder of the Session. However, RFG would also propose the Committee includes in its remit for the next two years consideration of freight movements by both rail and road and the implications and benefits from such movements, and from modal shift, with particular reference to delivering the priorities of climate change and sustainable communities.

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**5. Are there any other matters related to the Committee's priorities/work programme/ways of working that you would like to comment on?**

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No response.

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**6. Other information**

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No response.

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