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Llyr Gruffydd MS  
Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

14 January 2025

Dear Llyr Gruffydd MS

I am writing to you following the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee's most recent general scrutiny of Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales. During the session, the committee raised several questions regarding operational matters for Transport for Wales and I am providing a written update to address these.

### **Class 197 Air Conditioning Units**

Firstly, an update was requested following issues with the new air conditioning units on our 197 trains travelling on the Marches line earlier this year. I appreciate that during the summer months, it can be uncomfortable to travel on a train without working air conditioning.

Therefore, we've now completed an update to the software across our 197 fleet and are investigating further software improvements that will provide a greater level of automation. As well as software updates, we're currently looking into the feasibility of fitting heat reflective film on the 197 windows to further alleviate this problem.

### **Fleet Target Update**

During the session, the Cabinet Secretary was also asked to provide an update on TfW's latest fleet targets. We're investing £800 million in a brand-new fleet of trains for the Wales and borders network, and almost every line now has new units operating on them, with some lines such as the Wrexham-Bidston line or the Conwy Valley Line having every service entirely new.

As of the Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2024 timetable change, the North Wales Branches will continue to have 100% of journeys on new fleet and the North Wales Mainline with over 80% of journeys on new fleet. Overall, over 87% of journeys will be on new fleet for North Wales services following the introduction of the December 2024 timetable.

We expect the delivery of all new fleets, apart from the Class 398s, to be completed by the end of 2025, with all units entered into service by the end of 2026 (this is subject to some upgrade work on the Cambrian line). The table below details the number of each new unit entered into service so far:



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<b>New Trains</b>	<b>Number in service</b>
Class 197s	58 out of 77
Class 231s	11 out of 11
Class 756s	10 out of 24 (units being introduced in a phased pattern)
Class 398s	0 out of 36
Mark 4s	7 out of 8
Class 153s	16 out of 18
Class 230s	5 out of 5

However, we're still experiencing delays from our manufacturers, both Stadler and CAF, and it's important to both work in partnership with them and to hold them to account in every way possible. I very recently undertook a short visit to Spain to meet with the CEO of CAF to push them further on making deliveries.

The latest aggregate position is that around 70-75% of passenger journeys are on new trains, but this will increase with more Class 756s coming online and then bringing them onto the Coryton Line around Spring/Early Summer in 2025.

### **Cash payments on trains**

Finally, in relation to a Senedd petition regarding cashless payments led by representatives from Mencap, an update was requested regarding TFW's approach to accepting cash payments for train tickets and for refreshments on board.

If a customer needs to buy a ticket with cash, they can buy it from the ticket office if there's one at the station. If the ticket office is closed or if the customer is travelling from an unstaffed station, they can use the self-service machine to get a 'promise to pay voucher' Promise to Pay which can be exchanged for a ticket at the earliest opportunity.

We recognise that not everyone can use our self-service machines. Therefore, if this is the only way of purchasing a ticket at the station the customer is travelling from and they are unable to use the machine, they will be able to purchase a ticket on the train. Under these circumstances our Revenue Protection team are given discretion not to charge a penalty fare and will either charge the full single fare or charge any relevant discounted fare as appropriate.

Customers can also buy tickets using cash as part of our partnership with Payzone, through which selected rail tickets can be purchased at stores located at nearby stations. A list of participating Payzone retailers can be found here: <https://tfw.wales/ways-to-travel/rail/buy-tickets/ways-to-buy/payzone>.



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### **Cash payments for refreshments on trains**

In relation to payments for refreshments and catering on board, Tfw along with several other Train Operating Companies including Great Western Railway and London North Eastern Railway, does not accept cash. This decision was made initially as a response to Covid-19, and society moving away from cash payments. This is safer for our catering colleagues as they no longer carry cash. This also eliminates the risks and costs associated with handling and banking cash.

I hope this letter answers the questions raised during the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee's scrutiny session of the Cabinet Secretary. If you have any further operational questions for Tfw, then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

James Price  
Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive