

**NATIONAL RAIL ENQUIRIES SUBMISSION ON PROPOSED WELSH  
LANGUAGE MEASURE – 11<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2010**

National Rail Enquiries was set up by the train operators during the privatisation of the railways under the Railways Act 1993. It is required to offer the English language call centre service. However where it sees a passenger need that can be served within its commercial boundaries it offers other channels. Examples of these include the web site, speech recognition, mobile applications, SMS and the Welsh language call centre.

As well as more channels National Rail Enquiries continues to invest in improvements in passenger information provision especially in the area of real time information during disruption.

The National Rail Enquiries website is the number one travel site in the UK based on number of visits and, reflecting ever-changing technology, National Rail Enquiries has also diversified the range of information sources for passengers by making journey information available through the other channels.

National Rail Enquiries supports the aim of the Welsh Assembly to promote the use of the Welsh language. We offer a call centre in Welsh using a separate number (0845 60 40 500) and have upgraded the [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) website to recognise Welsh names, although it does give a response using the English names.

However National Rail Enquiries is a national service and our aim is to improve the information and range of services to all rail travellers in Great Britain. This includes developments such as real time train running information, expanding the number of access channels for information and helping people to find cheaper fares. We have limited funds to achieve improvements and have to target those funds to the areas where they will be most effective.

Providing the Welsh language call centre has a very high cost per call but, because of the low volume of calls (the Welsh service takes around 6,000 Welsh language calls per annum compared to nearly 12 million for the English line), the overall cost isn't high. Unfortunately our other channels have higher fixed costs and are not able to be run on a cost per contact basis.

For example providing a Welsh language website would involve copying every page on the site (around 16,000) into Welsh as well as setting up tables to convert journey planning data into Welsh. This is a huge fixed cost regardless of how many people use the site. Equally the dynamic data, which is generated in English, would all need to be translated into Welsh for a Welsh language website. Again this would have to be done regardless of how many people were using the site.

National Rail Enquiries are committed to improving their services for all passengers in Great Britain. Whilst we support the aims of the Measure we believe that imposing a duty on National Rail Enquiries to expand their Welsh language services is disproportionate to the benefit and will ultimately lead to less investment elsewhere which will be to the detriment of all passengers, including those in Wales.

## **Response to Consultation Questions**

1. The Measure is unclear on the criteria for deciding “reasonable and proportionate”. From the position of NRE the decisions on what channels to provide in what languages is driven by customer need and commercial boundaries. If a service meets those criteria then we would look to provide such a service regardless of whether the Measure was in place or not. If the service does not meet the criteria then we would need to see how the measure would be applied.
2. As above the application of this Measure is still unclear.
3. As above we provide services driven by customer and need within commercial boundaries. Unless the Measure imposes requirements for services that do not meet these criteria it will not impact on our organisation. However we have to restate that the criteria are still unclear.
4. Already addressed in the note above.
5. Again it is still unclear how the Measure will be implemented. If the Measure imposes additional costs on businesses then that will clearly be a barrier.
6. Any increase in the current level of Welsh language services to be provided by NRE will introduce an additional cost.
7. No other comments.