



ASLEF Response

Williams Review – Evidence Call: Objectives and assessment criteria

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train drivers' union representing approximately 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. ASLEF is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the objectives and assessment criteria for the Williams Review of the railway in Britain. The Review is being conducted at an important time for the future of the railways and the union is keen to ensure that the best possible outcomes are delivered for passengers, customers, communities and the taxpayer.

Question 1: The evidence papers summarise the key themes and evidence on which the Rail Review will draw in the subsequent phases of our work. Are there other themes or areas of evidence that we should consider? If so, what are they?

3. The user experience paper covers a broad range of stakeholders and their experience of, and views about, the railway. ASLEF believes this could go further to fully consider the needs of communities as well as passengers and customers, as the secondary impacts on a range of people matter to them as well. For example, an increase in movement of freight by rail rather than HGVs would increase road safety, and reduce pollution in heavily populated urban areas next to trunk roads.
4. The need for decarbonising the railway is also a prominent priority that was not fully discussed in the evidence papers. It is imperative that rail continues to decarbonise and to contribute to decarbonisation of transport across the board. This can be achieved by a

modal shift from road to rail, but also in the decarbonisation of rail itself. Several sources have concluded that the only sufficient way to decarbonise rail is electrification, and the investment required to fully electrify Britain's railways should therefore be a consideration in any proposals.

5. As a broad objective, ASLEF believes that the railways should be publicly owned and operated. While this model of ownership was discussed as a comparator with other similar countries, the union believes that having a railway in Britain fully in public ownership should be a priority and focus of the Review rather than merely a citation.

Question 2: Has the Review identified the right high-level objectives as set out in Chapter 2?

6. The right high-level objectives have broadly been considered, and the union welcomes the inclusion of 'wider society' alongside passengers and the taxpayer as key aims.
7. The railway has been at the centre of society since its inception, and it is important to remember its key role in the first industrial revolution. As we stand on the cusp of the next industrial revolution it's time for the railway to once again play a major role. The green new deal movement, ethical investment and industrial strategy for the country all benefit from, and link closely into, the strategic rail network for both passengers and freight.
8. ASLEF would welcome a specific objective for freight, rather than freight being included within the 'wider society' header. The promotion and increase of freight on rail has enormous benefits including reductions in carbon emissions due to taking HGVs off the road; being able to provide materials to inner city locations for construction and other major infrastructure projects; delivering infrastructure work on the railways, and supporting the UK's freight movements from ports and other entry points across the country at the speed required for just-in-time manufacturing and other processes.
9. Additionally, due to the nature of freight paths and freight movements, as discussed in the evidence paper on the user experience of the railway in Great Britain, it is important for freight to be considered at every stage of planning and organisation of the railways. For freight to flourish, it is necessary for long paths to be available, which frequently cross more

than one Network Rail route area, and for freight trains to be able to access track right into urban centres. Both of these factors require high-level strategic priority to be deliverable.

Question 3: Has the Review identified the key issues constraining the success of the railways in Chapter 3? What relative priority would you place on them?

10. ASLEF agrees with the broad problem statements identified, but thinks there should be some additions to complete the list.
11. We believe that the railway in Britain should be fully publicly owned and operated, without the involvement of private enterprise and without the leakage of funds to private profit at any point. The union therefore considers that the problem statement 'public funding is leaking out of the industry in the form of private profit' should be added.
12. The union also believes that the railway should be at the heart of social and community planning across the country, and therefore proposes the addition of another problem statement 'the railway is currently failing to serve communities, and too often exists in isolation from other planning and transport policy processes'.
13. In terms of priority, the impetus for public ownership to remove any profit leak would be ASLEF's top priority. After this, the need for strategic direction is the most paramount issue. Short termism and an inability to plan and roll over infrastructure projects has led to shambolic cancellations, extended project work and overall a lack of good infrastructure to serve the network. A 'guiding mind' and longer periods of forward looking could help to resolve this, along with the ability to retain skills and supply chains by rolling projects one into the other instead of stop-start.

Question 4: Do the broad assessment criteria in Chapter 4 capture the right issues against which the Review should test its proposals? What priority should we attach to each and how should we balance trade-offs? Are there other issues we should consider?

14. ASLEF broadly agrees with the assessment criteria listed under the 'Passengers' heading. We believe it is important that the railway serves both passengers and communities, and the criteria listed also acknowledge these priorities.
15. Public trust in the railways is very low and part of the reason for this is that the public are aware that the system is being run for profit, not people. ASLEF therefore reiterates our call for public ownership and operation of the railways, along with considering public trust among the highest priorities for the assessment criteria.
16. Under 'Affordability' the union strongly agrees that the funding and budgets of the railways should be put on a sustainable footing, as in point 1.
17. Regarding points 2. and 3. ASLEF believes that the railways should be fully publicly owned and operated, and therefore that the incentives for its operating bodies should primarily be based around running an efficient service which works for users, taxpayers and communities.
18. While we accept the need to seek commercial opportunities, such as bringing in private investment in order to further develop infrastructure, the union is very clear that it does not believe commercialisation should become a system of operation, rather that the railways should remain publicly owned and operated, and any income raised be re-invested into improving the service.
19. The inclusion of rail freight under the heading 'The fundamentals' is welcome. ASLEF sees this criterion as a very high priority given the vulnerability of freight to market forces, and the important contribution that increasing rail freight would make to road safety and environmental sustainability.
20. Under 'The fundamentals' we also propose an additional criterion of Principles for the operation of the railway: **Principles.** *The railway must be in public ownership, operated by the public sector; the railway must contribute to decarbonisation and sustainability, and the railway must maintain high standards of workplace safety, terms and conditions and industrial relations.*
21. ASLEF is in support of the proposed outputs listed under 'System changes'.

22. Regarding point 6. we feel that an extra clause should be added, to highlight the substantial benefits of a rolling programme of investment which include the ability to retain skills and existing supply chains from one project to the next. We propose adding *and must have a commitment to a rolling programme of investment across the network.*
23. In point 7. the inclusion of the nature of the workforce is welcome. ASLEF would also seek to ensure that strong and fair industrial relations is part of the listed outputs for the railway. We therefore propose to amend point 7. to: ***Workforce engagement and diversity.*** *The sector needs to ensure a productive, flexible, engaged and diverse workforce supported by strong leadership that puts the customer first and is proud of the industry, along with a positive approach to industrial relations and the maintenance of a high standard of safety and fair terms and conditions.*