

## **Abercynon New Station Project**

### **Proposal to Build a New Station at Abercynon and Close the old Station at Abercynon North**

Currently, the town of Abercynon has two separate stations, 180 metres apart. The separation of the stations is a feature of the existing infrastructure, there being two separate running lines, one for Aberdare and one for Merthyr. At present, two trains per hour serve the travelling public at each separate station.

The Abercynon New Station is a joint project involving Welsh Assembly Government and the South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA). The construction of the New Station will be undertaken by Network Rail.

The Project involves a proposal to build a brand new Station at Abercynon and, when that Station is ready to open, to close the old Station at Abercynon North. The opening of the New Station and the closure of Abercynon North Station will be simultaneous, resulting in no loss of opportunity for passengers. The New Station will be built on the site of the existing Abercynon South Station (next to the Signal Box). Passengers who currently travel to and from Abercynon North Station will then use the New Station, which will be situated 180 metres away.

The Project is part of a wider £18 million investment in modernising the railway infrastructure and train services between Merthyr, Abercynon and Cardiff.

The Project will be completed in February 2008. The main benefits for passengers will be:

#### **Improved Train Services**

- Merthyr trains and Aberdare trains will stop at the New Station – this is an improvement over the current situation where Merthyr trains stop at Abercynon South and Aberdare trains stop at Abercynon North
- The frequency of Merthyr trains will improve from every hour to every 30 minutes.
- 4 trains per hour in each direction during the daytime – providing customers with more a more frequent train service and greater choice of journeys will serve the New Station at Abercynon.

- Longer platforms so that longer trains with additional seating capacity can be run.

### **Better Access and Waiting Facilities**

- Closure of the old subway and replacing it with a modern, dry and well lit new subway that is fitted with CCTV.
- 24 hour CCTV coverage.
- Weatherproof canopies, with clear panels to assist with personal security.
- Integrated, clear and coherent signage and information displays, together with signage to station from outside
- For the future, a Park & Ride Car Park with secure car parking.
- Tactile paving throughout the new station platforms to assist visually impaired, currently only available on Abercynon North.

### **New Station Project Appraisal**

The Abercynon New Station Project has been assessed against the five criteria specified within the Railways Closures Guidance:

- Integration
- Economy
- Accessibility
- Safety
- Environment

### **Integration**

The New Station Project will improve integration between train services and other modes by providing one Station at Abercynon, as opposed to the current situation where there are 2 stations situated on different railway lines some 180 metres apart.

The Project will enable delivery of an enhanced service to and from Merthyr (from hourly to every 30 minutes), and will consolidate services into one Station

thus providing 4 trains per hour in each direction (as opposed to 3 trains per hour spread over 2 different stations).

Currently, Abercynon North Station is a stand-alone facility and its proposed Closure will therefore not have an adverse affect on integration between modes.

### **Economy**

The Abercynon New Station Project supports the wider policy objectives of Welsh Assembly Government by improving accessibility between key settlements and concentrated centres of employment, education and leisure. Demand for train services between Cardiff and Abercynon/Merthyr/Abercynon is growing by upwards of 10% per annum, year on year. The construction of a New Station, and the Closure of Abercynon North Station, are important factors in developing a railway infrastructure that has the capacity for meeting growing demand for train services.

The Project is part of a wider investment scheme in modernising the railway infrastructure and train services.

The Project includes modernisation of the railway infrastructure, resulting in replacing the antiquated mechanical signalling system with a modern equivalent form Solid State Interlocking signalling system, thus improving the capability and capacity of the asset and, at the same time, reducing the ongoing Operating & Maintenance Costs for Network Rail.

The New Station Project will reduce waiting times for passengers (by providing greater choice between journeys), improve access to train services (by improving frequencies), reduce journey times (by modernising the signalling system), and will provide provision for additional train capacity by providing longer platforms.

Welsh Assembly Government does not believe the Closure of Abercynon North Station will have a significant disbenefit to economical factors because the facility will be replaced by a far superior New Station at a distance of 180 metres away.

### **Accessibility**

The New Station Project will deliver Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (“DDA”) compliant step-free access for encumbered passengers. This is in comparison to Abercynon North Station, which is currently non-compliant with DDA, and neither does it have scope for adapting to DDA compliance due to limitations on the available land-take footprint.

The New Station will provide step-free interchange between train services, in comparison to the current situation whereby passengers have to walk between Abercynon South Station and Abercynon North Station (both of which are non-DDA compliant) to change trains.

A Park & Ride facility with approximately 250 car parking spaces will provide access to a wider market of rail users. The capacity of the current car park at Abercynon North is 5 spaces.

### **Safety**

The New Station Project will provide a significant improvement in lighting, CCTV surveillance, platform surfacing, waiting areas and weatherproof shelter. In addition, the New Station is within sight and close proximity to a continuously staffed Signal Box (Abercynon) which provides additional assurance for passengers.

In comparison, the existing Abercynon North Station is poorly lit, remote, does not have CCTV surveillance and has a rudimentary waiting shelter.

Welsh Assembly Government believes that closure of Abercynon North Station and transferral of passengers to the New Station will have a positive impact on passenger safety and security.

Once the new station is fully operational, the station at Abercynon North will be decommissioned and made safe.

### **Environment**

The New Station Project will deliver improved and more frequent train services, as well as a new Park & Ride facility with capacity to transfer journeys from car to rail.

The New Station Project is part of wider investment project that will deliver additional 3,000 journey opportunities every day between Merthyr, Abercynon and Cardiff (Monday to Saturday).

Delivery of these environmental benefits is contingent upon Closure of Abercynon North Station and the concurrent opening of Abercynon New Station.

### **Assessment**

An initial assessment of the proposal to close Abercynon North Station has been carried out by Jacobs Consultancy on behalf of the South East Wales Transport Alliance (Sewta). Copies of that assessment are available from Sewta, c/o Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC, Sardis House, Sardis Road, Pontypridd, CF37 1DU.

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<b>Feature</b>	<b>Abercynon North Station</b>	<b>Abercynon New Station Project</b>
Train Frequency	2 per hour	4 per hour
Waiting Times (Interval)	30 minutes	15 minutes
Journey Times	No Change	3 minutes less
Additional Journey Opportunities	Nil	3,000 per day (Monday to Saturday)
DDA Compliant	No	Yes
CCTV Surveillance	No	Yes
Weather-Proof Waiting Facilities	No	Yes
Infrastructure	Antiquated Mechanical Signalling	Modern Solid State Interlocking signalling system
Park & Ride	No	Yes
Car Parking Spaces	5	250