

this month

# Piecing the jic



It is more than just the *Rail devolution* our analysis of the rail sector. The challenge ground is still an issue raises the sector in general

In Wales, devolution has been a boon for the rail. Its Borders franchise has seen performance has improved. The Government very quickly recognised the economic growth and has funded two new lines and more.

The rail sector in Wales is slowly beginning to realise that devolved services can be tailored much more closely to the needs of local people. By bringing the local and national network together and raising the standards in which they operate, evidence is already emerging of growth in different regional centres and the next step is to use this as a catalyst to make broader economic cases for more strategic transport investment. In Scotland too, the latest ScotRail franchise has provided for significant growth and joins rail services to wider economic ambitions through tourism and other industries.

The Department for Transport's (DfT) single departmental plan 2015-2020 this month puts boosting economic growth and building a One Nation Britain at the top of its agenda, which once again points towards devolution being at the heart of it all.

Despite signs of positive outcomes, the transport sector will always be fragile in the hands of devolution due to its very nature. For good reason the public will always see it as a national road and rail network and, to put it bluntly, will never care who is responsible for which bit.

Many believe the devolution timetable was too tight, with local authorities given just seven weeks to put proposals together for extra powers. Even so, transport remains central to most of the bids and some great economic propositions might well come from that. But the transport and highways sector remains disjointed, fragmented and in need of one powerful force to drive it forward together.

It may seem counterintuitive, but only if those issues are addressed and solved will the sector really be able to make a success out of devolution. In short, only by working out a unified foundation can we all reach our separate heights.

Adrian Tatum,  
Group Content Editor

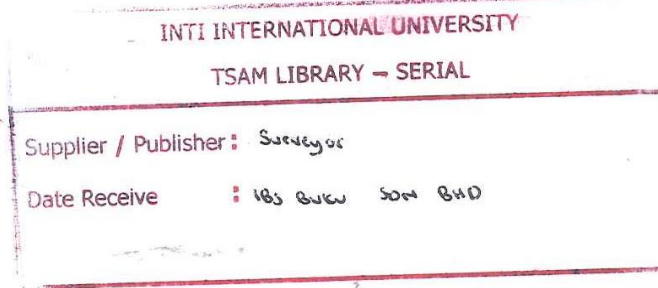
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