



North Pembroke Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

October News Briefing

Senedd Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

The Future of bus and rail in Wales report, October 2022

1. From the Chair's foreword

- 'At the start of this Senedd term, the Committee identified public transport as one of our priorities. This report, on bus and rail services, is our first on the subject'.
- 'As a Committee, we feel that bus and rail is key not only to meeting our climate change targets in Wales, but for us to create a society where people can easily access the services, education and work they need for a full life. We will continue to keep a close eye on progress over the coming months'.
- 'The first part of this report covers our annual scrutiny of Transport for Wales (TfW). TfW is responsible for delivering some transformative transport initiatives, including the three Metro projects in Wales. It's important that we hold them to account for their performance'.
- 'The second part covers the wider issue of bus and rail recovery after the Covid pandemic. We all know that the pandemic had a huge impact on levels of public transport use. Many people were, understandably, scared to get on the bus or the train. People in the poorest areas were hit hardest by reductions in bus services'.

2. Sources of Evidence

- A scrutiny session was held with Transport for Wales (TfW) on 17 March. Evidence taken from James Price and Geoff Ogden is reflected in Part 1 of this report.
- On 15 June, the Committee held a general scrutiny session with the Minister and Deputy Minister for Climate Change about public transport. This evidence is included in the report, where appropriate.
- On 26 May the Committee took evidence from academics, transport advocacy groups, and local government representatives.
- An event on 17 March aimed to understand stakeholder views on the effectiveness of bus and rail services, their future purpose, barriers to the public in using them, and perspectives on the effectiveness of Welsh and UK Government policy. Twenty stakeholders covering several areas of interest, including passenger representative groups from across Wales, attended the event.

- A series of five focus groups and six one-to-one interviews took place between 21 March and 21 April 2021. Participants were sourced through Committee Members, community groups, and organisations, including the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum, the Snowdonia Society, GIG Buddies, Rail Future Wales, and the Community Transport Association.

3. Selected Points in the Committee's Final Report

- In terms of encouraging passengers to return to public transport, we were pleased that several stakeholders were complimentary about TfW's promotion campaign. However, we agree with stakeholders and participants in our engagement work that this is a significant challenge, particularly encouraging the return of concessionary pass holders, and more needs to be done.
- We note the comments from figures in the bus industry about shortages of drivers and the impact on service provision. We would be grateful if the Welsh Government would explain what opportunities are available to it to assist recruitment and how it is supporting skill development in this area.
- Transport poverty affects some groups disproportionately, including disabled people, older people, and women. We believe the Welsh Government should set out how it will help people in Wales who find themselves in transport poverty.
- Other countries in Europe, including Germany and Spain, have already taken such steps through fare pricing structures. We note that, since we completed our inquiry, the UK Government has committed to bring forward similar measures in England from January 2023. Scotland and Northern Ireland have also made similar commitments. Challenges of the magnitude we are facing require creative thinking and could deliver the additional benefits of increasing numbers of bus and rail passengers and reducing car usage.

The Forum's work is supported by:

Individual Members (£5 p.a.), Family Members (£8 p.a.) & Corporate Members (£12 p.a.)

(Corporate members include town and community councils, transport operators, and groups, organisations and associations with a transport interest)

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ANNEX

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. In future, TfW should publish its business plan and the associated financial plan and do so in advance of the start of the financial year unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Recommendation 2. TfW should ensure that its Key Performance Indicators are published and accessible. It should provide an update to the Committee on this matter six months after the publication of this report.

Recommendation 3. Welsh Government officials should work with TfW to ensure that its budget allocations as set out in the Welsh Government's budget are transparent and accessible.

Recommendation 4. Welsh Government officials and TfW should work together to streamline the budget-setting process to make it as effective as possible. Details of the TfW budget should be published in full in good time. We believe it should be possible for this Committee to scrutinise the TfW budget in full during the draft budget scrutiny process.

Recommendation 5. TfW should provide the Committee with an update within the next six months on partnership working with Corporate Joint Committees and local authorities around the development of Regional Transport Plans.

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government should provide an update on the work it is undertaking with other partners to understand future travel patterns, including work and leisure, and their impact on transport policy.

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should set out a clear plan of action of how it will encourage, or support the encouragement, of passengers to return to public bus services. It should set out the timescales for this work and how it will assess its impact.

Recommendation 8. The Welsh Government should work with the bus sector to address the shortages of drivers and the impact on service provision.

Recommendation 9. The Welsh Government should bring forward proposals as soon as possible to address transport poverty in Wales arising from the cost-of-living crisis, including subsidised fare pricing and other financial support.

Recommendation 10. The UK Government must ensure that Wales has a level of funding for rail infrastructure enhancement which is fair and reflects the significant need for investment in a network which has fallen behind.

Recommendation 11. The Welsh Government must move quickly to deliver its own proposed infrastructure enhancements, such as Maesteg frequency enhancements. The Welsh Government response to this report should include details of schemes to be funded by the Welsh Government/TfW, including progress to date and a timeline for delivery.

Recommendation 12. The Welsh Government should set out its assessment of the costs arising from its target of decarbonising 50% of the Welsh bus fleet over the next 6 years. It should explain what funding it will make available over that period to assist bus operators to decarbonise the fleet. It should report regularly on progress.

Recommendation 13. To maximise the funding in Wales available for decarbonisation, the Welsh Government should provide advice, support and guidance to bus operators who wish to apply to UK Government programmes for funding for ultra-low emission buses.

Recommendation 14. The Welsh Government should update the Committee on any discussions it has held with the UK Government on road pricing policy.

Recommendation 15. The Welsh Government should set out what assessment it has made of the impact of energy costs and the cost-of-living crisis on its modal shift targets. If it has not already done so, it should undertake this work and report back to the Committee within the next 3 months on progress.

Recommendation 16. The Welsh Government should explore the possibility of developing more granular targets, for example, on a regional level for modal shift and linking these to policy delivery at the regional and local levels.

Recommendation 17. The Welsh Government should provide an update on the work of the group that is being established to examine potential pathways to net zero by 2035. It should explain why it has not asked the UK Committee on Climate Change, the statutory adviser to UK governments, to undertake this analysis on its behalf.

Recommendation 18. The Welsh Government should set out how much funding has been redirected from projects because of the roads review and how that redirected funding has been used, including whether any funding has been used to support bus or rail. The Welsh Government should ensure that funding from cancelled projects should be used for sustainable transport and decarbonisation measures in the same area or region.

Recommendation 19. The Welsh Government should provide an update on the work it has undertaken to date on behaviour change and transport.

Recommendation 20. The Welsh Government should provide the Committee with an update on specific interventions aimed at encouraging modal shift in the large population living in rural areas in Wales.

Recommendation 21. The Welsh Government should set out its position on the suggestions made by members of the public through our engagement work, which are included in this Report.

Recommendation 22. Great British Railways should proceed based on parity of status for the UK and devolved governments.

Recommendation 23. Transport for Wales should provide an update on the latest position on Metro costs in light of rising inflation and any impact this has had on the delivery timetable for each of the schemes.

Recommendation 24. Transport for Wales should publish the latest iteration of its five-year delivery plan for all three Welsh Metro schemes.

Recommendation 25. Transport for Wales should provide an update on the integrated ticketing pilots and should explain the next steps.

Recommendation 26. Subject to discussions with the organisation, the Welsh Government should bring forward proposals for the inclusion of Transport for Wales as a statutory planning consultee for major developments.

For the full report visit <https://senedd.wales/media/bpalfjzn/cr-ld15371-e.pdf>