



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

May News Briefing, 2022

Senedd Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee Examination of Bus and Rail Services

Public Evidence Sessions, 26th May

- Session 1 was held with Professor Mark Barry (Professor of Practice in Connectivity, Cardiff University) and Professor Graham Parkhurst (Director, Centre for Transport and Society, University of the West of England).
- Session 2 was held with Silviya Barrett (Director of Policy and Research, Campaign for Better Transport), David Beer (Senior Manager Wales, Transport Focus Wales) and Joe Rossiter (Policy & External Affairs Manager, Sustrans Cymru, representing Transform Cymru).
- Session 3 was held with Bev Fowles (Vice Chairperson, Coach and Bus Association Cymru), Gemma Lelliott (Director for Wales, Community Transport Association), Jane Reakes-Davies (Chair, Confederation of Passenger Transport Cymru) and Josh Miles (Director, Confederation of Passenger Transport Cymru)

View the sessions on Senedd TV: <http://www.senedd.tv/Meeting/Live/4a489cac-8f5b-4f0b-a7a3-789ec8f46ba2>.

Selected Matters Raised in the Sessions

1. Priorities for post covid recovery for Welsh bus and rail.

- Transport use is changing, and transport provision has to change to move with the times with more leisure travel and less business and commuting.
- Behaviour changes in shopping, education and working practices may prevent people coming back in the same numbers as before. The changes will be a big challenge for the bus industry. Services should provide journeys that people want to make, at the times they want to travel, out and back, on an attractive, effective network.
- To meet modal shift targets, disconnections between rail, bus and community transport must be dealt with. In particular: (1) The lack of integrated ticketing and (2) Support for passengers with mobility assistance needs to move safely between transport modes.
- To provide better value-for-money tickets was the second-highest priority for improvement, after punctuality.

2. Action required to achieve Welsh Government targets for modal shift to these modes, and behaviour change.

- Reinvest in the bus industry following changes to the way people are travelling. Morning and afternoon peaks aren't there anymore. More are travelling for leisure and social purposes than before. Hybrid working and work at home messaging has changed the way people are using vehicles.
- Fund bus services necessary to provide coverage that is frequent enough, goes to enough places and is attractive enough to provide an alternative to what are 'easy' choices of car use.
- Grow patronage back on to bus by looking at ways to be very flexible about ticketing. Such as making more distance fares relevant to individuals than just flat fares or fixed fares.
- Tackle things like congestion, make buses quicker, make them more appealing compared to the car. Address the issue of confidence, particularly for concessionary pass holders, that public transport is a viable alternative to other means of travel.

- Encourage a strongly integrated rural transport system, which does include cars. But establish the principle of driving to the nearest available transport node and transfer to public transport there.
- Lack of active travel infrastructure is a barrier to active travel in rural communities. We're still seeing people experiencing barriers to using the national cycle network, which then limits their ability to make multimodal journeys.

3. Proposals for bus and rail reform.

- At the moment the metros are entirely rail focused. Often we're redesigning rail solutions to tackle problems that might be better served by another transport mode. There are too many actors at the moment. We need a properly resourced regional body, given the tools and the funding to do it and say, 'Here's the metro. Look at it multimodally. Deliver it.'
- We would like to see greater investment in opportunities to create more rural and intra-urban transport hubs, multimodal transport hubs, that bring together different kinds of transport to allow people to make more of the journeys that work for them.
- Local bus services would be able to carry more people if they were better integrated to a rail backbone that provided sufficiently frequent services.

4. Advantages and disadvantages of the Government's idea of introducing an all-Wales franchise for bus services.

- The operating model is going to change who is in charge of buses, but not the amount of people working from home or the level of congestion on the roads. Whatever happens with the operating model, we've got to get those trends right in order to create modal shift.
- Franchise regimes are challenging for smaller operators. Family-owned firms in rural areas will struggle to compete in a franchise environment. Bigger companies can create bid teams, absorb costs, pitch in bigger packages to deal with it. SMEs will struggle with that.
- The danger with franchising is that the baby goes out with the bath water. That has to be avoided, because Wales is such a diverse country—with diverse needs that have to be met. Franchising may well not achieve that.
- Whether it's partnership or franchise it has to deliver for passengers. The closer the specifications and targets reflect people's needs, the better the chance that they'll deliver the types of services that people want, which will be valuable and will bring in new users to be able to grow the market and support modal shift.

4. Community Transport Observations.

- The community transport sector has been recognised as a sector in the 'Bws Cymru' plan. It's the first dedicated attention that Welsh Government has given to community transport in about two decades.
- Support for the franchise aspiration of delivering public buses and an integrated public transport network as a public service, rather than something that is driven by the totally rational aspiration that 'you need to make money'.
- Since its inception, the community transport sector has tried to deliver services that meet people's needs. It would like to see more people being able to make proactive choices that work for them. It is hoped that Welsh Government's aspirations and what they're setting out in these papers will allow for more of that to happen.
- With regard to input regarding 'serving user transport interests', is the community transport sector going to be taken on board with this? Hopefully having more local and regional expertise feeding into the development of networks would assist operators in designing services that actually meet people's needs and get them where they want to go.

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