

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes	Enterprise and Business Committee
Gwasanaethau Bysiau a Thrafnidiaeth Gymunedol yng Nghymru	Bus and Community Transport Services in Wales
BCT 42	BCT 42
Defnyddwyr Bysiau Cymru	Bus Users Cymru

### **Consultation questions**

**Question 1** –How would you describe the current condition of the bus and community transport sectors in Wales?

Passenger numbers in Wales were 107 million in the year 2013-2014, down from 115 million in the year 2011-2012 (SB 8/2015, Statistical Bulletin, 28 January 2015).

Generally, the bus sector in Wales is surviving but not helped by a continued lack of integration with land use planning. Housing and light industrial estates continue to be developed with no thought about access by buses.

There are some busy corridors where operators have invested in new vehicles and the service appears to be healthy although some users would say that fares are too high.

For older people particularly some of their local bus services have already disappeared, which impacts on their ability to access GP surgeries, hospitals, shops and visit friends and relatives. People who attend our bus user surgeries will tell us that they can get to evening events but cannot get home again. Others will tell us that they can get to work but the last bus departs before they finish work.

The withdrawal of evening services by most companies has an impact on the elderly and the young. The elderly probably will not travel and the young will use "mum and dad's taxi service".

There is an expectation that Community Transport will 'plug the gap' but the CT sector faces similar funding issues to other bus operators. Community Transport is in the main a volunteer driver based service with all the challenges that presents and their services are generally in fairly deep rural areas and tend to be demand responsive.

**Question 2 – why do you think the number of bus services and the number of bus passengers is declining in Wales?**

Cuts in services can result in fewer passengers and this in turn can lead to further cuts in services. At our bus user surgeries we are told that when evening or Sunday services are withdrawn passengers will use private cars or taxis or not take the journey at all.

There is a lack of integration with land use planning. Housing estates are built with no suitable road or turning provision for buses and large out of town shopping centres continue to be developed with no thought given to access by anything other than the private car. Health centres are consolidated in edge of town locations which can be accessed only by taxi or private car.

The bus was the traditional means to go shopping to the high street but the advent of internet shopping coupled with out of town shopping centres has resulted in less travel to shops. Town centres are declining and this is also a factor.

The development of employment centres on the edges of towns makes travel for shift work increasingly difficult or impossible by bus

Fewer evening journeys have reduced passenger numbers because they might be able to get to the cinema or bingo etc but often have no return service after 7 pm so will travel in a private car or taxi, or not go at all. This isolation can then impact on health and wellbeing.

The private car is seen as inexpensive because no-one factors in depreciation, tyres, insurance, tax, etc. and free car parking is an added attraction for out of town centres.

There is probably a greater proportion of rural services in Wales than in Scotland or England and thus a greater reliance on public money through subsidies. It is therefore not surprising that services in Wales have been hit hardest at a time of reducing public expenditure.

Evening and Sunday services are the first to be axed when funding dries up. These services provide vital links for people who work late and for people who rely on evening services for leisure purposes. The young and the elderly are most affected. The result is more people are dependent on cars.

Bus stations are not given the status they should have. Cardiff has closed its bus station without having a replacement open, Merthyr Tydfil bus station is not the best passenger experience and Port Talbot and Bridgend bus stations close in the evening. Swansea has a good bus station but it is poorly placed for integration with rail services.

Provision of information is crucial in promoting use of the bus and in some areas the lack of availability of up to date printed information probably has

also had an impact on bus use.

**Question 3** – what do you think is the social, economic and environmental impact of recent changes in bus and community transport service levels?

There is a clear cost to individuals and to the economy. People have to take taxis to health centres and places of work; lack of suitable bus services impacts on non emergency patient transport;

Elderly people in particular suffer from reducing bus and community transport services. It leads to isolation in their own homes and leaves them susceptible to loneliness and possibly depression.

If there are fewer public transport options people will need to source private transport and this inevitably results in higher emissions.

There is a reduced quality of life for those who rely on buses for leisure purposes particularly in the evenings.

There have also been cases of hardship particularly for disabled people where services have changed suddenly without consultation. This is partly being addressed by a sub group of the Public Transport Users Advisory Panel (PTUAP) led by Community Transport Association (CTA Cymru) who are producing a *Toolkit : Inclusivity and accessibility of the consultation process on changes to bus and community transport services in Wales*. The toolkit will apply to organisations in receipt of public funding in the first instance but it is hoped others will enter into the spirit of the toolkit's requirements.

People have to rely more on non-emergency ambulance transport or friends and family/taxis to get to/from hospital appointments.

Out of centre retail parks are booming, whilst town/city centres are in decline.

**Question 4** –what do you think the Welsh Government should do to support bus and community transport in Wales?

Welsh Government and local authorities should lead on Improving the bus stop environment; developing easy and convenient interchanges with proper signage; standardisation of provision of information across Wales; information on rail where appropriate at bus stations and on bus times at rail stations; bus priority measures; integrated ticketing (there are more opportunities now with new technology such as the use of contact less bank

cards for smart ticketing); integration between all forms of public transport.

Re-establish separate body(ies) focusing on public transport to enable organisational stability.

Accurate and easily available timetable information is vital to encourage people to use buses. It doesn't matter how good the bus network is if people can't work out how to use it. Maybe a national advertising campaign (and not just in transport hubs where you are preaching to the converted) to showcase the bus network in Wales and how to access Traveline Cymru.

Not all local authorities produce timetable books and this makes journey planning difficult for some users. Bus stations are closing their information offices to save money so in some places there is complete lack of information.

Because of budget constraints, local authorities don't have spare manpower to keep bus stop info up to date. Having old incorrect timetables in situ is worse than none at all. Electronic displays were once installed but most local authorities have long been unable to afford to maintain them and they are switched off.

Not everybody has access to the internet and especially when out and about – this is when you need the information generally. Not all people have Smart phones. Bus users have differing requirements for information and suitable formats should be available.

**Question 5** –what do you think Welsh local authorities should do to support bus and community transport services?

The current financial environment makes it extremely difficult for local authorities to dramatically improve performance,

The former Sewta region had developed outline framework of how to improve performance through regional strategies whilst still taking account of local circumstances.

A subgroup of the Bus Policy Advisory Group (BPAG) has developed a set of quality standards that would result in a consistent quality of provision of bus services across Wales and these quality standards would be monitored by local authorities.

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Improve bus stops and bus stations. A significant number of bus stops are still without raised boarders and there is a lack of up-to-date information at stops in many local authority areas. Too many bus stations are considered unimportant yet they are used by a significant number of the population.

**Question 6** - what do you think about proposals to devolve bus registration powers to Wales? How should these be used?

The Traffic Commissioner's office in Leeds deals with registration of services for Wales and England and there is no Welsh language capability.

Devolving bus registrations to Traveline Cymru, for example, would result in having all Welsh registrations in one place and it would enable an accurate network map to be made and maintained.

All information on and changes to bus services would transfer immediately to Traveline Cymru's information website thus ensuring updating of its systems and provide accurate and up to date bus timetable/routing information to the travelling public.

There is currently no requirement for a bus operator to notify Traveline Cymru of any new, cancelled or amended service. This means they are totally reliant upon operator goodwill/relationships to obtain changes in order to keep their data to the bus user as up to date as possible.

There would also be an income stream to Wales because the fees would be paid to Traveline Cymru.

**Question 7** – please tell us whether you think further powers to regulate the bus industry in Wales are required and why?

Use of the SQBP powers under the 2008 Act can achieve much of what is needed by working with existing commercial services and there are examples of good practice in this area.

The National Assembly for Wales also has procurement powers and it will be interesting how these are used.

Perhaps further exploration of franchising would be useful.

**Question 8** – what other action can be taken to ensure that bus and community transport services meet the needs of people in Wales?

Bus stations, like railway stations, should become a "national asset" and be managed (via local authorities) by the Welsh Government.

It would be useful if bus stations came under the remit of the Welsh Government, as it might avoid situations such as Cardiff being without a bus station for two years or more.

Please tell us anything else you would like to mention on this topic, thank you for contributing to our inquiry.

Congestion charging could be introduced in the centre of Cardiff at peak times, Mon-Fri. The delays to buses entering or leaving the city due to congestion are excessive and "car free days" should be encouraged.

Local authorities should improve integration between bus and rail. There were opportunities in Newport and Port Talbot for the bus and rail stations to be closer together.

### **Disclosure of information**

Unless you ask us not to, we will publish your response. The Assembly's policy on disclosure of information can be accessed [here](#), please ensure that you have considered these details carefully before submitting information to the Committee. This policy can be requested in other formats by contacting the Committee Clerk.

### **Submitting evidence**

If you wish to submit evidence, please send an electronic copy of your submission form to [SeneddEcon@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddEcon@assembly.wales).

Alternatively, you send it to:  
Clerk,  
Enterprise and Business Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay, CF99 1NA.