

# Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes](#)

[The Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

11/11/2015

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Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are recorded in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Mick Antoniw	Llafur Labour
Rhun ap Iorwerth	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Mohammad Asghar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Yr Arglwydd/Lord Elis-Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Graham	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
Eluned Parrott	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Rhyan Berrigan	Swyddog Polisi (Mynediad a Thrafnidiaeth), Anabledd Cymru Policy Officer (Access and Transport), Disability Wales
Barclay Davies	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr, Defnyddwyr Bysiau Cymru Deputy Director, Bus Users Cymru
Rhodri Evans	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfathrebu, Ffederasiwn Busnesau Bach Senior Communications Advisor, Federation of Small Businesses
Margaret Everson MBE	Cyfarwyddwr, Defnyddwyr Bysiau Cymru Director, Bus Users Cymru
Graeme Francis	Pennaeth Polisi a Materion Cyhoeddus, Age Cymru Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Age Cymru

Sarah Leyland-Jones	Uwch Swyddog Trafnidiaeth Gymunedol /Hyfforddiant, Cymdeithas Mudiadau Gwirfoddol Powys Senior Officer Community Transport/Training, Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
Robert Saxby	Cynrychiolydd Gogledd Cymru, Defnyddwyr Bysiau Cymru North Wales representative, Bus Users Cymru
Siân Summers-Rees	Cyfarwyddwr Cymru, Cymdeithas Cludiant Gymunedol Director for Wales, Community Transport Association
Phil Taylor	Rheolwr Trafnidiaeth ac Addysg, Prosiect Ieuenctid a Chymunedol Aberfan ac Ynysowen Transport and Education Manager, Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Youth and Community Project

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol**  
**National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Rachel Jones	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Andrew Minnis	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Gareth Price	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:29.*  
*The meeting began at 09:29.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon**  
**Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **William Graham:** Good morning. Welcome to the Enterprise and Business Committee. This is the beginning of our inquiry into bus services in Wales. The meeting is bilingual and headphones can be used for simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1, or for amplification on channel 2. The meeting is being broadcast and a transcript of the proceedings will be issued later. May I remind witnesses particularly that there's no need to touch the microphones; they should come on automatically. In the event of a fire alarm, I ask Members and guests to

follow directions from the ushers. May I inquire if any Members wish to make any declarations? No. Thank you very much.

**Ymchwiliad i Wasanaethau Bysiau a Thrafnidiaeth Gymunedol yng Nghymru**

**Inquiry into Bus and Community Transport Services in Wales**

[2] **William Graham:** So, our second item. Could I ask the witnesses please just to give their names and titles for the record?

[3] **Ms Everson:** Good morning. My name is Margaret Everson. I am director of Bus Users Cymru in Wales. Bus Users Cymru is the Welsh Government-funded bus passenger representation body.

09:30

[4] **William Graham:** Thank you.

[5] **Mr Davies:** Good morning. I'm Barclay Davies, deputy director for Wales of Bus Users Cymru.

[6] **William Graham:** Thank you.

[7] **Mr Saxby:** I'm Bob Saxby and I'm the north-west representative for Bus Users Cymru. I'm from a local government background and I retired last year. I'm a civil engineer, but I've spent most of my time specialising in public transport.

[8] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. The first Member to ask a question is Rhun.

[9] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Bore da i chi gyd a diolch am ddod i mewn atom ni'r bore yma. A gaf i ddechrau mewn termau eithaf cyffredinol a gofyn i chi rhoi rhyw drosolwg o gyflwr gwasanaethau bysiau yng Nghymru, os liciwch chi? Tybed a ydych chi'n cytuno â'r hyn a ddywedwyd wrth y pwyllgor gan Grŵp Gweithredol Cludiant Teithwyr yn gynharach eleni

**Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Good morning to you all and thank you for coming in to the committee this morning. May I start in quite general terms and ask you to provide us with an overview of the condition of bus services in Wales, if you'd like? I wonder if you agree with what was said to the committee by the Passenger Transport Executive Group earlier

bod gwasanaethau bysiau yng this year that bus services in Wales Nghymru mewn argyfwng. A ydy hi are in crisis. Is it as bad as that? mor ddrwg â hynny?

[10] **Ms Everson:** I don't speak Welsh, I'm afraid; I'll have to answer in English.

[11] **Lord Elis Thomas:** That's all right—that's allowed; we're a bilingual country.

[12] **Ms Everson:** I read several reports from Campaign for Better Transport and PTEG saying that buses are in crisis. In my view, they are actually only looking at one side of the story. If you were to talk to local authorities, they would say they haven't got the money to subsidise socially necessary services. But then if you look at the north-Wales coast, where Arriva operates, and if you look at Swansea Stagecoach area, and if you look at Cardiff and Newport, and at Richards Bros, perhaps, in west Wales, and look at TrawsCymru, you would say that it's thriving. So, there are two sides to this coin. And although Campaign For Better Transport identified lots of local authorities, and it's true that local authorities have cut back on services—. Wrexham, for example, cut all their subsidised services, leaving a whole village isolated, but then a local operator stepped in and ran a service to that village. More financial constraints are there; you can't get away from that, and what they call 'difficult choices' have to be made when local authorities have to prioritise, but there are two sides to it. I wouldn't say that all of the bus services in Wales are in crisis. Did you want to add anything to that, Barclay?

[13] **Mr Davies:** No; I think that's a very fair summary.

[14] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** If we look at things in general terms, though, we have a little graphic in front of us here showing that registered bus services in Wales declined by approximately 25 per cent between March 2005 and March 2014. British passenger journeys on local bus services—you can see the figures there—show that by far the biggest decline in the UK has been here in Wales, whereas growth has been seen across Great Britain as whole. That seems to suggest to me that we're facing some severe issues on the whole, despite the fact that we might have good bus performance in some areas.

[15] **Mr Saxby:** I'll answer that. I think, when you look at figures that take

Wales as a separate figure—. Wales is more rural than the other parts of Great Britain—even more rural than Scotland. The figures overall for the UK are very much influenced by London, which is going in a completely different direction to most other places.

[16] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** We have figures here for England, excluding London, and Wales performs significantly worse than anywhere else, even when you take London out.

[17] **Mr Saxby:** It does, but England outside London has still got lots of big cities and urban areas in it. So, Wales is more dependent, because it's largely rural, on public money to keep bus services going than England is overall, where there are lots and lots of commercial services because they're mostly urban. Personally, I think that's the main reason for the decline. As soon as public money is reduced, rural areas are going to suffer. That's almost inevitable because the services rely so much on it.

[18] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** A crisis could be precisely because of those circumstances that you mention—because of rurality and the effects of cuts and subsidies, that's why a crisis, if we see it that way, has come about.

[19] **Mr Saxby:** Certainly, if you define 'crisis' as passenger numbers going down. If they carry on going down, obviously, it's going to end up in a bad result.

[20] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Your evidence talks of a vicious circle, really, where you have cuts in services leading to a decline in passenger numbers, and a decline in passenger numbers then leading to further decline in services. Could you elaborate a little bit on your thoughts on that?

[21] **Ms Everson:** Well, for example, if a lady in the Valleys is used to going to bingo in the evening—because culture is different things to different people and that is her cultural pursuit; that's what she likes to do—and maybe she can get to the bingo hall for a 6.30 p.m. start but she can't get home again because the last bus is at 6.45 p.m. perhaps—. So, what she would do is she would tend to find alternative transport for the whole journey. So, because there are fewer people travelling on the earlier journeys then that service is then at risk. So, it acts as a vicious circle—

[22] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** So, the 10 o'clock bus gets cancelled as well, yes.

[23] **Ms Everson:** If they can't guarantee they can get there and get home, they'll say, 'Oh, I'll have a taxi or my friend will take me.' That's the type of thing that happens. Is there anything to add to that?

[24] **Mr Davies:** Generally, people tell us that, when there are changes to services, as my colleagues outlined, they can sometimes get to work but can't get home. Say, for example, the 10 o'clock bus is cancelled, then they stop using the service and they find alternative means, whether it's a lift share or whether they add to the congestion on the road by driving. Then, because their money is not going in the fare box of the operator, they decide then, 'Oh, we'll cancel that service.' So, it tends to be a vicious circle—death by a thousand cuts, almost. Cutting one service can potentially lead to cuts in other services as well. So, it's important to take a view of the overall profitability of the network, and an operator needs to consider that the feeder services into, say, the main services—because very often people travel into a hub to connect to travel to their place of work or whatever—. They need to bear that in mind—that these feeder services obviously feed the main route service, and bus users need a network, a comprehensive network, in order to travel.

[25] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Is there a clear pattern of which services go first—evenings, weekends, late evenings, early evenings?

[26] **Ms Everson:** What is our pattern? It is evenings and weekends, actually. Last buses tend to finish at 6 o'clock. There's a part of Barry where the last bus, I think, finishes at 3.30 p.m., which means you've got to get on it and get back up to the Colcot quickly before you lose your last bus. So, they are the vulnerable services because people tend to use the car or a taxi to go out in the evenings, so the demand isn't so great. But, often, what is forgotten by a lot of planners is that, if you don't have a Sunday service, you then don't have a bank holiday service either because bank holiday Monday is always a Sunday service, which means there are people now—. We're expecting some complaints over Christmas. Planners forget that people like to go shopping, they like to go to the sales at Christmas, but some places are going to be four days without a service. So, if they're starting to think about, 'Where shall I go and what shall I do?', the last thing they'll think of is perhaps going by public transport. Their first idea would be, 'Who's got the car?' So, it is evenings and weekends, exactly.

[27] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** You mentioned Barry as one urban area, but can I assume that there is an imbalance towards services being cut in rural areas



mainly?

[28] **Ms Everson:** Absolutely.

[29] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** And where does Bwcabus come in as a possible answer to those rural areas?

[30] **Ms Everson:** We have divided opinions on Bwcabus, my colleague and I. Bwcabus is a solution. Whether the way Bwcabus itself is set up is a solution or not—. But the Bwcabus concept is a solution because Bwcabus doesn't just connect people with doctors, with work, with social pursuits. There was one lady in west Wales—she said that she had not been able to visit her husband's grave for years because she couldn't get there, but Bwcabus took her there. But Bwcabus doesn't just complete your circuit of social, health and work, it also links you to the wider world, because Bwcabus now links with the T1, which can get you more or less anywhere. It fits into another hub, down to Carmarthen train station. Then you can go anywhere. So, that sort of concept, I think, is the answer.

[31] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** But you're not all agreed.

[32] **Mr Saxby:** I think if you look on a whole-network basis, if you had control of the whole network, then things like Bwcabus would be very useful ways of serving certain areas. When you haven't got control of the whole network, which we haven't at the moment because of deregulation, it can be an expensive way of serving areas that the commercial operators can't be bothered to do or don't want to do. But on a network basis there may be a good argument for it. It's very good for the passengers who live in those sorts of areas. I know, having dealt with that sort of thing myself, that demand-responsive services are much more expensive in terms of cost per passenger journey. In rural areas in particular you're never going to get away from the fact that you need a lot of buses because you've got school transport to cater for. Once you've got those buses carrying schoolchildren in the peaks, between peaks the cost of using them is quite marginal because you've already got the bus and the driver. So, it's often quite efficient. I know from when I put tenders out—I'd often put a tender out for, say, a 12-seater and I'd end up with only getting bids to use 25-seaters because that's what's available between peaks with the bus operators. It may not look efficient to have a big bus carrying a few old ladies around doing their shopping, but actually it's often the cheapest way of doing it.

[33] **William Graham:** Thank you. Jeff.

[34] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you, Chair. I'm clearly intrigued by the description you give of some buses ending fairly early in the day, like 3.30 p.m., which I assume is an extreme case, but even in the very early evening. What are the official explanations given for terminating services that early?

[35] **Ms Everson:** Generally, I think, no demand. I think that's what—. We have a lady who comes to visit us in Bangor, when we have our bus users' surgery up there, and she will tell you that she can get to work in HSBC—. I mean, it's hardly a farm in the middle of nowhere, and she can get to work in Bangor HSBC but her last bus to take her home is something like 4.45 p.m. and she finishes at 5.30 p.m.

[36] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. So, how is demand assessed in that case? It would seem logical that people, from what you say, do want to use the bus to go home.

[37] **Ms Everson:** Yes. It's a case of persuading the bus operators that there are sufficient passengers to warrant putting a service on.

[38] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. Thank you.

[39] **William Graham:** Joyce.

[40] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. We did an inquiry—a previous committee—in 2013 and some of the issues I want to explore. One of those is the integration of bus services, and you've sort of touched on it. In your opinion, since 2013, has the integration of bus services improved or declined?

[41] **Ms Everson:** We're presumably omitting Cardiff from this discussion.

[42] **Joyce Watson:** Well, we don't omit anywhere because that's not our role, but when I talk about integration I'm talking about joined-up modes of transport, and then I'll come on to other things.

[43] **Ms Everson:** Bob, would you like to talk about this?

[44] **Mr Saxby:** Yes, I'll answer that, if I may. In my opinion it's become very patchy now. It used to be quite good in my part of Wales. I can't speak for

other parts, but in my part it was very good. I'm not just blowing my own trumpet, but I used to sort of pull things together in north-west Wales. Across north Wales the co-ordination was quite good because there were a lot of professionals dealing with it, and they'd get together and make sure that things connected with one another. In recent years, a lot of the professionals who used to do that are retired or have moved on. Even the big companies tend to have taken their best people away to deal with the large urban areas in England. Today we find that most of the authorities and the operators just look on a route-by-route basis. They will change a timetable and forget that something used to connect with something else.

[45] In my particular area it's been very frustrating recently that we've had very sudden changes sometimes to contract services, which you only find out about by looking at the local authority's website. They seem to expect all bus passengers to look at the website before they travel every time, which I certainly don't want to be having to do. That is extremely frustrating. Changes happen so quickly that they're not on Traveline yet. I checked yesterday and the changes on 2 November on the Sherpa still hadn't got through to Traveline, but if you look at the local authority's site and the operator's site, they're there. There's a lack of consultation as well now in some places.

09:45

[46] There are still places that are very good—Anglesey, for instance. They asked me, as the bus users' rep for the area, back in the spring to comment on proposals that they may have to implement in October. They were having to make some savings and they were going through a retendering exercise, so they didn't know until they got the prices in, but they gave a series of options, which I was able to comment on. And that's the right way of doing it. That's how I used to deal with it in local government—consult nice and early, get people's views and broadcast exactly what you're proposing to do. That can save a lot of messing about afterwards, because if you do things without consulting and then you make changes, then you get comments and you have to change them again to address some of the comments. So, I think it's the fact that there's a lack of professional expertise now, both from local authorities and operators, that is causing a problem with integration.

[47] **Joyce Watson:** Can I ask another question? You've mentioned one authority, but I live in Pembrokeshire, where you could be travelling to Ceredigion and you could be travelling to Carmarthenshire quite easily. In

your experience, are local authorities that share those sorts of boundaries talking to each other before they decide a route change?

[48] **Mr Saxby:** I think the local authorities are, as far as I know. I have regular meetings with some of our local ones and they do talk to each other about what they're going to do. But a lot of the services don't cross boundaries, and sometimes they don't seem to take into account some of the internal connections, until people complain about them, because they've lost their connection.

[49] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. Moving on and keeping to the theme of connectedness, one of the other areas that was flagged up to us before was planning and designing where the things that people will use or access are, and the understanding of the means or mode of transport to get to them—surgeries, hospitals, whatever it might be. In your opinion, is that thinking happening and has it improved, or is it not happening and it has deteriorated?

[50] **Mr Saxby:** On a strategic level, when it comes to land use planning, most of the plans I've seen say the right things, and the basic principles of locating things on main corridors and so on generally followed. But the devil's in the detail, quite often, and I found, when I was consulted when I was working in local government on, say, moving a health centre or putting a new one somewhere, my comments have sometimes not gone down very well if I've said, 'Don't put it there, because it's going to be very easy to get to by car, but you need to put it on the main bus route for people to get there by bus'.

[51] When it comes to retail outlets, for instance, you can put the supermarket in the right place, but if you stick the building at the back of an enormous car park and the bus stop is right on the other side of the car park, then you're worse off than anybody who goes there by car if you go by bus. Whereas, it would be so easy, comparatively, to put the building next to the road and the bus stop outside the door, but, for some reason, that's not done and I've found that very frustrating, because I would tend to get consulted at quite a late stage when they've already made their plans; they don't want to move the building from there to there because they've already decided they're going to put it there. That's where local government, in theory, should work; they should be able to get their comments in early. I found that by the time it got to a highways department, which is where most of the transport people are, those sorts of decisions had already been made

by people who go everywhere by car, so they don't look at it from a bus user's point of view.

[52] **Joyce Watson:** So, if you were to give us a recommendation on that, what would it be?

[53] **Mr Saxby:** It would be to have some statutory method of consultation that brings the bus users' point of view in at a very early stage before decisions are made about where things are going to be located, and then exactly how the site is going to be planned. That may be, for instance, if we were in London, it would be Transport for London that would have to be consulted at an early stage. We haven't got Transport for Wales—

[54] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Yet. [*Laughter.*]

[55] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** It's coming.

[56] **Mr Saxby:** Yes. If there were one, then that should be a statutory consultee at a very early stage in planning.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[58] **Ms Everson:** I could name you two centres of excellence, medically speaking, in my local area that you cannot get to, and you can't even walk to one of them; it's just too far to walk. And even the receptionist will ask, 'How did you get here today?' and I'll say, 'Well, I had to get a taxi', and they'll say, 'Oh'. They just don't think bus; they think car, but don't think bus.

[59] **Mr Davies:** Of course, a lot of people attending surgeries or hospitals are going for treatment, which, by definition, means that they can't drive afterwards, but no thought is given to that. We held an event recently in Rhymney in the Caerphilly county borough, and a number of concerned people came to us there, because there's a new health centre being built there, and yet there's no safe walking route and no public transport access, and they're finding it very difficult to get there. As my colleague said, they have to get taxis back and forth to attend the local surgery.

[60] **William Graham:** Well, well. Eluned.

[61] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you. I wanted to pick up on something you said, Bob, I think, about local authorities not advertising changes and the impact

that that has. Last time I caught a bus in my village, we waited quite a long time and we had quite a long conversation because exactly that had happened—the timetable had changed and none of us knew about it. But what we were discussing was the phenomenon of the ghost bus, and I'm not sure if you'll know what I mean by this, but it's a bus that is not on a timetable and it's not on Traveline, but it does exist, because we see it driving around, and it is a surprise to the passengers that such a thing exists, because you can't work out what it is or where it's going. It seems to be a passenger service bus, but we have no way of knowing where it'll be or when. How common is this kind of phenomenon, because the cynics at my bus stop suggest that the reason why you might run such a bus is to demonstrate that there is no demand for it? *[Laughter.]*

[62] **Mr Saxby:** An interesting question. There certainly have been ghost buses around. I found one myself when I was making a connection off the train to bus in Bangor to go to Caernarfon. I went and sat in a nice warm place to wait until my bus was due, and as I started walking toward the bus stop, another one came along. I thought, 'Well, that's not supposed to be there.' I looked on all the websites—not there—

[63] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** The 5A or the 5B or something.

[64] **Mr Saxby:** It was a No. 1A, going to Penygroes.

[65] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** A 1A; that one.

[66] **Mr Saxby:** So, the next time, I actually used it and I got on, and said to the driver, 'You know this isn't in the timetable and there are lots of people sitting there using it.' So, I did point out to the operator after that, and they've taken on somebody recently who is improving lots of their things and he realised it wasn't registered. They didn't actually register it because things were changing anyway, so that one's not there anymore, but those things certainly do happen. It goes back to the lack of professionalism, from both operators and local authorities. You probably can't blame the local authority for that one because it wasn't a contract bus; it was one that was coming back after doing another journey, and they just thought, 'Well, we might as well run it in service,' which is fine, but it needs to be registered so that we all know about it.

[67] **Eluned Parrott:** So, you'd suggest it's not a conspiracy in this case then.

[68] **Mr Saxby:** No, probably not.

[69] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay. I want to ask about the groups who are using buses and, you know, obviously, one of the great concerns in Wales is that particular geographical groups could be isolated because of the loss of buses. That, I think, is well recognised. But I wonder what views you have on whether there are particular vulnerable groups who might be particularly badly hit by a loss of buses in terms of socioeconomics or in terms of age profile. Are there particular groups of people who can be left particularly vulnerable by these changes?

[70] **Ms Everson:** We don't generally keep—. We can do, and we can come back to you on that. We can do some research. We don't generally keep that sort of detailed record. I've got some papers and I could probably tell you the percentage of people who come to the surgeries, the percentage of people who complain and what they're complaining about, but not necessarily who they are.

[71] **Eluned Parrott:** That's interesting.

[72] **Ms Everson:** So, I regret that, but—

[73] **Eluned Parrott:** No, that's absolutely fine. I think that, potentially, for the future, it might be something that's useful, if not, maybe, for the Welsh Government to fund that kind of work particularly. One thing that the Welsh Government used to fund, but, as I understand it, isn't at the moment, is the bus users' survey. I understand there hasn't been one of them since 2010. I'm wondering whether you are aware of how the Welsh Government is collecting together bus users' needs if it's not conducting a survey.

[74] **Ms Everson:** Indeed, you're right. Passenger Focus, as they then were, conducted a survey for the whole of Great Britain in 2010, and Welsh Government put some funding in. It covered Wales as well. I believe 14,000 questionnaires were handed out, and they got a return of 4,500, which I think, in survey terms, isn't bad—

[75] **Eluned Parrott:** That's very good.

[76] **Ms Everson:** And the numbers were crunched, and it was published by Passenger Focus, now Transport Focus. Transport Focus are keen to do

another survey. In fact, they're trying to work through the public transport users' advisory panel, on which we sit. At the moment, it's work in progress. It's going to cost a great deal of money, unfortunately. So, Welsh Government, I believe, could put some funding in, but they are looking to partners to fund the rest of it, and my understanding is that there is a lot of reticence on the part of operators and local authorities to fund such a survey. So, that's where we are at the moment on that. Its target is spring 2016, and it's with the Minister, really, at the moment. So, it's being scoped with Transport Focus and the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK, and Welsh Government senior civil servants. But there was a wish to do it in 2015 so that it would be nice and neat and have a five-year gap, but these things are very expensive and it is about trying to find somebody to fund it.

[77] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay, thank you. That's very helpful information that we didn't previously have. Looking at the work that you do, obviously you mentioned the surgeries that you hold. Clearly, judging from our own surgeries, I think we'd probably anticipate that the kind of people who are willing and able to come to surgeries are not typical of the population—that something particular has gone wrong and that they're particularly motivated to come and see you—but I wonder if you can give us an idea of what kind of issues people are raising and whether you've seen a change over the last few years in terms of the issues that people are most concerned about.

[78] **Ms Everson:** I've done a bit of research on this because we do it anyway for our annual report, and I think you've all had a copy. Surprisingly, there's not been a huge—. There's quite a difference between the people who come to the surgeries and the people who actually write in and complain or telephone or e-mail. For the surgeries, last year, the highest percentage of complaints was about the level of service. So presumably they'd lost a lot—. Fifty-seven per cent of the people who came to see us at surgeries said that they were concerned about their level of service. This year, it's 43 per cent, so it's dropped a little. The next highest figure was for reliability—does the bus actually turn up? Does it stop when it arrives at your bus stop?

[79] But, with the complaints, the biggest number of complaints last year was about punctuality, and the biggest number of complaints this year so far is on reliability—again, does it turn up? The driver's attitude is the second highest complaint level for written and telephoned complaints, but in the surgeries, the driver very rarely figures. It's very odd—the complete difference in the kinds of people who talk to us. So, it's very difficult to say there is a trend, because they are actually quite stable, the figures.



[80] **Eluned Parrott:** That's interesting, thank you. Can I ask, are you able to—or have you in the past—cross-tabulated the complaints by where they're coming from geographically? I know you haven't done it in terms of socioeconomic groups or things along those lines, but is there a difference between what rural passengers are telling you what urban passengers are telling you?

[81] **Mr Davies:** Yes, we were categorising complaints with the former consortia areas. As you can imagine, in rural areas, level of service features more highly than it would in, say, Cardiff or Swansea, but driver attitude tends to feature less in the rural areas because you get local drivers who tend to know their passengers—they know Mrs Jones and, on the hail-and-ride, they'll drop her at the door and make sure she's okay. So, there is a difference between that and urban areas where it's sort of a constant flow of passengers and they don't necessarily have the time to do that.

[82] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay, interesting.

[83] **Ms Everson:** People in rural areas will say that, you know, they only get two buses a day, but people in Cardiff will complain that their bus has gone from every 15 minutes to every 20 minutes. So, that's the aspiration and the expectation, you see.

[84] **Mr Davies:** And for people in rural areas, at quite a number of the events we hold, they tell us, 'The bus is our lifeline. Without it we're lost', so buses are really important to people.

10:00

[85] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay, thank you.

[86] **William Graham:** Jeff.

[87] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you very much, Chair. Whether you think bus services can be improved at a time—. We're in times of austerity. It's unrealistic to expect, for the next few years, that there'll be more public money sloshing about to allocate wherever. So, with that factual, realistic background, what scope do you think there is—whether in terms of better planning or better co-ordination—what scope is there for improving services, and doing more with less?

[88] **Mr Saxby:** I'll answer that. In my view, the network as it stands in places is not the most efficient that it could be. Therefore, there must be a way of improving the efficiency of the network and using savings from the improved efficiency to improve things elsewhere. To bring that about, it can't be done under the existing, deregulated regime. But there are powers under the 2008 Act, which I had a lot to do with, because I was chairman of the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers in 2007, when the 2008 Act was going through. So, there are powers in there to do with statutory quality partnerships, and so on, that you can bring to bear to ensure that the network is a bit more efficient than it is at the moment. If you can do that, maybe you could move some of the buses that are competing with one another in one place, and over-bussing a particular area, and use those more productively to do something that's going to attract some new passengers, rather than just fighting over little bits. It's quite difficult to do. The problem at the moment is we haven't got the people on the ground to implement it, and that goes back to your Transport for Wales type approach. You'd need something on a much more strategic level than exists at the moment with the 22 authorities.

[89] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay, because you do mention in your written evidence the need to re-establish a separate body or bodies focusing on public transport. Now, you'll be aware, I'm sure, that in April of next year the powers, or the provisions rather, of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 come into force. That will require all public bodies in Wales to work together in a very, very collaborative way to meet the seven goals, one of which, of course, is well-connected communities—or at least it's part of a goal. Admittedly, that's public bodies, but I think we would hope that key private organisations that contribute to public services, such as transport, would join in spirit, at least, in that way of working. Do you think that the new public service boards, which will be responsible for co-ordinating this, could act together in terms of health, local authorities and education, for example, in terms of providing a better public transport service?

[90] **Ms Everson:** I certainly think that all departments, all divisions such as you mention, all have spare resource. They must all have vehicles lying idle at one time of the day, and I've advocated for some years that health, transport and education inside organisations do pool their resources and make better use of their resources, rather than different divisions purchasing different vehicles for different purposes at different times of the day. I've

always believed that you could make better use of your assets.

[91] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. Because there will be opportunities for organisations like yourselves to say that to the new boards, and I assume you intend to do so.

[92] **Ms Everson:** Yes.

[93] **William Graham:** Okay, thank you. Dafydd.

[94] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Thank you very much, Chair. We will be taking evidence later on this morning from organisations that have the famous words ‘community transport’ in their activity. Can you tell me what you mean by that, how you understand the term ‘community transport’? Is it not the case very often that community transport is called upon when commercial operators stop operating, and that there is no planned approach? Isn’t it really the case that all public transport should be, in one sense or another, community transport? Is that clear?

[95] **Ms Everson:** I agree 100 per cent. Community transport, the official ‘community transport’, and the association that Siân represents, they are expected at all times to plug the gap, because there is a lack of knowledge about what the Community Transport Association and their constituent parts actually do. They’re expected to just step in and run a volunteer bus, but they’re largely staffed by volunteers. People do it because they want to do it, and I believe now that, when they get to a certain age, they’re not allowed to do it anymore. It’s a very hit-and-miss way of addressing a real issue in the community, which is getting people to health, to work, to social, to leisure and home again. It should all work together.

[96] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** But how do you relate the community transport demands, which, presumably, are increasing, and the commercial expectation for the service operation of the commercial operators? How can funding, public funding, bridge that gap, if that’s possible?

[97] **Ms Everson:** That’s not 100 per cent our field, of course—I make that proviso before I start saying things that my colleagues will look at me and say, ‘Why did you say that?’

[98] **William Graham:** We’re getting rather short of time, so if you could be succinct, please.

[99] **Ms Everson:** Okay. Just to say that local authorities have 5 per cent of their local transport grant ring-fenced for community transport spend, and most of them actually spend 10 per cent. So, I think there's a very real will there to try and address this issue.

[100] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I think I'd like to hear my old friend, Mr Saxby, on this matter as well, please.

[101] **Mr Saxby:** In my experience, there was always a problem with funding when it came to community transport, because they tended to rely on applying for grants, and they would only be over a fixed term, and they didn't seem to have an exit strategy. I wanted to see something that was much more sustainable than it was. I think it's probably still the position that they're having to apply for grants. So, it's, you know, 'Well, I'm all right for the next two years', but what happens after that?

[102] **William Graham:** A short one from Keith and a short answer, please.

[103] **Keith Davies:** My question, really, is, with community transport, because we've got the Bwcabus, which is in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire—. And, actually, in my constituency, in Burry Port and in Llanelli, there's a Bwcabus to take people to places where there's no public transport. So, if you live on an estate where there's no public transport, you can actually book a bus to take you to the hospital. Now, why can't we get other authorities to do the same as Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion?

[104] **Ms Everson:** I suspect they would say a lack of funding, because I believe the Bwcabus project is quite expensive, and I think the subsidy levels are quite high.

[105] **William Graham:** Thank you. Oscar.

[106] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. My question has been answered, but the fact is that I actually live in Newport, and I travel every morning and believe me, Margaret, it's a nightmare. So, if there were a proper bus service, I think you could make quite a lot of profit. There are tens of thousands of people who travel from the Bridgend, Caerphilly and Newport areas, coming towards Cardiff, every morning between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. I know the Welsh Government has made a transport plan, and there is a bus plan in it, and there is a recommendation that the bus policy advisory

group has already made in it. What do you think your recommendations—? Have they been put into practice? Is the effectiveness there?

[107] **Ms Everson:** It's a little too soon to say, I'm afraid. In actual fact, the covering letter for the recommendations is going to the Minister today, so we're hoping for a quick turnaround from the Minister's office, because the quality standards, for example, are due to be implemented as from 1 April. We have every hope that that will happen, because there were many recommendations from the bus policy advisory group, and that was whittled down to three—three were taken forward for further development, and those are the three. One of them that you'll be interested in is a case study about how to set up voluntary network partnerships, involving local authorities, bus operators and trip generators. Two pilots have already been carried out in Ceredigion and in Barry as to how to address the community transport issues. Also, there is a little group in the Hay-on-Wye area, and the service is called, 'Hay Ho!', and that is a community-based service. They just got together and said, 'Look, let's do it'. So, the three things that the Minister is going to be approving, we hope, are the quality bus standard, advice and guidance for funding authorities for effective interventions, with examples from elsewhere in the UK, and, as I said, the voluntary network. So, I'm afraid it's too soon to say.

[108] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Have you had the opportunity to look at the draft Wales Bill in relation to buses?

[109] **Ms Everson:** I've looked at it; I haven't studied at it, and so I cannot comment in detail.

[110] **William Graham:** Okay. Could I just ask you, then, about the further explanation of franchising—in other words, bus regulation? Would you welcome this?

[111] **Ms Everson:** My colleague has very definite ideas on this subject. You have four minutes, Bob. [*Laughter.*]

[112] **Mr Saxby:** Thank you, Margaret. Franchising may mean different things to different people. It exists in London and I think that's what most people mean by franchising in terms of Britain. It's very common in other countries; there's a lot of places that use franchising. I know it works. It obviously works in London. It's worked better there than in most other places. I don't agree with the bus industry's statement that London's a

special case. Central London is, but suburban London is no different to a lot of places outside London—towns like Romford and Croydon and so on, they could be Sheffield or Leeds; they’ve just the same problems.

[113] I know that franchising also works in a non-London context, because I did it in Gwynedd in 1986, when we had a very large part—it was the whole of Dwyfor and Meirionnydd—that had no commercial services. I designed a network and procured it. Franchising, some people think, means that you’ll squeeze out the little operators, but we didn’t there, because I put out tenders for individual bus workings, and had 20 different operators. You didn’t need to know, as a passenger, who operated what bus; you knew it was going to have a red front on it, the fare was going to be £1 and it was number so-and-so, and you knew the times because the information was good, and you had an end date on all of the timetables so that you knew when it was likely to change.

[114] **Lord Elis Thomas:** Bring it back, I say.

[115] **Mr Saxby:** Yes. [*Laughter.*] It worked really well until operators started to cherry-pick the best bits, the best routes. Some of them thought they were saving the council money; they weren’t, because it cost us just as much to pay for the evenings and Sundays and the poorer routes. We lost the benefit of the revenue generation that we’d been ploughing back into increasing the vehicle spec. Dolgellau depot, at one stage, had the most modern fleet in the whole of Britain. Mind you, it was only about five buses, but they were all new. So, I know it works. The Department for Transport called it ‘Bob’s little London’ and it was a London style. [*Laughter.*]

[116] The problem is how you get there. I attended a meeting earlier this year where Sir Peter Hendy was speaking, who was commissioner, at the time, of Transport for London. I asked him why he’d been quoted in the trade press as saying that he didn’t think franchising would work outside London. His answer was, ‘It depends on the political will of politicians to put in enough money to get London-style frequencies and fares, because what they provide in London is more than you can provide commercially’, which is the reason that they’ve got so many passengers and so much greater growth.

[117] I’m still of the view that that doesn’t mean to say that, with the existing resources, you couldn’t do better than what’s there now, because we can improve the efficiency of the network. There would be problems, however, with implementing franchising if you tried to take away good

commercial pieces of operation. We don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water. Where there are good commercial services, I think we need to build on that and I think that, by using some of the powers in the 2008 Act, we could build on that, but it needs a strong organisation to be able to implement that. Something like a Transport for Wales is needed to take that forward.

[118] **William Graham:** Splendid. Thank you very much for your answers to our questions today and for your attendance at the committee. We're most grateful; thank you very much.

10:15

## **Ymchwiliad i Wasanaethau Bysiau a Thrafnidiaeth Gymunedol yng Nghymru**

### **Inquiry into Bus and Community Transport Services in Wales**

[119] **William Graham:** Good morning and thank you for your attendance today. Could I ask you to give your names and titles for the record please?

[120] **Mr Francis:** Yes. Good morning; Graeme Francis, head of policy and public affairs for Age Cymru.

[121] **Mr Evans:** Good morning. I'm Rhodri Evans; I'm a senior communications adviser for the Federation of Small Businesses Wales.

[122] **Ms Berrigan:** Rhyan Berrigan, Disability Wales, access and transport policy officer.

[123] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. And the first question this morning is from Keith Davies.

[124] **Keith Davies:** Diolch, **Keith Davies:** Thank you, Chair. I will Gadeirydd. Mi wnaf ofyn yn Gymraeg. ask my question in Welsh. Why do Pam ydych yn credu bod nifer y bobl you believe that there has been a sy'n teithio mewn bysiau wedi decline in bus passenger numbers, gostwng, a bod gwasanaethau wedi and why do you think that services diflannu? Pam? Beth sydd wedi achosi have disappeared? What has caused e? this?

[125] **Mr Francis:** Okay; I'll have the first go at that. We think it's a mixture

of factors—largely economic factors: so, the increased running costs of bus services due to things like fuel prices, which have risen significantly, as we all know, over a few years, albeit they've come down recently; also, changes to funding settlements. So, particularly of interest to Age Cymru is the funding of the concessionary travel scheme. We know that that has been changed over recent years, with a reduction in funding, according to the Campaign for Better Transport, of around £5.5 million since 2013. Albeit still a relatively small part of the overall budget for that scheme, we very much welcome the continuation of support for it from the Welsh Government. But, ultimately, the combination of those factors likely means that when bus companies are making commercial decisions based upon the bottom line for them—and that's the case across the majority of Wales, as you'll know—small changes to funding like that, small increases in running costs like fuel, or perhaps the requirements to make services more accessible, as firms are required to do by legislation, does ultimately mean a loss of routes in some cases. And we think, from our experience, that that's probably the main cause for a decrease in passenger numbers also.

[126] **Mr Evans:** I think that what we would point out is that, obviously, we've seen a rise in car usage in the same period, and certainly, there's the ease of use of that service that obviously drives people to use the car rather than a bus. Certainly, what we say—. We surveyed our members last year, looking at some of these issues, and certainly we had concerns raised by small businesses about the bus services not necessarily meeting business needs and not being able to get people to work and back from work on time, and also issues around frequency of services, reliability of services. So, I think, when you look at that mix of factors, they can push people to one form of transport over another.

[127] **Ms Berrigan:** As has already been mentioned, it's possible that buses are not seen as attractive as they once were because of the funding cuts, for young people especially, because once they learn to drive, that's it; they never go back to using the bus. So, it's all, again, linked to money and economy and fuel cost increases. Some services are cut in isolated communities because they can't afford to run, which means that disabled people and older people in rural communities who rely on buses are cut off. Maybe that's why people and passengers are decreasing—because there's no bus services available, not because they don't want to use the bus. They can't; that could be another reason.

[128] **Keith Davies:** Mae'r nifer sy'n **Keith Davies:** The number of train



defnyddio trenau yn tyfu. A ddylem ni fod yn edrych mwy ar ryw drafnidiaeth integredig? Achos fe glywon ni ddwy flynedd yn ôl fel pwyllgor, rwy'n credu, eu bod nhw wedi newid pethau ym Mhowys, ac maen nhw wedi sicrhau ym Mhowys fod y bysiau yn cyrraedd y gorsafoedd trenau pan fydd y trenau'n cyrraedd, ac y mae wedi gweithio. A ydym ni'n gwneud digon ar drafnidiaeth integredig?

passengers is increasing. Should we be looking more towards an integrated transport model? Because we heard two years ago as a committee, I think, that they had changed things in Powys, and they have ensured that the buses in Powys arrive at the train stations at the same time as the trains, and everything has worked well. Are we doing enough on integrated transport?

[129] **Mr Evans:** Shall I start on that one? In short order, I think the answer is 'no'. I think that we have far greater scope in Wales to develop integrated transport. Obviously, this committee looked at the issue, as you'll be aware, a number of years ago. I would certainly say that we've perhaps not seen the progress that we'd have liked to have seen in that regard. You're probably aware that in the FSB's manifesto for the next Welsh Government, we're actually calling for a body called 'transport for Wales' to head up integrated transport in Wales. We believe it requires that sort of approach—a professional and joined-up approach—in order to deliver these services. We currently are having problems on the roads network as everybody's aware, and we're not going to necessarily solve those by building roads. That's a very expensive way of doing it. And certainly the bus services have a very important role to play, both joining up with rail services, and I think we are not achieving as we might at the moment in terms of integrated transport.

[130] **Keith Davies:** My final question to you, really, is on—. I've said it before this morning about Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire and community transport and Bwcabus, and whether we're doing enough with that. Because I'm told that even in an urban area like Llanelli, there's a Bwcabus there that will take people from estates where there's no transport to Prince Philip Hospital, providing they do it the day before. Why don't other authorities do the same kind of thing as Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire, then?

[131] **Mr Francis:** In relation to Bwcabus, we too hear very positive things about the service and how it operates and how it enables older people to access the services or the facilities that they need to. I think I'm right in saying that, technically, it doesn't count as community transport because the definition of 'community transport' requires the service to be not-for-profit,

and I believe Bwcabus isn't. However, it's certainly been a frustration for a number of older people that we've spoken to, not just older people from Carmarthenshire, where they know that good service examples exist in one local authority or one part of Wales and aren't replicated elsewhere. And we think that where models are successful and can demonstrate that they allow people to access the services that they need or to tackle social isolation, those kinds of models should actively be shared and replicated where necessary.

[132] **Mr Evans:** I think that we also say that Bwcabus is a positive thing, and certainly in rural areas like Ceredigion, when we look at public transport, that is essentially bus transport. There are economic reasons why it's quite difficult to operate some routes that are important to individuals, both for social reasons and economically as well. So, I think that Bwcabus plays an important role in that, and I think that we should be looking at it certainly in other rural areas of Wales.

[133] **Ms Berrigan:** On the demand for community transport and what it can provide, it does provide a real accessible alternative to inaccessible mainstream buses. However, it's worth noting that, from 2013, most community transport operators do not accept concessionary passes, which means that older and disabled people don't benefit from free travel, and cannot do so if they rely on community transport. They have to pay; even if it's a minimal amount, they still have to pay. So, they haven't been able to use the free concessionary pass. That's something to consider. It adds to the economy. Before 2013, some community transport services could accept passes, but because of the fuel costs and the rising costs of administration, they had to move to pay for that model.

[134] **William Graham:** Jeff, you had a short question.

[135] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, it's about better integration of transport. You'll be aware, of course, that the provisions of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 come into force next April, and one of the goals there relates to well-connected communities. It's a no-brainer that that ought to lead to better transport. Admittedly, the legal requirements are on public bodies, but we trust that providers of transport will work in the same spirit. What sort of representations do you think your organisations could be making to the new public service boards, when they're established, about how transport can be better integrated?

[136] **Mr Francis:** I think we need to make those kinds of representations. One of the key things that our research into buses, conducted a couple of years ago with the Bevan Foundation, found was that older people in some areas really struggled to access the essential services, particularly hospitals and other health services that they need, by public transport. We think that's a place where public service boards, which will include membership from the right organisations, need to get together and make sure transport is on their agenda. We're particularly interested in that around the current reconfiguration of health services that's been happening around Wales. Where those decisions are taken, then transport really does need to be a consideration in that as well.

[137] The other thing I'd add on integrated transport is that there are various different types of integration, if you like, or different things that need to be integrated: timetables have already been referred to, so that buses and trains arrive and depart at convenient times. Equally, there's the sort of physical integration of where bus stops or bus stations are next to train stations, and where bus stops actually actively take people to things like hospitals or public facilities. There's also ticketing and information that can be better integrated across the transport system as well. So, you're absolutely right, public service boards and public bodies need to be looking at that in the context of sustainability and the future generations Bill.

[138] **Mr Evans:** In terms of the FSB, we've been very concerned about economies of place and very much that: joining up sort of local communities with their surroundings, essentially. So, obviously, we'd be very interested in terms of making representations, particularly on services that, perhaps, join people up in communities to our town centres, because that has an economic value and a social value for people as well, and also in order to join people up so that they can get into work. Certainly, I think we've seen some evidence that there are services that allow people to get into work on time, but no services that allow them to get back. So, it's those sorts of things that we would probably look to make representations on.

[139] **Ms Berrigan:** Well, at the moment, many health and different services make decisions in isolation without proper consultation with each other. It would be good if overarching communication and engagement, before any policies are implemented, took place with disabled people and people on the ground as well, working together on the policy. Instead of coming from the top down, it should be from the ground to each level above. That approach is needed.

[140] **Eluned Parrott:** There seems to be some confusion between what is a commercial Bwcabus service and what is a Dial-a-Ride service for people who, perhaps, have disabilities, or older people, to access things like hospital appointments. I'm wondering, in terms of those Dial-a-Ride services, the extent to which you think that changes in the concessionary fares regime has affected that. Rhyan has suggested that operators weren't taking concessionary passes. I went on one six weeks ago that was accepting a concessionary pass, so I'm surprised by that assertion. But I'm just wondering—. One of the issues they've raised with me is the fact that, since they've dropped the reimbursement for concessionary passes on the basis that commercial operators can accept that kind of cut, community transport whose passengers might be 100 per cent concessionary pass holders—*[Inaudible.]*—communities that you're looking after.

[141] **Ms Berrigan:** It's down to the costs for community transport to run. Most services rely on volunteers like drivers and a very minimal contribution for fuel comes back to them. So, that's why I think for community transport to carry on the service that the majority of their customers rely on for hospital appointments and social activities to stop them becoming isolated in their communities, they feel that instead of shutting down operations altogether, they'll have to charge a minimum fee to keep it going. Many don't want to because it's against their ethos and principles, but to save the transport association stopping altogether, leaving communities isolated, it's a necessary evil really to charge even just a minimal amount.

10:30

[142] **Eluned Parrott:** And is that the case—have Age Cymru found that as well?

[143] **Mr Francis:** Yes, the point about the concessionary pass scheme on community transport—it's interesting to know that there are schemes that do accept that, because I think they're not required to by the legislation around concessionary travel. It is a problem therefore for people who use community transport because they can't access public transport, mainstream buses, and that means that they're at a financial disadvantage, because often, in many parts of Wales, the concessionary pass is not taken on community transport schemes.

[144] **Eluned Parrott:** So, can I ask—

[145] **Mr Francis:** Sorry, just to say, from our point of view as well, one of the issues—and I know you'll be hearing in more detail about community transport later this morning—one of the issues for that sector, as we understand it, is the uncertainty of funding. One thing the concessionary pass scheme does do, albeit with the caveats around the reimbursement rate, is provide a predictable form of funding, which might help that sector in terms of its sustainability.

[146] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay, thank you. I wonder, to all of you, if you've conducted any research to demonstrate the impact of cuts across the piece and the changes to bus routes, on either the groups that you're representing or alternatively on businesses in particular geographical locations. Have you been doing that research and what has it been telling you?

[147] **Mr Evans:** We've been doing a wider piece of transport research that the bus element forms a smaller part of, essentially, but I don't think we've asked that particular question because I think the sample sizes make it quite difficult to ask that in particular economic areas of Wales.

[148] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay.

[149] **Mr Francis:** We conducted some research that I've mentioned previously with the Bevan Foundation in late 2013, which highlighted a number of issues that older people had in terms of accessing bus services, one of which was a lack of routes or cuts to routes. However, we believe that, since that research was undertaken, this problem has got worse. In 2013, the research found that there wasn't a huge number of route reductions, but conversations more anecdotally with our local partners across Wales more recently have indicated that those cuts have accelerated, and I think that research by the Campaign for Better Transport found 86 route changes including 16 complete route withdrawals in the last year. So, I think, if we repeated that work now, we would probably find an even greater issue with regard to things like access to hospital services, which came out from that research in 2013.

[150] **Ms Berrigan:** We don't have research as such but we have lots of case studies from our members that state that uncertainty about accessibility on their local bus services knocks their confidence when a bad experience happens. For example, a lady—a wheelchair user—went into, I think, Swansea centre, on an accessible, flat, low-level bus, but she couldn't come home

again because all the buses they were using then—a few hours later—had steps, which means she had to then get a taxi, which is an additional cost, to get home again. So, it's consistency that's causing confusion and knocking people's confidence about using public transport.

[151] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay, thank you.

[152] **William Graham:** Joyce.

[153] **Joyce Watson:** I wanted to ask about the next stage in concessionary fares. I don't know if you have any views, but Age Scotland did run a campaign—and they called it Still Waiting—that suggested that the concessionary fare should be available to community transport. But they aligned it to increasing the age at which—because it's currently 60—people can access concessionary fares, if they're accessing, of course, due to age. Do you have any views on that? Because their argument was that then the upper age limit could pay for an advantage in community transport.

[154] **Mr Francis:** We've argued for a long time about the extension of the concessionary travel scheme to community transport. For the reasons that I've outlined already, we think that's essential to address that anomaly whereby some of the most vulnerable older people who can't access mainstream buses have to pay to access community transport.

[155] In relation to how you would pay for that, we're realistic that options need to be considered for where you'd get that funding from. Whereas I don't believe it's for us to be arguing for the diminishing of rights for older people, I think the eligibility age for the scheme would, potentially, be a reasonable compromise to make sure that that could be extended to community transport. We know already that it's happening in England, whereby the eligibility age for an older person to get the pass is rising in line with female state pension age. To be perfectly honest, that doesn't seem like an unreasonable position to take. However, I think, in order for us to support that kind of policy, then something like the extension to community transport—which I think is really important and would, as I said earlier, help to address some of the funding uncertainties faced by community transport—would need to be in place.

[156] **Ms Berrigan:** I think concessionary passes are vital for the independence of people in local communities, and they help older and disabled people to travel about when they may not be able to afford to do so

otherwise. So, in support of independent living, I don't think any campaign to raise the age should happen, really. It's about independent living and supporting that, rather than trying to scupper a good thing that we have now.

[157] **Mr Evans:** I don't think we'd have any view either way on the age issue, but certainly, obviously, we are operating in constrained times. I think the one concern we would have is if there was anything that meant that there was less money available to support key routes through other forms of bus subsidy.

[158] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[159] **William Graham:** Jeff.

[160] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. To quite a degree, you've already addressed the issue of barriers, particularly for older and disabled people, to bus transport, but this is an opportunity if there's any more that you want to say about barriers that exist now. Specifically, could I ask Disability Wales why you think there's a need for a contingency plan to identify routes at risk of losing services specifically as a result of the implementation of the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations, which we all know was 2000?

[161] **Ms Berrigan:** Yes, it's all linked to barriers—access barriers, communication barriers. It's not just the physical barriers, which are the first thing people think of—ramps and steps. We're talking about provision of accessible information, too. I did say contingency plans, because if you think about it holistically, many rural isolated communities have bus services that use older stock and may not be able to afford the newer stock that enables them to operate legally into 2020; therefore, more than likely, they would rather go out of business instead of spending money they can't afford updating their stock to make it viable to trade again. So, we have to think about it.

[162] The deadline's great; it's fantastic that disabled people will have peace of mind, knowing that it's 100 per cent accessible on public transport, but we have to be mindful that some smaller operators may not be able to afford to carry on, and there could be gaps left in communities—urban communities as well as isolated communities. Community transport may or may not be able to step in, depending on their own finances. So, that's why I thought—well, Disability Wales thought—we have to be mindful of the fact to take over

from transport operators that may operate now, but may not be able to in the future.

[163] **Mr Francis:** The only other point I'd add in relation to barriers is: as well as the accessibility of the buses themselves that we've talked about, our research with older people has found that one of the major barriers in addition is bus stops themselves, or the street environment that people need to use to get to bus stops. So, there's an important role for local authorities in working with bus companies here to make sure that things like sufficient seating are provided at bus stops, that there's shelter, and that the actual built environment enables people to access the stop itself—that pavements and things like that are rectified as well. So, whilst the main barrier to many older and disabled people is the bus itself, you can't neglect the bus stop as well.

[164] **Mr Evans:** In terms of our members, I'd say the key barriers are the routes and the frequency of services. If services allow people to get their staff to and from work, then they will use them. If either of those sides fail, then the barrier exists to prevent them using that service.

[165] **Jeff Cuthbert:** If I may, Chair, as you know, one of the biggest capital projects that's about to begin here is the south Wales metro. I dare say you intend to make submissions to them. Can you give us a flavour, just a flavour, of the sort of minimum requirements you would want to see built into the metro?

[166] **Mr Evans:** I think the key thing is that it provides more frequent services and a higher quality of service in order to get people to and from where they need to be. I think there's also an important element that we'll be looking at in terms of the hubs that they've talked about in the Valleys, as to how we can ensure that they are easily accessible also to people who want to travel on then into Cardiff as well. But, as I say, a key thing is that we think that it's got to be overseen by a joined-up integrated transport approach. So, certainly I think we've talked about joint transport authorities covering various regions in Wales, and certainly we'd like to see the metro scheme come under a joint transport authority covering south-east Wales, and then that fall under an umbrella body, Transport for Wales, to drive overall strategy and investment.

[167] **Ms Berrigan:** Of course, full, inclusive access is a must for the new stations and on board the metro, and enough provision of wheelchair spaces



so that wheelchair users don't have to compete with mothers and prams for the same space because, at the moment, on buses, the majority of buses have only one space and there's a bit of friction about who has priority—whether it's buggy or wheelchair. So, that would need to be resolved on the modern metro. More spaces need to be available to avoid confrontation.

[168] **William Graham:** Dafydd.

[169] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** And by the time Rhun's brought his bike as well, it'll need even more space. [*Laughter.*] Can I ask about Transport for Wales? Have you done any specific work on how this would look, and the structure? Clearly, this committee would be very interested if you've got a hidden paper up your sleeve somewhere, Rhodri.

[170] **Mr Evans:** The key thing that we've looked at, obviously, is the need for it in the first instance. We are currently conducting work with Professor Stuart Cole, who you'll be familiar with, from the University of South Wales. That work is ongoing and probably will come to fruition early in the new year. So, I don't want to release everything, but certainly we've had, since we've raised the issue of Transport for Wales, contact from senior advisers from Transport for London offering assistance with that. So, certainly, there is expertise out there that can be drawn upon, and I'm more than happy to provide those sorts of things to the committee.

[171] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Thank you.

[172] **William Graham:** Thank you. Oscar.

[173] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much. My question to the panel is—first of all, thank you for giving us the brief—local government and Welsh Government both support the local community bus and transport plans. What are the areas, do you think, for improvement, in your view?

[174] **Mr Francis:** I think we've probably touched on a number of them already, and we'd probably have a slightly different wish list from Welsh Government or local government. For us, consistent funding has got to be the bedrock of any policy for transport. That's not intended as a criticism of the current Welsh Government's policy, but it's just a statement of fact that, you know, we need a consistent long-term funding basis so that operators can properly plan their routes, and particularly so that community transport is fully supported and we don't see the kind of reductions in services that

Rhyan has referred to. We've already talked about proper integration. That's essential for all the reasons that we've already discussed; accessibility for all the reasons as well. Then, particularly for us, I think that co-ordination between the types of services that exist to help older people get to hospital, for example, and commercial services—we think that could be better joined up, and there are probably missed opportunities in not working together on that in terms of economies of scale or sharing of resources. Equally, we believe the Welsh Government and local government need to be very strong over those routes that may not be commercially viable but are socially critical to older people to enable them to get to the services that they need, and in particular there I guess we'd also be talking about evening services and weekend services, because those are the ones that are quite frequently raised with us as being particularly lacking.

10:45

[175] **Mr Evans:** I think integration is key, both at a local level and at a wider Wales level. In terms of the sort of Welsh Government level, I think what we'd also like to see is a more sort of joined-up methodology in deciding on what sort of transport infrastructure and schemes get invested in. Certainly, with the bus industry, it may be the case that there are bus schemes that could potentially deliver a greater bang for your buck in the short term than a road scheme potentially, but we don't seem to have a methodology at the moment to compare one with the other. So, we're looking to perhaps increase the road network rather than looking at the best use of the road network that we've got. I think that's one key thing that we'd like to see from a Welsh Government level—an adoption of a methodology that better allows us to consider different forms of transport, including bus transport in the round.

[176] **Ms Berrigan:** A more joined-up approach would be good within local authorities' different departments themselves or education and leisure to think about transport and how to get to the different places, especially schools. So, their budgets are shrinking, but if they co-operate more at the local authority level, they could do more with what they already have to improve transport services in that way.

[177] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you.

[178] **William Graham:** Rhun.

[179] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I'm just going to ask some questions about how

well you think transport considerations are integrated into other policy areas. I think you've touched a lot on that already, certainly on health planning. In general terms, is the economic importance, for example, of buses considered enough across the whole range of policy in Government?

[180] **Mr Evans:** Personally, I would say that I think that the key is that the bus is often seen as the poor relation in terms of transport consideration by government. I think that, obviously, that doesn't help rural areas in particular, and the economies of rural areas. I think there needs to be a better focus on, as I say, an integration that provides for the needs of communities across Wales. I think there is a danger that there's a focus on those large urban communities at the expense of other parts of Wales. I think, certainly in terms of transport needs, if you're going to look to invest in the methodology that they use at the moment in terms of where there's the greatest return, you're always going to look at where the greatest population is, but I think we need to look a little bit beyond that and look at, certainly, the economic needs of rural areas where the provision of a service full stop may have a greater benefit than a less journey time that you might find from a similar investment in an urban area.

[181] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** One specific area where transport possibly hasn't been considered—and a question to Graeme and to Rhyan—is welfare reform. Has the impact of welfare reform on transport for disabled people and older people been considered enough?

[182] **Ms Berrigan:** With the cuts in mobility, higher rate mobility, and the disability living allowance change-over to the personal independence payment, it's increasing now that disabled people who were eligible for higher rate mobility, which meant that they had a mobility car, are no longer eligible for the higher rate, which means they're more than likely to lose their mobility car. If they can't afford—. With the welfare cuts, some can't afford to buy an adaptable car outright, and they'll be forced to rely on public transport, which isn't always accessible, even today. So, we have to be wary that disabled people are losing money through benefit cuts and losing their independence, through a lack of a mobility car, and are forced to rely on carers, the support worker, or friends and family to ferry them about when, really, they should be independent. If they are able to use public transport, they should be able to, if it's accessible.

[183] With the benefit cuts again more severe now, the roll-out for those on lifetime benefits have started in October from Capita, which means—. The

majority of disabled people who have the mobility have a lifelong award or grant, which means you will probably see a higher number of people now being forced to come off higher rate mobility to lower rate mobility, which only gives you, say, £20 a month, as opposed to the car itself. So, it's a big drop in what you are eligible for, from the higher to lower rate. So, we have to be mindful that many disabled people could start to get isolated because they no longer have access to a car. It's something that will only get worse with time.

[184] **William Graham:** Last question, please.

[185] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Just maybe, briefly, a response from you on that, because I'm aware of the time.

[186] **Mr Francis:** I agree with everything that Rhyan's said. From our point of view, the issue is probably less to do with welfare reform itself than the design of benefits for older people, anyway. So, for example, many older people access attendance allowance, rather than accessing disability living allowance or now the personal independence payment, and that's never actually included a mobility component—we believe because of ageist assumptions that are made about the importance of mobility to older people. What that means is that the benefit is paid at a lower rate and doesn't have consideration of people's mobility needs. That, combined with an assumption, sometimes, that older people are well served by transport policy because of the concessionary bus scheme, means that those people who can't access that or don't use buses need to drive because they live in a rural area, or they can't get to a bus stop, or, as I've previously mentioned, need to access community transport, don't have adequate consideration of their mobility needs and the cost of their mobility.

[187] **William Graham:** Thank you very much and thank you very much for interpreting today—most grateful to you. The Record will be published and you'll have a chance to comment. Thank you very much for coming today. The committee will now retire until 11.15 a.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:52 ac 11:14.  
The meeting adjourned between 10:52 and 11:14.*

**Ymchwiliad i Wasanaethau Bysiau a Thrafnidiaeth Gymunedol yng  
Nghymru**

**Inquiry into Bus and Community Transport Services in Wales**

[188] **William Graham:** Can I welcome our witnesses today? Could I ask you to give your names and titles for the record, please?

[189] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** My name's Sarah Leyland-Jones and I'm the vice-chair of the Community Transport Association Wales, but I'm also the senior officer for community transport and training for the county voluntary council in Powys.

[190] **Ms Summers-Rees:** I'm Siân Summers-Rees and I'm the director for the Community Transport Association in Wales.

[191] **Mr Taylor:** I'm Phil Taylor and I'm the transport and education manager for the Aberfan and Merthyr Vale youth and community project, which provides community transport services, and I'm the chair of CTA Wales.

[192] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. We'll start, if we may, with Eluned.

[193] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you, Chair. I wonder if you can give us an idea of what role you think community transport should be playing in an integrated transport network, and the difference between what you should be doing and what actually does happen on the ground.

11:15

[194] **Ms Summers-Rees:** We believe CT could play a really extensive role in an integrated transport network. There are challenges around integrated ticketing and timetables, because community transport is usually demand-responsive, and therefore people book the day before. There are issues in being able to get timetables that are integrated. However, I think what we do have is the opportunity for CT to play a significant role in supporting commercial services in terms of feeder routes, for example, but also there could be other opportunities. We need to think about how we can look at supporting the more rural communities and not lose sight, I suppose, of our more local services, such as the community car schemes. I think there's a danger there of losing some of the core services that CT has, as it would be

unable to really extend into a role of running feeder routes, for example, without additional resources, because of the role that it's currently playing in supporting the most vulnerable in our society.

[195] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay, thank you. There seems to be some confusion sometimes between services like Bwcabus, which are obviously commercial services, and then the Dial-a-Ride services that you've just described, so perhaps you can give us an idea of how the two compare and what is community transport, if it is such a different thing from that kind of thing. If you could clarify that for us, I think that would be helpful.

[196] **Ms Summers-Rees:** Okay; it might be difficult in an hour, but I'll try. Community transport is regulated differently from the commercial sector. We're run under a permit regime, and that's under a section 19 permit and a section 22 permit. That is for organisations that are not for profit. Essentially, a section 19 service is for people who are members of an organisation. So, they have to be members, and then they are able to use services such as Dial-a-Ride. A section 22 service is a community bus service that is open to the public to use. I suppose, essentially, the difference with Bwcabus is that it is a purely commercial service, run by commercial operators—so, not run by community transport, which is not for profit. In terms of the Bwcabus model, it's got a mix of fixed routes and demand-responsive routes, but they are run by commercial operators, not by community transport at the present time.

[197] **Eluned Parrott:** That's really helpful. Thank you ever so much. Clearly, we've heard a little bit this morning about the CT sector facing some challenging times, and I think other Members will want to drill into that in more detail, but I wonder if you can tell us what you believe the social and economic benefits of community transport are to their communities and what we risk if we risk the loss of services from community transport.

[198] **Ms Summers-Rees:** Okay. Well, there's a wide range of economic, social and health benefits, really, to community transport. If you look at the social importance of community transport, it is supporting people to live independently. So, if there were fewer services, there would be more demands on social care, more demands on the health service and, obviously, if people were unable to live independently, there would be a cost there in terms of having to go into nursing homes. So, the cost savings to the public purse of CT are quite significant.

[199] There are other benefits—economic benefits in terms of the support that CT gives in employing people, but also the volunteering opportunities that it gives people in the community and the benefits, really, of volunteering for unemployed people, who might be able to then look at opportunities once they've got some experience. Of course, CT operators are buyers themselves; they are operating in the community, so they are purchasing locally. In addition, I think community transport plays a huge role in supporting access to local high streets, and that's a significant role I think CT plays in supporting its local communities in terms of an economic benefit. I don't know if my colleagues have anything to add.

[200] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** I think we also generally use smaller, more economic vehicles—and actually, there's that knowledge and understanding that we have in terms of the individuals that we provide a service to. Our vehicles are accessible, and therefore those who are wheelchair users are often those who benefit most from the use of, certainly, our Dial-a-Ride services—otherwise they're at home, or they end up in homes. So, you know, the types of vehicles that we're able to offer and the type of service that we're able to offer is there to complement the bus services that are operating in the localities.

[201] **Mr Taylor:** I support both of my colleagues in what they've just said. As a community transport operator, there are a range of benefits, obviously, at a national level at the moment—prudent healthcare is a big thing and trying to support people in their own homes or in the community, and bringing those health benefits to them. Living more independently is a big step for us, and it's what we're all about, really, as a community operator.

[202] **Ms Summer-Rees:** I think there's a key role that community transport also plays with health, ensuring that people don't miss their appointments. They have that close relationship, often, with a community transport organisation, and it's the driver that really reminds people of their next appointments et cetera. As to the costs, we've got an example, I think, in west Wales of community transport taking mental health patients to their appointments, and the 'did not attend' number has significantly reduced by having that dedicated service taking them day to day. So, the cost savings for that must be significant.

[203] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** We're also actually looking to train all our drivers, certainly across Powys, to further develop dementia-friendly communities. We've got nearly 300 volunteer drivers, and actually having those people

recognise and understand early signs of dementia and supporting those individuals is really important.

[204] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you.

[205] **William Graham:** Dafydd.

[206] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Can I ask about the spread of community transport availability across the whole of Wales geographically, and what your views are on that? I'd also like to try and update some statistics that you gave in the state-of-the-sector report in 2014, which indicated a decline in direct employees, but still with a substantial cohort of voluntary drivers. I would like to know exactly where you are now in terms of the participation and the geographical spread of community transport.

[207] **Ms Summers-Rees:** Okay. What we've been doing recently is looking at where there are gaps—a sort of gap-mapping exercise. Through the work with the non-emergency patient transport services transformation board, what we're hoping to look at is where there are currently social-need journeys that WAST are picking up, to identify whether potentially we could do work in those areas. The difficulty, as an organisation, is that we have limited capacity in terms of supporting that community development work, and we recognise that it's really important that it must be from the communities, otherwise it's not going to work. So, to really have that bottom-up approach for developing either new schemes, or whether to support existing community transport organisations to extend current services. We do have Sarah in Powys and another community development officer in Pembrokeshire that we work in partnership with, but we do have limited resources, really, to be able to support new schemes and also in terms of resources for extending services in existing community transport organisations.

[208] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** I think it's quite hard to gain additional funding for new services. What we have to look at is the sustainability of those services. So, an extension of an existing service is always going to be better than setting up something completely new. Just as an example in Powys, we received £62,000 last year to support 17 organisations to deliver over 30 different CT services. So, it's a very small amount of core funding that's coming in; everything else they've got to generate themselves.

[209] **Ms Summers-Rees:** In terms of staff, we've seen an increase in



organisations relying on volunteers, and I suppose from an operator's perspective, it's very difficult to recruit additional volunteers. We've got more difficulties as the pension age goes up because there is less of a pool of people able to offer their services. Also, we've had changes to licensing requirements, which can limit the pool of staff and volunteers that are available, and that's causing a difficulty for organisations.

[210] **Mr Taylor:** I think across Wales there is quite a varied range of services and individuals forthcoming to volunteer. I think we do find that, further west and further east in Wales, there is a willingness to volunteer. Perhaps within the more central and eastern parts of Wales, it's quite difficult to find people to volunteer. Again, obviously, there is the licensing issue, and the retirement age is deterring people from volunteering—they are staying within employment for a longer period. The sector does rely on volunteers to support many of these services, especially the smaller rural areas. For perhaps a larger operator, they mainly focus on employing staff, which is ensuring that those services can be delivered effectively, on time, on a regular basis. Obviously, ultimately, volunteers can't be relied on for everything. So, there is a big variety in the mix in trying to get it right across the whole of Wales. It's quite difficult, really, because everywhere is quite diverse; every area is quite different, and each area has different needs and demands.

[211] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** But, surely, there are similar demographic trends in many of these areas, especially in the rural areas, which would point to an unmet need, perhaps, for community transport. That's one of the questions I'm trying to get at.

[212] **Mr Taylor:** Ultimately there is, and I think you can look across rural areas— and I suppose Sarah can give more information on this. You look across Powys; it's quite a rural area, and trying to get from one service to another, it can be quite a long, lengthy journey, and it's about trying to meet those needs. But, as she just stated, there is no funding available to put those new services in place and to meet the needs of the community. So, yes, there is demand there, but, unfortunately, the finances are not there to support it.

[213] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** I think, also, we've got to be clear that community transport is there to complement existing services. We are seeing cuts in public transport services. The expectation is then raised on our community transport. What I find across Powys—and as I said, we've got 17

organisations that operate across the key towns in Powys, and in some of the more rural areas—is that the services are different. In some places, we have got Dial-a-Ride services, using accessible minibuses, in our key towns. What we have then in our more rural communities is generally the community car schemes. So, depending on what's requested by the community, we'll try to develop the appropriate type of service, and we have to look at the cost associated with doing that. One of the issues that we have in county is that our local authority doesn't always engage with us appropriately about which services they're likely to remove, and which services they're likely to develop.

[214] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** But it's also the problem—and we discussed some of this earlier this morning—that commercial operators can drop a service just like that. And where does it end up? It ends up with you trying to put something together, or your equivalents.

[215] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** Absolutely.

[216] **Mr Taylor:** As an example, as an organisation, it's something which happened within Merthyr Tydfil. The operator removed a service and there were no opportunities to provide that service to that rural community. We introduced a section 22 bus service within that area and we've now been operating it for three years. There was some resistance first of all, with the change to that service, but now it's effective. We've improved the destination, we've improved passenger numbers and we're still operating that on a budget from three years ago. So, there is scope there for these services to work, and again, there has to be some demand there in the community. As Sarah rightly stated there, we meet the needs of the community. Whatever needs are there, we will focus on, but ultimately, as a sector, we can't truly be reliant on what we've currently got as income. It doesn't suffice really or meet the needs of what we're doing. If we generated income, a commercial operator would provide the service. Obviously, we do the work that a commercial operator doesn't want to do, ultimately.

[217] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** This is my final question. I want to ask about the whole sad failure of Government policy—and it includes all of us, all parties here in this Assembly—on the funding of community transport. We can go back to the pilot schemes of the community transport concessionary fares in previous Governments, previous Assemblies, through to the decision in February of the then Minister to bring that to an end, and the concern that if that way of funding continued, it would have been unsustainable and would be too expensive. What can we do nationally now, in terms of the national

transport plan, and the funding of that, to make sure that you have adequate resources to meet the needs across Wales?

[218] **Ms Summers-Rees:** There certainly needs to be a review of the funding, both in terms of the BSSG, which, as you pointed out, has gone from 10 per cent to 5 per cent. But I think, also, it's about looking at how that's distributed through the local authorities. I've written to all 22 local authorities; not all have come back to me on what their current funding levels are—

[219] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** They haven't replied to you?

[220] **Ms Summers-Rees:** No, not all of them.

[221] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Are you willing to tell us which ones? Not necessarily now, but you can tell us later.

[222] **Ms Summers-Rees:** Okay. From the position we're in, we can see already, from the responses that we have had, that it's very different across each of the sectors. Sarah's point is that, in one area, where you've got more schemes, you've got the same amount of money and 18 schemes. So, it's not focused on the need of the community; it's not a thought-out process, if you like, and it's not done in consultation and engagement with the communities that actually know what the needs are. So, I think with the BSSG, that's the crucial issue.

11:30

[223] Concessionary fares—I'll leave this to Phil to explain where we are and the continuing difficulties for organisations that have moved from the section 19. Because you cannot use your concessionary fares pass on the section 19, some organisations, in some circumstances, have felt that they've been forced to look at section 22 and, unfortunately, that's led to some financial instability as well.

[224] **Lord Elis Thomas:** I should declare an interest and show my pass now. There's more of us, I'm sure. [*Laughter.*]

[225] **Mr Taylor:** With regard to the concessionary fares initiative, which we've funded, really, for eight years, ultimately, the service in itself, and the idea and the concept behind the concessionary fares, met the needs of a

community, especially within Merthyr Tydfil, where we have high levels of disability and people requiring that service. Over the years, though, it kind of left a legacy where people required this transport, but, once it ended, there was nothing there for them. The only way those individuals could use that service would be for us to set up a section 22 service and operate it on that basis. Unfortunately, the difficulty you have there is that the concessionary fares reimbursement rate does not cover the full cost of operating that service, and that's where many services have fallen down and operators have not been able to continue to operate that kind of service.

[226] To put that into some context, for us to operate that service costs £60,000 a year. If we change that over to a section 22 service, and solely based it on concessionary passes and reimbursement rates, you're looking at only getting back around £15,000 a year. So, obviously, there's a big shortfall there in what it can do. But, in terms of meeting the needs of a community, it was very good at doing that and served a very good purpose; unfortunately, those individuals now have been left isolated or have to find some alternative transport.

[227] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** Can I just add, in terms of the funding? I represent Powys and it is the most rural community in Wales and covers a quarter of the country. In terms of population, it's very small, so the costs of providing services and the distances travelled are going to be greater, but, actually, we always get the smallest amount of funding to provide services, and it's incredibly difficult to meet the needs of those people in our communities. It feels, often, that you're penalised for living in a rural community, and, actually, some of those people are forced to move into local towns, but it doesn't make them any less isolated; their needs are still there. It may cost less to meet them locally than it does to travel out, but, that reduction from the 10 per cent to the 5 per cent, the 10 per cent was insufficient for the number of services that we were trying to deliver, and then the reduction to 5 per cent seemed to be predicated on what was needed in other areas, because there was too much money there, because the need for community transport wasn't quite so great. So, actually, as Siân quite rightly puts it, the distribution of that funding needs to be reviewed.

[228] **Ms Summers-Rees:** What the pilot did—we had a pilot in eight years—is it created also an expectation, so people expected their services to be free, and then it forces community transport to look at the section 22 option, which, actually, in some circumstances might not be suitable. We've looked at that in Powys, and, you know, for some areas, section 22 is just not going

to be a viable option. The difficulty is now that, on section 19, the passengers aren't able to use their pass. They don't know the difference—it's a bus to them—and it's very difficult for a sector to manage those circumstances.

[229] In terms of the turnover and the differences in the funding as well, the change from year to year—local transport services grant, regional transport services grant, and now bus service support grant—and the short-termism of the funding as well—. It's impossible for organisations to look to the future and do any strategic planning when they don't know what funding they're going to get from one financial year to the next.

[230] **Mr Taylor:** And, obviously, looking at the distribution, as you mentioned there, it's that, for each area in each local authority, the distribution is looked at depending on the population living within that area. Throughout Wales it varies, and throughout the counties it varies, and, depending on how many operators operate in that area, what the allocation is. So, in some areas they might have a kind of large 5 per cent, in some senses, it could be—estimate—£50,000 or £60,000, but there's only one or two operators in that area. In another area, like Sarah's, that comes to £60,000, but it has to be broken down between 17. Previously, the idea being that the regional transport consortia were in place and the vision for the future was that the regional transport consortia controlled all the 10 per cents from the local authorities within that area, and then they looked at the needs of that area and distributed the money correctly to the needs and the requirements, which the more kind of on-the-ground operators supported that idea.

[231] **Joyce Watson:** I'd like to just carry on with the idea of concessionary fare schemes and I'm not going to rehearse the first part again, but do you have any views on Age Scotland, where they have looked at the age of eligibility and argued that it should match the age of retirement—which we know has increased somewhat—as a potential method of funding that scheme's extension, particularly into your area? Have you discussed that or have you any views on it?

[232] **Ms Summers-Rees:** We discussed that this morning and I think what we felt was, if the redistribution made it fairer, then certainly that would be something to look at. However, I think that needs to be done in consultation and in engagement with communities. Often, we find, with the changes from the section 19 to the section 22, it's explaining to people why you're making

those changes to make it fairer for more people in society and I think that's one of the things that, as organisations working in the community, we could support any changes in that respect, to be able to engage with communities.

[233] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** I think also we have to remember that for many people, certainly within the CT sector, they're not able to use those passes, so it makes no difference what age they are. So, unless we're extending it to ensure that, for all services that are provided, where they meet a specific need, if you reach that age, then you should be able to use that—. But we also have to look at the—. As Phil said, if he's operating a service that's costing him £60,000 and he can only get £15,000 back, we need to actually review how that's managed financially.

[234] **Joyce Watson:** Okay, thank you.

[235] **Keith Davies:** Diolch, **Keith Davies:** Thank you, Chair, I'll Gadeirydd. Fe wnaif i ofyn yn ask in Welsh. You have talked in Gymraeg. Rŷch chi wedi sôn a mynd i detail about where you are as far as fanylder ar ble rŷch chi mor belled â finance is in the question, and that's bod cyllid yn y cwestiwn, a dyna ble where we are. But I would ask you: if rŷm ni. Ond, buaswn i'n gofyn i chi: you were going to invest, what would os ŷch chi'n mynd i fuddsoddi, beth your priorities be, because you have fyddai eich blaenoriaethau chi, achos to look to a plan to the future? So, mae'n rhaid i chi edrych am gynllun what are your priorities in terms of i'r dyfodol? So, beth yw'ch investment? blaenoriaethau chi i fuddsoddi?

[236] **Ms Summers-Rees:** I think this was where we come to the point of looking at better engagement and more work with the local authorities to look at needs, because we're not having that dialogue as to where the cuts are coming, what's happening with the cuts, what's going to happen in the future. So, it's really difficult to look forward and think about priorities when people are, on a day-to-day basis, struggling to cope with the demands of the most vulnerable in society, and we've been discussing this morning the balancing act that we are trying to play at the moment, ensuring that those most in need are getting a service by looking at whether there's potential, really, to look at opportunities for CT. But I think, crucially, the community transport sector does not want to go into competition with the commercial sector, and so there's a line there that we need to be mindful of; that is not what we're set up to do. So, I suppose for us the priority is those most in need, but also are there opportunities where we can support communities in

a wider sense in terms of looking at where the needs are with regard to the commercial services no longer being available?

[237] **Mr Taylor:** Can I just add there? In terms of investment, what's felt is that, as organisations, we're not allowed to make any profit, but what we are allowed to cover is depreciation—so, the value of the vehicle being offset year on year. Unfortunately, due to cuts, the first thing we go to are our reserves, which are our depreciation reserves, and, when we're trying to support services, we obviously have the benefit of the community at hand, and we'll actually make a loss to continue providing a service. Unfortunately, that doesn't allow us to replace vehicles, and, as vehicles get older, they are quite expensive. So, capital investment across the whole sector is key to supporting and raising the standard of services. If you look at the model in England recently, they've launched a capital investment project throughout England for community transport services, which is benefiting a range of people. So, capital investment is a big area that needs to be looked at and also then there's how those services can kind of fit in strategically to existing services to complement each other and offset the cost for the revenue operations.

[238] **William Graham:** Thank you.

[239] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Sorry, me?

[240] **William Graham:** Please.

[241] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. I want to ask you about the permitting regime. Before I do that, on the previous question, obviously, I understand the importance of funding, and you will know that, at a time of austerity like this, our budgets are shrinking overall and probably, after the Chancellor's announcements later this month, shrinking even further—probably; we don't know for sure. You did mention about rebalancing financing. Do you have any feel as to what that would look like—where you would take money from to go into the sort of schemes that you're most concerned with?

[242] **Ms Summers-Rees:** Certainly, a look at the BSSG and the 10 per cent generally, and reinstating the 10 per cent, but whether the model of distributing that money could be in a fairer distribution across the sector, and are there ways of looking at the concessionary fares in the round, really, to see if there are any savings that could be made that could go towards community transport—. As a sector, we are fully aware that these are difficult

times and that money is very scarce, but there could be more opportunities, I think, for local authorities to support community transport in terms of vehicle sharing, although we have heard that some of those that do share those vehicles may need to be taking those vehicles back as well, because they have difficulties in terms of meeting their existing needs. Do colleagues have anything?

[243] **Mr Taylor:** Yes. I think, obviously, you spoke there about the BSSG and the figures of 5 per cent and 10 per cent being shared about there; we have to look at that. There are a lot of local authorities out there who do invest more. That BSSG can be looked at by a local authority and invested however they see fit to suit the needs of their community, so it doesn't have to be restricted to that 5 per cent or 10 per cent. They can obviously look at the needs and increase it further. If you look at Monmouthshire council as an example, there they run a grass-roots project that invests a lot more of their BSSG into them operating their own section 22 services. So, there's an example of a local authority kind of being proactive in what they do. But not every local authority is of that feeling, so organisations like us come along and support that.

[244] So, that remaining BSSG that the community transport element doesn't get goes to subsidise subsidised bus services. Obviously, with those services decreasing, there is an opportunity there for a community transport sector to come in, fill the gap and that distribution to be changed, really. So, I don't think it has to be a set figure of around 10 per cent, but it could be a feeling that more could be invested or something could be done better—it doesn't have to be done in the way it is now, really. So, it's changing that mindset really, and a willingness to change by local authorities and to look at alternative options.

[245] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** I would agree absolutely with that, and I think, certainly across Powys, we don't have any services that aren't supported. So, all our bus services are supported financially through the local authority. I think there might be one that's run on a commercial basis and so is making a profit. But, actually, I think, traditionally, we try and run the same types of services—large buses running across certain routes. I think we've got to change the way we operate services, and what may work here in Cardiff will certainly not work in Powys. What works in Pembrokeshire on the coastal routes may not, again, work in other rural communities. I think we've got to adapt to the needs of our communities, and our local authorities need to talk to us. Some of our CT services have been around for more than 30 years.



They have gone up and down in terms of the amount of money that they've had, but they're still there. So, adapting to the needs of the community is something we do really well, and I think, actually, it's time that the local authorities really looked and engaged with us as to how best to do that.

[246] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay, I think that flows nicely into my main point, which is about the current statutory permit arrangements. How is that affecting the sector at the moment? Do you feel that local authorities fully understand the arrangements? And how is it impacting in a good or bad way on planning?

11:45

[247] **Ms Summers-Rees:** I'd say it's a very mixed picture across each local authority. I think it's not—. It is the understanding of permits but the understanding of community transport generally and how it operates is a huge problem. With the current permits—obviously, we're not-for-profit—they can be used really successfully but maybe local authorities don't understand what innovations we could use using the permit regime. I think it's really important that we get that engagement with local authorities to understand what the permits can do and also what community transport can then do. I suppose, for us, we have seen a lot of concern around some of the procurement processes, where there's unrealistic expectations saying that the organisation will need a public service vehicle operator's licence and that drivers should have a certificate of professional competence, which you do not have to have if you're driving under a permit. So, there are opportunities there that CT are prevented from taking on board because of the procurement process and the lack of understanding by commissioners of the CT sector generally. For example, most recently, the Welsh Government was really keen that CT was able to tender for the exercise they've just put out but, unfortunately, there were unrealistic expectations in terms of financial prudence. It just wasn't relevant. The size of vehicles was an issue and pricing structure. There was a range of really quite challenging circumstances that couldn't be overcome. If they'd come to us first and engaged with us, we could've looked at where it's not a requirement for CT and asked whether there was an opportunity, therefore, to say, 'We run not-for-profit services under permits and, therefore, x, y, and z are not applicable'.

[248] **Mr Taylor:** And, again, just to expand really on what Siân's just said, education is the key to kind of getting local authorities to understand what we can do, what we're able to do. Some local authorities are very good at this, some do it themselves and some have no knowledge whatsoever. Again,

obviously, at a Welsh Government level it needs to be looked at there to get them to expand on that. There's currently an invitation to tender through the south Wales porthole for a framework to invite bus service operators along, to be on that framework, to tender for different lots of work. As a community transport operator, we've looked at it and, unfortunately, we're not able to bid into it because the framework and the questions in it have very 'yes/no' answers and for us, as a sector, the questions are not relevant to us. So, therefore, we have to say 'no', but yet, through the events that have come along and advertised it, the point has been made that the Minister is keen to see community transport engaging with this. So, you know, we have to get things right at the top first, at that procurement level, and understand what questions need to be asked to allow this to kind of work really. So, there has to be education on all levels so that everyone understands what can and can't be done really.

[249] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Well, okay. Thank you.

[250] **William Graham.** Thank you, Jeff. So, really, on that point, can you explain to the committee why community transport providers are being,

[251] 'increasingly forced into tendering arrangements to secure contracts',

[252] and the implications for the sector and how those issues can be addressed?

[253] **Ms Summers-Rees:** In terms of the funding arrangements, what increasingly community transport operators have had to do is look at alternative services to be able to continue their other core services, so, for example, schools contracts, which your organisation does. Also, concerningly, some of the Dial-a-Ride services, which actually should be grant-aided as far as we're concerned, have been put into the procurement processes. I think that's from—I am surmising, but I think local authorities are worried about the state aid implications and the difference really between grant and procurement, although recently there has been a European decision on state aid that found in favour of local authorities and community transport. So, we'd like to think that it does clear things up in terms of grants for things like Dial-a-Rides, which are, obviously, by their nature non-commercial services.

[254] **Mr Taylor:** As I say, as a sector, obviously, over the years we've had to change and adapt to meet the needs of the market and the financial market.

As an organisation, we see very minimal funding from anywhere. The bus service support grant is our only source of funding, which is around about £9,000 a year. Apart from that, with our other services, we have to tender for school transport and social services transport. Unfortunately, the difficulties with that are, although the whole tendering process is very cut-throat to be honest in terms of the process there, there's very little income generated from those contracts, but it is enough just to suffice in some areas, but that's to the detriment of providing section 19 Dial-a-Ride services, which is what we're set up for. We are set up to help the most severely disabled, the most difficult and the most challenged people get from A to B, really, and not be socially excluded. But, unfortunately, at the times of day when they most need that service, we're providing school transport or social services transport, when that's not really what we were set up for, but we have to go down that route, otherwise we wouldn't exist anymore and we wouldn't be able to offer any services.

[255] **William Graham:** Quite so. Thank you.

[256] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** I think, sometimes, local authorities assume that all community transport schemes are doing is coming to them and asking for more money. But actually, we're running services to support our communities to enable people to access the services, many of which are provided through the local authority. Actually, if they were commercially viable, then they would be run by private operators. We're here to complement those providers, as I said earlier, and we do need financial support in order to be able to do that. It's quite right, we are forced into a position where we have to tender for services in order to be able to continue, and that, actually, doesn't meet our primary need, or what we were originally set up for or what we're constituted for, often.

[257] **Ms Summers-Rees:** There are community transport organisations that are keen to look at these options, but what it has done is brought us to the circumstances of now having infraction proceedings in Europe, because everything's gone down the procurement and tender route and there've been complaints from commercial operators that CT are directly competing with their operations.

[258] **William Graham:** Thank you. Oscar.

[259] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair. My question to Sarah and Siân is: first of all, you know, this national transport plan and

policy advisory group on community transport, what other areas do you think need to be improved and what can be done for better collaboration and cross-boundary working among the communities and the counties? And, to Phil, you mentioned earlier to this committee that depreciation makes operators reduce the value of their vehicles and they don't have the power or finances, after a few years, to buy one, but you forgot to tell them that when you get a vehicle, there is a capital allowance for every year, which is much more than depreciation, so any prudent businessman can save money and make more buses. There are some transport businesses that I know very well—small business people and taxi businesses—that have improved their numbers. That's beside the point. But I agree with your second point that you mentioned about your relationship with local authorities. I totally agree with you that they need a lot of vision to improve the relationship with community transport. So, I agree on that. My question to you is because you deal with the youth. We've been told earlier that youths, when they learn to drive a car, just never bother to sit on the buses. So, how are you encouraging the youth to use the transport at the same time when they're using their cars, to improve numbers on the buses, rather than—? For the sake of their own safety and the other side.

[260] **Mr Taylor:** A couple of questions there to look at, really. On the first question in terms of being prudent and business-like, I think, as a sector, we're very good at doing that; if we weren't, we wouldn't be here now. A commercial operator is quite able to go off and do alternative work, but our licensing doesn't permit us to do that. Therefore, if our services are loss-making, we're out of money. We can't go off and do larger scale events and private services, therefore, unfortunately, we have to accept that depreciation is a big thing and that's where we lose our money.

[261] In terms of the following questions, as an organisation, we were set up in 1994 within the Aberfan community to look at supporting the wider community in terms of social and economic need. One of the first things we looked at was tackling anti-social behaviour, which looked at young people in the community and supporting them and diverting them away from car crime and anti-social behaviour. Over the years, our project has grown and we offer a range of services, but, obviously, the aim was to get those young people off the streets and involved with something good. That's why we have something over there, which is separate, that delivers motor vehicle training. We now work with Merthyr Tydfil education authority, and we provide education and training to young people from Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taf. So, we offer a range of services to them, working

with the most difficult and challenging people. Most of these young people have been excluded from school and this is the only education that they're involved in. So, in terms of the service, that's why we do that.

[262] Community transport was obviously another need of the community and, originally, we were set up for the needs of the community. There are a lot of elderly people living in the Aberfan community who were unable to get to hospital appointments, doctor's appointments and, therefore, it was costing the NHS a lot of money with missed appointments and downtime. So, we came along and introduced a community transport service to get those people to those appointments, ultimately, to save the Government money. That's where we started from; over the years, we've evolved.

[263] The concessionary fares initiative, then, was something that we took on as a project and developed further. So, our community transport has grown and grown and grown over the years from these different services that have been set up by the Welsh Government. But, to sustain our services now, our backs have been put against the wall and they've said, 'You have to go tendering for work, because there is, sorry, no funding available to you'. So, we've changed from the needs we were originally set up for. Hopefully, I've answered some of your questions in there.

[264] **Ms Summers-Rees:** I think, probably, with regard to loan financing, that's obviously impossible for charities, in that they're operating not for profit, and that's in terms of a real sense of 'not for profit'. Obviously, some charities are able to increase their reserves, but because of the permit and licensing restrictions, community transport has to be extremely careful that everything is actual cost, and some of the issue actually relates to concessionary fares. So, if it's a £3 journey, it is a £3 journey, and that's why loans just aren't appropriate.

[265] **Mr Taylor:** To put that into context, we spoke just now about the current invitation to tender to go on the framework for bus services for Wales. Some of the questions in there ask you to show your accounts for the last three years. It also asks in there, if those accounts are not to a standard, whether you have a guarantor or a loan option to be able to put money in place—financial standing—to support your services. There's no community transport operator in existence, really, that has that financial standing of that amount to support the requirements of that procurement process.

[266] Also, on the finances, like we said, we're there for the needs of the

community. If we choose, by our work directors, who are all volunteers, to make a loss this year, as long as we meet the needs of the community we will do that. We are not there, as a business, to make money; we're there for the community. So, that's why, on many occasions, we will not be able to meet the procurement needs because we don't have the finances to support ourselves to do that.

[267] **Ms Summers-Rees:** With regard to the advisory group, CTA wasn't a part of that, unfortunately, so we didn't have input into the bus policy advisory group report. That's not to say we don't welcome some of the recommendations, particularly around longer term funding. Also, I think community transport feels that it does have a role to play with—they suggest—feeder routes. One thing we need to be mindful of is, with the feeder routes, if you have a severely disabled person who can't meet that connection, then that community transport organisation is going to take them into town because they have to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in society. Where does that then leave other passengers who are on that? Are they required to then get off and get onto another route? All of these things are not insurmountable, but they do need to be thought through, and we weren't part of those discussions, unfortunately, when these recommendations were made.

[268] There is a good piece of work looking at quality standards for community transport, so I am really pleased that we've been involved, in the south-east, in those discussions. Very positively, there's been complete engagement with the sector, so it hasn't been imposed; it's been a two-way process that we're working on. So, it's very positive in terms of some of the recommendations coming out of that advisory group. However, we are disappointed that we weren't involved at the start of those conversations.

[269] **Mr Taylor:** Again, within the national transport plan, there are several comments and references to community transport, and community transport can meet the needs for the issue raised. Unfortunately, it doesn't give you any more specifics of what the idea or the vision is for community transport in that area—it just refers to community transport. If everyone's understanding of community transport is that there's something over here that can be done for free and we'll go to them as a last resort, it's never going to work. If the understanding is that Bwcabus is community transport—it's not. So, we have to understand: what is community transport, what can it do and what can it meet the needs of? So, that's why, really, it should have been important that the Community Transport Association was

involved at the early stages of the plan to say, 'Well, what can and can't be done?'

[270] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** Can I just add something, in terms of support for youth? We've been doing some work in Powys in terms of working with our education department to look at the possibility of going into the schools and educating the children at key stages in their transition—so, for example, from primary school to high school, when parents are, perhaps, willing to give them a little bit more freedom—and working with them on how to read the timetables, what to do with them, how to use the local buses, what access they can have to community transport and, at that next stage, when they're in secondary school, when they're actually leaving secondary school, around the use of public and community transport services.

12:00

[271] Some of our services are constituted differently, based on the way in which they are able to access funding; so, some of them are constituted specifically around providing a service for older people, but actually we've been looking at changing those constitutions to enable them to provide a broader level of service. But because we do need funding, sometimes the money that we're able to receive has to be used in a particular way. Also, certainly in Powys, we do have a growing older population, often with greater needs. So, it's just to add to that point.

[272] **Ms Summers-Rees:** But the sector has been very innovative. We've had wheels-to-work schemes that are now progressing well and looking at working on a more regional basis, and I think that's really important, that we are starting to engage with younger people to look at how we can support, under the national transport plan, the economy. But I think the difficulty we had with the national transport plan is that accessibility really didn't come out as a key priority for the Welsh Government, and I think that's our concern, really—what role do we play if it's not to support the most vulnerable in society? There was no mention of a wider policy agenda, and what impact supporting accessibility for people has in terms of other areas of Welsh Government. I think we really need to not just focus on transport. An integrated transport system means that we do look at health, et cetera, as part of the mix. From the community transport perspective, we were concerned that the concentration seemed to be on car clubs, not necessarily looking at community car schemes, which are hugely successful in some of the rural areas, and are essentially a lifeline for many people in those rural

communities. So, whilst we are really positive and want to support the Welsh Government, it's a shame that the national transport plan doesn't really look at some of the vision and the priorities for the sector.

[273] **William Graham:** Thank you. Keith.

[274] **Keith Davies:** Rŷm ni fel **Keith Davies:** As a committee we've been in Manchester, we've been in London, and we've seen we've seen ni wedi gweld Trafnidiaeth i Lundain. Transport for London. Looking at the Wrth edrych ar y papur rŷch chi wedi paper that you've submitted, you talk anfon i mewn, rŷch chi'n sôn, rwy'n about the fact that the powers for credu, y dylai fod y pwerau cofrestru registering buses should come to bysiau yn dod i Gymru. Yn ôl beth Wales. Now, according to what you've rŷch chi newydd ei ddweud am y just said regarding the national cynllun trafnidiaeth cenedlaethol, nid transport plan, I'm not quite sure wyf yn siŵr nawr—a ŷch chi'n credu y now—do you think we should have dylem ni gael y pwerau i gofrestru the powers for registration? Do you bysiau? A ŷch chi'n credu y dylem ni think we should have a 'Transport for gael 'Trafnidiaeth i Gymru', a pham? Wales', and why?

[275] **Ms Summers-Rees:** If we could get it right, then yes.

[276] **Mr Taylor:** From an operator's point of view, yes, it would be beneficial. If it was just set up to look at licensing, and just generically issue licences, we don't feel that that would be the best advantage of having those kinds of powers, really, to be looking at things. I think that we need to look at a structure in place where there's a reinstatement of regional transport consortia, and a Wales national transport organisation above that, to work together and look at the overarching issues in Wales, really. So, as long as the people at the top understand the needs of the people at the bottom, I think it could work well. If it doesn't, we've got a lot of problems.

[277] **Ms Summers-Rees:** We have to say that, obviously, CTA is thankful for the support that we've had from Welsh Government so far, because we wouldn't be here now if we hadn't had that support. So, I think we do need to recognise that support, and we have been more recently engaging in having some really good conversations about what the priorities are for the sector, so that will bring a positive slant to the discussion as well.

[278] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** I don't have a great deal to add, except that some



of the regional consortia have worked better than others. So, I think depending on which one you are in—[*Interruption.*] Yes. [*Laughter.*] So, yes, I think it has to be done properly, I would reiterate.

[279] **Keith Davies:** Like local authorities, then.

[280] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** Absolutely.

[281] **Keith Davies:** Diolch.

[282] **William Graham:** Joyce, please.

[283] **Joyce Watson:** There's been a lot of talk about engagement, and you said some time ago that you filled a gap to allow accessibility to hospital appointments, GPs, et cetera. So, in terms of that, and particularly in Powys, because I cover Powys, there's supposed to be some joined-up thinking between social services and the health board, so I'm told. So, that being the case, are the health boards—and you've all got, maybe, different ones—speaking to you in terms of the role that you can play on behalf of the people and their budgets?

[284] **Ms Summers-Rees:** Okay, so if I talk about what I've been doing on the transformation board, we're really positive that CTA played a part on the NEPTS transformation board and we have had that increasing engagement with health boards. Successfully, we've got a number of pilots now started where CT is involved in the delivery of NEPTS. Where our concerns still lie is that, if somebody is not eligible for non-emergency patient transport services, and yet there is no transport available, then they are deemed a social need. What actually happens with the call centre is that they are refused transport at that point and told to find alternatives. Then they could go back and say, 'Well, we haven't been able to get a community transport service', or 'There isn't any public transport', and they are then recognised and given transport through non-emergency patient transport services. So, what we have is a lot of community transport organisations picking up that social need without, in many circumstances, any financial support whatsoever. So, that still needs to be looked at. We have had positive indications, following the submission of the business plan to the Welsh Government, with regard to non-emergency patient transport services. We're hoping to continue that dialogue with WAST and with the health boards, to look at this issue, because I think it's really an important issue. But on a positive note, Powys—

[285] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** Back in 2002 we set up a transport health and wellbeing partnership, which actually engaged with the community health councils and the local authorities. Social services were within that and, obviously, CT providers. That went on until about four or five years ago. Then we found consistently that we had very little support from social services in terms of what we were actually able to provide, and how we were able to support individuals. What we were then developing further was our relationship with the health board. We put together a service level agreement between ourselves and the health board for what we refer to as 'on-request' non-emergency patient transport. The issue we've got, certainly with our community car schemes, because those are the services that are generally used to support people to get to hospital appointments—. We don't have a district general hospital in Powys, as you're aware. We set up an on-request service so that actually our schemes were able to refuse if they didn't have a driver available. We didn't want to commit to a certain number of journeys. Now, that was piloted for two years. So, we piloted it two years ago. It worked very well. The reimbursement was at 45p per mile for the drivers, which was the appropriate amount, but there was also a small administration fee that went to the scheme. So, it worked very well.

[286] We started, initially, working directly with the health board to provide that service. We then further developed it, and we now have a relationship directly with the Wales ambulance service trust, certainly in the north of Powys, in Montgomeryshire, where we again are providing the on-request non-emergency patient transport services. So, rather than people having to go through the call centre and actually being refused when they don't necessarily need to be, we're actually missing out that middle person and they're coming directly to our schemes. Again, they're being reimbursed at the same rate. We had to be careful because I think WAST in general don't pay their volunteers at the same rate that we actually pay ours. But it's working very well and we're hoping to extend it further across Powys. At the moment, it's needed more in Montgomeryshire to get people out to Shrewsbury and Telford, and to some of the hospitals there.

[287] So, it's been very successful and worked really well. That's because they've actually talked to us. They've engaged with us properly; so, we've been able to provide a service that meets the needs of those communities. They're no longer, now, sending volunteers, say, from Ystradgynlais to pick somebody up in Welshpool to then take them across to Shrewsbury, because they're utilising a local CT service that has volunteers who are locally based

and actually cost less.

[288] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[289] **Ms Summers-Rees:** Depending on the commissioner within the health board, there are really positive examples. For example, in west Wales there's been a mental health service that's been directly commissioned through the health board. There's a positive relationship there with the commissioner, who understands CT. They support the Country Cars scheme as well, through the RVS. It's hoped that, through the transformation project, we can try to look at these areas of good practice and look at it from a national perspective as to how we can ensure that that happens across the board.

[290] **Mr Taylor:** Again, I'll give some examples, just to expand on things. There's a very good example of things working within our local authority. I think, historically, what we've found is each department is slightly different, and they all do their own thing and sometimes they can be unwilling to change, really. Within Merthyr Tydfil, we've overcome that barrier, and we've had a good relationship for the last few years. We share vehicles and, in return, we provide staff for free and the council provide the vehicle, which has been a very good example of working well, and we've actually won awards for it. Unfortunately, the local authority's budget has been cut, and that vehicle now is on lease and has to go back in February. They can't afford to replace it, so that relationship's going to end. So, that's an example of things that could work, but, unfortunately, for financial reasons, can't work.

[291] Within the local health board, in Cwm Taf Local Health Board, nine years ago, we approached the subject of what we could do together, and we're still at that phase, really. There have been a number of people, we've gone through processes, we've done mapping exercises, the sector itself and the CTA has put a lot of work into Cwm Taf health board to say, 'This is what can be done; this is what we can do'. Unfortunately, though, nothing has happened, and we're still not providing any services. So, there are good examples and bad examples.

[292] In terms of non-emergency patient transport, as an organisation, we are working with the Welsh ambulance service on a pilot to deliver patient transport for dialysis treatment, working six days a week. It's something that is working very well, but, again, this is something that we approached the ambulance service with five years ago and said, 'We feel that we could help you out and work together here'. It started, but unfortunately there were a

number of barriers put up and it ended, but it's reintroduced itself now and we're working forward again. But the sector can see the problems on the ground. We are willing to change, and to put these ideas forward and say, 'This is what you could do', but perhaps sometimes it seems that because of Government and a bit of red tape, it can't actually happen. Things can happen, you just have to be willing to make things change.

[293] **Joyce Watson:** Can I, just quickly, Chair—?

[294] **William Graham:** Very quickly, please.

[295] **Joyce Watson:** You mentioned red tape and Government, but this isn't necessarily always about that.

[296] **Mr Taylor:** No.

[297] **Joyce Watson:** So, I want to ask a pointed question: is it the case that people could work together, but aren't always doing that?

[298] **Mr Taylor:** Absolutely, yes.

[299] **Ms Leyland-Jones:** Absolutely. Lots of it is about personalities. It's about the people that you've got in those positions and the relationship that you can develop with them. That is very sad, because many of those people do not appreciate that they are in that position because they are supporting and looking at the needs of those communities, and they need to focus on that, and not on the relationships.

[300] **William Graham:** Thank you very much for your evidence today. We're most grateful for your attendance. Thank you.

12:12

**Papurau i'w Nodi  
Papers to Note**

[301] **William Graham:** Can I ask Members to look at item 5, please, papers to note? Are they agreed? Thank you very much. The public meeting is now closed.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12:12.*

*The meeting ended at 12:12.*