



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Policy discussion to improve local bus services in Wales

Summary

The Welsh Government is undertaking a policy discussion with bus operators, local authorities and passenger groups in Wales, to develop proposals on how best local bus services can be developed as part of an integrated public transport system in Wales.

This document summarises the objectives we are seeking to achieve.

The process

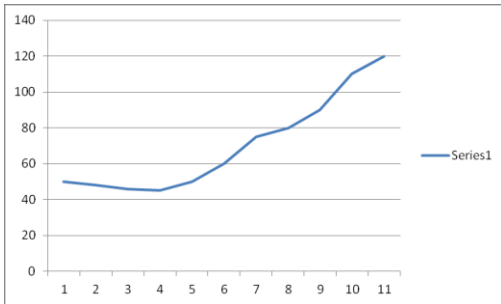
Since 2013, the Welsh Government has been working with stakeholders in the bus industry to identify the challenges facing the bus sector; the services that passengers expect and how local authorities can better support the delivery of bus services as part of the integrated public transport network that we are seeking to achieve.

As part of this ongoing dialogue, the Welsh Bus Summit 2017 was held in Wrexham on 23 January to further consider these issues and develop an action plan on how best we can tackle these challenges – both in the short, medium and long term. Over the next twelve months, we will continue the discussion with key stakeholders as part of a programme of workshops that will explore some of the key themes emerging from the Summit.

The aim is to develop solutions that can resolve some of these challenges in the short and medium term.

In the longer term, there is also a need to consider whether the framework governing local bus services is right for the people of Wales. So from March 2017 and as part of the ongoing discussion with stakeholders, we are undertaking consultation about some suggested proposals on how the law can be reformed in the future to better enable us to deliver the public transport system that delivers our wider national ambitions.

Our proposals aim to.....



Increase the number of people of all ages using buses for their daily commute to work, for education, access to health services and for leisure activities.

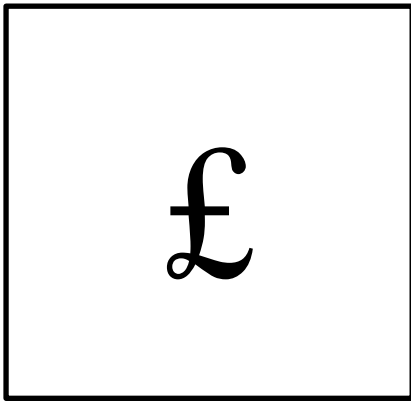
Improve the availability of good quality and accessible local bus services, for passengers as part of an integrated Welsh public transport system comprising a mix of demand responsive or scheduled local transport, together with longer distance express bus services that complement passenger rail services.



Enable the setting up of national and regional integrated ticketing products to better enable seamless multi modal transportation.

Enable bus operators to contribute to the development and the delivery of the south east Wales and north east Wales metro public transport systems.





Give a fair deal for passengers, staff, bus operators and the public sector - a financially viable and sustainable bus network underpinned by a stable public funding arrangement that provides value for money and will safeguard the best characteristics of the commercial bus sector.

Contribute to safeguarding the wellbeing of future generations by tackling poor air quality zones and supporting a sustainable and thriving economy.



Change is needed because

We want to reverse the contraction of the local bus network and declining passenger journeys undertaken in Wales. The number of registered bus services in Wales declined by approximately 46%, from 1,943 services to 1,058 between March 2005 and March 2015. The number of bus passenger journeys has declined by 19% between 2008 and 2015. A further million journeys have been lost in the year ending March 2016

We want to improve the resilience of local bus networks and reduce the risk of business failures in the bus sector. In 2016, three bus operators based in Wales ceased trading affecting more than 500 jobs and seriously disrupting bus services in local areas. We want to enable local authorities to enter into longer term funding agreements.

We want to improve the availability, frequency and quality of local scheduled bus services across Wales The vast majority of local scheduled bus services are operated in south east Wales with

the newest buses in the Welsh bus fleet. We want to improve the quality of service across the whole of Wales.

We want to reduce the variation and complexity in passenger fares and ticketing A day to ride ticket from the local operator can range from £3 to £6 and few offer multi operator tickets or combined bus and train tickets. We want to work with the industry and local authorities to introduce a system of bus fares and ticketing that provides a fair deal for passengers, bus companies and the tax payer.

We want to improve arrangements for the administration of the mandatory concessionary fares scheme Local authorities are responsible for paying local operators for the journeys undertaken by free travel pass holders. The amount paid for these journeys varies considerably between operators and depots in different parts of Wales. Simplifying the arrangements for the delivery of Public Service Obligations is a key goal.

The discussion will develop proposals that aim to

- ✓ Ensure that local authorities say how local bus services are to be delivered as part of their local transport plans
 - ✓ Let the Welsh Ministers and local authorities make payments to support bus operators
 - ✓ Foster good relationships between local bus operators and local authorities by ensuring consultation takes place before applications are made to the Traffic Commissioner to introduce new, vary or remove existing bus routes.
 - ✓ Simplify the arrangements for the development and delivery of the TrawsCymru® network, which will be brought under the control of the Welsh Government. Routes will be operated by bus companies under franchise agreements to enable long term planning and investment to take place.
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- ✓ Establish the service quality expectations to be met by bus operators in relation to local bus services delivered in Wales, together with clear guidance about bus stops, shelters and the display of passenger information.
- ✓ Replace statutory Quality Partnership Schemes in Wales with Bus Improvement Partnership Schemes where local operators may not be able initially to meet the quality standards within the statutory guidance
- ✓ Enable local authorities to set up bus franchising in their areas and set up their own bus companies if the need arises
- ✓ Improve access to effective and reliable public transport journey planning information services and the sharing of data
- ✓ Make it easier to set up regional and national ticketing schemes to meet the needs of bus and rail passengers.

What we are keen to avoid

- ✓ Loss of the benefits and positive characteristics that the commercial bus market has delivered in part of Wales
 - ✓ Limiting the ability of the bus sector in Wales to work in partnership to innovate new solutions to some of the transport challenges
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