

Improving Public Transport Across Wales

Community and Youth Version



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



WG36694

Introduction

Public transport includes trains, buses and taxis. It helps all of us move around. It is a big part of life in Wales and it helps us with:

- getting to schools and colleges;
- getting to work;
- getting home from a concert or a night out;
- doing the shopping;
- visiting friends or going on holiday.

Having good public transport:

- reduces traffic issues;
- reduces air pollution;
- helps people connect with services, friends and family;
- helps businesses grow;
- brings jobs to an area.

Our aim

We want a public transport system that links buses and trains, walking and cycling.

We want more people to use public transport instead of their cars.

We want to reduce air pollution and protect the environment.

The Welsh Government wants all public transport to:

- be safe;
- be on time;
- be something people trust;
- help reduce pollution;
- meet people's needs now and in the future.

This booklet tells you about the changes we want to make to improve:

- 1. Local bus services; and**
- 2. The licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles.**

We want to know what you think so we don't leave out anything important.

This document is also available in a Dyslexia friendly version from:

PublicTransport.Engagement2019@gov.wales



Part 1 – Local bus services

Why do we need change?

There are lots of different bus companies across Wales.

Together they make around **100 million** journeys each year.

But, fewer people are using bus services each year.

It has been reported that some of the reasons people don't use buses regularly (or at all) include:

- some buses don't link well with other transport like trains;
- some buses are not as modern, safe and environmentally-friendly as others;
- sometimes information about the available bus services is hard to find;
- information isn't always up-to-date;
- buses don't always run where people need them to;
- tickets don't always work as people need them to;
- fares cost too much in some areas.

We want to make sure that any changes we make improve bus services for everyone.



Proposal 1

We want to create Joint Transport Authorities (JTAs).

Why?

Each local authority looks after the buses and other public transport in their area. This costs time and money.

Each local authority individually performs many of the same tasks, for example, the buying of replacement bus shelters. We believe that if local authorities worked together in a JTA they could:

- make savings;
- improve how public transport works.

We want to use our existing powers to create JTAs.

We also want to change the law so we can:

- write new guidance and provide instructions to JTAs about how they carry out their functions;
- make sure Welsh Ministers have a say in how JTAs work now and in the future.



Do you think this is a good idea?

Yes

No

Why?

We believe there are two different ways JTAs could be set up:

A. One national JTA. This would cover all of Wales but it would also have regional boards (committees) that would operate in connection with smaller areas of Wales;

B. One national JTA and three regional JTAs (4 JTAs in total). The three regional JTAs would look after public transport in their area of Wales and would be supported by the national JTA.



Which structure do you prefer?

A. One national JTA covering all of Wales;

B. One national and three regional JTAs; or

C. Is there another structure for the JTAs that could be used?

Why?



Proposal 2

We want local authorities to work better with bus companies to deliver improved bus services. To allow for this we want local authorities to be able to make Enhanced Quality Partnerships.

Why?

At the moment local authorities can set out what they expect a bus company to do in a Quality Partnership (QPs). In return for doing what they are asked, bus companies are allowed to use facilities that local authorities have provided, for example, new bus lanes.

However, bus companies do not have to enter into these partnerships, and are free to decide what bus services they run. This means they can stop running a service or change a timetable if they want to. This can lead to communities losing bus services that they need.

We want local authorities and bus companies to work together to improve the bus services that are delivered. To encourage this partnership working we want local authorities to be able to make **Enhanced Quality Partnerships**.

i Enhanced Quality Partnerships would be developed by the local authorities and bus companies working together. They would identify any problems with the bus services in an area and agree on taking actions to address these problems and improve services.

For example, they could agree which bus services should run in an area and at what times; what services should be available on buses, WiFi etc.; and what types of tickets should be available to passengers.

? Do you think we need Enhanced Quality Partnerships?
Yes No
Why?



Proposal 3

We want local authorities to be able to franchise bus services.

i Franchising is an arrangement where you give a bus company the exclusive right to run a bus service. Under these arrangements other bus companies are stopped from running the same service.

Why?

We believe local authorities should be able to decide what arrangements should be put in place to make sure the right bus services are being delivered in their areas. We believe franchising should be one of the options they could choose.

Where franchising is in place it would be possible to set bus routes and timetables, have common branding and ticket types.

Where a franchise contract to run a service has been awarded to a bus company, other bus companies will be stopped from running the same service.

We want to change the law so local authorities can franchise bus services where they need to.

? Do you think local authorities having the option to franchise bus services is a good idea?

Yes

No

Why?



Proposal 4

We want local authorities to be able to set up and run their own bus services.

Why?

At the moment, the law does not allow local authorities to run their own bus services, except in a few special cases.

This can sometimes cause problems for local authorities where bus services need to be run in their area and there are no bus companies who want to run those services. The local authority cannot step in to fill the gap and so people who usually rely on those bus services to get around cannot do so, and often end up isolated.

There can also be problems in areas where there are not enough bus companies who want to run bus services. This often means the local authority ends up paying more for the services than they would have if there were lots of companies competing to run the service and offering lower prices.

If we change the law, local authorities will be able to choose to run bus services themselves. They could do this for any reason they want to, such as to fill gaps in services or act like any other bus company and run bus services to make money.

We want to change the law so local authorities can run their own bus services.

? Do you agree that local authorities should be able to run their own bus services?

Yes

No

Why?



Proposal 5

We want to change the age for free bus passes.

No one who has a bus pass now will have it taken away.

Why?

At the moment anyone aged 60 and over can have a bus pass which gives them free travel anywhere in Wales. Because the bus passes are very popular, the scheme is becoming more expensive to run every year.

One of the ways we are thinking about saving money is by making the age for free bus travel the same as a woman's pension age. We have chosen a woman's pension age because at the moment women get their pension before men, so this will mean men and women will receive their bus pass at the same age.

Anyone who already has a pass will keep it and will still be able to catch any bus at any time in Wales.

We would bring the change in gradually over time to let people get used to the new rules.

We want to change the age for free bus travel.

? Do you think it is a good idea to change the age a person can get a bus pass for free travel in Wales?

Yes

No

Why?



Proposal 6

We want information about bus services to be shared better.

Why?

Passengers need information about bus services so they can use buses when they need to, and plan their journeys.

Local authorities need information about bus services to carry out their planning functions and to support their communities. Other people, such as app designers, need information about bus services so they can develop travel apps etc. that provide up-to-date and accurate information for passengers.

Information that is made available, including information about timetables and routes, must be clear, up-to-date and easy to find.

We want to change the law:

- so more information is available about bus services;
- to require bus operators to share information with local authorities when they change any bus services.

? Do you think this is a good idea?
Yes No
Why?



Part 2 - Taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs)

Taxi and PHVs are an important part of the Welsh transport network.

i Taxis are vehicles that can pick up passengers from taxi ranks and the street, and be pre-booked by 'phone, via the Internet or by using an app. PHVs are vehicles that can only be pre-booked.

They often work in rural areas where communities don't have regular buses or trains.

They help disabled people, people who don't have a car, and people coming home from a night out.

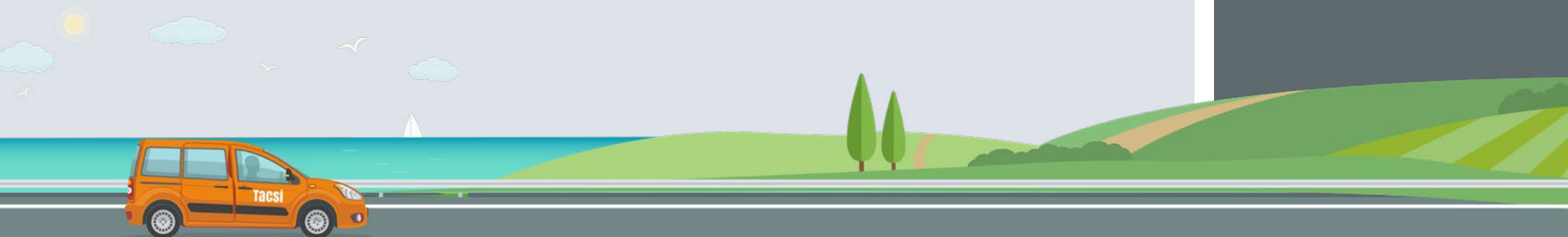
In 2018 in Wales there were:

- around **5,000** taxis;
- **4,900** PHVs;
- **12,000** licensed taxi and PHV drivers.

Although taxis and PHVs are a lifeline for many people in Wales, it has been reported that their licensing system is out-of-date. For example:

- the vehicles can be very different from one local authority area to another;
- it is difficult for passengers to be confident that all vehicles are safe;
- it is possible for a person who shouldn't be granted a licence to get one;
- it can be difficult to take away a licence when a driver has done something wrong.

We want to make sure that any changes we make improve taxi and PHV standards across Wales, and help keep people safe.



Proposal 1

We want to create new national standards for all taxis and PHVs.

Why?

Wales has 22 local authorities. Each one has different standards for the taxi or PHV licences that it issues. A taxi or PHV can be turned down for a licence in one area, but then apply for and get one in another. Once a taxi or PHV is licensed, it can (generally) work in any area. This means one area in Wales may have many vehicles following many different sets of rules.

The 22 local authorities also have different standards for drivers. All drivers have to show they are 'fit and proper' to work, but there is no set definition of 'fit and proper'. Each local authority gets to decide what those words mean.

This is a safety issue. At the moment, passengers using taxis or PHVs in one area may be less safe than in another area. Vehicles and drivers should all have to follow the same rules.

We want:

- **national standards;**
- **all local authorities to follow those standards when issuing licences;**
- **all taxis and PHVs to have to meet the standards to get a licence to work.**

i One of the national standards that we are thinking about is a national standard which stops the most polluting vehicles from being licensed as taxis and PHVs.

? Do you think all local authorities should have to adopt the same standards when issuing taxi/PHV licences?

Yes No

Why?

? Do you think a national standard about vehicle pollution is a good idea?

Yes No

Why?



Proposal 2

We want to give local authorities the power to take action against any taxi or PHV if they need to.

Why?

Local authorities issue taxi and PHV licences. They can check vehicles and deal with complaints that passengers make. But, they can only take away a taxi or PHV licence if they gave the taxi or PHV its licence in the first place.

For example – if a taxi or PHV driver does something wrong in Local Authority A's area, but it got its licence from Local Authority B, Local Authority A can't do much about it.

This is a safety issue. At the moment, whether or not a taxi or PHV driver is punished depends on where the vehicle is when the driver does something wrong. If a driver does something wrong in any area, then the consequences should be the same.

We want to give local authorities the power to take away any taxi or PHV licence (not just one they issued themselves), if they need to.

? Do you think all local authorities should be able to take away any taxi or PHV licence? Yes No
Why?

Proposal 3

We want to create a national database that holds the information about all licences in Wales.

Why?

Each local authority has information about the licences that they issue, suspend or take away. At the moment, this information doesn't have to be shared. This means that local authorities don't know if a taxi or PHV (or its driver) has been refused a licence in another area.

We know that most taxi and PHV drivers work hard to give passengers a safe service. We want local authorities to be able to spot the ones that don't. Information needs to be shared to keep passengers safe.

We want to change the law so that local authorities must share their licensing information with each other.

? Do you think all local authorities should be able to share information about taxi and PHV licences?
Yes No

Why?

Proposal 4

We're thinking about the best way to achieve Proposals 1-3. We are considering allowing a new national licensing authority (a Joint Transport Authority or JTA) to licence all taxis and PHVs in Wales.

Why?

There are lots of decisions for a local authority to make when licensing taxis and PHVs. This costs each local authority time and money. Each local authority individually performs many of the same tasks, for example, the setting of fares and fees and making decisions about whether a licence should be taken away. We think this could be made easier by having a national licensing authority in Wales: a national JTA. This would mean:

- all taxis and PHVs could be licensed by one authority (rather than 22);
- all decisions about whether a licence should be taken away could be taken by one authority;
- all information on taxi and PHV licences could be held by one authority;
- all of Wales would become one licensing area (rather than 22).

This is Option A.

However, we know local authorities have a lot of knowledge about taxis and PHVs. It may be better if they continue to make decisions about taxi and PHV licences. We are therefore also considering Option B.

Option B would mean local authorities would continue to issue licences, but more consistently than they do now. They would all have to follow one set of national standards; they would all have to share information with each other; and they would be able to take away a licence issued by any other authority.

We think Option A is the best approach.

? Do you think taxi and PHV licensing should be done by:

- A. a new national licensing authority (JTA) for all of Wales (Option A)?;
- B. the 22 Welsh local authorities (Option B)?

Why?



Thanks for reading this

Is there anything else you'd like to say on this?

Please send your answers to:



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You can read the full Public Transport (Wales) Bill White Paper here:
gov.wales/improving-public-transport

