

Third Sector Group Ministerial Meeting: Economy and Transport

Note of meeting held on 10 October 2018 at Welsh Government Conference Room in Ty Hywel

List of Attendees

Welsh Government

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport
Emma Watkins, Deputy Director, Economic Policy
Dewi Rowlands, Deputy Director, Transport Planning, Policy & Partnerships
Stephen Layne, Senior Policy Analyst, Economic Policy

Third Sector Representatives

Matthew Brown	Welsh Council for Voluntary Action
Linda Thomas	National Library of Wales
Matt Appleby	Business in the Community
Brychan Tudor	Disability Arts Cymru
Kate Evans	Welsh Sports Association
Derek Walker	Wales Co-operative Centre
Peter Williams	Development Trusts Association Wales
David Williams	Social Firms Wales
Jamie Burt	Siawns Teg
Peter Jones	Guide Dogs Cymru
Jessica McQuade	Wales Environment Link
Kate McColgan	Interfaith Council for Wales
Eluned Parrott	Community Transport Association Wales
Hazel Lloyd Lubran	Third Sector Support Wales

Apologies

Lynne Hill	Children in Wales
Catriona Williams	Children in Wales
David Smith	Wales Co-ops & Mutuals
San Leonard	Social Firms Wales
Gareth Coles	Voluntary Arts Wales

Agenda Item 1 – Introductions, minutes and actions arising from last meeting

1. The Cabinet Secretary welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked those attending to introduce themselves.
2. The Cabinet Secretary asked whether everyone was content with the minutes of the last meeting. The minutes were agreed.
3. The Group received an update on the four actions arising from the last meeting. In summary:

- The Welsh Government has agreed to keep mandatory concessionary fares guidance under review.
- The Wales Co-Operative Centre provided a paper setting out some ways in which social businesses measure their sustainable impact.
- Officials circulated to members the contact details of the relevant official taking forward work on the circular economy.
- Officials set out the expected timescales for completion of the independent led social enterprise census and framework.

Agenda Item 2 – Progress update: Accessible Transport Forum

4. Welsh Government outlined some of the various topics discussed by the Accessible Transport Panel meeting held on 25 July 2018 (A summary of those topics is at Annex A).
5. The Group received an update on work to reform bus services. This includes work with Transport for Wales to undertake a Bus Strategy Review. The intention is for this work to be complete in early 2019.
6. Transport for Wales are developing three business cases to:
 - Develop integrated responsive transport.
 - Identify a national network that is well planned, integrated including with rail services, with better infrastructure and more reliable services.
 - Establish better ticketing arrangements and back office support.
7. Transport for Wales will work closely with the Community Transport Association Wales.
8. In addition to the work by Transport for Wales, it was explained that the Welsh Government is looking at the legislative changes needed to reform the bus industry. The Welsh Government expects to publish a White Paper for consultation in December 2018.
9. Community Transport Association referred to their concerns regarding the review process. These were outlined in the “Initial thoughts on the Bus Strategy Consultation” paper under Item 5 and included:
 - The ability to fully engage due to the ambitious timescale.
 - The omission of the role played by Community Transport in the modelling work.
 - The approach adopted to the modelling could exclude the needs of vulnerable groups.
 - The importance of understanding local needs and planning around these.
10. Community Transport Association commented on the positive developments that have taken place since the paper was drafted which address the issues.

11. Welsh Government confirmed the important role played by Community Transport in the transport eco-system in Wales is fully recognised. Transport for Wales are engaging with Community Transport Association, Older People Wales, Welsh Ambulance Trust and operators to test high level delivery models. Once they have established which high level models are feasible, they will develop more detailed propositions with input from a far wider range of stakeholders, including passengers. Transport for Wales is modelling both commercial bus services and community transport services and it understands that public transport is especially important to vulnerable passengers that may have no alternative means of transport. The governance arrangements for the review was explained.
12. Community Transport Association noted their aspiration to work with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to undertake a pilot in Gwynedd based around the cooperative model. Welsh Government agreed to consider the proposal and determine whether a pilot if taken forward, could link with the green transport proposals being promoted under the North Wales Growth Deal.

Action: Welsh Government to consider working with Community Transport Association on a cooperative model arrangement in Gwynedd.

Review of Bus Services in Wales

Agenda Item 3 – Preparations for exiting the EU

13. The Cabinet Secretary reflected on continued uncertainty on the outcome of negotiations and the danger of a ‘no deal’ scenario that would have incalculable consequences for business, communities and individuals.
14. The Cabinet Secretary emphasised that the Welsh Government is doing all it can to prepare for all eventualities and that the £50m EU Transition Fund is an example of the proactive steps that the Welsh Government is taking.
15. Officials explained how Welsh Government has structured itself internally. Essentially this involved a hub and spoke mechanism, with a central EU transition team acting as the hub providing overall co-ordination, but with individual departments feeding in. This was replicated in Economy and Transport.
16. It was made clear that the Welsh Government cannot plan in isolation and that constructive, open and timely dialogue and engagement with the UK Government is vital. However, the quality of engagement with UK Government is inconsistent with some UK Departments like the Department for International Trade reluctant to engage and share information.
17. It was explained that the UK Government has published 77 Brexit Technical Notices so far and that it is likely that a further batch of Technical Notices will be made available soon. The Third Sector has a role to play in raising awareness of the Technical Notices.
18. The Welsh Government is provided very short advance warning of these Technical Notices and input is restricted to commenting upon their impact on the devolution settlement, rather than upon influencing their policy content.

19. It was explained that the Welsh Government has recently launched its Brexit Portal on the Business Wales platform to support business through Brexit. The content on the Portal will be continually updated as the Brexit negotiations continue to evolve combines a information portal and diagnostic tool.

20. In discussion, the following points were made:

- The WCVA, in partnership with Cardiff University, has formed a project to help the third sector better engage with and influence Brexit debate – the “Wales Civil Society Forum on Brexit”. The Group reflected on the importance of such activity being complimentary to the Brexit Portal and the need to avoid duplication or mixed messaging.
- The importance of aligning and not duplicating activity was stressed.
- The Welsh Government’s position on the future of structural funds was clear and could be summarised as not a penny less than current levels of funding and not a control more and that such funding should be devolved to Wales.
- However, the UK Government’s intentions for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund remain unclear and this could become a major point of contention. In that context, it is important that Wales speak with one voice.
- The Third Sector are supportive of the Welsh Government’s position and will continue to use opportunities to communicate the message that Wales should not lose out on any funding and that how such funding is spent is best decided by Wales rather than at a UK level.
- The need to place a focus upon the practicalities of doing business post Brexit; and therefore the importance of the Brexit Portal in providing clear and consistent advice on the practical implications rather than the political or constitutional arguments.

Agenda Item 4 – Low Carbon Action Plan Economic Contract

21. The Cabinet Secretary invited Jessica McQuade to introduce the paper prepared by Wales Environment Link. The following points were made:

- Broad welcome for the emphasis placed on decarbonisation in the Economic Action Plan, but a strong feeling that other environmental aspects are overlooked in the Plan generally and in the Economic Contract in particular.
- Natural resource depletion and the degradation of biodiversity and the natural environment deserve greater emphasis within the Plan.
- An ask on the Welsh Government to (a) develop new tools and approaches for assessing the economic risks associated with natural resource depletion; (b) broaden the Economic Contract to test the full environmental impact of a business and not just its carbon footprint; and (c) consider a more challenging low carbon pathway target.

22. In response, the Cabinet Secretary invited the Wales Environment Link to come forward with more detailed proposals for consideration in relation to the assessment toolkit.

ACTION: Wales Environment Link to provide further detail for consideration on potential assessment tools to help measure the environmental impact of the Economic Action Plan.

23. However, the Cabinet Secretary and officials emphasised that there would be no changes to the Economic Contract at this stage. They pointed out that the ethos of the Economic Contract was focussed upon driving long-term behavioural and cultural change through a 'something for something' relationship with business.

24. Aside from complexity, the risk of expanding the Economic Contract to include more asks is that business will simply disengage from the process and that it is only through engagement that we can influence a change in behaviours. Moreover, it was pointed out that the Economic Contract conditions should not be looked at in isolation or viewed narrowly. Lessons learned from the application of the Economic Contract so far is that Welsh Government officials are now having much deeper and broader conversations with businesses.

25. There was broad agreement about the importance of a strong message of the business opportunity that exists from smart and green growth and that the Economic Contract helps this.

26. Officials are looking to expand the internal guidance that is available to staff in deploying the Economic Contract and examples of what good looks like is key to this. It was also emphasised that to drive continuous improvement, officials are keen to sign post businesses to organisations and sources of advice that can help them improve and deliver against the Economic Contract. A number of attendees, including the Wales Co-operative Centre, Wales Sports Association, Wales Environment Link and Business in the Community were keen to engage in this agenda.

ACTION: Officials to continue a dialogue with Third Sector organisations over what good looks like in Economic Contract terms and to map to sources of information and advice.

27. The meeting was brought to a close with an undertaking that officials will be in touch with a date and arrangements for the next meeting.

ACTION: Officials to make arrangements for the next meeting.

END

Annex A

Transport Staff Training

The Panel received a presentation on the training being delivered by Pembrokeshire County Council to local bus drivers to raise awareness of disability issues to improve customer service. The presentation included video clips that explained how people use local bus services and the role of the bus buddy scheme operating across the local authority area. The Panel requested the training package to take into consideration:

- The issues people who have dual sensory loss encounter when using all forms of public transport; and
- There needs to be appreciation that service planning should consider route scheduling to enable sufficient time for people to board and alight services safely.

Other than some minor production issues, the Panel endorsed the training being provided and agreed it should be made available across Wales and Pembrokeshire should provide a summary of the training package to the Cabinet Secretary for his consideration. Officials are currently working with the authority to revise the training package.

Eligibility Guidance to Local Authorities on Mandatory Concessionary Fares

A copy of the Concessionary Travel Scheme Guidance published by the Welsh Government in October 2014 was considered by the Panel. Members expressed concern the guidance was open to interpretation, which has led to the inconsistent approach being adopted by local authorities, especially in relation to the issue of disabled persons' free bus travel permits. Also of particular concern was the treatment of disabled applicants who were students and whose permanent residency is outside Wales.

Panel requested officials recommend to the Cabinet Secretary the guidance is reviewed and amended as appropriate (*Cabinet Secretary – response under item 1 confirmed his intention to consider a broad package of measures to support public transport across Wales and as part of that work to keep the Mandatory Concessionary Fares guidance under review*).

UK Government Consultation on accessible Information on Local Bus Services

The Panel noted the public consultation on accessible passenger information had been published by the Department for Transport on 8 July. Recommendations put forward during the engagement with officials at the Department for Transport at the previous meeting had been included in the consultation document. The consultation ended on 16 September and Welsh Government are awaiting the recommendations brought forward from the exercise.

Update on Community Transport Provision

Panel was informed the Cabinet Secretary for Economy for Transport has made representations to the UK Government about the impact the proposed changes will have and are having on the community transport sector in Wales. Operators are being denied permits if services are to be provided under contract.

U.K. Government Access for All station improvements programme

Welsh Government is working with the Wales and Borders rail industry and a number of local authorities on nominating priority recommendations for investment in step free access for stations. The U.K. Government has called for nominations by 16 November for a £300 million England and Wales programme covering the five year railway control period 6, commencing April 2019.

The U.K. government criteria for the programme include the footfall at stations, the incidence of reported disability in the catchment area, representations received from user groups and others, and match funding station investment by third parties.

Almost half Wales and Borders stations remain partly or wholly inaccessible for step free access and the Welsh Government has often strongly raised this with the U.K. Government, which retains sole non devolved responsibility. Suggested priority nominations will be submitted to Welsh Government Ministers for consideration this month with the intention of circulate the resulting submission to AM's for any comment they would wish to make direct to U.K. Government.

Wales Transport Strategy

The Wales Transport Strategy (One Wales: Connecting the Nation 2008) is a statutory document required by the Transport (Wales) Act 2006 (The Act). The Act places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish a Wales Transport Strategy setting out its policies and how they will be discharged. The same Act requires the Welsh Ministers to keep the Wales Transport Strategy under review and provides the ability to revise it from time to time.

A number of developments since the publication in 2008 such as decarbonisation and the duties arising from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the strategy to be refreshed.

A two tier approach to the replacement Wales Transport Strategy is proposed, comprising an overarching policy statement supported by a number of thematic policy statements. The overarching policy statement will set out how transport will work to deliver the four key themes in Taking Wales Forward and deliver against the Priority areas set out in Prosperity for All.

To date, internal consultation sessions have been held with colleagues across the Welsh Government to understand how a replacement Wales Transport Strategy could support the delivery of other priorities, plans and strategies. Further to this, 3 consultation sessions were held in Wrexham, Nantgarw and Aberystwyth in September 2018 (with both external and internal stakeholders invited) in collaboration with the

Future Generations Commissioner's office and engagement with stakeholders will continue over the coming months.

A May 2020 publication date is considered appropriate in terms of demonstrating the Government's commitment to the process, enabling sufficient time to engage in meaningful dialogue and enable robust cross-Government evidence gathering.