

Disability Equality Forum

12 pm Wednesday 23 November 2022 via Video Link

Minutes of the Meeting

Present:

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice (Chair)

Forum Members

Gaye Hampton	Wales Council for the Deaf
Sara Pickard	Mencap Cymru
Andrea Gordon	Wales Vision Forum / Guide Dogs Cymru
Louise Sweeney	Wales Council for the Deaf
Rachel Jones	Royal National Institute for the Blind
Marie Daly	Transport for Wales
Zoe Richards	Learning Disability Wales
Alex Osborne	Disability Wales
Leyton Powell	Transport for Wales
Emma Eccles	Transport for Wales
Owen Williams	Wales Council for the Blind
Lewis Brencher	Transport for Wales
Louise Sweeney	Wales Council for the Deaf
Megan Thomas	Disability Wales
Rachael Holbrook	Transport for Wales
Rhian Stangroom-Teel	Leonard Cheshire
Andrea Gordon	Guide Dogs Cymru
Cath Lewis	Guide Dogs Cymru
Kirsty James	Royal National Institute for the Blind
James Price	Transport for Wales
Kaarina Ruta	WLGA

Laura Hughes	BSL Interpreter (Guest)
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Welsh Government Officials

Jon Luxton	Specialist Policy Adviser
Gill Huws-John	Disability Rights Taskforce
Nina James	Disability Rights Taskforce Secretariat Lead
Matthew Xerri	Head of Senedd Elections Policy
Daniel Jones	Senior Senedd Elections Manager

- 2.4 Andrea made reference to the letter sent to Lee Waters, how it was a supportive and complimentary letter about how much the Panel enjoy the work of the DEF and their involvement. She mentioned the DEF's disappointment that the letter had backfired unexpectedly and how shocked and saddened the DEF were about how it was received. Andrea mentioned the DEF wished for a co-productive approach to the work and the response in the letter. She mentioned Rob Gravelle as an excellent chair for the Panel.
- 2.5 The Minister asked James Price, Chief Executive of Transport for Wales to speak. James acknowledged there was a failure on his behalf, which was why he attended the meeting.
- 2.10 James said there was an ethos for Transport for Wales and the Panel members to work well together. It was his understanding that the issues Panel members raised were being discussed and focused on seriously. He was disappointed to hear this was not the case. He encouraged the DEF and attendees to provide full and frank feedback as the Welsh Government Transport Officials and Transport for Wales officials would not have been part of the previous discussions that resulted in a negative response but wished for a positive outcome.
- 2.11 The Minister asked Sara Pickard to speak. Sara mentioned Mencap had noticed an increase in the amount of people that Mencap support who have had their bus passes removed from them before the expiry dates. The reasons Transport for Wales gave was they needed to reassess whether individuals were still eligible for the travel card. Sara mentioned that some people had been in receipt of the travel cards for decades but were no longer meeting the eligibility criteria. As a result, many people have gone from travelling cost free to now having to pay, despite having a variety of evidence. These are people with learning difficulties, mental health, and experiencing the cost-of-living crisis. They will increasingly become isolated as they will be unable to travel due to cost implications.
- 2.13 Sara mentioned communication was not accessible for all people to understand and people have been reliant on Mencap staff to assist with this.

- 2.14 Owen Williams wanted to see an improvement to the changes in relation to how concessionary passes were reviewed and for the Group to be involved in the changes.
- 2.15 The Transport for Wales Accessibility and Inclusion Panel would be an opportunity to shape the forward plan. Rob Gravelle was the Chair of the Panel and Leyton Powell would have an independent scrutiny role in his capacity as Director of Safety and Sustainability.
- 2.16 The current Chair of the panel was an employee of Transport for Wales. The Forum members were asked to confirm if they were content for this to reflect the independent nature of the panel.
- 2.17 Jon Luxton confirmed his support of Robert Gravelle, as an expert in his field but opened it to DEF to comment whether someone from DEF would be more appropriate as Chair of the Panel and that Rob Gravelle could be an independent voice from Transport for Wales.
- 2.18 Andrea confirmed the panel was made up of a cross section of people, some of whom have not had the opportunity to have their views welcomed in the way this particular panel allowed for. She mentioned the ability Rob had in ensuring those individuals were engaged in discussion and support their involvement.
- 2.19 Leyton Powell, Safety Sustainability and Risk Director at Transport for Wales, explained his role as an independent observer on the panel.

Agenda Item - Welsh Transport Strategy Accessibility and Inclusion Lack of Action against the Transport Strategy

- 3.1 The Minister referenced the paper, and asked attendees to look into the 5 issues, engagement and involvement, infrastructure, Social Justice, Technology and Information, Training and Guide.
- 3.2 Jon Luxton referred to the different transport campaigns in England, and the excitement there was in Wales because of the commitment made to an accessible strategy.
- 3.6 Jon referenced the concerns of disabled people in that they were

promised a 5-year Strategy and 1 1/2 years in, they have little to be positive about. We have to be honest about what can and cannot be achieved in the next 3 1/2 years.

4. Agenda Item Transport Equality Framework

This topic was not covered in the meeting. It would be an Agenda item at the next meeting between the DEF and Transport colleagues.

Action: To discuss Agenda Item 4 at the next DEF Meeting with Transport Colleagues

Actions:

Action 1	Transport for Wales and Welsh Government Transport officials would discuss Agenda Item 4 at the meeting on 16 February as it was not covered at this meeting.
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