

NAW Policy Review of Public Transport: response of the Countryside Council for Wales

1. CCW's policy on Public Transport

1.1 CCW's policy on transport is set out in *Transport and rural Wales* (CCW, 1996). It states: 'CCW has a statutory duty to promote the enjoyment of the countryside, the coast, and in-shore waters. However it immediately faces a challenge in so doing when so many recreational trips to the countryside are made by car. This may, directly or indirectly, harm the natural environment that people are travelling to enjoy'. CCW's transport policies are attached as an appendix.

1.2 To take forward its policies, CCW's Transport Advisory Service (TAS) has undertaken number of studies into the use of public transport for countryside recreation. The TAS provides local authorities and others free consultancy time from public transport experts, in order to assess a particular issue regarding the use of public transport. The TAS has led to the establishment of a number of bus services such as the *Clwydian Ranger* serving the Clwydian Hills AONB, the *Puffin Shuttle* on the Pembrokeshire Coast, and the *Beacons Bus* in the Brecon Beacons National Park. . To promote car-free access to the countryside, CCW has supported through the TAS and its grant aid the *Greenways* initiative in Pembrokeshire, a series of circular walking and cycling routes that are accessible to all (including disabled people), and which can be reached by bus and train.

We have found that the ability of partners to utilise specialist consultancy advice, for free, in taking forward public transport initiatives, is a key catalyst to the promotion of innovative new services.

1.3 To encourage the use of public transport for tourist journeys CCW has supported the *Sustainable Transport Tourism for Wales* campaign. This has utilised EU structural funds under the 1994-99 Objective 5b and Objective 2 programme, and has been successful in developing initiatives such as the *Freedom of Wales Flexi Pass*, one ticket that gives access to trains, buses, visitor attractions and accommodation.

1.4 Public transport has a central place in tackling problems caused by car use, such as congestion in popular areas, and the intimidation of walkers, cyclists and horse riders by both the volume and speed of traffic. Traffic restraint strategies, such as the proposed *Northern Snowdonia Scheme* (also initiated through CCW's TAS), will require the enhanced provision of public transport as an alternative to the private car.

1.5 Public transport can also play a role in reducing social exclusion by giving car-less households access to the countryside, thereby expanding the social profile of those presently visiting the countryside. For example, the Beacons Bus links the Brecon Beacons National Park with surrounding towns.

1.6 Through the more efficient use of fossil fuels, public transport can also cut the amount of CO₂ released into the atmosphere, slowing global warming and helping to conserve threatened habitats. It is worrying to note that CO₂ projections indicate a rise in the volume of harmful emissions from the transport sector beyond 2010.

2. Short term changes

2.1 Short term changes within the existing statutory, regulatory and organisational framework which would facilitate the delivery and take-up of improved and integrated services are suggested below. The key issue is the enhancement of NAW guidance on Local Transport Plans.

Improved Local Transport Plan guidance

2.2 CCW supports the use of more sustainable modes of transport for travel to and within the countryside. For this reason we would like to see public transport information, and the link between public transport and walking and cycling, given at least the same attention in the Assembly's LTP guidance as in the DETR version. There are numerous references to making access to public transport easier for pedestrians and cyclists in the DETR LTP guidance which should be mirrored in the Assembly's version (*Guidance on Full Local Transport Plans, DETR, March 2000*). In particular the Assembly's LTP guidance would be greatly strengthened if it covered the following points from DETR's Annex D:

Public transport interchange

Minimum Requirements...

- Initial audit of existing formal and informal places of interchange covering information, ease of access and movement by all modes, (including access by foot and bicycle)...
- A programme of work to:
- Assess current standards against good practice, to develop a plan- short and long terms- for improvements
- Assess which trips cannot be made directly or with easily facilitated connections...
- Assess potential pedestrian and cycling catchment populations, current travel patterns and means of access

Characteristics of a good LTP

- Implementation programme (based on initial audit) together with ongoing programme of audit
- Clear evidence of partnerships and joint working with public transport operators and others to maximise walking and cycling to public transport networks... (p. 105)

Take account of contribution of passenger rail

Minimum Requirements...

- Evidence of consideration of infrastructure and service improvements which could bring about better integration with other modes (such as cycling and walking), and modal shift from road to rail...

Characteristics of a good LTP...

- Evidence of strategy for improving integration between passenger rail and other modes...
- Evidence of joint consideration with passenger service operators of scope for improving capacity to meet various passenger needs, e.g. through greater use of flexible space areas in train and bus vehicles... (P.100, *ibid*)

Establish a public transport information strategy

...Characteristics of a good LTP

- Comprehensive assessment of PTI provision and usage in clear strategies and performance targets to improve PTI both locally and as part of PTI 2000 and its subsequent developments
- Clear evidence of effective partnership between authority, operators and all adjacent authorities and commitment to action to promote and improve public transport use...
- Strategies to integrate PTI with other policies, such as Bus Quality Partnerships, Travel Plans, Travel Awareness and Sustainable Tourism
- Travel information for other modes of transport, including... walking and cycling, to be made available (p. 106, *ibid*)

Recognise the particular needs and special character of the countryside

Minimum Requirements...

- Considers the needs of tourists and visitors to the countryside...
- Considers potential for walking and cycling in combination with public transport... (p.112, *ibid*)

Objective 1 Funding

2.3 Objective 1 provides an opportunity to take forward the sustainable development of West Wales and the Valleys. It should be used to:

- * fund innovative integrated transport projects, that make public transport easier and more convenient to use

- * enhance the marketing and information provision to local people and visitors to Wales, of public transport provision ensure that any new development (for example new sites and premises) funded under Objective 1 is served by public transport.

It should be noted that the two contextual indicators targets set out in the Objective One Single Programming Document, which will measure the overall medium term effects of the programme are:

Reduction in CO2 emissions by 20% by 2010

Annual Traffic growth to reach 0% for the final year of the programme (2006)

3 Longer term changes

3.1 Longer-term changes to the statutory, regulatory and organisational framework relating to public transport which would facilitate the delivery of improved services are as follows;

Establishment of Passenger Transport Authorities

3.2 The Assembly's debate on an *Integrated Transport Policy*, on 16/2/00, set out the various advantages of Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) in Wales. In response to these benefits CCW can see the advantage in the introduction of through ticketing on all bus and rail services. The following issues appear to us to be pertinent:

- * the suggested time-limited bus franchises would have to run long enough so as not to hamper investment, something which the shadow Strategic Rail Authority is conscious of with rail franchises.

- * the PTAs' ability to support marginal and experimental bus services would obviously be welcome if this meant an increase in the amount of funding available. Funding for experimental schemes in Wales is hampered by not having a similar scheme to the DETR's *Rural Bus*

Challenge competition where English local authorities can bid for a share of £5 m a year.

* funding which does exist, like the Welsh Rural Transport Grant, could be better promoted.

Land Use Planning and Public Transport

3.3 The review of public transport policy needs to be coordinated with the review of planning policy to reflect the importance given to developing public transport in the *Development of Planning Policy in Wales* (Report of the Land Use Planning Forum, NAW, 31 July 2000). CCW supports the idea set out in this document that 'accessibility' rather than 'mobility' should be the aim of NAW's policies on transport. Policies should therefore seek to make local journeys by foot, cycle and bus easier, while reducing the demand for car use.

3.4 We would also agree that guidance needs to reflect the difference between remote and pressured rural areas, and between urban and rural areas. In the short term transport and land use policies need to recognise that car ownership is a necessity in many rural areas, and action to stem traffic growth cannot rely on urban solutions where alternative modes are either impractical or non-existent.

Countryside Council for Wales

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