

Petitions Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date:
16 October 2012

Meeting time:
09:30

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Agenda

- 1. Introduction, apologies and substitutions 09:30**
- 2. New petitions 09:30 – 09:40**
 - 2.1 P-04-426 Introduce a mandatory 40mph speed limit on the A487 at Blaenporth Ceredigion (Pages 1 – 3)
 - 2.2 P-04-427 A new Welsh language law for Wales (Page 4)
 - 2.3 P-04-428 Alternative energy for street lighting (Page 5)
- 3. Updates to previous petitions 09:40 – 10:40**

Housing, Regeneration & Heritage

- 3.1 P-04-403 Saving Plas Cwrt yn Dre/Old Parliament (Pages 6 – 8)

Environment & Sustainable Development

- 3.2 P-03-273 Transportation of Wind Turbines in Mid Wales (Page 9)
- 3.3 P-04-344 Freshwater East Public Sewer (Pages 10 – 12)
- 3.4 P-04-326 No to Incineration (Pages 13 – 95)
- 3.5 P-03-309 Cardiff Against the Incinerator (Pages 96 – 98)

- 3.6 P-04-351 Recall LDPs (Pages 99 – 104)
- 3.7 P-04-398 Campaign for a Welsh Animal Offenders Register (Pages 105 – 108)

Health & Social Services

- 3.8 P-04-396 Emergency Life Support Skills (ELS) for Wales Schoolchildren (Pages 109 – 110)
- 3.9 P-03-318 Cross Border Maternity Services (Page 111)
- 3.10 P-04-400 NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health (Pages 112 – 120)

Local Government & Communities

- 3.11 P-04-373 School Exclusion Zones for Mobile Hot Food Vans (Pages 121 – 122)
- 3.12 P-04-370 Petition for the improvement of Psychic and Intuitive services in Wales (Pages 123 – 125)
- 3.13 P-04-380 Bring back our bus! Petition against the removal of scheduled bus services from east Lampeter, Cwmann & Pencarreg (Pages 126 – 261)
- 3.14 P-04-402 Council Prayers (Pages 262 – 264)

P-04-426 Introduce a mandatory 40mph speed limit on the A487 at Blaenporth Ceredigion

Petition wording:

We, Aberporth Community Council call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to introduce a mandatory 40mph speed limit on the A487 at Blaenporth Ceredigion.

Supporting Information:

Background: -

Blaenporth village straddles the main South/North coastal road; the A487. Roughly two thirds of the village live to the South of the main road; the remainder of the population are mostly clustered around the local Church to the North. As far as Aberporth Community Council can ascertain this village is the only one without a mandatory speed limit from Fishguard in the South to Porthmadog, Gwynedd in the North, the length of Cardigan Bay.

Historic Data to April 2012: -

Numerous letters and e mails have been sent to the Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (MWTRA) and Ceredigion County Council (CCC).

Submissions to the MWTRA elicited no replies. Ceredigion Highways Department letters and e mails replies but no support for the change.

October 2009 came the Welsh Government Circular 24/2009; Setting Local Speed Limits in Wales. For 2 years CCC did nothing and then in a Cabinet Meeting 25/10/2011 a moratorium on the introduction of new speed limits was put to CCC cabinet members this was Page 8 of 9 being considered by Cabinet, a fait accompli! CCC Officers decision to start the process 2 years after the date of the circular and then take 3 years (until December 2014) to implement it seems to stretch the credibility of the process.

This decision prompted Aberporth Community Council to write to the Chief Executive of CCC, the reply just supported "The Party Line".

During this period Ceredigion AM Elin Jones was also attempting to implement a mandatory speed limit with no effect.

May 2012 Onwards: -

After the May Local Elections Aberporth Community Council felt it had a fresh mandate from the electorate to try once again for the mandatory speed limit at Blaenporth.

The start of the campaign was a site meeting with CCC Cabinet Member for Transport Cllr Alun Williams who supported our case and emailed CCC Highways Department and the Go Safe initiative.

The chair of Aberporth Community Council Highways Committee met with Ceredigion's MP Mark Williams and he also offered full support.

The opportunity was also taken to "Copy In" Mid and West Wales Regional Assembly Members. Rebecca Evans AM, finally had a reply from Mr Deio Evans MWTRA with the same mantra i.e. end of December 2014 before new speed limit decisions will be made. William Powell AM had suggested the petition's committee as a place of last resort.

Addition Safety Information: -

At the end of Summer Term 2012 CCC closed the local school; Blaenporth CP along with several other schools and opened a new school T Lewis Area School at Brynhoffnant Ceredigion, some 5 miles North on the A487.

As stated in the background paragraph two thirds of the homes in Blaenporth are on the south side of the village. These pupils and their parents have two options open to them for their children to attend their new school.

1. Take their primary school children in the morning across the road to the Bus Stop in what is an advisory speed limit with a legal speed of 60mph (more than half the traffic is estimated to exceed this National Limit). School pick up times also coincide with commuter traffic. or
2. Take them by car to the now closed Blaenporth School car park so that they can safely get on the bus. This option also has risks in that there is a finite time window to meet the school bus unlike previously when the School was open.

Of course children on the North side of the village will then have to cross this dangerous road at the end of school.

This situation has been highlighted in the local press Tivy-Side Advertiser 25th September 2012 edition.

Summary: -

Aberporth Community Council is at a loss to why there is no mandatory speed limit in Blaenporth and the lack of support by MWTRA and CCC to implement one. Ceredigion is not a large County and 3 years to check speed limits on Class A and B Roads seems an extraordinary amount of time for this exercise.

Just one village with no speed limit on the A487 within the County should be relatively easy to implement.

Petition raised by: Aberporth Community Council

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 October 2012

Number of signatures: Aberporth Community Council

Agenda Item 2.2

P-04-427 : A new Welsh language law for Wales

Petition wording:

We call on the Welsh Assembly to create a new Welsh language law as we feel that the current laws regarding the Welsh language do not go far enough to protect the rights of Welsh speakers. Currently, the private sector is not required to have Welsh language plans or policies and does not have to treat the Welsh language as an equal to English. Whilst Welsh speakers have increased rights, they now need to have the right to be able to use Welsh in ALL aspects of their daily lives.

Petition raised by: Gethin Kurtis Sugar

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 October 2012

Number of signatures: 93

P-04-428 : Alternative energy for street lighting

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh government to convert streetlights on the trunk road system in Wales to an alternative energy source and to issue guidelines to the local authorities requesting day convert local streetlights to alternative energy.

Supporting Information : The Welsh Assembly Government claim that they are working along the lines of Agenda 21, which is to reduce pollution by reducing our energy consumption. During the night, street lighting sends our energy consumption levels to a high peak. So I feel that the Government should convert the street lights in the country to an alternative energy source. For example, Solar and wind energy is already used for some street signage and to convert all street lighting so this would provide extensive and sustainable employment for thousands and the electricity providers would then be able to reduce their prices to the consumer and the Local Authorities.

Petition raised by: Ethan Gwyn

Date petition first considered by Committee: 16 October 2012

Number of signatures: 22

Agenda Item 3.1

P-04-403 Saving Plas Cwrt yn Dre/Old Parliament House for the Nation

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly of Wales to instruct the Welsh Government to purchase Plas Cwrt yn Dre also known as Dolgellau's Old Parliament House before this national treasure is sold on the open market and lost for ever.

Additional information: Plas Cwrt yn Dre, also known as Owain Glyndwr's Old Parliament House was moved from Dolgellau to the Dolerw Park, Newtown in 1886. The Quakers, who currently own it can no longer afford to maintain it and are selling it for £55,000. It is undoubtedly a national treasure and we think it should be purchased by the Welsh Government for the nation.

Petition raised by: Sian Ifan

Date petition first considered by Committee: 2 July 2012

Number of signatures: 218 (An additional 10 signatures were collected on an associated petition)

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth
Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-403
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/05946/12

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

19 July 2012

Dear William

Thank you for your letter asking for my comments on the petition led by Sian Ifan, asking that the Welsh Government be instructed to purchase Plas Cwrt yn Dre, Newtown.

The Welsh Government has a duty to conserve and present the sites in its care and with limited resources at our disposal we need to be satisfied that certain criteria are met in assessing whether to take on any additional sites. Generally, sites should be of outstanding importance at a national level, and many sites which do not meet that criterion are managed by others than Cadw, for example private owners or public bodies such as local authorities. We also need to be sure that we really are the option of last resort and the site cannot be properly sustained by others.

In this instance there does not seem to be any compelling reason to take the property into state care. It seems to have been suitably managed in its previous use as a meeting house for the Society of Friends, and although currently vacant, it is being actively marketed for private sale. The building is listed – it was upgraded to II* earlier this year - which introduces a statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, or its setting, or any features of special architectural and historic interest that it may have. The local planning authority is able to protect the character of the property through the requirement to obtain listed building consent for any works of alteration or extension which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. I am satisfied that listing provides the most appropriate framework for the protection of this building, which is not currently on the Buildings at Risk Register maintained by Powys County Council.

In re-evaluating the grading earlier this year, my officials in Cadw were able to examine the structure of the building and some of the material relating to its history, an exercise which has led to a much better understanding of its development and the extent of change

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associated with the move from Dolgellau to Newtown. There is no direct evidence for the date of the original building, and no references to an association with Owain Glyndwr before the early nineteenth century, and although the strength of an assumed association undoubtedly contributed to its survival, the building was heavily modified when it was re-erected in Newtown – relatively little of the form and fabric of the original building survived in what was in effect an imaginative reconstruction.

I hope that this reply is of help.



Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth
Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage

P-03-273 Transportation of wind turbines in Mid Wales

Petition wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to issue guidance to Local Planning Authorities to ensure that communities are properly consulted on wind farm developments, that impact on road infrastructure is properly assessed and that the broader effects of traffic disruption on sectors such as tourism are properly considered before any development is approved to take place. We believe the only way this can be properly concluded is by way of a public inquiry.

Petition raised by: Welshpool Town Council

Number of signatures: 1

Agenda Item 3.3

P-04-344 Freshwater East – Public Sewer

Petition wording

We the undersigned householders of Freshwater East, ask the Welsh Government not to take enforcement action against Dwr Cymru Welsh Water concerning the installation of a public sewer in Freshwater East.

Petition raised by: Royston Thomas

Date petition first considered by Committee: 29 November 2011

Number of signatures: 106

PET(4)-14-12 : Tuesday 16 October 2012

P-04-344 : Freshwater East Public Sewer

Correspondence from Environment Agency to Committee

Freshwater East Update Briefing Note for Petitions Committee Secretariat

The Environment Agency has undertaken two surveys at Freshwater East to ascertain if there is any significant environmental impact of private sewage treatment facilities.

The first survey was conducted in January 2012 and a second survey in June of the same year when property occupancy in Freshwater East was expected to be higher following a two-day bank holiday.

We have presented the results of the surveys to officials in Welsh Government's Water Branch. The surveys conclude that there is little impact on local water courses. Where impacts have been detected it is believed that these can be addressed through improved management of individual treatment facilities. The results strongly suggest that, where found, bacteria loadings are from agricultural rather than domestic sources.

A report has been submitted to Welsh Government together with a letter outlining what we believe should be the next steps in the s101a determination process.

We intend to send copies of the survey to elected representatives in the community and known interested parties and then meet with the Community Council in October to explain the survey findings. We would hope by then to be in a position to also discuss the way forward.

PET(4)-14-12 : Tuesday 16 October 2012
P-04-344 : Freshwater East Public Sewer

Freshwater East Action Group against Public Sewer Installation

7th October 2012

Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

We refer to your e-mail of 3rd October 2012. With it you attached a 'Briefing Note'. We assume that the Briefing Note was prepared by the Environment Agency but please inform us if our assumption is incorrect.

It is difficult to comment on the note without access to both the report being submitted to the Welsh Government and the letter referred to in the note which outlines the next steps to be taken in the S101a determination process. In addition we have not been sent a copy of the second survey despite asking for the same. This reluctance to communicate with the village reflects the way in which this matter has been handled from the beginning.

Having said that, we see from the note that both surveys concluded that the current septic tanks are having little impact on local water courses and that, such bacteria as was found was likely to be caused by farming rather than local homes. **This confirms what we have always believed.** It is a shame that such surveys were not carried out at the outset.

A lot of public money was spent on the Judicial Review procedure instigated by the Environment Agency concerning Welsh Water's change of mind about the need to provide an extended sewerage system in Freshwater East. The latest surveys suggest that that could have been avoided had a more rigorous scientific approach to the alleged pollution issue been adopted. We hope that both the Minister and the members of the Petitions Committee will want to ensure that both the Environment Agency and Welsh Water will learn lessons from this matter.

We understand from our communications with the Environment Agency that there has been some disagreement between the Minister's office and the Environment Agency as to who has to make the final decision in this matter. We trust that this will be resolved shortly. **We would ask the Petitions Committee to continue to keep a watching brief on this matter until we know the outcome and until acceptable arrangements have been made to hold a local public meeting to inform local residents of the outcome and the reasons for the final decision.**

We are most grateful for your continued assistance.
Yours sincerely,
Roy and Pat Thomas (for Action Group)

P-04-326 No to Incineration

Petition wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to revise its planning policy and policy on residual waste to provide a presumption against the building of incinerators, which send most of the carbon from waste into the air as CO₂, emit ultra-fine particles that can be damaging to health, and create toxic ash. We believe that incineration is bad for the environment and bad for people.

Petition raised by: Friends of the Earth Cymru

Number of signatures: 1299 (An associated petition collected 13,286 signatures))

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee

Energy Policy and Planning in Wales
June 2012



The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

An electronic copy of this report can be found on the National Assembly's website:
www.assemblywales.org

Copies of this report can also be obtained in accessible formats including Braille, large print; audio or hard copy from:

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National Assembly for Wales
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National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee

Energy Policy and Planning in Wales
June 2012



Environment and Sustainability Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing: the maintenance, development and planning of Wales's natural environment and energy resources.

Current Committee membership



Dafydd Elis-Thomas (Chair)

Plaid Cymru
Dwyfor Meirionnydd



Mick Antoniw

Welsh Labour
Pontypridd



Rebecca Evans

Welsh Labour
Mid and West Wales



Russell George

Welsh Conservatives
Montgomeryshire



Vaughan Gething

Welsh Labour
Cardiff South and Penarth



Llyr Huws Gruffydd

Plaid Cymru
North Wales



Julie James

Welsh Labour
Swansea West



William Powell

Welsh Liberal Democrats
Mid and West Wales



David Rees

Welsh Labour
Aberavon



Antoinette Sandbach

Welsh Conservatives
North Wales

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Report layout

The Committee held a total of 20 evidence sessions. It also received 315 written responses to its consultation. Of these, over 250 were from individuals and local action / community groups, predominantly in mid Wales. In addition to the written responses, the Committee also received 109 coupons from the Powys County Times newspaper and 85 standard forms submitted in relation to the two petitions. The forms included a 'tick-box' option to indicate support in relation to the two petitions referred to in the original terms of reference.

In order to summarise all of this material the Committee has identified a number of main issues and themes that have emerged from the evidence. For each of these we have set out the following:

- a summary of the key points taken from the written and oral evidence and the views presented to the Committee by the stakeholders. These are not listed in any particular order. Of course not all stakeholders said the same thing and on some issues there are strongly opposing or contradictory views. The summaries reflect this and the inclusion of a particular comment in the 'stakeholder views' section does not necessarily mean that this also represents the view of the Committee;
- the Welsh Government's position on the issue. This is either taken from their evidence to the Committee or from its policy documents;
- the Committee's views on the issue. There are a few instances where not all members of the Committee have the same view and this is reflected in the text;
- the Committee's recommendations;

Introduction

- the Committee's inquiry into Energy and Planning has had a major impact. It has contributed significantly to the debate and stimulated discussion. A large volume of written and oral evidence was received;
- both Welsh and UK Government policy has evolved during course of the inquiry. However there has been little progress on further consents for onshore wind - especially for onshore wind projects in mid Wales (Section 36 of the *Electricity Act 1989* Legacy and *Town & Country Planning Act 1990* applications);
- the inquiry has confirmed the vital importance of the energy sector to Wales
 - in meeting contributions to EU targets for renewable energy generation, in helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also as an economic driver;
- the huge potential for renewables both onshore and offshore has also emerged – it is important that Wales and its people benefit, but the impacts need to be carefully managed;
- there is recognition that 'baseload' and 'on demand' forms of energy will also be needed at least for the next decade;
- the implications of new approaches to major infrastructure planning and importance of finding new sources of energy have only become apparent over the last couple of years;
- legitimate concerns of communities and local people have been raised about what is being planned and how consultation and introduction of new policy has been handled in the past;.
- the vital importance of community engagement, community benefit and buy-in. Problems with how energy and associated planning policies have been communicated in the past. Some lessons that need to be learnt from this;
- there is strong stakeholder support for *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* and its associated Energy Programme – a major step forward in recognising important messages that the Committee has heard;
- the importance of an approach that recognises the relationships between energy/communities/natural environment has been identified. This is part of the Natural Environment Framework approach and is acknowledged in *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition*;

- there is a need to accept there will be some environmental impact at least in the short-term. This point was made by the Countryside Council for Wales in particular:

“[...] CCW recognises that it will often be necessary to reconcile the need to accept some local impacts on our natural heritage in the short term in order to secure a lowering of emissions from energy generation, whilst ensuring that legal requirements to protect the environment are upheld.”

Major developments during the course of the inquiry

During the period that the Committee has been taking evidence there have been a number of important developments including:

- *Localism Act 2011* – abolition of the Infrastructure Planning Commission and creation of the National Infrastructure Directorate within the Planning Inspectorate from April 2012;
- establishment of the Silk Commission – further devolution of energy consenting is at best several years away;
- *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* – plus parallel energy programme – launched March 2012;
- Horizon Nuclear Power decision to withdraw from Wylfa B;
- a planning review of consenting process for energy announced by the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development (the Hyder review);
- a wider review of the planning system in Wales – a consultation has been carried out – in preparation for the Planning Bill White Paper in 2013;
- a consultation on a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ in Wales has been completed;
- Feed in Tariffs reviews by UK Government;
- Renewable Obligation Certificates banding review consultation;
- final consent for the Pembroke Power Station in November 2011;
- Welsh Government consultation on Marine Conservation Zones launched in April 2012;
- approval of the Pen y Cymoedd onshore windfarm in May 2012;
- publication of the draft Energy Bill 2012 by the UK Government in May 2012;
- publication of the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan by the Welsh Government in May 2012;
- publication of the draft Order in May 2012 for the new Natural Resources Body to replace the Countryside Council for Wales/Environment Agency Wales/Forestry Commission Wales.

Leadership

Stakeholder views

- the need for the Welsh Government to show more leadership in taking forward renewable energy policies and targets. Many stakeholders perceive that the Scottish Government has demonstrated stronger leadership;
- the need for local authorities to show strategic leadership in promoting renewable energy – including those authorities not directly affected by a Strategic Search Area. Important to ensure this is filtered down to officer level. Leadership here means giving greater priority to delivery and support for the development of renewable energy;
- the need for the other consenting bodies in Wales (Countryside Council for Wales/Environment Agency Wales especially) to show leadership in this policy area. Unfavourable comparisons with Scottish equivalents. As above leadership here means giving greater priority to delivery and support for renewable energy;
- the need for an overarching Renewable Energy Delivery Board to co-ordinate/drive delivery. The Scottish Energy Advisory Board with its sub-groups is a possible model;
- concerns that previous Welsh Governments have not consulted sufficiently with local communities on the impact of its energy and planning policies;
- confusion about the First Minister’s Cabinet Statement and the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development’s clarification letter last year – some say this has undermined confidence;
- Ministers should be making greater use of the Energy & Environment Sector Panel for advice and to promote key messages;
- a call to improve general public understanding and perception of renewable technologies and to provide clarity through regular campaigns to maintain momentum.

The Welsh Government’s position

- *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition*, published in March 2012, sets out the Welsh Government’s views on the importance of energy. It identifies the importance of providing leadership “to ensure Wales has a clear and consistent framework for investors, regulators and decision-makers together with the infrastructure, co-ordination and stability to ensure Wales is a great place to do business”;

The Committee's views

- leadership in this area from all levels of government is vitally important. Despite the views of some stakeholders, expert advice received by the Committee leads us to conclude that there are a number of factors that have led to a greater take-up of renewables in Scotland and it is not simply a question of stronger leadership by the Scottish Government;
- the Committee welcomes *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* which is an important step in the right direction – the Committee will want to monitor closely the implementation of the key things that the Welsh Government say they will do. The confusion last year caused by the First Minister's Statement and the subsequent letter from the Minister for Environment & Sustainability was unfortunate;
- it is crucial that the current backlog of onshore wind energy schemes in the pipeline is removed – this means all levels of government showing leadership in tackling the important transport/grid/cumulative impact issues. A number of these are large schemes being dealt with outside of Wales as legacy applications under Section 36 of the *Electricity Act 1989*. There are also a number of potential applications to be dealt with by the National Infrastructure Directorate under the *Planning Act 2008*. Until some decisions are made it is difficult for communities to understand what is happening and difficult to plan properly for the supporting infrastructure likely to be required. The recent decision by the Secretary of State to approve the 299 Megawatt Pen y Cymoedd windfarm gives some indication of how such decisions may be made;
- *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* recognises the need to ensure that communities are fully engaged and receive long-term positive benefits from energy developments. Improving public understanding and perception must be a priority;
- local planning authorities need to show greater strategic leadership and to work together to deliver all forms of renewable energy and to encourage community engagement, whether or not they are directly affected by a Strategic Search Area;
- in taking forward its proposals for a Natural Resources Body the Welsh Government needs to ensure that priority is given to dealing with energy projects, from a regulatory, statutory consultee and commercial development point of view.

Recommendations

Headline

1. The Welsh Government should establish a **Renewable Energy Delivery Board** to act as a coordinating body with representatives from government, developers and regulators.
2. The Welsh Government needs to work closely with all the stakeholders to **free up the backlog of onshore windfarm applications**, particularly in mid Wales.
3. The Welsh Government should encourage local planning authorities to adopt **formal working arrangements** particularly at a **regional level** on dealing with renewable energy projects (the Simpson agenda).
4. The Welsh Government should develop a **Natural Resource Plan** for Wales by the **end of 2013**. This would sit alongside the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan, be integrated with the Marine Spatial Plan and be used as a basis for the future planning of energy projects in Wales. The framework should be evidence-based and tested for “soundness” through an independent examination before it is adopted.
5. The Sustainability Committee of the Third Assembly recommended that the role and function of the **Wales Spatial Plan** should be reviewed. This needs to be taken forward alongside work on the natural resource planning.
6. The Welsh Government should ensure that the **Energy and Environment Sector Panel** in future represents all forms of renewable energy, including Marine and should continue to use its expertise to inform future policy and initiatives.
7. The Welsh Government should organise and fund a programme to improve the level of **public engagement, empowerment and political debate** about renewable technologies.

Devolution

Stakeholder views

- the current arrangements for planning/consenting large energy projects are complex and some argue strongly are discouraging development in Wales;
- they create an artificial divide for schemes below 50 and above 50 Megawatts for onshore projects. The two regimes are radically different;
- the separate arrangements for associated development in Wales create further complexities with responsibility being split between the two planning regimes;
- two-thirds (in Megawatts) of proposed developments in the system are *Section 36 legacy/Planning Act 2008* schemes to be decided by the National Infrastructure Directorate/Department of Energy & Climate Change, rather than in Wales;
- TAN 8/*Planning Policy Wales* should be taken into account by the National Infrastructure Directorate/ Department of Energy & Climate Change but it will not out-weigh the National Policy Statements – however no projects have reached that stage yet. There could be test cases/judicial review if the Department of Energy & Climate Change approves large-scale windfarms outside of the Strategic Search Areas;
- there are a variety of views on the need for further devolution of energy powers with some supporting it and some not;
- some developers say that it is less important to them who makes the decision – they want certainty and consistency and at present many are not convinced of the case for further devolution;
- further devolution of energy powers issue is being dealt with as part of a wider discussion on further devolution – now to be considered by the Silk Commission that will not be reporting until 2014;
- if energy consenting was devolved, some suggest that a parallel consenting system to the National Infrastructure Directorate be established for Wales with the final decision resting with the Welsh Ministers.

The Welsh Government's position

- the Welsh Government will continue to press the UK Government for greater devolution of energy consenting powers. This would include responsibility for consenting of projects above 50 megawatts onshore and above 1

megawatt offshore (initially up to 100 megawatts or could be all), electricity grid consents and Renewable Obligation Certificates. It is also seeking responsibility for major port development. The one exception to this would be nuclear power;

- the Welsh Government believes that under the current regime because the National Policy Statements take precedence over *Planning Policy Wales/TAN 8* “wind turbines could be put anywhere and strategic search areas could be ignored”.

The Committee’s views

- we welcome the Welsh Government’s intention to set out how it will use any additional powers over energy consenting to put in place a single, streamlined and transparent process for Wales. This was a recommendation of the Planning Inquiry of the Third Assembly’s Sustainability Committee and it is important that this is explained;
- the majority view of members of the Committee is support for the Welsh Government in its call for greater devolution of energy powers. Apart from making the system simpler for developers it would also help local communities by being clear about who is responsible for what. The Committee will be interested to see the outcome of the current inquiry into major Ports and Airports by the Enterprise & Business Committee, to see if that committee will support the devolution of responsibility for major ports development;
- however further devolution is at best several years away and it is important that in the meantime the planning and consenting systems for projects up to 50 Megawatts onshore and 1 Megawatt offshore are made to work as well as possible. The Committee welcomes the work commissioned by the Welsh Government to consider changes that can be made within the existing framework to improve the planning system and the Welsh Government’s intention to review other consenting regimes alongside the introduction of the Natural Resources Body.

Recommendations

Headline

8. The Welsh Government should **publish its case for further devolution** of energy consenting and financial incentive powers.
9. As part of this case the Welsh Government should consider the introduction of a process in which the Planning Inspectorate’s **National Infrastructure**

Directorate continues to consider major energy infrastructure projects in Wales, but in future makes its **final recommendations to the Welsh Ministers** rather than UK Ministers.

Energy Mix

Stakeholder views

- there is scope for renewables to replace much of the existing carbon-intensive electricity generation, but not in the short-term. Renewable energy sources need to be successfully combined with on demand forms of electricity generation to successfully meet forecast demand, at least for the next ten years;
- there will be a continuing dependence on conventional supplies of gas and coal at least for the next decade;
- onshore wind is currently the most economically viable alternative that can contribute significantly in the period to 2020. Some stakeholders believe that there has been an imbalance in favour of wind technology that has led to it becoming more economically viable;
- offshore wind's potential contribution is many times greater than onshore wind and costs will probably fall;
- marine wave and tidal have great potential around Wales (particularly off Pembrokeshire and Anglesey) but commercial installations are not likely before 2020. The Severn also has great potential but is unlikely to contribute much in the next decade;
- micro-generation and community-based renewable projects can make an important contribution especially with more support, but they cannot be a substitute for large-scale renewable projects;
- energy from waste has a contribution, although the priority for the municipal programme for waste is to encourage re-use and recycling and in the longer term Energy from waste will be phased out as residual waste is reduced. There are some concerns about health impacts. The overall contribution is quite small;
- Anaerobic Digestion - potential to develop further but the current overall contribution is quite small;
- hydro - pumped storage important in Wales. Large-scale hydro schemes are unlikely to make a major contribution - but smaller-scale schemes are important for local community engagement;
- nuclear- some say it is important as a major low carbon contribution to the energy mix, important source of jobs and support new nuclear plant at

existing sites. Others are concerned about safety and long-term storage of waste and consider that alternatives should be found;

The Welsh Government's position

- the Welsh Government's aim is that almost all local energy needs will come from low carbon electricity by 2050, but this is not possible in the run-up to 2020;
- there is support for a mix of renewable energy sources with targets for each;
- in the short-term conventional gas, nuclear and bio-energy will provide the energy to compensate for the intermittent nature of renewables;
- conventional gas will be a key transitional fuel. However carbon capture and storage will be vital in the medium term;
- nuclear - there is support for development of new nuclear plant at existing sites given the urgency of tackling climate change, however it does not support the development of new nuclear sites.

The Committee's views

- in terms of energy generated, much of the future energy mix is beyond the control of the Welsh Government. The UK Government's electricity market reforms are critical to providing a stable framework for future investment;
- the Committee agrees with the Welsh Government's approach of moving towards as much electricity generation as possible from renewable/low carbon sources and welcomes the clarity provided on these issues by the *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* statement;
- most of this is likely to come from wind in the period up to 2020;
- it is important to encourage as much take up as possible of other forms of renewable energy up to 50 Megawatts including micro-generation and community-based renewables, hydro, anaerobic digestion and energy from waste, although it needs to be recognised that even taken together these won't contribute enough to replace the energy produced by large fossil fuel power stations;
- it is very important to ensure that wave/tidal power opportunities are taken;
- this approach must ensure that maximum economic benefits and jobs come to Wales;
- the majority view of members of the Committee is support for the Welsh Government's position on nuclear power - no new sites but the potential at

existing sites needs to be exploited as nuclear is a low-cost form of 'baseload' and 'on demand' low carbon energy. There are strong economic arguments for this approach and concerns over the decision of Horizon to withdraw from Wylfa B.

Recommendations

Headline

10. Engage with the UK Government to ensure that the market mechanisms proposed by the **UK Government's Electricity Market Reform** are implemented with greater transparency and speed and to ensure that stability is achieved in the longer term by confirmation of the changes to the Renewable Obligation Certificate regime beyond 2017 as soon as possible.
11. The Welsh Government should work with the UK Government to help **identify and secure an alternative developer** to take forward proposals for a new nuclear reactor at **Wylfa B**.
12. The Welsh Government should actively **encourage a greater mix of below 50 Megawatt renewable energy developments** across the whole range of technology types and including as many community-based schemes as possible.

Economic benefits/financial support

Stakeholder views

- there is considerable economic potential for renewable energy industry and support services to develop in Wales;
- Welsh Government support and incentives for newer technologies are vital.
- the importance of ports – access to offshore windfarms and potentially tidal wave/stream;
- the need for a level playing field in terms of Renewable Obligation Certificates to enable Wales to compete with Scotland for wave/tidal projects;
- developers say that the UK Government’s Electricity Market Reform proposals, funding reviews and delays are creating uncertainty within the industry. Organisations have called for continuity in financial mechanisms;
- the recent Feed In Tariff reviews have particularly hit the solar energy industry;
- a lack of clarity around European state aid rules is seen as a barrier for community developments;
- Enterprise Zones: it is unclear at this stage what contribution they can make to the energy sector and important to avoid economic migration instead of new growth;
- the economic impact of windfarms on tourism – there are conflicting views and a limited amount of current evidence on this;
- best use needs to be made of European funding, particularly the next round of Structural Funds and funding to support research and innovation;
- local authorities in Wales are behind their counterparts in England in preparing for the implementation of the Green Deal;
- the need for a major effort to market the potential of Wales as a place for renewable energy developments.

The Welsh Government’s position

- *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* sets out the Welsh Government’s views on the economic importance of energy. It states that “Our aim is to unlock and harness Wales’ energy resources in order to maximise economic, social and environmental benefits for the people of Wales”. It stresses the need to ensure that business delivers the promise of jobs, the

need to build a competitive supply-chain, both to unlock resources in Wales but also to export to the rest of the UK and globally.

- the Welsh Government says it will “Maximise benefit for Wales in terms of jobs and wider economic benefit at every stage of development whilst also ensuring our communities derive long term benefits.” And it will “Act now for Wales’ long term energy future through support for innovation, research, development and commercialisation in the areas that offer the greatest potential for long-term benefit for Wales.”

The Committee’s views

- the Committee supports the Welsh Government’s views on the economic importance of the energy sector to Wales.
- it is vital that maximum use is made of European Structural funding in the current and next (2014-2020) round and European Horizon 2020 research and innovation funding to support innovation and development in the energy sector.

Recommendations

Headline

13. The Welsh Government should engage with the UK Government to ensure that the proposals in the **Renewable Obligation Certificate (ROC) review for 5 ROCs for marine wave and tidal** projects in Wales are implemented, so that Wales is on a par with Scotland.
14. The Welsh Government should ask the **Energy and Environment Sector Panel** to advise it on how best to use the opportunity of the next round of European Structural funding to support the provision of strategic infrastructure for the energy sector in Wales.
15. The Welsh Government should prioritise **support for innovation, research and development**, particularly to the emerging wave/tidal industry and should provide greater encouragement to international and global collaboration in research and innovation activity relating to emerging renewable energy technologies.
16. The Welsh Government should clarify in detail before the end of 2012 how the **energy Enterprise Zones** will operate and the financial and planning incentives that will be offered.

17. The Welsh Government should work with the Welsh Local Government Association to encourage local authorities in Wales to **prepare for the Green Deal**, using examples of good practice in England as a model.
18. The Welsh Government should **commission research** to measure the **economic impact** of **windfarms** and associated grid infrastructure on the **tourism** industry in Wales.

Renewable Energy Targets

Stakeholder views

- Welsh Government renewable energy targets are helpful but some stakeholders (especially developers) believe that they are not sufficiently clear or that in some cases they are unrealistic;
- some believe that the Welsh Government should develop more detailed action plans of how the targets are to be achieved and report annually on progress towards these targets. Comparisons are made with the level of detail provided by the Scottish Government's 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy;
- there has been a considerable increase in the target for onshore wind – from an additional 800 megawatts in the Strategic Search Areas in 2005 to 1.7 gigawatts in 2011;
- the target for marine wave/tidal (4 gigawatts by 2025) is seen as very optimistic and may need to be reviewed;
- there is some uncertainty about what the target is for community/micro-generation schemes and what is included in this. Does the 300 megawatt target for up to 25 megawatt onshore windfarm schemes outside of the Strategic Search Areas include what has already been consented?
- the detailed targets in the 2007 Micro-generation Action Plan have been superseded according to the Welsh Government but it is not clear what has replaced them;
- the First Minister's Statement of June 2011 and the subsequent letter from the Minister for Environment & Sustainable Development in July 2011 introduced some uncertainty about the targets/capacities for onshore wind in the Strategic Search Areas;
- some people and communities affected by the onshore wind targets and the Strategic Search Area approach were not fully aware of their implications until consultation began on grid reinforcement.

The Welsh Government's position

- renewable energy targets have been updated through the 2010 Energy Policy Statement and subsequent revisions to Planning Policy Wales;
- the targets are ambitious but achievable and important if Wales is to contribute to EU 2020 renewables target and reduction in carbon emissions.

The Welsh Government recognises the importance of a coherent vision and framework for investors and communities;

- the First Minister's Statement of June 2011 and the subsequent letter from the Minister for Environment & Sustainable Development put an upper limit on capacity for the Strategic Search Areas. This is important to ensure development within the Strategic Search Areas is balanced and proportionate and will avoid the need for major grid reinforcement;
- however *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* states that energy infrastructure in Wales requires investment, reinforcement and upgrading and that energy developments should be supported and not delayed by improvements to the grid.

The Committee's views

- whilst *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* is an important high level statement, it does not resolve the confusion about what the Welsh Government's targets are and there is considerable doubt about whether or not they can be achieved within the timescales specified. More detail is needed about how the targets for different sectors are to be achieved along with regular monitoring arrangements;
- some of the targets are relatively short-term and it is unclear what will happen beyond these dates;
- the target for wave/tidal power (4 gigawatts by 2025) is particularly optimistic given that it depends on a major Severn tidal power project coming forward;
- the First Minister's Statement and the subsequent letter from the Minister for Environment & Sustainability in 2011 have put a cap on onshore wind capacity for the Strategic Search Areas which is to be welcomed, but they also had the effect of creating considerable uncertainty and confusion both for developers and for communities.

Recommendations

Headline

19. To complement *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* and the associated energy programme the Welsh Government should produce a **detailed Action Plan** by the **end of 2012** with details of specific actions that are required by the Welsh Government and others to meet the targets for each form of renewable energy.

20. The Welsh Government should publish an **annual monitoring report** that sets out **progress towards the targets** for each form of renewable energy and this should include an explanation of the reasons for any future changes to these targets that it may make.
21. As part of the detailed action plan (see recommendation 19) above the Welsh Government should:
- Provide **robust information about existing and proposed renewable energy developments** in Wales;
 - review the **2025 target for wave/tidal power**;
 - clarify what is included in the 300 megawatts **target for onshore wind** developments of between 5 to 25 megawatts **outside of the Strategic Search Areas** and how this is to be monitored;
 - Consider the need for a **longer-term target for offshore wind** beyond 2015/16.

The planning and consenting process

Stakeholder views

- the process in Wales for consenting projects is very complex despite changes introduced by the *Planning Act 2008* and the *Localism Act 2011* and there are further complexities for offshore projects (see the table in Annex A);
- given the devolution arrangements for planning, there is a chance that an associated development based on Welsh planning policy could be refused when the associated Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Project based on the National Policy Statement has been approved by the National Infrastructure Directorate;
- consenting and environmental permitting are separate processes but could be streamlined/combined/run in parallel, although there is a need for flexibility as developers may sometimes need consent in principle before they can commit finance to provide adequate information for permitting purposes;
- developers blame local planning authorities and the Countryside Council for Wales/Environment Agency Wales for delaying schemes. Local planning authorities and the Countryside Council for Wales/Environment Agency Wales say developers aren't providing adequate information and/or aren't addressing cumulative impact issues. There have been disagreements throughout the inquiry about the responsibility for such delays;
- there has been a lack of non-determination appeals for energy projects to date;
- there are good practice examples of bringing developers/other parties together at an early stage;
- some suggest time limits for responses on applications by Countryside Council for Wales/Environment Agency Wales should be set, as delays in responding can cause considerable problems for developers. Scottish equivalent bodies are considered as more positive about renewable energy;
- some concerns about the role that a new Natural Resources Body would play in consenting:
 - how would disagreements such as those over the Pembroke Power Station be resolved? There are different cultures in the two organisations (Countryside Council for Wales/Environment Agency Wales);

- How will the role of Forestry Commission Wales as a land manager/provider of sites be kept at arm's length?
- Access to technical expertise outside of Wales (eg; in the rest of the Environment Agency);
- a simplified faster procedure for consenting marine prototypes would be desirable, but there are some concerns about the potential impact of such prototypes on the marine environment;
- many witnesses suggest that planning and consenting is simpler and faster in Scotland;
- speed of approval is not the only criteria to measure success;
- some Town and Community Councils say they are not consulted effectively on planning applications.

The Welsh Government's position

- *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* recognises that there is a need to improve the planning and consenting regime. The Welsh Government has commissioned research (the Hyder Report) to review current energy consenting systems and is committed to introducing changes to simplify planning and consenting processes by April 2013;
- the introduction of the Natural Resources Body offers an opportunity to ensure that advice to applicants prior to submission is constructive and to consider how the planning and consenting regimes can be better integrated;
- the Government will also produce a Planning White Paper in 2013 in advance of a Planning Bill in 2015-2016 to introduce further changes including the appropriate level of decision making for energy projects up to 50 Megawatts, which could be regional or national.

The Committee's views

- the Committee agrees with the need to improve the planning and consenting system for renewable energy projects of up to 50 megawatts in Wales. It is important that applications can be decided one way or another more quickly than they have been to date. We consider that the Hyder report is an important piece of work because the Committee has heard conflicting evidence about who is to blame for delays in projects being decided. We do not accept the simplistic analysis that the system always works much better in Scotland. However we consider that some of the delays in Wales are due to an unwillingness by local planning authorities and others to take difficult

decisions. The backlog of onshore windfarm applications needs to be cleared as soon as possible;

- the lack of non-determination appeals for energy projects shows that the current system is not working as intended, probably because developers are reluctant to take this step when they have other applications with the same authority also waiting for decisions;
- any changes to the planning and consenting regime need to be taken forward alongside the key things that the Welsh Government has committed itself to do to ensure that communities benefit from energy developments (see *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* - page 18);
- the introduction of the Natural Resources Body in April 2013 provides a major opportunity to ensure that there is a more co-ordinated and streamlined approach to renewable energy projects including the setting of target times for responses to consultations on energy applications;.
- the Committee has already made recommendations about the business case for the proposed body. It has stressed the importance of creating a new and coherent organisational culture and ensuring robust arrangements are in place to separate its permitting and advisory functions. In Plenary on 22 May 2012 the Assembly agreed an amendment to the government's motion noting the results of the consultation on the new body. This amendment calls on the Welsh Government to ensure that there are sufficient safeguards in the new body where there is a conflict of interest between Welsh Government's land ownership and consenting arrangements for energy projects on that land.

Recommendations

Headline

22. The Welsh Government should pilot the introduction of a system that **better integrates the planning and environmental permitting** systems in Wales before the full introduction of a new system in April 2013. Such a system should be flexible enough to allow for some choice of which permitting route is the most suitable for each project.
23. The Welsh Government should implement improvements to the **current planning and consenting systems** for renewable energy projects of up to 50 Megawatts emerging from the **Hyder report**, that do not require new legislation as soon as possible and by April 2013 at the latest.
24. The Welsh Government should establish a **one-stop shop for advice** to businesses and community groups to help them navigate the renewable

energy planning/consenting processes. This could be provided by the central renewable energy team (see recommendation 31).

25. The Welsh Government should produce further targeted guidance about how the **cumulative impact of onshore windfarms in the Strategic Search Areas** should be assessed (paragraph 12.8.2 of *Planning Policy Wales* states that the production of further targeted guidance will be considered).
26. The Welsh Government should ensure that the **second stage of the Hyder research** considers **energy applications that are yet to be determined** as well as those that have already determined.
27. The Welsh Government should consider introducing a requirement for a **single environment statement** to be used for both planning and environmental permitting purposes.
28. As part of setting out a case for further devolution (see recommendation 8), the Welsh Government should propose that any **associated development** would also be **considered alongside the main project by the National Infrastructure Directorate** under any new arrangements.
29. The Welsh Government should implement the **Committee's recommendations** made in its report on the **business case for a Single Environment Body**.
30. The Welsh Government should confirm whether or not the **Memorandum of Understanding** with the **Infrastructure Planning Commission** will continue to apply now that it has been replaced by the National Infrastructure Directorate.

Resources/expertise

Stakeholder views

- some consider that local authorities do not put adequate resources into dealing with renewable energy – both from a planning and an economic development point of view;
- also when dealing with technical aspects of renewable energy and emerging technologies some local authorities lack the necessary expertise;
- there is more scope for sharing/pooling resources and expertise by local planning authorities when dealing with renewable energy applications;
- some consider that there is a case for a dedicated team of ‘expert’ individuals at an all Wales level to assist with planning/consenting applications;
- Welsh Government grant funding for a single-source of expertise (eg: energy from waste) is helpful;
- local planning authorities do not have resources for dealing with pre-application consultation under the *Planning Act 2008* regime. This falls disproportionately on some authorities;
- local planning authorities also do not receive fee income for commenting on *Planning Act 2008* applications – the Welsh Government provides some funding;
- some believe that the Welsh Government doesn’t put enough resources into this work, both on planning side and on economic side;
- some question whether Countryside Council for Wales/Environment Agency Wales have sufficient resources/expertise to deal with renewable energy consenting at present and want to know how this is being built into the Natural Resource Body proposals.

The Welsh Government’s position

- the Welsh Government is confident that it has the resources and expertise in place to deliver its energy programme;
- the Welsh Government does not accept that there is a capacity issue within local authorities, although it does offer grant aid to help with providing additional technical expertise. It is also keen to encourage more collaboration and joint working in line with the Simpson agenda;

- it has produced a range of practice guidance to help authorities deal with particular renewable technologies and to help them prepare Renewable Energy Assessments for their Local Development Plans;
- the new Natural Resources Body will be successful if it is viewed as a champion of sustainable renewable energy both in its direct delivery and through its wider work.

The Committee's views

- the Committee believes that there is a resources issue for some local planning authorities, although more of this is to do with inadequate technical expertise rather than an overall lack of capacity. The Hyder report should help to identify how much of an issue this is;
- the lack of fee income for dealing with *Section 36 Legacy* and *Planning Act 2008* applications has created resource problems, particularly for a few authorities that have a disproportionate workload. The high level of planning fees can also act as a disincentive for smaller community-led renewable energy projects;
- it is important that adequate resources are made available to the new Natural Resources Body to ensure it can deal quickly and effectively with its part in the consideration of energy projects and that robust transitional arrangements are put in place in the period up to April 2013.

Recommendations

Headline

31. The Welsh Government should establish a **central team with particular expertise in renewable energy technologies**. This team should be made available to local planning authorities to assist them in dealing with planning applications and *Planning Act 2008* consultations, particularly to help those authorities dealing with applications involving novel technologies.
32. Until the central team is established, the Welsh Government should continue to provide **grant aid to local planning authorities** to assist them with **buying in technical expertise**.
33. The Welsh Government should encourage the development of regional working and the **sharing of expertise**.
34. As part of its current review of the planning system, the Welsh Government should consider introducing a **cap on planning application fees for community-led** renewable energy projects.

35. The Welsh Government should encourage further use of **planning performance agreements** with developers as an alternative way of providing additional resources for dealing with major energy projects (eg: as was agreed between Anglesey County Council and Horizon Nuclear Power).
36. The Welsh Government should establish a **dedicated energy team within the Natural Resources Body** and ensure that this team has adequate resources and a focus to deal with its dual roles as a statutory consultee and as an environmental permitter.

Planning Policy

Stakeholder views

- although *Planning Policy Wales* was updated in 2011 to take account of the 2010 Low Carbon Energy Policy Statement, only a few local authorities so far have up to date development plans that reflect national policy and targets;
- some developers perceive that there is a 'weak link' between TAN 8/*Planning Policy Wales* and local development plans;
- it is suggested that there is a need for Supplementary/Interim Planning Guidance where there is no up-to-date plan;
- the potential need for a regional tier of planning policy;
- a lack of clarity about the role of a national resources plan and how this will feed into the development plan system;
- lack of policy/guidance for up to 25 megawatts onshore windfarm schemes outside of the Strategic Search Areas. Limited scope for such schemes now remains;
- important to establish a relationship between marine and terrestrial planning.

The Welsh Government's position

- the Minister says that Local Development Plans adopted so far are consistent with national policy on renewable energy;
- the Minister has suggested that the appropriate level of decision making for energy projects up to 50 megawatts could be either regional or national. A 'city region' approach to planning has also been mooted. A review of the whole planning system is under way in advance of the publication of a White Paper in 2013 on a proposed Planning Bill for Wales;
- *Planning Policy Wales* requires local planning authorities to produce a Renewable Energy Assessment as part of the preparation of their Local Development Plans - the Welsh Government has produced guidance on how these should be prepared. Some authorities have produced these already;
- the Welsh Government has recently consulted on the introduction into *Planning Policy Wales* of a presumption in favour of Sustainable Development in circumstances where there is no development plan in place or where policies in adopted plans are out-dated or have been superseded by other material considerations such as national planning policy.

The Committee's views

- the existing development plan system is not working as it should do as far as the development of energy projects in Wales is concerned. There needs to be a consistent planning policy framework for decisions on renewable and other energy planning applications across Wales, possibly based on regional level plans, that is also understood by local communities. The current system of largely uncoordinated development plans being produced to different timescales across the 25 local planning authorities has so far failed to deliver this;
- in the short-term, completion of evidence-based Renewable Energy Assessments by local planning authorities based on the Welsh Government's practice guidance is important, even where there are Local Development Plans at an advanced stage of development;
- the Committee supports the proposed 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' that was originally proposed by the Sustainability Committee of the Third Assembly, as this will give extra weight to national planning policies where there is no current development plan.

Recommendations

Headline

37. As part of its current review of the planning system, the Welsh Government should consider how it can quickly **deliver a consistent local or regional planning policy framework for decisions** on renewable and other energy planning applications that **local communities** can understand and engage consistently with.
38. Following its recent consultation on a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', the Welsh Government should revise *Planning Policy Wales* by the end of 2012 to **give more weight to national planning policies** in circumstances where there is no up to date development plan in place.
39. In the short-term the Welsh Government should encourage individual or regional groupings of local planning authorities to give priority to the preparation of **Renewable Energy Assessments** based on the Welsh Government's practice guidance, even if their Local Development Plans are at an advanced stage of development.
40. Where there is no up-to-date development plan, the Welsh Government should encourage local planning authorities to **prepare and adopt formal**

Supplementary Planning Guidance, on the development of renewable energy in their area, building on its Renewable Energy Assessment.

41. The Welsh Government should clarify how the proposed **Natural Resource Plan** is to be integrated with any changes made to the development plan system and how this new plan relates to the **Wales Spatial Plan**.

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8

Stakeholder views

- a wide range of differing views on the need to review/refresh TAN 8;
- some say a full review is required because of changes in technology since 2005 (larger wind turbines) and a limited consideration of landscape impacts, also because of uncertainty about targets and lack of recognition of cumulative issues about the grid, transport and impact on tourism;
- others say it provides an important strategic framework and the recent update to *Planning Policy Wales* and targets plus the clarification about maximum capacities from the Minister in July 2011 is sufficient;
- some developers also want changes to increase the targets, allow for more flexibility, identify new Strategic Search Areas – they argue that the Strategic Search Areas are now almost completely committed;
- TAN 8 (2005) was introduced before the Welsh Government’s Energy Policy Statement (2010) – it is suggested that the policy should have come first;
- a letter was issued by the Welsh Government in February 2011 updating parts of TAN 8, although no formal review has taken place;
- concerns were expressed about the adequacy of the original TAN 8 consultation and the extent to which people’s concerns about wind made at that time were taken on board;
- there are differing views on the extent to which cumulative impacts were/could have been covered by TAN 8;
- some broad landscape information was considered by the consultants when they originally identified the Strategic Search Areas for TAN 8. However some landscape issues were left to be considered through later refinement studies. Countryside Council for Wales’s detailed LANDMAP data was not available in 2005;
- Strategic Search Areas are ‘search areas’ that should be refined by local planning authorities and not all proposals within them will be acceptable;
- some question whether a Technical Advice Note is the most appropriate place for spatial policy on wind – some suggest it should be part of *Planning Policy Wales*;
- questions have been raised about the requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the legal status of TAN 8. Local development plans are

subject to SEA and individual applications for onshore windfarms are usually subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment;

- some other European examples of spatial concentration policies for windfarms do exist.

The Welsh Government's position

- the Welsh Government remains committed to TAN 8 and the Strategic Search Area approach. It stresses that it is important to remember that TAN 8 is not just about onshore wind, but covers all forms of renewable energy;
- TAN 8 in 2005 was subject to a substantial amount of public consultation with over 1,700 responses from a four month process;
- the previous Welsh Government agreed to refresh TAN 8 - this was done through the revisions to *Planning Policy Wales* and a subsequent letter updating parts of TAN 8;
- the Minister's letter of July 2011 has subsequently introduced maximum capacities for the Strategic Search Areas, based on the work by the consultants Garrad Hassan;
- the First Minister told the Committee that TAN 8 has no real force for projects that are larger than 50 Megawatts and that the UK Government's National Policy Statements on energy could potentially lead to large-scale windfarms being built anywhere in Wales.

The Committee's views

- the Committee understands the concerns of communities across Wales about the impact of onshore windfarm proposals and associated infrastructure. These concerns have not been helped by the extensive delays in decisions on a significant number of projects which has increased uncertainty and left communities unsure about what is being planned and its likely impact;
- the fact that decisions on about two-thirds of applications will in any case be taken outside of Wales, where the UK Government's National Policy Statements will take precedence over TAN 8, is a further cause of uncertainty;
- we agree that there are technical aspects of TAN 8 that are now out of date and these have not all been dealt with by the Minister's February 2011 letter. For example, Annex C of the TAN does not fully reflect changes in renewable technology since 2005 or the latest information about the cost of undergrounding of connections to the grid;
- the planning system in Wales is at present undergoing a major overhaul. The Welsh Government has made a commitment to review current energy

consenting systems and to introduce changes to simplify planning and consenting processes by April 2013 and we expect it to deliver on this commitment;

- as well as this, work is being done in advance of the publication of a White Paper on a Planning Bill in 2013. The Welsh Government will also, as part of the Natural Environment Framework, be starting work next year on a new Natural Resource Plan to provide a picture of its priorities and aspirations for the use of Wales' natural resources. The Committee looks forward to playing an active role in the scrutiny of the new planning legislation and any consequential changes to arrangements for the planning of energy projects. We urge the government to keep to its timescale for the White Paper and the subsequent Planning Bill. We would be concerned if there was to be any delay in bringing forward this legislation;
- given this context, the majority view of members of the Committee is that it does not consider that a change in planning policy for renewable energy would be appropriate at this time, particularly given the forthcoming major changes to the planning system and the existing backlog of applications;
- the majority view of members of the Committee is that given the urgency of the renewable energy agenda, onshore wind is currently the only viable alternative that can be implemented in time and at the right scale;
- some developers have called for more flexibility or for additional search areas to be identified, but again the Committee considers that given the impending changes to the planning system and the backlog of existing applications, then any changes to existing targets and the current spatial approach are inappropriate;
- legitimate concerns of communities and local people have been raised about how consultation by previous governments over the introduction of new energy policy has been handled in the past. We also recognise that there has been a lack of engagement with communities by some developers, both large and small. Lessons need to be learnt from this going forward. In particular community engagement and long-term positive benefits must in future be secured at a much earlier stage;
- the Committee believes that TAN 8, the more recent changes to *Planning Policy Wales* and subsequent statements about the maximum capacities of the Strategic Search Areas **will** all be material considerations in *Section 36 Legacy* and *Planning Act 2008* applications. The recent Pen y Cymoedd windfarm decision by the Secretary of State confirms this.

Recommendations

Headline

42. Once the major overhaul of the planning system in Wales that is now underway is completed, the Welsh Government should **consider whether it needs to amend its planning policies for all forms of renewable energy**. In considering this it should take account of:
- the outcome of the current backlog of outstanding onshore wind applications;
 - progress achieved by that time on the implementation of all other forms of renewable energy, including the current round of offshore windfarm proposals;
 - the new Natural Resource Plan for Wales.
- Once it has made its decision, the Welsh Government should publish a full justification for the approach it decides to take.
43. As part of an **annual monitoring report** setting out **progress towards the targets** for each form of renewable energy (see recommendation 20), the Welsh Government should include a detailed assessment of **progress in the development of onshore wind** for each **Strategic Search Area**, compared with their **maximum capacities**.

Transport

Stakeholder views

- a draft Strategic Transport Management Plan (STMP) produced by developers has been produced for mid Wales but is not yet in the public domain. There are concerns about the amount of time this has taken to prepare;
- concentration of windfarm proposals in mid-Wales Strategic Search Areas and the timing of construction (because of lack of grid connection at present) is the main reason why cumulative impact of transport is such a big issue. This is a unique situation in the UK. However one developer suggested that only one in four or five of their proposals are expected to be built – so the scale of impact is difficult to assess;
- developers argue that for some applications transport issues could be dealt with post-consent as is done outside of Wales (where there is not a cumulative impact);
- mid-Wales transport impact is more in the East away from the sites in the West – this causes problems for local people not being consulted and not being included in any community benefits package;
- possible alternative routes for wind turbines to mid Wales to spread the load have not been explored (eg: from Chepstow, A55/A470, through Holyhead/A5);
- there are an average of 10 Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) per wind turbine, although the exact number depends on the size of the turbine – however not all of these are the same length, height and weight. Also up to 1,000 HGV movements per turbine for construction – however the impact of these is different to the AILs;
- there are concerns about the impact of AILs on inadequate/narrow roads, underground infrastructure, street furniture, emergency service access, potential need for additional lay-bys/passing places and on tourist traffic;
- there is confusion over who is responsible for what in relation to windfarm transport issues;
- there is a requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out by developers for each application and this should include a transport assessment;

- a Capita Symonds study commissioned by the Welsh Government showed the potential volume of transport movements in mid-Wales and recommended an economic impact assessment study – however this has not been done;
- transport was not a major part of original TAN 8 exercise – it was seen as a temporary construction issue, although it was not anticipated that most schemes would be built at the same time (because of grid access).

The Welsh Government's position

- although there are transport problems associated with the development of windfarms, none of these are insurmountable;
- it is for developers to lead on dealing with the transport access issues associated with their energy project proposals. However the Welsh Government's officials are working with the local authorities, the emergency services, developers and Renewable UK Cymru on the preparation of a strategic transport management plan for mid Wales;
- the Welsh Government has prepared an all Wales study of possible routes for the movement of components and has made the results of this available to developers;
- once preferred routes are agreed the Welsh Government expects local communities to be consulted on this. Local authorities also have a duty to inform communities about the impact of the transportation of windfarms.
- Welsh Government transport officials were consulted during the preparation of TAN 8;
- guidance on Environmental Impact Assessments for the transportation aspects of applications for wind farm developments, including the cumulative impact of the transport of windfarm components, was issued to local planning authorities in the form of a letter in 2009.

The Committee's views

- transport issues particularly in mid Wales have been one of the main reasons why further progress has not been made on a significant number of onshore windfarm applications in that area;
- it is unacceptable that it has taken so long for a final version of the strategic transport management plan for mid Wales to be published so that communities can be consulted on its impact and applications can be considered further;
- elsewhere in Wales transport issues have been dealt with effectively – however in other cases developers have been required to submit very detailed information in advance of their planning application being considered. We see

no reason why in those cases where there are no cumulative impacts, transport could not be dealt with post-consent through the use of planning conditions. This is common practice in Scotland and elsewhere.

Recommendations

Headline

44. As part of working closely with all the stakeholders to free up the **backlog of onshore windfarm applications** (see recommendation 2) the Welsh Government should particularly concentrate on resolving the transport issues associated with such developments.
45. The Welsh Government should take action and provide stakeholders with support to enable the **early publication of the overdue strategic transport management plan for mid Wales, to be followed by similar plans for each of the remaining Strategic Search Areas**. It should ensure that those communities likely to be affected by these plans are properly consulted.
46. The Welsh Government should commission a quick **economic impact assessment study** of the **impact of transport movements** associated with windfarm developments in mid Wales, as originally recommended to them by Capita Symonds. This study should be completed by April 2013 at the latest.
47. Following the study by Capita Symonds which indicated that rail could play a part in the movement of some turbine components particularly to mid Wales, the Welsh Government should work with Network Rail and other stakeholders to ensure that the **use of the railway network for the delivery of windfarm components** is integrated into the transport plans of developers where appropriate.
48. As part of the current review of the planning and consenting process for windfarm development, the Welsh Government should **share good practice on dealing with transport issues post-consent** through the use of appropriate planning conditions where there are no cumulative issues.

Grid access

Stakeholder views

- some stakeholders perceive a lack of strategic planning by National Grid about future grid requirements, although National Grid say they are required to plan for what can be reasonably anticipated;
- there is a lack of clarity about the Welsh Government's position on the need for major grid reinforcements in mid and north Wales;
- there are calls for clarity in relation to whether the Welsh Government is seeking responsibility for grid infrastructure, including its maintenance, in their call for further devolution of energy powers;
- some projects have been delayed even when they have a grid connection offer.
- there are concerns about the impact of pylons and electricity sub-station on the tourism industry;.
- the backlog of projects in mid Wales is unlikely to be resolved until the proposed new grid connection has been provided there. The current delivery date is understood to be 2015;
- National Grid/Network Operators' position is that they are contractually obliged to provide grid connections to developers once their projects are approved – they “follow the megawatts”;
- the north Wales grid connection project is at an early stage but the need will be linked to Wylfa and offshore wind proposals. The decision of Horizon to pull out may impact on the timing of the project, although offshore wind and tidal projects will still need connection;
- resilience of the grid in south Wales given offshore wind potential may also be an issue. However National Grid says otherwise;
- independent research commissioned by the Infrastructure Planning Commission shows undergrounding costs for cables are generally about five times the cost of overhead lines, which is less than previously thought;
- difficulty of connecting small-scale Hydro and community micro-generation projects – the process can be slow and the costs prohibitive. However grid connections for small hydro schemes can bring community benefits in connecting remote communities to the grid;
- there is an inconsistent approach to charging for connections to the grid by District Network Operators, with costs being prohibitive in some cases.

The Welsh Government's position

- the Welsh Government position on mid-Wales stated to the Committee and in the Minister's July 2011 letter on the capacities of the Strategic Search Areas is that the scale of grid infrastructure proposed by National Grid/Network Operators is not necessary as long as the maximum capacities of Strategic Search Areas are not exceeded;
- The government has subsequently provided the Committee with the following update of its position:

“The Welsh Government position is that where new grid is required, Ministers expect the grid company and regulator to ensure that it is located, designed and installed as sensitively as possible, using appropriate techniques, including the use of undergrounding. The Welsh Government would not support the construction of large visually intrusive pylons in Mid Wales and we are pressing this case with National Grid Transmission and Ofgem.

“The Welsh Government expects all decision makers in Wales, including the National Infrastructure Directorate which has replaced the Infrastructure Planning Commission, to recognise its spatially specific policy outlined in TAN 8 and to respect the fact that the Strategic Search Areas have a finite environmental capacity and output should not exceed the maximum levels as assessed in 2005.”
- The First Minister told that Committee that in north Wales the existing infrastructure will be able to support most of the proposed developments, including Wylfa, although decisions are the responsibility of the National Grid.
- The government has subsequently provided the Committee with the following update of its position:

“Unlike Mid Wales, North Wales already has major infrastructure and some spare capacity but investment is needed to replace ageing infrastructure as well as to support proposed new developments, including Wylfa.”
- however *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* states that “our energy infrastructure requires investment, reinforcement and upgrading” and that energy development should be “supported not delayed by improvements to the grid” The *Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan* states that grid developments are “essential infrastructure to support renewable energy developments”.

The Committee's views

- providing grid connections for onshore and offshore renewable and low carbon energy developments as part of a more distributed and smart grid is clearly vital if the Welsh Government's policies for renewable energy development are to be successful;
- the Committee supports the Welsh Government's calls for devolution of responsibility for electricity grid consents, alongside responsibility for other major energy projects;
- as well as grid reinforcements in mid and north Wales it is important that the implications of developments offshore are included in future planning – for example the case for an undersea connection between Anglesey and Pembrokeshire and a possible need to reinforce the grid in south Wales as a result of future wave and tidal projects. The Committee is not convinced that National Grid is planning ahead as it should be to deal with likely future demand across Wales arising from renewable energy developments;
- we await details of the mid Wales connection project.
- We urge National Grid and the electricity distribution network operators to listen to the views of local communities and agree to the undergrounding of cables in the most environmentally sensitive areas

Recommendations

Headline

49. The Welsh Government should seek an urgent assurance from Ofgem that National Grid is building **adequate levels of future proofing** into its plans for grid reinforcement in all parts of Wales, so that the grid can cope with the increasingly diverse and dispersed nature of energy generation.
50. The Welsh Government should **clarify its position** on the need for **major grid reinforcement in mid and north Wales** given apparent differences between last year's statements on the capacity of the Strategic Search Areas and more recent statements in *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* and the *Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan* and in the update of its position provided to the Committee.
51. The Welsh Government should ensure that National Grid and the District Network Operators are included in the **protocol for community benefits** (see recommendation 53), so that communities affected by new grid infrastructure also benefit from the associated infrastructure.

52. The Welsh Government should encourage Ofgem to ensure that there is a consistent and simplified approach to **the securing of and charging for connections to the grid** for small-scale renewable energy projects.

Community involvement/benefits

Stakeholder views

- there has been a lack of community involvement/buy-in to the need for renewable energy projects until recently;
- Community Energy Wales will be an important focal point and safety net for community engagement in the renewable energy sector;
- a call for the development of a toolkit/one-stop shop for communities to help them with renewable energy developments;
- the need to enhance skills within local community groups through relevant training to assist in the development of community led projects;
- controversy over large-scale windfarm developments has discouraged communities from developing small-scale schemes;
- the *Planning Act 2008* process requires up-front community engagement – this should be replicated for applications dealt with by local planning authorities;
- there is a lack of consistency in community benefits currently being offered by developers;
- communities that are likely to be affected by grid or transport infrastructure improvements that are remote from the renewable energy projects themselves consider that they should also receive a share of community benefits;
- the need for a protocol – so that payments/other forms of benefit are transparent – RenewableUK Cymru are working with the Welsh Government on this;
- a specific body should be established which can receive part of the community benefit from commercial sources to allocate funding for more sustainable local energy projects;
- National Grid should be contributing to community benefits;
- elected members should administer community benefit trusts;
- some believe that planning/consenting should be kept separate from provision of community benefits – there should be no suggestion of ‘buying’ consents;
- potential opportunities for smaller-scale ‘blending’ of community windfarm schemes on the edge of Strategic Search Areas.

The Welsh Government's position

- *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* aims to “maximise benefit for Wales in terms of jobs and wider economic benefit at every stage of development whilst also ensuring our communities derive long term benefits.”
- it states that “we must ensure that our communities are fully engaged and that they receive long-term positive benefits.”
- the Welsh Government says that this Assembly term it will work with business to agree an approach to energy development in Wales that sets out expectations for economic and community benefits and working with communities and partners to ensure that the wealth generated by energy development in Wales benefits communities and lays foundations for Wales’ long term economic prosperity. The Welsh Government expects these benefits to include re-investment into energy infrastructure, generation and efficiency.

The Committee's views

- a central theme throughout the inquiry has been how to strike the balance between a planning and consenting system that operates quickly and effectively to address the urgent need to see renewable energy developments, whilst at the same time ensuring that communities properly understand the impact of these developments and can feel ownership and receive benefit from them;
- the community benefits negotiation process is currently kept at ‘arms length’ from the process of gaining planning consent. However this can itself be a source of tension in decision-making and is arguably a less transparent process as a result. A more direct link with planning/consenting would be likely to require changes to current legislation but would be worth further consideration, although concerns about consents being ‘bought’ would need to be carefully considered;
- we see an urgent need for a protocol for community benefits that will make such arrangements more transparent and will allow communities directly and indirectly affected by large renewable energy projects and associated infrastructure to receive direct benefits. Part of these benefits should include direct financial payments or opportunities for local ownership. Whilst some of these benefits should be re-invested in energy measures, we consider that communities should also be able to receive benefits in kind. In our view community ownership is the best form of benefit for a community-based renewable energy project;

- community benefits also include jobs created and indirect financial benefits accrued to the local economy through construction work and on-going maintenance.

Recommendations

Headline

53. The Welsh Government should work with developers and Renewable UK Cymru to complete work on a **protocol for community benefits by mid-2012**.
54. As well as communities directly affected by renewable energy developments, the protocol should require developers to **contribute to communities that are indirectly affected** by their development proposals as a result of associated infrastructure (roads and grid).
55. The Welsh Government should support and promote the work of **Community Energy Wales** as a source of information and advice to local communities. It should **provide some funding to Community Energy Wales** to enable it to act as a skilled intermediary to advise local communities on the management and use of **community benefit contributions** for large-scale energy and associated infrastructure projects.
56. The Welsh Government should commission a study to investigate the feasibility of amending current **national policy and local planning guidance to incorporate** a more robust and systematic consideration of **community benefits packages and mandatory levels of payment** by renewable energy developers formally linked to the planning/consenting process.
57. The Welsh Government should establish a formal mechanism so that **information is made publicly available** about the **level and nature of benefits** associated with energy development that have been made available to communities.
58. The Welsh Government should introduce a formal **pre-application consultation stage for renewable energy projects of between 5 megawatts and 50 megawatts**, modelled on the *Planning Act 2008* procedure for Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Projects.

Technology specific issues (not covered elsewhere in the report)

(a) Micro-generation/community renewables

Stakeholder views

- the Welsh Government should provide clearer signals on micro-renewables;
- a call to extend permitted development rights to solar PV developments on public, industrial, commercial and community buildings.

The Welsh Government's position

- the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development told the Committee that "we see community projects as an important part of the overall picture." He said that in meetings with the UK Government to discuss changes to the feed-in tariff scheme and the proposed ending of the higher rate "I made it clear that we see community energy development and systems that foster, encourage and generate community energy schemes as a significant part of the overall energy picture."
- specific targets in the Micro-generation Action Plan (2007) no longer apply as they have been superseded by schemes such as ARBED;
- the Welsh Government has consulted on extending permitted development rights to non-domestic premises but has not yet introduced the legislation. This is being co-ordinated with introduction of these changes in England.

The Committee's views

- we agree with the Welsh Government's view that micro-generation and community renewables are an important part of the future energy mix and should be encouraged further. However we consider that more could be done to encourage take-up;
- the majority view of members of the Committee is that the Welsh Government should be urging the UK Government not to make any **further changes in the levels of Feed In Tariffs for Solar PV** installations for at least another four years to provide greater stability and certainty to the industry.

Recommendations

59. The Welsh Government should bring forward changes to **extend permitted development rights to non-domestic premises** by the end of 2012 at the latest.

60. As part of supporting/promoting Community Energy Wales (see recommendation 55), the Welsh Government should encourage the development of a **toolkit and specific training** for communities wishing to pursue the development of small-scale renewable energy projects.
61. The Welsh Government should **publish revised targets for Micro-generation**, given that the targets in the 2007 Micro-generation Action Plan have been superseded.
62. The Welsh Government should work with the UK Government and OFGEM to resolve outstanding problems with the **interpretation of European State Aid rules** where community projects are applying for Feed In Tariffs and are also receiving funding from the structural funds.

(b) Marine and Tidal

Stakeholder views

- there are calls for the establishment of an all Wales Marine Renewable Group to co-ordinate activity across Wales. Marine Energy Pembrokeshire is a public-private partnership that already acts in this capacity for south west Wales;
- the suggestion of a dedicated Marine Energy Park to encourage development of wave / tidal technologies (possibly based in Pembrokeshire);
- the need for a single point of contact and marketing of marine renewables to potential developers in the marine renewable sector in Wales;
- importance of good information/data about tides, waves and currents to reduce uncertainty for developers. Provision of this information needs to be publicly funded;
- the importance of the Marine Renewable Energy Strategic Framework and the on-going Marine Infrastructure Study as a foundation for identifying potential sites;
- Marine Conservation Zones and other designated sites need not prevent installation of marine renewable devices. However some are concerned about the potential impact of renewable energy developments on marine ecosystems.

The Welsh Government's position

- *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* states that the Welsh Government “is strongly committed to unlocking the energy potential in our seas.” It believes that “Wales has the potential to be a world leader in the marine energy market – as a significant generator and, just as importantly, as an exporter of marine energy knowledge, technologies and services.”

The Committee's views

- the Committee agrees with the Welsh Government's view on the huge potential of the marine and tidal energy sectors. However it is clear that in the run-up to 2020, apart from offshore wind, these technologies won't be advanced enough to make a significant contribution to the energy mix. What is important is to ensure that the support and infrastructure is in place so that Wales can benefit from the marine and tidal energy sectors in the longer-term.

Recommendations

63. The Welsh Government should establish a **sub-group of the proposed Renewable Energy Delivery Board** (see Recommendation 1) with responsibility for **Marine and Tidal energy development across Wales** and this should be modelled on Marine Energy Pembrokeshire.
64. The Welsh Government should ensure that **robust information on tides, waves and currents** around the Welsh coast is collected and made **publicly available** to reduce uncertainty for potential developers.
65. The Welsh Government should work closely with private and public sector stakeholders to explore the potential of the **Severn estuary as a source of renewable tidal energy**.
66. The Welsh Government should prepare and agree a **formal Memorandum of Understanding** with the **Marine Management Organisation** on the handling of renewable energy projects, by the end of 2012 at the latest.

(c) Energy from waste/Biomass

Stakeholder views

- energy from waste (EfW) refers to several techniques, including anaerobic digestion and incineration with energy recovery;
- positive support has been provided by the Welsh Government and Local Authorities in terms of both financial and procurement programmes for energy from municipal waste;
- greater financial support and incentives and assistance with planning are required for small scale operators of on-farm anaerobic digestion;
- some consider that Welsh Government policy is overly focused on municipal waste instead of the entire waste stream;
- for anaerobic digestion plants, connecting to the grid has been identified as a slow and expensive process. Also a call for the standardisation of costs for connecting to the grid;

- a call for the Welsh Government to focus on ensuring a biomass supply in the future through planting more woodland, as from 2020 that biomass supply will decrease and Wales will not be able to meet demand without further forestry developments or enhanced importation;
- a call for promotion of local fuel / biomass supply, and not the encouragement of large scale developments which have to import fuel stock.

The Welsh Government's position

- for waste which cannot be prevented, minimised, reused or recycled - and for this waste only - it is better to use it to create energy than to bury it in landfill;
- *Towards Zero Waste* and the *Bioenergy Action Plan* set out the Welsh Government's policy on EfW treatment facilities. *Towards Zero Waste* states that by 2050, Wales aims to re-use or recycle all waste, without the need for any landfill or energy recovery, or as a minimum, reduce waste to 65 per cent of current levels;
- *Towards Zero Waste* also states that Wales should reuse, recycle or compost 70 per cent of waste by 2024/25 and the remaining 30 per cent of waste should be treated through high-efficiency EfW treatment facilities;
- in Wales anaerobic digestion has been identified by the Welsh Government as the favoured option for the treatment of municipal food waste, with funding being made available to local authorities wishing to develop anaerobic digestion plants to treat source segregated food wastes. The Welsh Government has ring-fenced £26 million of new funding for the anaerobic digestion of separately collected food waste from households. This new money will go to local authorities across Wales to develop anaerobic digestion plants as an alternative to landfill;
- the Welsh Government considers that EfW with Combined Heat & Power technology has the greatest potential to make a positive impact on climate change compared with other residual waste treatment technologies. As such they provide support to local authorities in Wales who intend to start treating residual waste. Currently, local authorities in Wales are working together in groups to procure residual waste treatment;
- the Welsh Government's *Energy Policy Statement* (2010) indicates that Wales' sustainable renewable energy potential for biomass (electricity) by 2020 is a total capacity of 1 gigawatt. It also states:

“Our aim is to deliver by 2020 up to 6KWh/d/p in Wales of electricity from biomass – 50% indigenous/50% imported – and a heat potential of 2-2.5 KWh/d/p in Wales¹”

- this includes energy generated from biomass crops in addition to waste;

The Committee’s views

- some energy from waste technologies and in particular anaerobic digestion have considerable potential to contribute to the energy mix and we support anaerobic digestion as the best option for the treatment of municipal food waste;
- although energy from municipal residual waste is preferable to landfill in the short-term, ultimately if recycling targets are met and waste minimisation is achieved then the supply of residual waste should diminish significantly;
- the Committee considers that the Welsh Government’s current policies for energy from waste place too much emphasis on municipal waste and not enough on the other waste streams. Only about 15 per cent of all waste arisings in Wales come from municipal sources;
- we also consider that the Welsh Government needs to place a greater emphasis on reuse/recycling and should be closely monitoring the overall capacity of any EfW plants that may be commissioned by local authorities across Wales. We are concerned about the potential levels of waste tonnage that will be needed to keep these plants operating once they have been commissioned;
- more use should be made of the heat generated as a by-product during energy recovery from waste for district and commercial heating schemes;
- we support biomass energy plants, but these should be small-scale and local to avoid the need to import fuel. We do not support the Welsh Government’s target of providing 1 Gigawatt of electricity from biomass if this means that 50 per cent of the fuel will have to be imported;
- financial support for ‘enhanced co-firing’ through the Renewable Obligation Certificate scheme will encourage the use of biomass as a co-feedstock with fossil fuels in large power stations in the short-term, but this should not be seen as a long-term solution.

Recommendations

67. The Welsh Government should closely monitor the **total capacity** and **levels of waste tonnage** associated with **energy from waste plants** that are

¹ KWh/d/p = kilowatt hours per day per person.

commissioned by local authorities and should review its policies for the treatment of residual waste when the position is clearer.

68. The Welsh Government should work with planning authorities to encourage the development of facilities which offer the **best options for the utilisation of heat recovery from waste**, through the **revisions to Technical Advice Note 21** (Planning and Waste) and local planning authority **supplementary guidance**.
69. The Welsh Government should consider ways of introducing a requirement for Local Planning Authorities to give greater weight to the re-use of heat for district heating schemes as a material consideration in their determination of planning applications for energy from waste plants.
70. The Welsh Government should publish a **draft Industrial and Commercial Sector waste management plan** by the end of 2012 at the latest. This should include detailed action plans for this sector for source segregation of food waste and diversion of **food waste from landfill to anaerobic digestion plants** as well as ways of seeking an overall reduction and alternative disposal arrangements for all types of waste from this sector.
71. A consultation draft of the **Food Manufacture, Service and Retail Sector Plan** for waste management was published in March 2011. The Welsh Government should **publish a final version of this plan as soon as possible** and take forward the actions it identifies to encourage further use of anaerobic digestion for the treatment of biodegradable waste produced by the sector.
72. The Welsh Government should provide additional support to assist the development of **small-scale on-farm anaerobic digestion**.

(d) Hydro-electric power

Stakeholder views

- there is variation in practice between local planning authorities with at least one requiring hydro developers to obtain consent from the Environment Agency first, before they will consider a planning application. Developers say this means an increase in timescale and therefore costs and that the consenting and permitting should run in parallel;
- the Environment Agency Wales has recently revised its guidance on small hydro schemes for developers and communities to help them through the permitting process;

- a call for the Environment Agency to use the same procedure within Wales as in England and Scotland for ‘flow splitting’ (the removal of some water from smaller upland rivers and then returning it downstream). Developers argue that older, similar scale projects have been in existence for approximately 15 years with no obvious detrimental impacts so it is unclear why it is now necessary for ‘flow splitting’ to be implemented at such a precautionary level within Wales.

The Welsh Government’s position

- the Minister told the Committee that it is important to receive consistency between local planning authorities and that funding and technical expertise is available to help them in dealing with renewable energy applications.
- on ‘flow splitting’ the Minister said that the Environment Agency was aware of the concerns of the industry and he hoped it would put in place a system that “better facilitates hydro development in Wales.”

The Committee’s views

- it is unacceptable that any local planning authorities in Wales are insisting on incorrect procedures being followed when they are dealing with planning applications for small-scale hydro developments;
- we are also very concerned by what we heard about ‘flow splitting’ and could not understand why there was variation in practice on this issue within the Environment Agency for Wales, compared to England. It was put to us that as a result a hydro scheme in Wales was only half as profitable as one in England or Scotland. The Environment Agency Wales has subsequently written to us to explain its position. It says that there are “sound and proven principles” behind its use of flow splitting but also it accepts that the inconsistency of approach across England and Wales is causing a level of concern amongst the hydropower industry and that it is working hard to resolve the situation. We are deeply sceptical about this response and we have sympathy with the views of the industry set out in further correspondence to the Committee that there is no justification for the different approach to ‘flow splitting’ being taken in Wales.

Recommendations

73. The Welsh Government should make sure that **no local planning authority is insisting on consent from the Environment Agency for a hydro scheme before it will consider a planning application.** This requirement should be built into its review of the planning/permitting process for renewable energy projects (see recommendation 23).

74. The Welsh Government should urge the Environment Agency to produce a revised version of its **Good Practice Guidance** for “High Head” hydro power schemes to include a **consistent approach to ‘flow splitting’** across England and Wales as soon as possible and by the end of 2012 at the latest.

(e) Coal/conventional gas/carbon capture and storage

Stakeholder views

- coal is still very much part of the current energy mix in Wales. There are substantial reserves in Wales already with permission for extraction over the next ten years. Local coal extraction also supports the economy of Wales. Local producers of coal are closely linked to local power stations and the steelworks at Port Talbot;
- carbon emissions from coal power stations are more than twice the emissions from gas power stations. It needs to be demonstrated quickly that carbon capture and storage technologies at full scale can be an option, both technically and economically, if coal is to continue to be used as an energy source. Carbon capture and storage will also be very important for the future use of conventional gas;
- retrofitting of carbon capture and storage for gas power stations is more likely to be feasible than it is for coal power stations;
- options for the storage of carbon are being explored but are unlikely to be available in the short-term;
- *Minerals Planning Policy Wales* and MTAN 2 are considered to be placing hurdles in front of the coal industry, particularly when a 500 metre buffer zone is applied to a surface coal mine but not to other forms of minerals extraction. There should also be a clearer relationship in the planning system between energy generation and the production of fuel for energy generation;
- the protection of intellectual property rights is one of the reasons why the power companies withdrew from the government funded carbon capture and storage demonstration competition. They would rather ‘go it alone’ and retain the intellectual property rights.

The Welsh Government’s position

- in the short-term gas, nuclear and bio-energy will provide the energy to compensate for the intermittency in supply from renewable sources. Gas is a key transitional fuel because greenhouse gas emissions from gas are significantly less than coal;

- much of the deep coal remaining in Wales is now uneconomic to access – it is no longer possible to access the deep mines that were closed in the 1970s and 1980s, because most of the coal seams are under people’s houses;
- any new fossil fuel plants should be carbon capture ready with fully developed plans for both capture and storage and should also maximise efficiency through use of waste heat and co-firing;
- in order to combat climate change, carbon capture and storage is essential. However it is not going to be here on a large scale until 2020 at the earliest. The Welsh Government is supportive of a research pilot scheme at Aberthaw. It is trying to take forward further development, particularly in north Wales in the first instance;
- there is potential for carbon storage in a large saline aquifer in the Irish Sea and in deep coal seams and as part of enhanced oil and gas recovery.

The Committee’s views

- the Committee accepts that there will be a continuing dependence on conventional supplies of gas and coal for at least the next decade. It is therefore of vital importance that the economic and technical feasibility of full scale carbon capture and storage technology is established as soon as possible, particularly for gas power stations;
- the coal industry will continue to be important in south Wales in the short-term, both as a supplier of fuel for remaining coal fired power stations and for the Tata steelworks. However over the next ten years the use of coal for power stations is likely to be largely phased out because of their unacceptable high carbon emissions. The local employment and skill implications of this change need to be managed very carefully.

Recommendations

75. The Welsh Government should continue to provide **support for Research and Development** within Wales to explore the technical and economic **feasibility of carbon capture and storage** for existing and future gas fired power stations.
76. The Welsh Government should work with the UK Government to ensure that private companies understand that from the outset, where public money is being provided to help fund energy Research and Development work, then the value of the **intellectual property rights** associated with that investment will be shared with the public sector funding body.

(f) Unconventional Gas

Stakeholder views

- there are large quantities of unconventional gas (coal-based methane and shale gas) potentially available as a source of energy in parts of Wales, both onshore and offshore. This could be exploited by drilling, the injection of water and other fluids or by underground gasification in situ;
- according to the Tyndall Centre, the use of shale gas cannot be reconciled with the UK and Welsh Government's commitments to reducing emissions and achieving a maximum two degrees centigrade increase in global temperatures, even if carbon capture and storage technology was to become available;
- evidence from the only UK site in Lancashire where hydraulic fracturing (fracking) has so far been deployed has shown that it is highly probable that this did trigger a number of minor seismic events. However a recent report to the UK Government has recommended cautious continuation of the hydraulic fracture operations;
- there are risks of contamination of surface and ground water associated with the drilling and extraction of unconventional gas. The Environment Agency is however used to dealing with other activities where similar risks are present;
- some are also concerned about the use of chemicals as part of the 'fracking' process that could be harmful to the environment. The amount of water potentially required is also a concern expressed by some;
- there is a call for a clear policy statement from the Welsh Government on its views on the potential exploitation of unconventional gas as part of the overall future energy mix in Wales;
- there is also a call for some technical guidance from the Welsh Government to help local planning authorities when they are considering planning applications for the exploration and extraction of unconventional gas.

The Welsh Government's position

- the Welsh Government believes there is a need to look at both the potential of unconventional gas as a source of energy, but also concerns about the potential impacts of this form of gas extraction. It would welcome the UK Government working with devolved administrations across the UK to put in place a robust and evidence-based policy framework for Shale Gas in the UK;
- responsibility for much of the licensing for unconventional gas exploration and extraction is not devolved, but where planning permission is required, the approach should be a precautionary one.

The Committee's views

- despite the Welsh and UK Governments' view that the potential of unconventional gas needs to be explored whilst taking account of the potential risks, the Committee considers that the development of another carbon intensive energy industry at this time is not appropriate and cannot be reconciled with EU and UK commitments to reduce emissions;
- there is a need for some detailed technical support and guidance for local planning authorities. This should include the outcomes of the work already done by the UK Government following the seismic activity in Lancashire last year.

Recommendation

77. The Welsh Government should work with the UK Government and the other devolved administrations to produce technical guidance in the form of a **new Technical Advice Note** to help local planning authorities in Wales in dealing with planning applications for the **exploration and extraction of unconventional gas**, including applications where the use of **hydraulic fracturing** is proposed.

Original Terms of Reference

The Committee will consider how the current devolution arrangements for energy policy and planning affect the delivery of the Welsh Government's desired future 'energy mix' in Wales, as set out in *A Low Carbon Revolution – Energy Policy Statement (2010)* and the *UK Renewable Energy Roadmap (2011)*.

- what are the implications for Wales if responsibility for consenting major onshore and offshore energy infrastructure projects remains a matter that is reserved by the UK Government?
- how does this affect achievement of the Welsh Government's aspirations for various forms of renewable and low carbon energy as set out in the Energy Policy Statement?
- how does this affect delivery of the Welsh Government's target for a 3 per cent reduction in Green House Gas emissions per annum from 2011?
- what will be the impact if consenting decisions on major infrastructure projects and associated development are not all taken in accordance with Welsh planning policy?

Alongside these questions, the Committee will also consider the two petitions about Welsh Government planning guidance as it relates to onshore wind energy and the impact on local communities and infrastructure.

Key issues

Issues that the Committee will consider as part of these terms of reference will include:

- the role of the different consenting agencies, how they inter-relate and how the current system could be improved, both with and without further devolution (*Infrastructure Planning Commission, Planning Inspectorate, Local Planning Authorities, National Parks, Welsh Government, Marine Management Organisation, Environment Agency*);
- the relationship between the UK Government's Energy National Policy Statements and Welsh national and local planning policies (including *Planning Policy Wales*, Technical Advice Note 8 and Local Development Plans) and whether or not these policies can achieve the Welsh Government's aspirations, including whether or not a formal review of TAN 8 is now required;
- the potential contribution and likelihood that different types of renewable and low carbon energy (*offshore wind, tidal, onshore wind, hydro-power, nuclear, bio-energy/waste, micro-generation, community energy projects*) will be capable of delivering the Welsh Government's aspirations for energy generation as set out in *A Low Carbon Revolution – Energy Policy Statement* and the *UK Renewable Energy Roadmap*;
- the potential contribution of these different types of renewable energy to meeting the Welsh Government's annual target for Green House Gas emission reduction;
- the potential role of other forms of energy production in Wales such as coal-bed methane and shale gas;
- the transport issues relating to wind turbines and other forms of renewable energy including their impact on roads, traffic and tourism.

Annex A: Energy projects in Wales: responsibility for consenting

Project type	Size	Consent	Current	Future
Onshore¹				
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (Energy generation)	>50MW	Development Consent Order (<i>Electricity Act 1989</i> as amended by <i>Planning Act 2008</i>)	Infrastructure Planning Commission	DECC Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate - Major Infrastructure Planning Unit)
Nuclear power installation		Nuclear Site Licence (<i>Nuclear Installations Act 1965</i>)	Office for Nuclear Regulation	Office for Nuclear Regulation
		Development Consent Order (<i>Electricity Act 1989</i> as amended by <i>Planning Act 2008</i>)	Infrastructure Planning Commission	DECC Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate - Major Infrastructure Planning Unit)
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects such as electricity grid/gas pipelines	Overground lines > 132 Kv, cross-country gas pipelines (> 10 miles)	Development Consent Order (<i>Electricity Act 1989</i> as amended by <i>Planning Act 2008</i>)	Infrastructure Planning Commission	DECC Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate - Major Infrastructure Planning Unit)

Oil and gas exploration and extraction (including 'fracking')		Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences (PEDLs)	Department of Energy and Climate Change	Department of Energy and Climate Change
		Planning Permission (<i>Town & Country Planning Act 1990</i>)	Local planning authorities (Planning Inspectorate/Welsh Ministers)	Local planning authorities (Planning Inspectorate/Welsh Ministers)
Smaller Energy generation projects	<50MW	Planning Permission (<i>Town & Country Planning Act 1990</i>) ²	Local planning authorities (Planning Inspectorate/Welsh Ministers)	Local planning authorities (Planning Inspectorate/Welsh Ministers)
Smaller scale energy infrastructure and 'associated development' such as sub-stations, lower voltage distribution network ³		Planning Permission (<i>Town & Country Planning Act 1990</i>)	Local planning authorities (Planning Inspectorate/Welsh Ministers)	Local planning authorities (Planning Inspectorate/Welsh Ministers)
Offshore (Welsh territorial waters - up to 12 nautical miles)				
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (Energy generation)	>100MW	Development Consent Order (<i>Electricity Act 1989</i> as amended by <i>Planning Act 2008</i>)	Infrastructure Planning Commission ⁴	DECC Secretary of State - Planning Inspectorate - Major Infrastructure Planning Unit ⁴

		Marine Licence (<i>Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009</i>)	Welsh Ministers	Welsh Ministers
Other Energy generation projects	1-100MW	<i>Electricity Act 1989</i> Consent	Marine Management Organisation ⁴	Marine Management Organisation ⁴
		Marine Licence (<i>Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009</i>)	Welsh Ministers	Welsh Ministers
Sub-sea cables		Marine Licence (<i>Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009</i>)	Welsh Ministers	Welsh Ministers
Oil and gas pipelines		<i>Petroleum Act 2008</i>	DECC Secretary of State	DECC Secretary of State
Offshore (UK waters - beyond 12 nautical miles)				
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (Energy generation) + associated development such as cabling	>100MW	Development Consent Order (<i>Electricity Act 1989</i> as amended by <i>Planning Act 2008</i>)	Infrastructure Planning Commission	DECC Secretary of State - Planning Inspectorate - Major Infrastructure Planning Unit
		Marine Licence (<i>Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009</i>)	Infrastructure Planning Commission	DECC Secretary of State - Planning Inspectorate - Major Infrastructure Planning Unit

Sub-sea cables (not 'associated' with a NSIP)		Marine Licence (<i>Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009</i>)	Marine Management Organisation	Marine Management Organisation
Oil and gas pipelines		<i>Petroleum Act 2008</i>	DECC Secretary of State	DECC Secretary of State
Other Energy generation projects	<100MW	<i>Electricity Act 1989</i> Consent	Marine Management Organisation	Marine Management Organisation
		Marine Licence (<i>Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009</i>)	Marine Management Organisation	Marine Management Organisation

¹ In some cases Environmental Permits may also be required from the Environment Agency

² Some micro-generation projects are 'permitted development' and so do not require planning permission

³ Also applies to onshore 'associated development' for offshore energy projects

⁴ It is also possible for Welsh Ministers to consent large energy projects in territorial waters under the *Transport and Works Act 1992* if applicants apply to them rather than to the IPC or its successor and where the proposals could interfere with navigational rights

Annex B – Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at: <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=1308>

21 September 2011

Carwyn Jones AM	First Minister
John Griffiths AM	Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, Welsh Government
Rhodri Asby	Welsh Government
Clive Bates	Welsh Government
Matthew Quinn	Welsh Government

29 September 2011

Dr Richard Cowell	Cardiff University
Dr Calvin Jones	Cardiff University
<i>Dr Roisin Willmott</i>	Royal Town Planning Institute Cymru

13 October 2011

Sir Michael Pitt	Infrastructure Planning Commission
Ian Gambles	Infrastructure Planning Commission

19 October 2011

Llywelyn Rhys	RenewableUK Cymru
Piers Guy	Nuon Renewables
Caroline McGurgan	Eco2

3 November 2011

Wayne Cranstone	npower renewables
Steve Knight-Gregson	National Grid
Janice McLaughlin	Scottish Power Renewables
Sam Peacock	SSE
Colin Taylor	Scottish Power Energy Networks
Simon Wells	RWE npower

23 November 2011

Peter Burley	Planning Inspectorate
Morgan Parry	Countryside Council for Wales
Roger Thomas	Countryside Council for Wales

Dr Sarah Wood
Ceri Davies
Anthony Wilkes

Countryside Council for Wales
Environment Agency Wales
Environment Agency Wales

1 December 2012

Llywelyn Rhys
Gerry Jewson
Steve Salt
Martin Murphy
Craig Mitchell
Cllr Graham Brown
Steve Packer
Alan Southerby
Cllr David Lewis
Geoff White

RenewableUK Cymru
West Coast Energy
West Coast Energy
Tidal Energy
Welsh Local Government Association
Powys County Council
Powys County Council
Powys County Council
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

12 January 2012

John Day

Lead petitioner, P-04-024 Say No to TAN 8
– Windfarms and High Voltage Power Lines
Spoiling our Community

Huw Morgan
John Morgan
Peter Ogden

Montgomeryshire Against Pylons
Cambrian Mountains Society
Campaign for the Protection of Rural
Wales

Neville Thomas QC
Jonathan Cawley
Morag Ellis QC
Simon Power
Mike Webb

Shropshire and mid Wales Alliance
West Coast Energy

Arup
RSPB Cymru

26 January 2012

Cllr Estelle Blevais
Robert Robinson
Nick Oliver
Kevin McCullough

Welshpool Town Council
Welshpool Town Council
AECOM
Business, Enterprise, Technology &
Science (BETS) Sector Panel

9 February 2012

Michael Butterfield
Peter Davies
Andy Rowland

Llangattock Green Valleys
Commissioner for Sustainable Futures
ecodyfi

Rod Edwards
Michael Phillips
Andrew Padmore

Dulas Ltd
Dulas Ltd
Egnida

22 February 2012

Dr Miles Willis
Tonia Forsyth
Dr Dickon Howell
Toby Gethin
Dr David Tudor

Low Carbon Research Institute Marine
Marine Energy Pembrokeshire
Marine Management Organisation
The Crown Estate
The Crown Estate

1 March 2012

Dr Sandra Esteves

Clifford Parish

Kath McNulty

Darren Williams
Dr Aonghus McNabola
Ewan Campbell-Lendrum
Richard Rees

Wales Centre of Excellence for Anaerobic
Digestion, University of Glamorgan
Chartered Institution of Wastes
Management Wales
Confederation of Forest Industries
(Confor)
Eco2
Hydro-BPT project, Trinity College Dublin
Infinis
North Wales Hydro Power

15 March 2012

Carwyn Jones AM
John Griffiths AM

Edwina Hart AM

Carl Sargeant AM

First Minister
Minister for Environment and Sustainable
Development, Welsh Government
Minister for Business, Enterprise,
Technology and Science, Welsh
Government
Minister for Local Government and
Communities, Welsh Government

21 March 2012

Mark Picton
Dr Michael Gandy
Prof. Jim Watson

RWE npower
Celtic Energy Ltd
Sussex Energy Group, University of Sussex

29 March 2012

Clr Stephen Churchman
Prof Kevin Anderson,

NFLA Welsh Forum
The Tyndall Centre

Dr John Broderick
John Harrison
Dave Jones

The Tyndall Centre
Environment Agency Wales
Environment Agency Wales

Annex C – Written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All written evidence can be viewed in full at <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=1336&Opt=0>

<i>Organisation / Name</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Anwen Roberts	EPP 01
Roland Baskerville	EPP 02
Judith Stretton	EPP 03
Llansanffraid Action Group	EPP 04
KD & BM Holland	EPP 05
Salop leisure	EPP 06
British Holiday & Home Parks Association Ltd	EPP 07
Calor Gas	EPP 08
Geoffrey Weller	EPP 09
Snowdonia National Park	EPP 10
Cilgwyn Community	EPP 11
Mrs J Hanratty	EPP 12
Frances Cartwright	EPP 13
Jenny Butler	EPP 14
Paul Butler	EPP 15
Chloe Read	EPP 16
Energy Saving Trust	EPP 17
Oili Hedman	EPP 18
Robert Trueman	EPP 19
Infrastructure Planning Commission	EPP 20
J Vaughan Gronow	EPP 21
Philip Jones	EPP 22
David Lewis	EPP 23
Derek Wick	EPP 24

John & Christine Rowland	EPP 25
Louise Guidery	EPP 26
Maggie Eaton	EPP 27
Mark & Helen Rivers	EPP 28
Paul Sear	EPP 29
Peter Foulkes	EPP 30
Rhondda Cynon Tâf County Borough Council	EPP 31
Tim Ware	EPP 32
Nigel & Stella Bullock	EPP 33
Ken Whitmore	EPP 34
Elaine Williams	EPP 35
ER Hughes Consultancy Services	EPP 36
Alun Bunford	EPP 37
Mrs Beryl Crone	EPP 38
Kathleen Harries	EPP 39
Cambrian Mountains Society	EPP 40
Mark Michaels	EPP 41
Steve Galloway.	EPP 42
Steve Southam	EPP 43
Phil Bettley	EPP 44
Mrs H Ravenhill	EPP 46
Dr Helen K Little	EPP 47
Sandra Vaughan-King	EPP 48
Jack Watkins	EPP 49
Julie Jones	EPP 50
Howard Jones	EPP 51
Sandra & Paul Evans	EPP 52
Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust	EPP 53
James and Susan Grafton	EPP 54
Mr A G Letts	EPP 55

Mrs Jitka Novak	EPP 56
Sarah Faulkner	EPP 57
Ray Mitchell	EPP 58
Tony Burton	EPP 59
Miss Tamasine Stretton	EPP 60
Roger Goff	EPP 61
Gillian Foulkes	EPP 62
Debbie Gilbert	EPP 63
Irene Earis	EPP 64
Ms A Ra & Miss A Brain	EPP 65
Carole O'Reilly	EPP 66
Pat Atkinson	EPP 67
The Planning Inspectorate	EPP 68
Richard Noyce	EPP 69
Steve & Karen Howland	EPP 70
Diane & Richard Goodchild	EPP 71
T Foley	EPP 72
Mrs J Hussey	EPP 73
John & Sue Beynon	EPP 74
William Beament	EPP 75
Nuclear Free Local Authorities Secretariat	EPP 76
D J Dunkley	EPP 77
D Evans	EPP 78
Paul, Laura & Richard Barnes and Louise Lloyd	EPP 79
Deb Justice	EPP 80
Ian Turford	
Michael Justice	
Ms G Taylor	EPP 81
Gordon Dibbs	EPP 82
Pat & Robin Murchie	EPP 83
Charles Turpin	EPP 84

Buddug Mai Bates	EPP 85
The Revd. J. Ll. W. Williams	EPP 86
Mrs S Smith	EPP 87
Victoria Morgan	EPP 88
Pontrobert Women's Institute	EPP 89
Diane Whittingham	EPP 90
Rory D Trappe (Trade Union representatives at Trawsfynydd Nuclear decommissioning site)	EPP 91
David Millett	EPP 92
David Hughes	EPP 93
Mrs E L Pemberton	EPP 94
John Clarke	EPP 95
George Whitworth	EPP 96
John & Maria Jones	EPP 97
Marie Shirley Smith	EPP 98
Jill Kibble	EPP 99
Cllr. E A Jones	EPP 100
Gwynedd Council	EPP 101
David Morgan	EPP 102
Montgomeryshire Against Pylons	EPP 103
Energy Solutions	EPP 104
Gordon Dibbs	EPP 105
William and Carolyn Gough	EPP 106
Barry Smith	EPP 107
West Coast Energy Ltd	EPP 108
Mr R Watson	EPP 109
Jane Stewart	EPP 110
Linda & Jenny Shepherd	EPP 111
Steven and Joyce Jary	EPP 112
D J Bispham	EPP 113

Jennifer Bispham	EPP 114
Sheila & Mike Price	EPP 115
Daphne Bursell	EPP 116
G E Evans	EPP 117
M F Dixon	EPP 118
David & Lynda Dabinett	EPP 119
David A Smyth	EPP 120
Frances Buckingham	EPP 121
S Day	EPP 122
Brett Kibble	EPP 123
Barbara Jessop	EPP 124
David Reeves	EPP 125
Steve & Linda Elliott	EPP 126
Newport Area Environment Group	EPP 127
John & Lilian Gordon	EPP 128
Eirwen Allen	EPP 129
Dale Callingham	EPP 130
David Surrey	EPP 131
Mrs P Evans	EPP 132
Gareth Thomas	EPP 133
David Bellamy	EPP 134
Nigel Brown	EPP 135
Peter Ashcroft	EPP 136
Dŵr Cymru	EPP 137
Jan & Martin Watt	EPP 138
Peter Lewis	EPP 139
Carno Community Council	EPP 140
Amanda Jenkins	EPP 141
Professor L.Birke and Dr. C. Rivera	EPP 142
Stella Townsend	EPP 143

Martin Pearce Ltd	EPP 144
Mrs Leigh O'Connor	EPP 145
Miss M L Fanders and Mr B S Crawford	EPP 146
National Parks Wales	EPP 147
Graham & Jackie Ellis	EPP 148
Pembrokeshire County Council	EPP 149
Mr Brian & Mrs Becki Davies	EPP 150
Sue Cullup-Smith	EPP 151
Tina Stamps	EPP 152
Dr James D C Martin	EPP 153
Robin & Helen Cox Aaron & Isabella Cox	EPP 154
Swalec / SSE	EPP 155
RWE npower and RWE npower renewables	EPP 156
Professor B O'Neill	EPP 157
Anthony, Rosemary & Fleur Richards	EPP 158
Nicola Dearling	EPP 159
Dulas Ltd	EPP 160
David Jones	EPP 161
Environmental Services and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Ceredigion Council	EPP 162
Dr S Hart	EPP 163
Graham Law	EPP 164
Alan Morgan	EPP 165
Ann Yewdall	EPP 166
The Coal Authority	EPP 167
GALAR Community Volunteer Group	EPP 168
Country Land & Business Association	EPP 169
Renewable UK Cymru	EPP 170
Stephen Wilson and Susan Wilkinson	EPP 171

Richard & Janice Bonfield	EPP 172
Eco Cymru	EPP 173
Michael Bowen	EPP 174
Jason Howard	EPP 175
Mike Blood	EPP 176
Mark Davies	EPP 177
Design Commission for Wales	EPP 178
Jane Bowen	EPP 179
Lynette Davies	EPP 180
Dr Evelyn Over	EPP 181
Mr & Mrs I Bernard	EPP 182
Becky Bigglestone	EPP 183
Ffion Evans	EPP 184
Christopher Wallbank	EPP 185
Cara Evans	EPP 186
Steffan Evans	EPP 187
Sue Jones	EPP 188
J Bridges	EPP 189
Heather Brigland	EPP 190
Shropshire and Mid Wales Alliance	EPP 191
Jackie Evans	EPP 192
L R Mytton	EPP 193
Michael & Claudi Halsey	EPP 194
Lorraine Jones, William Jones, Sheila Jones, Gail Jones, Cheryl Lloyd, Russell Lloyd Caroline Marsh, Bill Marsh	EPP 195
Mike Cokayne	EPP 196
Wendy Owen	EPP 197
S Partridge	EPP 198
Michele Lloyd	EPP 199
Grwp Blaengwen	EPP 200

Llanfechain Community Council	EPP 201
Moira W Smith	EPP 202
Jamie Dalmer	EPP 203
Mochdre Action Group	EPP 204
Kevin Jones	EPP 205
Mrs L Boots	EPP 206
Welsh Local Government Association	EPP 207
Ian Stamps	EPP 208
Mr & Mrs J W Jones	EPP 209
Ann Butler	EPP 210
One Voice Wales	EPP 211
Jiri George Novak	EPP 212
Robert Hall	EPP 213
NFU Cymru	EPP 214
Natural Power Consultants Ltd	EPP 215
Neil Grant	EPP 216
John R Jones	EPP 217
Countryside Council for Wales	EPP 218
Terence Ingram	EPP 219
Stephen Morgan	EPP 220
Cllr Eldrydd Jones	EPP 221
Gareth, Alison, Ifan & Llyr Davies	EPP 222
Dr J Hill	EPP 223
Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service	EPP 224
Farmers' Union of Wales	EPP 225
The Crown Estate	EPP 226
Scottish Power	EPP 227
Robinetta Lloyd-Jones	EPP 228
Isle of Anglesey County Council	EPP 229
Carolle Doyle	EPP 230

Brechfa Forest Energy Action Group	EPP 231
J Saffron	EPP 232
Brechfa Forest and Llanllwni Mountain Tourism Cluster Association	EPP 233
Les Smith	EPP 234
Marine Energy Pembrokeshire	EPP 235
Environment Agency Wales	EPP 236
Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales	EPP 237
Friends of the Earth	EPP 238
Wales Tourism Alliance	EPP 239
Tegni Cymru Cyf	EPP 240
Tegni Ltd	EPP 241
Romy Shovelton	EPP 242
Low Carbon Research Institute	EPP 243
EDF Energy	EPP 244
WWF	EPP 245
Zoe Smith	EPP 246
Diane Reeves	EPP 247
RSPB	EPP 248
National Grid	EPP 249
Community Energy Wales	EPP 250
Sally Austin	EPP 251
Dr A Cresswell	EPP 252
J R & L E Hancock	EPP 253
Roger & Sarah May	EPP 254
Jonathan Francis-Scott	EPP 255
John Williams	EPP 256
Miss Layla Long	EPP 257
June Watts	EPP 258
Michelle Lloyd	EPP 259

Stephen Long	EPP 260
Mr Brynmor Bryce	EPP 261
Jane Peate	EPP 262
Llangyniew Community Council	EPP 263
Neil Grant	EPP 264
Sue Hayward & Malcolm Whitehead	EPP 265
Campaign for National Parks	EPP 266
Norman Roberts	EPP 267
Nigel Smith	EPP 268
Andrea Marlow	EPP 269
M J Davies	EPP 270
Mr & Mrs Davies	EPP 271
Mrs S Jopling	EPP 272
Law Society's Planning & Environmental Law Committee	EPP 273
Centrica	EPP 274
Powys County Council	EPP 275
Welsh Conservative Group - Powys County Council	EPP 276
Bert Holness and Sally George	EPP 277
Nerys Rogers	EPP 278
Robert, Jaci, Phil, & Mary Dunsford,	EPP 279
David T Jones	EPP 280
D W Amos	EPP 281
Mrs S Hawley & Dr A Hawley	EPP 282
Mrs J Evans & Rev P Evans	EPP 283
G Bevis	EPP 284
Bethan & Dyfrig Jones	EPP 285
Ann Yewdall	EPP 286
John Day	EPP 287
W D J Hicks & Mrs K Hicks	EPP 288
Jane Gweno	EPP 289

Robert Horler	EPP 290
R David R Corser, Sarah M Corser and Luned M Corser	EPP 291
Rainbow Trails Project	EPP 292
North Wales Association of Town and Larger Community Councils	EPP 293
Dr Alan Belfield	EPP 294
Mr & Mrs Jarvis	EPP 295
Mr & Mrs Kappel	EPP 296
Mrs Ann Lawrence	EPP 297
Mrs Maxine Belfield	EPP 298
Wynn Rowlands	EPP 299
Chris Owen	EPP 300
Mrs Doreen Lawson	EPP 301
Mrs Holder	EPP 302
Allan Higgs	EPP 303
T A Jones	EPP 304
N M James	EPP 305
T Martin Jones	EPP 306
David Morgan Jones	EPP 308
Joan Morgan	EPP 309
Tony Hughes, Clwydian Range AONB Joint Advisory Committee	EPP 310
Idris & Judy Andrew	EPP 311
Llandrinio and Arddleen Community Council	EPP 312
Llandysilio Community Council	EPP 313
Welshpool Town Council	EPP 314
Montgomeryshire Local Council Forum	EPP 315
Gary Swaine	EPP 316
Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science Energy & Environment Sector Panel	EPP 317

Agenda Item 3.5

P-03-309 Cardiff Against the Incinerator

Petition wording:

We, the undersigned, call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to intervene to stop the incinerator scheme being proposed by Virador. As residents of Wales, we believe this scheme will be detrimental to the health and well-being of ourselves and our children.

Petition raised by: Rick Newnham

Date petition first considered by Committee: November 2010

Number of signatures: 2,203

John Griffiths AC /AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-309
Ein cyf/Our ref JG/06216/12

William Powell AM
Chair Petition's committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

27 June 2012

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter requesting that I examine whether the planning processes for the Cardiff incinerator were correctly followed, and your follow up letter of 14 June requesting that you consider the weight of support for the petitions against incineration. I can outline the position now reached in relation to this case but I should make it clear from the outset that I am not at liberty to undertake the investigation which you request and this fact is not altered by the weight of support gathered by the petitioners.

Given the statutory role of the Welsh Ministers in the planning process, and that the matter may come before me at some point in the future, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the merits of this, or any specific case.

Generally, complaints about the delivery of the planning service at a local level should, in the first instance, be directed to the local planning authority, initially to the authority's Chief Planning Officer, and subsequently to the authority's Monitoring Officer. If, having exhausted these lines of complaint, the complainant's concerns have not been addressed, then they may wish to take up the matter with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, who can investigate complaints of personal injustice that have arisen through maladministration. These channels have been utilised in this case and it is a matter for the local planning authority to now consider the implications of the investigation undertaken by the Ombudsman.

It is important to understand that whilst the Ombudsman can investigate the administrative process that informs decisions on planning applications, he cannot investigate or overturn planning decisions. Any challenge, by a third party, to overturn a planning decision could only be sought as a result of Judicial Review and anyone considering this course of action should seek their own legal advice. Otherwise, once a planning permission has been granted, it can only be taken away by statutory revocation. Revocation is, in the first instance, a matter for the local planning authority, using powers in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Welsh Ministers, however, have reserve powers to propose making an order, but these would be likely to be used in only the most exceptional circumstances and the general principle and policy which has been followed by successive Governments is that these default powers should only be used *if the original decision is judged to be grossly wrong, so that damage would be done to the wider public interest*. Your committee will also wish to note that the use of Welsh Ministers default power would only be considered after the local planning authority has explored whether they would revoke the permission.

Yours,



John Griffiths AC / AM

Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development

P-04-351 Recall LDP's

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh government to recall all Local Development Plans across Wales and to scrap the use of population projections issued by the Statistical Directorate that are used to inflate housing numbers in local development plans. We call for all LDPs at whatever stage of development to be halted immediately in order to bring the level of housing growth in line with genuine local needs.

We the undersigned view all LDPs guided by the Welsh Government's population projections as ill thought out, fundamentally flawed and detrimental to the communities of Wales.

This type of planning is not sustainable, is not needed and is not wanted by the people of Wales. In order to halt the damage that is already being done and to prevent further irreversible damage and devastation to our communities, environment and identity across Wales, we appeal to the Welsh Government to intervene immediately.

Petition raised by: Councillor Carrie Harper

Date petition first considered by Committee: 10 January 2012

Number of signatures: 2,471

Supporting information:

WAG's population projection formula is fundamentally flawed, relying heavily on trends of past in migration into Wales and not taking into account the issue of affordability. The use of this formula continues to lead to unnaturally high levels of housing and population growth which will be implemented via our LDPs. The implications of implementing such plans are huge, affecting many aspects of life across the country:

Identity and human rights (in terms of Welsh identity, language, culture, character and expression). Environmentally (in terms of sustainability, ecology, natural habitat and the built environment) and societal sustainability (in terms of demographics, economics, politics and communities).

Local authorities have stated publicly they are fearful of deviating to any great extent from the figures issued by the WAG for fear of having their LDPs found 'unsound' by the Planning Inspectorate. This ensures that local opinion is sidelined during the LDP preparation process and our elected representatives are left struggling to challenge unsustainable levels of housing growth.

John Griffiths AC /AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-351
Ein cyf/Our ref JG/06899/12

William Powell AM
Chair Petition's committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

7 September 2012

Dear William,

Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your letter dated 13 January which has been forwarded to me as a matter falling within my portfolio. I trust the following explanation of the legislative context of preparing a plan, the public scrutiny all plans undergo and the description of the powers available to Welsh Ministers will explain why I consider the petition is ill-founded and its suggested action should not be taken.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (section 62) places a statutory duty on local planning authorities across Wales (25 in total) to prepare a Local Development Plan (LDP) for their administrative area. The 2004 Act, combined with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005, set out the due process to be followed when preparing a LDP. Key to the preparation of a LDP is the requirement for a robust and credible evidence base which supports its content.

To assist LDP preparation the Welsh Government published 'Local Development Plans Wales 2005' following substantive consultation with stakeholders, including local planning authorities. Paragraph 4.3 of LDP Wales builds on section 64 of the 2004 Act which requires an authority to keep all matters under review that are expected to affect development of its area. Clearly, population change, both in structure and size is one of the matters specifically highlighted in "... the size, composition and distribution of the population;" (paragraph 4.3, criterion iii).

National planning policy is set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) supported by Technical Advice Notes (TANs); Minerals Planning Policy Wales (MPPW) and Minerals Technical Advice Notes (MTANs). All LDPs should take account of the aforementioned. All these documents have again been subject to stakeholder consultation and supported by a robust and credible evidence base.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence .John.Griffiths@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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With regard to the level of housing provision set out in each LDP, the Welsh Government does not set a specific level of housing for each local planning authority. PPW (paragraph 9.2.2) clearly states that the latest Welsh Government projections (currently 2008 base) form the starting point when preparing a LDP:

“The latest Assembly Government local authority level Household projections for Wales should form the starting point for assessing housing requirements.”

“Local planning authorities should consider the appropriateness of the projections for their area, based upon all sources of local evidence, including the need for affordable housing identified by their Local Housing Market Assessment.”

“Where local planning authorities seek to deviate from the Assembly Government projections, they must justify their own preferred policy-based projections by explaining the rationale behind them in terms of the issues listed at paragraph 9.2.1 above (refers to PPW).”

The Welsh Government Statistical Division is responsible for preparing and publishing population and household projections. Informed by technical advice groups the Welsh Government produced 2006 and 2008-based population and household projections at a unitary authority level. These projections provided a more refined evidence base to assist local authorities in preparing their LDP. The projections are trend based projections. They are not policy based forecasts of what may happen, and they do not make allowances for the effects of local or central government policies on future population levels, distribution and change. This is specifically why PPW provides the opportunity for local authorities to deviate from the projections, provided they can justify a deviation with robust and credible evidence.

The Welsh Government projections have been developed in close collaboration with local authorities and key users in Wales - through the Wales sub-national population working group (WASPP). The WASPP group was originally formed as a subgroup of the Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee. The WASPP group has met on a regular basis over the past four years, and has been a forum for technical discussion on the methodology, the base data, and the launch of the population projections. Members of WASPP include local authority representatives with knowledge of and/or experience of demographic data and population projections.

In addition, both the 2006 and 2008 based Household and Population Projections were developed using Technical Advice Groups (TAGs). These groups provided a forum for discussing and agreeing the methodology and base data. Officers from local authorities formed the basis for these groups. Following discussions and publication of the projections, the Welsh Government enabled all local authorities to have access to the base data and methodology. Local authorities can therefore undertake further modelling, taking account of more refined local circumstances, if appropriate, to produce alternative outputs. The quality of the evidence will be central to demonstrate a LDP can be found ‘sound’ and adopted after examination.

With access to the projection model, assumptions underpinning it, as well as a raft of additional evidence collated by a local authority when preparing their LDP, if other evidence indicates a different level of provision this can be a reason to deviate. Critical will be the robustness of such evidence which will be tested by the appointed Inspector through the examination process. The implications for the plan and locality of not following the projections will also need to be clearly articulated.

To conclude what the precise level of housing provision is set out in a LDP, all plans are subject to a public examination. This is a transparent and open process, led by an independently appointed Inspector who, after reviewing all the evidence to support the plan


and all representations made on the plan, will conclude whether the plan can be found 'sound' and therefore adopted. This due process is set out in the 2004 Act, supplemented by the LDP Regulations. The actual running of the examination is down to the appointed Inspector, under general guidance issued by the Planning Inspectorate Wales.

The LDP process includes statutory stages at which any individual, group or body can make representations. Thus if individuals or organisations believe their views have not been taken into to date by the local planning authority, the conclusions reached are flawed, or the evidence to support such conclusions is not robust, there is ample opportunity to express their concerns. The examination process includes hearings in public where representors who have made a duly made representation have a right to appear. The appointed Inspector will seek to determine the merit of such concerns, based on evidence both through written representations and orally at public hearings. Consequently, if the level of housing provision is considered too high, or too low, evidence to support such a view will be considered. The Inspector's report, which is binding, is also critical in its reference to evidence base as part of the due process to scrutinise a LDP. Once the Inspector's binding report has been issued a local planning authority is bound by the 2004 Act and Regulations to adopt the plan. The LDP process includes a legal challenge period immediately following adoption of the plan. This means that if the correct procedure has not been considered to have been followed a legal challenge, potentially ending in the High Court can be pursued.

The petition seeks the 'recall' of all adopted and emerging LDPs. Whilst the Welsh Government has powers contained within the 2004 Act to intervene, call-in or direct during the plan preparation process, once a plan is adopted there are no legal powers to 'recall' a plan. An adopted LDP is the extant development plan until replaced by a subsequent plan. In this regard the Welsh Government does not have to powers to act on the petitions request as it is beyond its powers. As all plans will have been subject to a due process including public scrutiny and testing of the evidence to support the plan, it would be inappropriate to override such a democratic process.

In summary, the Welsh Government's population and household projections do not cause an inflated level of housing provision set out in LDPs; indeed they do not dictate the level of provision as they clearly form the starting point. They are provided to assist plan preparation, forming one part of the evidence base. Local planning authorities can deviate from the projections provided they have sufficient robust and credible evidence to justify such a position and can explain this coherently to an independently appointed Inspector. There is a due process set out in the current legislation and regulations to ensure this can happen. As there is a due process set out in legislation in which to prepare a LDP with sufficient opportunity for all stakeholders to make their views known I cannot agree with the petition. The Welsh Government also doesn't have powers in relation to a LDP once adopted.

I trust this clarifies the position.

Best wishes


John Griffiths AC / AM

Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development

Agenda Item 3.7

P-04-398 Campaign for a Welsh Animal Offenders Register

Petition wording:

Please sign in support of a 'Animal Offenders Register', a central Welsh database which will consist of name, address and convictions of people who have been convicted of any form of animal cruelty and abuse within Wales. Breeders / sellers of animals will be required to check this central database before allowing any animal they own / bred to go to a prospective owner / new home; if it is found that someone who has been convicted of animal cruelty or abuse has an animal the supplier / breeder will be held liable and prosecuted. At the moment there is no law to stop anyone who has been convicted of animal cruelty from moving a few miles up the road and then obtaining another animal to inflict further abuse on. Stricter laws need to be implemented to help protect animals, heavier fines and longer prison sentences as well as a Animal Offenders Register.

New York City and various states in the USA have already implemented this law, what is there to stop Wales taking the lead in the United Kingdom? You've heard of Sarah's Law, designed to keep sex offenders from striking again. Now we hope for a law created in the hope of preventing animal abusers from inflicting more cruelty, or moving on to human victims. Research has shown that there is a very strong correlation between animal abuse and domestic violence. Many murderers start out by torturing animals, and we could end up also protecting the lives of people.

Petition raised by: Mari Roberts & Sara Roberts

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 June 2012

Number of signatures: 69



John Griffiths AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-398
Ein cyf/Our ref JG/06451/12

William Powell AM

Chair Petition's committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

12 July 2012

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter following receipt of petition P-04-398, about the creation of an Animal Offenders Register.

This is not something that the Welsh Government has considered; discussions would need to take place with the police.

The Welsh Government is currently consulting on principles regarding the compulsory microchipping of all dogs in Wales and further, the draft Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2012 will require breeders to chip their animals and register as the first owner of any puppy that they breed; this will provide traceability for enforcement authorities and could help to identify 'repeat offenders'.

We, as well as many welfare organisations, strongly recommend that buyers, where possible, only purchase puppies direct from the breeder's premises. That way they can see the conditions their potential puppy was bred in, and its mother. This advice is reflected in the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs, Section 5.4 (Obtaining a Dog), which was published in November 2008.

Further Codes of Practice have been published for cats, equines, rabbits and livestock, providing guidance to owners and keepers of animals about how to meet their welfare needs.

Best wishes,

John Griffiths AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

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Cymdeithas Frenhinol Atal Creulondeb i Anifeiliaid Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee,
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Your ref: P-04-398

28th September 2012

Dear Mr Powell AM,

The RSPCA is grateful that the Committee has invited our views on the 'Animal Offenders Register' petition currently under consideration.

As the main enforcer¹ of animal welfare legislation in Wales (and England) the RSPCA would certainly welcome a comprehensive investigation into the practicalities and legalities of a register of offenders. It is a complex area, however, and in our opinion would require careful exploration and thought.

RSPCA Cymru
10 Ty Nant Court
Morganstown
Caerdydd CF15 8LW

RSPCA Wales
10 Ty Nant Court
Morganstown
Cardiff CF15 8LW

Cruelty Line 0300 1234 999

Elusen a gofrestrwyd
yng Nghymru a Lloegr
Rhif. 219099

A charity registered in
England & Wales
Charity no. 219099

www.rspca.org.uk

Noddwr Ei Mawrhydi
Y Frenhines

Patron HM The Queen

Is-noddwr
Ei Ras Archesgob Caergaint

Vice Patron His Grace
The Archbishop of Canterbury

We are aware of similar systems, e.g. in San Francisco where the city council has required both animal sellers/traders and sanctuaries to check against a central database if the person they are selling or rehoming the animal to has an outstanding conviction. The database is funded by a one-off fine/fee paid by the offender at the time of conviction. Clearly the costs and administration of such a database, as well as who has access to the sensitive data it holds, are issues that would need to be addressed.

Unfortunately I am not able to provide comprehensive figures on the rates of recidivism amongst those convicted of animal abuse, however the RSPCA has taken many prosecutions against individuals who are in breach of banning orders. As such this issue is of concern to us, for there is no way of monitoring those who have been convicted (post-conviction) and no way of knowing how many have gone on to acquire animals despite being banned, by a Court, from keeping them. Usually the RSPCA, police and local authorities have to rely on the public reporting such situations to us, which is far from ideal.

¹ Please see www.politicalanimal.org.uk/wales for data and statistics on the work of the RSPCA and the prosecutions taken in Wales each year.

Cymdeithas Frenhinol Atal Creulondeb i Anifeiliaid Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

The petition's authors are correct in highlighting the link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence. Whilst it would be far from correct to say that all those who abuse animals will graduate to violence against humans, it is true that many of those convicted of violent offences in respect of humans, have previously abused animals. Despite clear correlations between such violent behaviours there is a dearth of research in terms of what deters animal cruelty and it is also perhaps too early to speculate as to whether the animal offenders registers operating in the USA are working. Nevertheless the idea of an animal offenders register still has merit and something that we have previously discussed informally with Welsh Government officials.

If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CLAWSON', is centered on a light-colored rectangular background.

Agenda Item 3.8

P-04-396 Emergency Life Support Skills (ELS) for Wales Schoolchildren

Petition wording:

We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to make ELS skills training, including vital cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) a compulsory part of the curriculum at secondary schools in Wales, forming part of the core knowledge and understanding that children acquire at school. This would create a new generation of lifesavers across Wales.

Petition raised by: British Heart Foundation

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 June 2012

Number of signatures: Petition brought by the British Heart Foundation. An associated petition collected approximately 4,000 signatures.

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-396
Ein cyf/Our ref LA/06239/12

William Powell AM

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

9 July 2012

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June 2012 regarding Petition P-04-388 calling on Emergency Life Saving skills to be a compulsory part of the secondary curriculum in Wales.

Personal and social education (PSE) forms part of the basic curriculum for all pupils in maintained schools. The non-statutory *Personal and social education framework for 7 to 19 year-olds* is the key document schools should use when planning their provision, and sets out opportunities for learners to develop the practical skills necessary for everyday life, including emergency aid procedures and how to administer basic first aid.

The school curriculum is non prescriptive and allows schools the opportunities to focus on areas that are particularly relevant to their learners such as emergency life saving skills. It is for schools and their governing bodies decide on the precise content of a school's PSE provision. Currently, I have no plans to review the statutory nature of the PSE framework, I will however, consider the results of this petition should any review be undertaken in relation to the framework.

I wrote to Ms Lloyd at the British Heart Foundation (BHF) on 16 June 2011 to explain the Welsh Government position. Representatives from my Department also met with colleagues from BHF on 27 July last year to discuss the teaching of ELS in schools and to offer practical suggestions on how to raise the its profile within schools in Wales.

Thank you for sharing the results of the petition

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

Agenda Item 3.9

P-03-318 Cross-border maternity services

Petition wording

We, the undersigned, note the proposal to move the consultant-led maternity unit, neonatal intensive care unit and child inpatient unit from the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (RSH) to the Princess Royal Hospital (PRH) at Telford.

We believe this would cause a great deal of hardship and stress for patients and their families travelling from Montgomeryshire. It would add an extra twenty minutes onto a journey which is already fifty minutes at best and ambulance response times will inevitably be significantly increased.

It is vital that these proposals are not considered in isolation to proposals in Wales and that the Welsh Government adopts a strategic approach to cross border health issues, to ensure that the needs of patients from Mid Wales are fully represented in any proposals at catchment hospitals.

We therefore call on the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to fully engage in the 'Keeping it in the County' consultation process, to ensure that patients from Mid Wales are not disadvantaged by any changes.

Petition raised by: Mrs Helen Jervis

Petition first considered by Committee: March 2011

Number of signatures: 164

P-04-400 NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health

Petition wording:

We urge the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to adopt and implement the NICE quality standard for service user experience in adult mental health in its entirety.

We hope with this petition to put the humanity of the person as the focus of mental health. This requires changes in the services, treatment and interventions currently used in Wales. Following two training sessions organised by Sefyll at the Senedd to inform mental health service users of the scope and powers of the Welsh Assembly and Government, a group of us attended a further meeting with the Petitions Clerk to word this petition. As the Welsh Government is currently reviewing the ADULT MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN FOR WALES, this is an opportunity to make a difference by influencing and raising awareness of mental health issues to Assembly Members and Ministers. The NICE Standards (2011–2013) www.nice.org.uk/guidance have been developed for the NHS and social care sectors in England – they are not applicable in Wales – but are illustrations of best practice: Putting the service user experience at the centre of all treatment and interventions. Making staff in mental health services accountable for their actions. The NICE guidelines are already in practice in England. In total there are 15 Quality Statements. The following two are illustrations of the overall ethos and approach: “People using mental health services, and their families and carers feel they are treated with empathy, dignity and respect”. Quality Statement 2 “People in hospital for mental health care, including service users formally detained under the Mental Health Act, are routinely involved in shared decision making”. Quality Statement 11. In addition to this e-petition, a paper version is available on request. Please contact us at the following e-mail address: MHPetition2012@gmail.com. If you can help in any way with this campaign, please also contact us at the above email address. To view all 15 quality standards go to: <http://publications.nice.org.uk/service-user-experience-in-adult-mental-health-improving-the-experience-of-care-for-people-using-cg136/quality-statements>.

Petition raised by: Action for Mental Health

Date petition first considered by Committee: 19 June 2012

Number of signatures: approx. 200

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-400
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/07335/12

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

15 July 2012

Dear Bill

Thank you for your letter of 26 June regarding the petition, received by the Petitions Committee, urging the Welsh Government to adopt and implement the NICE quality standard for service user experience in adult mental health.

I agree service user experience should be the focus of adult mental health in Wales. Indeed, a key *Programme for Government* commitment is to use the legislative powers delivered by the Mental Health (Wales) Measure to ensure modern, user-focused care is implemented consistently across Wales.

As highlighted by the petition, these Quality Standards and other Standards which have been developed in England, do not apply in Wales at present. However, I have taken the decision, in principle, for the Quality Standards being developed by NICE to, in future, apply to the NHS in Wales. Officials are currently finalising the detail of a new Service Level Agreement with NICE to allow this to happen.

In terms of improving mental health service user experience in Wales, it should be noted the rights of service users in Wales under the Measure in some areas go beyond the NICE Quality Standards in England. For example, while the Quality Standards are not mandatory, in Wales under the Measure, it is a statutory requirement for all individuals in secondary services to have a Care and Treatment Plan which takes into account an individual's wider needs, such as housing, employment and physical health. Under the Measure, all individuals discharged from secondary services will be able to self-refer back to those services if they feel their mental health is deteriorating. In addition, every in-patient, as well as those detained under the Mental Health Act 1983, whether in hospital or community, will have support from an independent mental health advocate. The Measure is a flagship policy of which the Welsh Government and Assembly Members can be proud and there has been long standing cross party support for the Measure.

As the petition states, a Delivery Plan to support *Together for Mental Health*, the draft strategy for mental health and wellbeing in Wales, is currently being developed. *Together for Mental Health* is being consulted upon currently and we are seeking the views of service users on the outcomes the strategy proposes. Dedicated public consultation events have specifically targeted and elicited the views of, service users and their carers. The strategy on the whole has been very well received by service users, particularly as it has been developed in partnership with statutory and third sectors, service users, their families and carers. I have asked my officials to include the petition in their analysis of responses to the strategy public consultation. The draft strategy is available here:
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/healthsocialcare/mhealth/?lang=en>.

A Delivery Plan to support *Together for Mental Health* will be published alongside the final strategy in October. The Delivery Plan will include effective and measurements of the strategy outcomes, intended to improve the patient experience, prioritise safe, dignified, evidence-based interventions and ensure service user participation in Care and Treatment Planning.

I hope this information is helpful.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley".

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Petitions Committee : Tuesday 16 October 2012
P-04-400 : NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health

Dear Bill Powell

Yesterday I received an email from Annette Millett attaching the letter (dated the 15th July) from Lesley Griffiths to you regarding the Petition we submitted earlier this year.

I am very pleased that - FINALLY - the Welsh Government have recognised that the NICE standards for service users in the mental health system have not been adopted in Wales.

While the Minister has indicated that "in principle" - "future" NICE guidelines will apply to the NHS in Wales - this would seem to evade the issue of the adoption and implementation of **existing NICE guidelines relating to Mental Health service users**.

From my reading of the letter, while admitting that Quality Standards are not Mandatory, the Minister does not seem to be able to confirm that there will be any accountability or requirement to meet standards under the Welsh Measure.

For instance, while there is now a statutory requirement for service users in secondary services to have a Care and Treatment Plan (very worthy and much appreciated) I can not find any indication of what measures or standards apply to the implementation - of failure to implement that particular care plan. I am also aware from conversations with others, that not all users (mainly those receiving care in the community rather than in hospital) have been involved in developing their own Care Plans and agreeing them with the appropriate key worker, psychiatric nurse etc.

In addition - the support of an independent health advocate is only available upon request and there are very few people employed in this capacity. I also wonder how an "in-patient" can be in "the community" - my belief was that the right to advocacy was for those receiving in-patient care whether in a "normal" hospital or in a psychiatric unit. Perhaps the Minister could be asked to clarify this issue.

Regarding the draft policy "Together for Mental Health" - I, amongst many other service users and professional service providers attended one of the Consultation events. (At which, for the second time, we were informed by a senior adviser to the Minister that the NICE guidelines **were applicable in Wales!**)

The Strategy is a wonderful aspirational document - but as the last Mental Health review failed to meet many of the proposed outcomes - I can not see that this new strategy will be any different. Aspirational, uncosted with no mention of delivery or accountability.

I can not see how the Delivery Plan can "support" the Strategy solely by providing "effective and (sic) measurements of the strategy outcomes" unless it also includes **specific targets, standards and levels of accountability**.

Unfortunately my response to the letter from Lesley Griffiths is that I feel that despite the fine words, the Minister has failed to address the issues we raised in our petition - and her response has been somewhat evasive.

I hope that you will be able to include this email and this Ministers letter in the discussion of the proposed Strategy and Delivery Plan. Personally I think the response from Lesley Griffiths is somewhat disingenuous.

We also aim to provide - by the Monday midday deadline - some additional supporting evidence from service users and carers illustrating their experiences of treatment within the mental health system in Wales over the last ten years (right up today).

Kind regards

Jane Miller Smith
p.p. Mental Health Petition Action Group

Petitions Committee : Tuesday 16 October 2012

P-04-400 : NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT THE PETITION TO THE WELSH ASSEMBLY:

WITNESS STATEMENTS BY CURRENT AND FORMER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE USERS & FRIENDS / CARERS.

The following are from individuals' personal experiences. They are either from current or former "service users" in the Wales mental health system, or friends and carers who have witnessed treatment of service users; whether in hospital or in the community.

These statements have been collated and submitted to support the petition as an illustration of practices which fail to meet the standards of care which service users and their carers should receive. There are many other stories of "lived experience" available through many other sources e.g. Gofal, Mind etc.. Therefore this is just a small sample but illustrates why we strongly feel that the NICE standards for service users should be implemented and provide a standard of service and care which has to be implemented and followed.

1. I have been in hospital under Section (*required to stay in hospital under the Mental Health Act*) a number of times. The last time I was in Whitchurch I was assaulted by one of the workers on the night duty. I couldn't sleep and it was only about 9.30pm so I wanted to watch the TV. I was told I couldn't and to go back to my room. When I wouldn't I was gripped by one arm – which was forcibly put up my back and put back in my room. It was a strong man who assaulted me and it was so painful I thought my arm was at breaking point

When I came out of hospital the psychiatrist told me and my partner that there was no treatment other than medication. It was only through a friend that we found out that there was a range of support that should be available from both the NHS and Social Services. My partner raised this at our next appointment with the psychiatrist – at which point he "remembered" and provided me with A CPN and referred me to Outreach Services. This all happened in the last eighteen months (2011 – 2012).
Mags C.

2. In February of this year (2012) I found out, purely by chance, that a long-standing friend of mine was on Gorwel Ward at the Llanfair unit at Llandough Hospital.

AC, who is sixty years old, had never previously been under psychiatric care or received treatment for mental illness. Following a series of events - a family argument over money, which appeared to lead to his sister contacting his GP; a subsequent argument with his GP; and an ongoing issue with the police (he reported attempted blackmail of

“grooming” by two teenagers – a girl and her boyfriend). One evening when walking his dog he was picked up by the police and taken to the Llanfair unit.

It seems that a police officer (unofficially) told a member of the nursing staff that he was being investigated for suspected child grooming and child pornography. No charges were ever made against him – there was no incriminating evidence either in the house or on his computers.

When I found out he was an in-patient, I went to visit him. He had been on the unit for a number of months – then told he could leave – and then recalled and sectioned. He was understandably angry and confused by his confinement. When I saw the way he was dealt with by the staff I was horrified – they showed an obvious dislike – chose to ignore him as much as possible and were only interested in his taking medication.

It was only after my intervention – organising legal aid – regularly visiting – sitting in on his consultations; that the staff’s behaviour and treatment of him dramatically improved. He was spoken to and treated much better and finally discharged (just before a formal panel meeting was due to take place).

Jane S

3. I have only been in a psychiatric hospital once and that was over 15 years ago. I became psychotic and to avoid being sectioned I agreed to go into Whitchurch. I was so frightened and distressed by the experience that I swore to myself that I would sooner commit suicide than end up in there again. There was no care – other than giving me medication. I had very bad reactions to some of the drugs. On one occasion I had to be given an antidote – it was another patient who realized I was so unwell and took me to the nurses office where the staff spent most of their time.

I also saw another patient being assaulted by several members of staff. None of them saw the event which led to a fight (although I and many others did) – they got the wrong patient and she was so heavily tranquillised she scarcely moved for three days.

When I left I received very little aftercare, was unable to work, plunged into a terrible depression and ended up losing my house. I moved back to my home town. I never told my GP about my diagnosis of Bipolar Effective Disorder but for most of that time did take antidepressants.

I moved back to Wales about six years ago. Two and a half years ago I became very ill. I could scarcely get out of bed and couldn’t even fill in forms for council tax or claim any benefit. I was so desperate that eventually I asked my GP to refer me to a psychiatrist. This time I received wonderful care but I am aware from talking to many other service users that not a lot seems to have changed – particularly in the NHS and on psychiatric wards.

JMS

4. When I was in hospital my psychiatrist told me that I wouldn't be able to cope with independent living. He told me I should give up my flat. Unfortunately I took his advice and ended up homeless. I had to go into a hostel and it's taken me years to get my own place again.

4 Winds Service User

5. I was both sexually and physically abused as a child by my father. This has affected me to this day. I have asked many times to see a psychologist as I feel that this is the only thing that can possibly begin to help. I have never got to see one. The psychiatrist just gives me drugs. I even thought about trying to see a psychologist privately but living on benefits that's just impossible.

Phil M

6. I was homeless for six years and became a very heavy drinker. With help I managed to stop drinking and went into a hostel where no alcohol was allowed. I was so depressed that I attempted suicide on several occasions and was taken into the Poisons Department at Llandough hospital. I did see a mental health nurse but was always discharged without seeing a psychiatrist because I "knew what I was doing".

7. The hostel tried to get help for my depression and suicide attempts from the hospital. This never happened – although the last time I nearly managed to kill myself. I started drinking again because this was the only way I could stop feeling suicidal – but that meant I lost my place at the hostel.

AB

8. I have bi-polar disorder. My psychiatrist prescribes Lithium for this – as it works as a mood stabiliser. This is the most common drug for this condition but it is a heavy metal and in the long term causes kidney damage. It also has to be regularly monitored through blood tests because if the level is too high it is toxic and very dangerous.

9. On one occasion I got a phone call telling me my level was way too high and to stop taking it immediately. There was no suggestion that I should go to a poisons unit or get an antidote and no-one came to check I was okay. But they are quick enough to turn up to take me to a psychiatric unit if they think I am becoming mentally unwell.

SJ

10. I have first hand experience regarding my son who first became ill at the age of 15 - he is 32 now and stable, intelligent, caring and very motivated- but we had horrific experiences in the past, and the way his illness progressed was precisely because of the lack of intervention, proper care, lack of understanding of the needs etc.etc.etc. It was a true nightmare.

AW

HOUSING ISSUES

P-04-373 School Exclusion Zones for Mobile Hot Food Vans

Petition wording:

The Petitioners call upon the Welsh Government to consider legislation to exclude Mobile Fast Food Vans from operating within a 400 metre exclusion zone around all schools in Wales during the hours of 8am to 4.30pm weekdays during term time.

Petition raised by: Arfon Jones

Date petition first considered by Committee: 13 March 2012

Number of signatures: 43

Supporting information: Wrexham Council have recently agreed a Planning Guidance note which states that – New Hot Food Takeaways should not be located... within 400 metres of the boundary of a school or tertiary college. Planning conditions cannot be used to restrict use of mobile fast food vehicles and if they comply with highways and environmental health regulations they can operate unlicensed. It is therefore argued that to legislate as suggested will serve to promote a social objective of reducing the availability of cheap unhealthy foods to children, to reduce obesity and to promote healthy eating.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-373
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/06511/12

William Powell AM
Chair Petition's committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

July 2012

Thank you for your letter of 26 June 2012 about the 43-page signature received from Arfon Jones relating to mobile food vans.

The licensing of mobile food vans on the trunk road network is one for the relevant local highway authority. However, I can confirm it is unlawful to trade from a trunk road lay by, unless the trader has some lawful authority or excuse, for example a licence.

The licence incurs a licence fee and the responsibility for issuing licences and the consents for trading on any highway lies with the relevant local authority.

My officials are currently developing a policy for trading in lay bys on the trunk road network and I can assure you the subject of this petition will be considered during this process.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities

P-04-370 Petition for the improvement of Psychic and Intuitive services in Wales

Petition wording:

We the undersigned call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to raise awareness with providers of Psychic services and the public of the Consumer Protection from unfair Trading Regulations 2008.

Petition raised by: Ant Edwards

Date petition first considered by Committee: 13 March 2012

Number of signatures: 38



William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Your ref **P-04-370**
12th September 2012

Dear Mr Powell,

Thank you for your letter regarding the petition that your Committee received regarding concerns about psychic services.

In response to your question, Consumer Focus Wales has not undertaken any work on this area or subject.

The formulation of our workplan is dictated by those areas for which we have statutory responsibilities – post and energy – and via consultation with stakeholders and groups of consumers.

The aim of the workplan consultation is to try and ascertain what the key areas of concern are for consumers and, in particular, to identify where we feel we can make the greatest difference for disadvantaged or vulnerable consumers.

The issue of psychic services has not, at any time in the last 3 years since our inception, been raised with us as an issue either by stakeholder groups or by consumers directly.

To further assist your enquiry I have spoken directly to Citizens Advice Cymru to see if they have ever had this issue raised with them as a problem and, if so, what the scale of the problem might be.

I'm afraid they told me that it was not an issue that they could find on their database for Wales.

I also asked our investigations team here in Cardiff to take a retrospective look at the Consumer Direct database for a 12 month period up until March 2012 (when the service transferred to Citizens Advice). Consumer Direct, as you may know, was the UK Government's consumer advice phone line which acted as an access point for all Trading Standards Departments.

Unfortunately this also returned no reported incidences or cases involving psychic services in Wales.

However, this lack of evidence may not mean that there is no problem at all, in fact your petition points to the contrary, but it is clearly not something that is being brought to the attention of the obvious consumer protection organisations.

This may be because the victims are reporting concerns elsewhere, to another trusted intermediary, or that they are simply not reporting incidents. Experience tells us that this can often be the case if a victim is embarrassed about their behaviour and doesn't want to be seen as foolish. Most often this happens when victims realise they have been victims of scams.

I am not sure if it is within the remit of the Committee but, in light of the above, you may wish to take this forward by writing to the Welsh Heads of Trading Standards, asking them to advise their members to be mindful of this issue and to be alert to it within their own constituencies. Trading Standards Departments will have their own network of local organisations and contacts and so may be better placed to identify and investigate individual incidents.

I hope that the above is of use and helps you in your considerations. If I can be of any further assistance please let me know.

Yours Sincerely,



Rhys Evans
Senior Director, Consumer Focus Wales

Agenda Item 3.13

P-04-380 Bring Back our Bus! Petition against the Removal of Scheduled Bus Services from East Lampeter, Cwmann and Pencarreg

Petition wording:

We request the urgent implementation of a properly scheduled & timetabled bus service in these affected areas & would urge those governmental agencies concerned, to commit to this on our behalf, at the earliest possible opportunity.

Supporting information:

On February 27th 2012, Arriva began operating as a solely commercial enterprise, ending their subsidies from local County Council & Welsh Assembly and running their operations on an 'express service' as opposed to the previous 'hail & ride' one, which is essential in these very rural areas..

The company rerouted the former X40 service, bypassing east Lampeter, Cwmann & Pencarreg., thereby denying access to essential services like G.P. Dentist, Post Offices & shops, curtailing the ability of people, to exercise their freedom of movement, insofar as access to the above services is concerned.

The removal of regularly scheduled bus services has also had an extremely detrimental effect on the ability of all sectors of our communities to go about their normal daily lives. The evident disregard for peoples' safety cannot be emphasised enough because people are now trying to walk unpaved & unlit roads, populated by fast traffic & juggernauts. .

Carmarthenshire & Ceredigion County Councils are trying to extend the implemented 'Bycabus' scheme, a predominantly pre-booked service, which has proven limited availability and which is currently operating in an economically unsustainable and environmentally inefficient way.

As it is Welsh Assembly and local County Councils who agreed to implement these transport changes, they are responsible under their duty of care to

the people in Wales, especially the elderly and otherwise vulnerable, who are currently having their independence taken away from them and who are in danger of becoming increasingly isolated. Lack of an adequate bus service will also affect the economic, social & welfare aspects of peoples' lives.

Petition raised by: Sharon McNamara

Date petition first considered by Committee: 27 March 2012

Number of signatures: 505 (479 on paper and 26 on website)

PET(4)-14-12 : Tuesday 16 October 2012

P-04-380 : Bring back our bus! Petition against the removal of scheduled bus services from east Lampeter, Cwmann & Pencarreg

Additional evidence from Sharon McNamara

Claire Kirkham

6:45pm May 25

Been told this morning by the driver that Arriva are withdrawing the 41 service in July - having changed the timetables again in June ! This will leave myself and loads of other people I know unable to get to work without all the people that will be stranded in the villages unable to go shopping or get to the doctors - they cant seriously expect us to use Bwcabus. There are no notices on the buses and I nearly brought a 4 weekly ticket that would have taken me into July as I wanted it to start after my holidays and it would have been worthless!

Yin Z Lipy

11:05am May 26

waited in temple bar for the 10.12 from Lampeter, it got here just before quarter to 11, driver flashed his headlights and waved his hands to indicate he wasn't stopping. there was, me, my two kids and a senior citizen with a walking stick waiting there (with no bus shelter, shade or seat) bus looked full so that might have been the reason for no stopping but it's just one more drop in the ocean of arriva's unreliability

PET(4)-14-12 : Tuesday 16 October 2012

P-04-380 : Bring back our bus! Petition against the removal of scheduled bus services from east Lampeter, Cwmann & Pencarreg

Response from : Robert Ellis, Case Investigation Officer, Older People's Commission for Wales/Comisiwn Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Re: Bring Back Our Bus! Petition

I am writing in response to William Powell AM's email request for a Commission response to the above named petition.

The Commissioner's position is as follows:

The views and needs of older people should be properly considered in transport planning. Transport is a policy area which can have a significant impact on older people and their ability to access services such as hospital/GP appointments, their freedom to undertake social and volunteering opportunities and to maintain their independence and wellbeing. Access to public transport in particular, enables older people to meet others and make new friends, reducing their isolation and loneliness which in turn improves their quality of life and physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Whilst the Commission would not comment on the detail of proposed changes to specific bus services, as a matter of principle we encourage local authorities and the Welsh Government to involve older people in decisions on transport links. Where appropriate we would also encourage government to use financial incentives to support essential but lesser used services, and bus companies to consult openly and transparently with their users about proposed changes.

Older people themselves regularly contact the Commission in relation to the vital role that public transport plays and we have heard from many older people, especially those who live in more rural and isolated areas, who tell us that public transport offers them not only a crucial link to essential services but also the opportunity to remain integrated in society; the impact of transport on the lives of older people therefore cannot be overstated.

The Commission undertook research on the use of the bus pass by older people in Wales which showed that non car owners were more likely to be older, female, disabled and from low income households and that changes to bus services would therefore have a greater impact on more vulnerable groups in society. For your consideration, I have attached a copy of the research report.

The results of this research clearly showed that the bus pass has far wider benefits for older people than simply providing free travel. A significant

majority of respondents felt that a bus pass improved their quality of life and helped prevent them becoming lonely and housebound. However, the bus pass is only able to deliver these benefits if bus routes and timetables meet the needs of older people who wish to access them. Consideration of alternative provision, including community transport schemes, should accompany any decisions related to bus service changes.

I hope that this information is of use to you; however, should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Case Investigation Officer
Older People's Commission for Wales/Comisiwn Pobl Hŷn Cymru



Concessionary Bus Pass Research

Report

November 2010
Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Concessionary Bus Pass Research

Report

November 2010

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff, CF10 5FL

Issue and revision record

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B	19 November 2010	P Goodenough	P Hammond	P Hammond	Draft final issue
C	24 November 2010	P Goodenough	P Hammond	P Hammond	Final issue
D	26 November 2010	P Goodenough	P Hammond	P Hammond	Revised final issue

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Mott MacDonald (MM) was appointed by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales (OPCW) in July 2010 to undertake research investigating the impact of the concessionary bus travel scheme on older people in Wales, with emphasis on obtaining the views of older people themselves.

The purpose of our research has been to provide an evidence base to demonstrate the effects of the scheme and to establish what, if any, positive impacts the scheme can have on other budgets, such as health and social care, as well as other user groups, notably young people.

Our methodology has combined original and secondary research techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact that the introduction of concessionary bus travel has had on older people in Wales and the potential value it adds to their lives and to the wider community. The work undertaken has incorporated desk research, quantitative research (questionnaire interviews with 666 older people across Wales), qualitative research (two focus groups in Carmarthen and Wrexham) and interviews with various stakeholders.

Policy Context

The concessionary bus travel scheme was introduced in April 2002 for residents aged 60 and over as well as qualifying disabled people of all ages, giving travel across local authority boundaries to make it an all-Wales scheme. Passes can be used at any time of the day, unlike in England where passes are restricted to the off-peak period and where the scheme is in the process of being limited to those aged 65 and over. Welsh pass holders are able to use cross-border services if their bus journey starts or ends in Wales, although they are generally unable to transfer between bus services in England.

The scheme has proved enormously popular in Wales, with local authorities managing in excess of 650,000 passes annually. The popularity of

concessionary bus travel amongst older people has increased the costs to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) of the scheme. Reimbursement payments made by WAG to bus operators have more than doubled in six years, to £66m in 2008-09.

WAG has indicated that there is no intention to amend the entitlement or eligibility criteria for the concessionary bus travel scheme but, in response to rising costs, it has capped the concessionary fare reimbursement budget for 2010-11 at £69m. Nevertheless, challenges still remain. Changing demographics (i.e. an ageing population) means that the eligible cohort is increasing and demand for concessionary bus travel could therefore grow over time. It is possible that a progressively reducing rate of reimbursement for local bus operators may lead to the deregistering of some commercial bus journeys and changes in service patterns (e.g. lower frequencies and shorter operating hours).

The budget for WAG's Economy and Transport department will be reduced from £1,035m in 2010/11 to £888m in 2013/14¹. Revenue spending will be reduced by 8.1% in real terms, while capital spending will be reduced by 35.5%. WAG has restated its commitment to retaining the concessionary bus pass scheme in its current form, although it is possible that this position may change following the National Assembly elections in May 2011.

It is therefore critical that a robust evidence base is assembled to test the benefits of the concessionary travel scheme, for older people themselves and the longer term savings to other departmental budgets (such as health and social care) and to other user groups (notably young people) who may have benefited from the public transport improvements delivered as a result of the scheme.

Various documents have been reviewed as part of our research, including:

- Strategic Plan 2010-2013 (OPCW, 2010)
- Response to National Transport Plan – One Wales: Connecting the Nation (OPCW, October 2009)

¹ Business leaders dismayed by deep transport cuts'. Western Mail, 18 November 2010.

- England-wide Concessionary Bus Travel: The Passenger Perspective (Passenger Focus, July 2009)
- Opportunities and Challenges, our ambition for public policy in Wales (Age Cymru, November 2010)

Questionnaire Interviews

Use of the Concessionary Bus Pass

The Concessionary Bus Pass was used extremely frequently by the survey sample with three quarters (76%) of the sample using their pass more than once a week. Frequency of use was higher among respondents interviewed in urban locations and among respondents who did not own a car.

The pass was used for a wide range of trip types, but was used most widely for essential shopping trips, such as, *food* (88% use it for this purpose) and *clothes* (79%). In addition to this, the pass was also widely used for *days out* (59%) and for maintaining social networks (*visiting friends* 43%; *visiting relatives* 39%).

A large group of respondents also used the pass for accessing health care services (*visiting GPs* 38%; *hospital appointments* 52%).

In terms of frequency of use by trip, the pass was used most frequently for *food shopping trips*.

Travelling distances to access services were relatively large and, for most types of trip, approximately half of respondents had to travel 25 minutes or more to access services. Trips for *food* and *visits to the GP* had the shortest average journey length of all trip types.

Method of transport used if no longer had Concessionary Bus Pass

If respondents no longer had the Concessionary Bus Pass, essential trips, such as, *shopping for food* or *shopping for clothes* would still be made. However, discretionary trips, such as, *days out/sightseeing* (41% would no

longer make trip), *visiting friends* (17%) and *visiting relatives* (12%) would be more likely to be stopped.

For most types of trip, if respondents no longer had the pass just under a half would continue using the bus on a paid basis, with approximately a third switching to cars.

The method of transport that respondents would use as an alternative to the bus varied considerably by car ownership. The majority of car owners would switch from bus to car, while non car owners would continue to use the bus.

Attitudes towards the Concessionary Bus Pass

There was almost universal agreement that having the bus pass made it easier for respondents to make trips.

There was a strong feeling among respondents that *without a bus pass their quality of life would suffer* (81% agreed) and that they *would be more lonely and housebound* (78% agreed).

There was also a strong perception among respondents that their independence would suffer if they did not have the pass: *having a bus pass allows me to be independent* (92% agreed) and the *bus pass allows me to do things more easily* (93% agreed).

The majority of respondents felt that removal of the bus pass would negatively affect their economic circumstances. Two thirds (67%) disagreed that *I don't need the concessionary bus pass to afford the bus*, with four out of ten (40%) disagreeing strongly. Similarly, two thirds (66%) agreed that *I would find it hard to make ends meet without the bus pass*.

There was widespread opposition to changes to the current system: *replacement with half price travel* (88% disagreed) and *use only when off peak* (79% disagreed). A key driver behind this opposition was widespread disagreement that *the bus pass was an unnecessary burden on taxpayers* (76% disagreed).

Satisfaction with the Concessionary Bus Pass and bus services

Satisfaction with the bus pass was virtually universal with over nine out of ten (93%) respondents *very satisfied* and a further one in five (6%) *fairly satisfied*. There was little difference in satisfaction between respondents interviewed at urban locations and those interviewed at rural locations.

When asked what were the main benefits the Concessionary Bus Pass offered them (apart from financially), spontaneous responses centred on *the freedom to get out of the house* (29%). This confirms the benefits of the bus pass on the independence of pass holders.

Satisfaction with specific aspects of the bus service was also high, with satisfaction highest for *ease of getting a seat* (70% very satisfied) and *the bus driver* (69% very satisfied) being the highest. Satisfaction was also high for *ease of getting on and off the buses* (67% very satisfied) indicating relatively few accessibility issues with the bus service.

Effect of car ownership on opinion of the Concessionary Bus Pass

The beneficial impact of the concessionary bus pass was found to be greater among those respondents who did not own a car compared to those who do own a car.

Non car owners were found to use the Concessionary Bus Pass for a wider range of trip types. Not only this, but non car owners were also found to use the pass more frequently for each trip type than car owners (who use the pass for that purpose).

Responses to attitude statements showed that non car owners were more likely to feel that:

- their quality of life would suffer if the bus pass were withdrawn
- they would become less independent and reliant on family and friends without the bus pass
- they would find it hard to make ends meet without the bus pass

Non car owners were also slightly more resistant to any changes to the current system.

The profile of non car owners showed that they were more likely to be: older, female, disabled and from low income households. The removal of the Concessionary Bus Pass or a move towards charging would therefore have a greater impact on more vulnerable groups in society.

Focus Groups

To add depth to the face to face interviews and to explore issues arising from the questionnaire survey, two focus groups were conducted in Carmarthen and Wrexham on 14th October 2010. These towns were selected to obtain a cross-section of participants from urban and rural areas in north and south Wales. Focus group participants were selected from those who had indicated during the questionnaire survey that they were willing to take part.

The focus groups were semi-structured against a topic guide (**Appendix B**) which enabled older people to raise issues of importance to them, whilst probing their underlying attitudes and obtaining an understanding of the issues affecting them most.

Carmarthen

The Carmarthen focus group were passionate that the concessionary pass scheme should not be removed as it provided them with a lifeline to activities that helped to improve the quality of their life. Being independent was of great importance to participants and the group felt that this provided mental health benefits as it encouraged them to remain active avoiding isolation. The group felt that isolation was a major contributor towards depression in older people and many participants considered themselves to be at risk if they were unable to take part in activities or have an active social life. A number of participants were not in a financial position to afford to pay for the number of bus trips they are currently making. Therefore, if the scheme was removed they would be drastically affected both financially and also socially,

as they would not be able to make the non-essential trips which give a sense of purpose to their lives.

Wrexham

All members of the group stressed the value of the bus pass. It plays a valuable role in giving them a level of freedom and independence they would otherwise be unable to achieve without the pass. They do not want to be reliant on friends or family for transport. The pass also enables holders to have a full and active social life; the group were particularly conscious of issues surrounding depression and associated health difficulties in older members of the community. They were clear that the pass has wider benefits for them than simply providing free travel.

In summary, the group do not want to see any changes.

'The pass is fine as it is. Please don't change it!'

Stakeholder Consultation

To complement the review of relevant policy documents, strategic consultations were held with a selection of stakeholders, including user groups, selected local authorities, WAG and bus operators. These consultations took the form of telephone interviews, which were semi-directive against open questions, complemented by follow up email correspondence. The stakeholders interviewed were as follows:

National/local government

- Welsh Assembly Government (Head of Integrated Transport)
- City & County of Swansea (Acting Group Leader – Transportation)
- Wrexham County Borough Council (Transport Co-ordinating Officer)
- Cardiff County Council (Head of Concessionary Travel Unit)
- Carmarthenshire County Council (Transport Manager, Passenger Transport Operations Manager)
- Powys County Council (Head of Public Transport Unit)

User groups

- Age Cymru (Head of Policy and Public Affairs)
- Bus Users UK Cymru (Senior Officer for Wales)
- Alzheimers Wales (Acting Director for Wales)
- National Partnership Forum for Older People (Transport Sector Representative)

Bus operators

- Arriva Cymru (Concessionary & Smart Card Manager)
- GHA Coaches (Operations Manager)

The feedback received during the stakeholder consultations suggests that older people are generally happy with their concessionary passes and with the bus service. Local authorities are very happy with the administration of the scheme. However, there is possibly a need to monitor compliance and prevent the abuse of passes. More resources would be required to improve monitoring, which may be unrealistic in the current economic climate but the savings accrued on the reimbursement budget could potentially recoup the additional financial outlay for WAG in the medium term.

WAG, local authorities and bus operators are generally happy with the new reimbursement arrangements, which have capped the costs of the concessionary bus travel scheme. However, in the context of potential changes to the scheme in terms of fares, hours of operation and eligibility, some user groups have questioned the scheme's value for money, and suggest that efforts be made to improve the accuracy of the reimbursement process before any changes are made.

Beyond ensuring a more accurate reimbursement process, stakeholders are reluctant to suggest any amendments to the scheme, as all are aware of how highly older people value their passes and the benefits that the passes bring to some of the more vulnerable members of society. However, it is generally considered that the most politically acceptable means of managing scheme costs (in the context of people working longer and retiring later) would be to raise the age of eligibility for concessionary passes, as long as it is ensured that no older person loses their current entitlement.

Cross-border issues were not viewed as a particular problem by any of the stakeholders that we contacted, at least from the perspective of Welsh pass holders which is the focus of our research. This is borne out by our own questionnaire interviews and focus groups.

Summary and conclusions

Overview

In all activities undertaken, the Older People's Commissioner must give due regard to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. In subjective terms, we have summarised below how the concessionary bus travel scheme contributes to each of the UN Principles:

- **Independence** - without the concessionary bus pass, we suggest that many older people without access to a car would be housebound and denied access to essential facilities which enables them to maintain their independence. The pass gives older people greater freedom to access food/clothes shopping, hospital/GP appointments, days out and volunteering opportunities. It gives older people the ability to regularly visit and care for loved ones, which would become much more difficult if bus travel had to be paid for;
- **Participation** – the concessionary bus travel scheme offers older people the opportunity to remain integrated in society. The availability of free bus travel enables older people to meet others and make new friends, reducing their isolation and loneliness. This in turn improves their quality of life and physical, mental and emotional well-being;
- **Care** – this principle states that older people should have access to health, social and legal care so that they can optimise their well-being. Free bus travel removes a significant barrier to accessing these opportunities. We suggest that the potential for the scheme to relieve pressure on health and social services budgets is clear, in two main respects:
 - the cost of the alternative health/community transport service which would need to be provided in the absence of free bus travel; and

- the ability of older people to use free bus services to access regular hospital appointments. Without these bus services, it is conceivable that a significant number of individuals would no longer be able to live independently, and would instead need to be placed in residential care at a much greater cost to the taxpayer.

Our contact with older people, as well as our consultations with various stakeholders, has demonstrated the numerous benefits that the concessionary bus pass brings to people's lives. Although we have not undertaken a full cost-benefit analysis as part of this commission, this evidence strongly suggests that the benefits of the scheme far outweigh the costs, and that the overall burden on the taxpayer would in all likelihood be significantly increased if free concessionary bus travel was to be discontinued;

- **Self-fulfilment** - this principle states that older persons should have access to educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources and be able to develop their full potential. The results of the questionnaire interviews demonstrate that older people use their concessionary bus passes for visiting friends and relatives, days out, accessing sport/recreation and volunteering. Whilst non-essential, all of these trip purposes are important to optimising older people's well-being and fulfilling their potential. The surveys have shown that many older people would be unable to make such trips if free concessionary bus travel was withdrawn. Self-fulfilment is therefore much less likely to be achieved; and
- **Dignity** – the availability of a universally available and unlimited concessionary bus pass clearly contributes to older people's dignity. Without it, the results of the questionnaire interviews and focus groups strongly suggest that many older people would have to depend on car-owning friends and relatives in order to undertake all but the most essential trips (e.g. days out, visiting friends/relatives/accessing sport and recreation), or not travel at all. For essential trips, such as food shopping and hospital appointments, older people would pay for bus travel, but with clear negative implications for household budgets and overall quality of life. Car owners would most likely switch to their cars for all trips, with clear environmental disbenefits.

Conclusions

This research project has focused on obtaining the views of older people themselves on the concessionary bus travel scheme, supplementing this with desk research and consultations with various stakeholders.

In general, older people are very satisfied with their passes and with the bus service. They do not wish to see any changes to the concessionary bus travel scheme. Local authorities and user groups are similarly satisfied with the scheme.

'It (the concessionary bus pass scheme) has improved social mobility and helped persuade people to use the public transport system. It's been a great success'

If the free concessionary passes were no longer available, the questionnaire interviews and focus groups provide clear evidence that non car-owners would cut back on non-essential trips (days out/visiting friends and relatives/accessing sport and recreation), but would pay for essential trips (food shopping, hospital appointments). Car owners would most likely switch to their cars for all trips, with clear environmental disbenefits.

The concessionary bus travel scheme offers older people the opportunity to remain integrated in society, improving their quality of life. The scheme brings wider benefits in terms of relieving pressure on health and social services transport budgets, and the linkages are complex. Bus operators have acknowledged that the scheme has helped renew bus fleets and support both commercial and tendered services which would not otherwise be viable.

The revised reimbursement arrangements have been effective in capping the cost of the scheme. However, if the concessionary fares budget has to be reduced in the future, rather than amending the terms of the scheme policy makers should firstly focus on the reimbursement methodology to ensure that it fairly reflects distance travelled. Beyond this, raising the age of eligibility is viewed by older people and other stakeholders alike as the fairest way of managing scheme costs. As a last resort, a nominal flat fare

may be deliverable, but it must be stressed that there is a strong commitment within WAG to retaining the concessionary bus travel scheme in its current form.

The next steps

Our research has provided an evidence base to demonstrate the benefits of the free concessionary bus travel scheme. However, our research merely forms a starting point in developing a robust argument for the retention of the current scheme in the face of financial challenges currently faced by WAG and local authorities. More detailed analysis would be beneficial in order to quantify the benefits of the concessionary bus travel scheme and present data in a format which can be easily understood by older people, user groups and policy makers alike. This analysis could include:

- **Cost benefit analysis** – the linkages between the concessionary bus travel scheme and other government budgets are complex. We have already speculated about the savings which the scheme brings in terms of the health and social care budgets and to the wider community from improved bus services. However, a full economic cost benefit analysis of the scheme would enable these complex linkages to be investigated in greater detail and the benefits quantified in financial terms, adding details to support our conclusions. With a reimbursement budget of £69m per annum, WAG is right to consider the scheme's value for money. Our research suggests not only direct social impacts (positive) for the older people of Wales but also indirect benefits e.g. for public services and benefits for other bus users. Operators suggest that they have used the funds to pay for new Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant buses (all buses are required to be low floor by 2015) as well as to improve frequencies. The frequency issue is of course of benefit to all age groups and has both an economic and environmental benefit in sustainability terms.
- **Data analysis using Geographical Information Systems (GIS)** – use of GIS mapping can show complex relationships in an intuitive and easy to understand way. GIS can be used for area profiling, pulling together multiple data sets to identify spatial patterns and commonalities or differences between areas. With specific regard to the concessionary bus travel scheme, accessibility analysis could be used to measure how well

places are served by the Welsh bus network. A scoring methodology could be developed, tailored to concessionary bus pass usage (i.e. preferred times of day/days of week to travel, access to specific destinations). Geographical intersection of the accessibility results with other socio-economic data sets would allow areas with common problems or advantages to be identified, classified and analysed. Animated maps of Wales could be produced showing the areas with high and low public transport accessibility for pass holders. This analysis could be repeated at regular intervals to allow the impact on older people of changes to the public transport network (such as reduced bus service provision) to be tracked over time.

Furthermore, although the benefits of the free concessionary bus travel scheme are clear, not all older people are able to access bus services. This may be due to accessibility problems, or the bus services may not operate at all. It would be beneficial to undertake further research to consider the wider transport and travel needs of older people in Wales, and explore options for improving opportunities where affordable, safe, frequent and reliable transport is not currently available.

1. Introduction

1.1 Task

Mott MacDonald (MM) was appointed by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales (OPCW) in July 2010 to undertake research investigating the impact of the concessionary bus travel scheme on older people in Wales, with emphasis on obtaining the views of older people themselves.

The specific objectives were to examine:

- The frequency, nature and purpose of bus use amongst pass holders;
- Views about the concessionary bus travel scheme, from older people, user groups, bus operators and local/national government;
- Older people's experience of travelling by bus, in both urban and rural areas of Wales;
- The barriers older people face to travelling by bus; and
- Cross border issues between Wales and England in relation to bus pass use.

1.2 Response

Evidence from OPCW suggests that older people themselves have two key concerns about the future:

- The challenges of living on a fixed income; and
- Obtaining information about, and access to, services.

Each of the above has an association with and implications for the concessionary bus pass scheme. This is emphasised by the statutory requirement for the Older People's Commissioner to give due regard to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, i.e. their independence, participation, care, self fulfilment and dignity. As such, OPCW consider it vital that the free concessionary bus pass for older people is retained.

The purpose of our research has been to provide an evidence base to demonstrate the effects of the scheme and to establish what, if any, positive impacts the scheme can have on other budgets, such as health and social care, as well as other user groups, notably young people.

Our methodology has combined original and secondary research techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact that the introduction of concessionary bus travel has had on older people in Wales and the potential value it adds to their lives and to the wider community. The work undertaken can be summarised as follows:

- **Desk research** – we have reviewed relevant policy documents and operational data from OPCW, the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities;
- **Quantitative research** – we have undertaken face to face questionnaire interviews with 666 older people in Carmarthen, Swansea, Cardiff, Builth Wells, Newtown, Wrexham and Mold, providing a balanced geographical coverage of Wales;
- **Qualitative research** – we have conducted two focus groups in Carmarthen and Wrexham to add depth to the face to face interviews and to explore issues arising from the questionnaire survey; and
- **Stakeholder interviews** – our research has been complemented by telephone discussions with user groups, bus operators, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and local authorities, to consider issues and opinion as well as validating the findings of our original quantitative and qualitative research.

1.3 Report Structure

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 summarises the review of relevant policy documents and background data;
- Section 3 summarises the results of the face to face questionnaire interviews;
- Section 4 presents the findings of the focus groups; and
- Section 5 presents the findings of discussions with various stakeholder organisations;
- Section 6 brings together the main issues and conclusions identified in the above sections.

2. Policy Context

2.1 Current Situation

The concessionary bus travel scheme was introduced in April 2002 for residents aged 60 and over as well as qualifying disabled people of all ages, giving travel across local authority boundaries to make it an all-Wales scheme. Passes can be used at any time of the day, unlike in England where passes are restricted to the off-peak period and the scheme is in the process of being limited to those aged 65 and over. Welsh pass holders are able to use cross-border services if their bus journey starts or ends in Wales, although they are generally unable to transfer between bus services in England.

The scheme has proved enormously popular in Wales, with local authorities managing in excess of 650,000 passes annually. Table 2.1 shows the number of passes issued by each local authority, based on local authority administrative returns.

Table 2.1: Wales concessionary bus passes – numbers issued and in circulation

Local authority	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Isle of Anglesey	12,519	13,766	12,920	13,723
Blaenau Gwent	16,226	17,597	15,368	17,327
Bridgend	27,000	31,000	28,050	30,014
Caerphilly	37,694	36,190	36,435	37,826
Cardiff	61,972	53,762	60,526	64,111
Carmarthenshire	33,342	37,296	38,898	39,701
Ceredigion	14,600	16,588	15,224	16,015
Conwy	27,339	26,154	25,926	27,653
Denbighshire	17,888	19,294	20,729	20,729
Flintshire	28,608	27,933	26,346	27,602
Gwynedd	21,000	23,199	24,186	25,542
Merthyr Tydfil	10,000	12,790	13,343	13,469
Monmouthshire	13,480	18,358	18,802	19,665
Neath Port Talbot	29,351	31,479	31,702	33,162
Newport	28,537	29,630	27,513	28,772
Pembrokeshire	22,500	22,774	23,067	24,871
Powys	18,000	20,080	23,066	25,000

Local authority	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Rhondda Cynon Taff	49,524	47,892	49,873	50,783
Swansea	52,143	54,543	55,707	58,278
Torfaen	19,419	21,060	21,572	23,888
Vale of Glamorgan	23,985	25,569	26,123	27,297
Wrexham	22,390	23,606	25,035	26,151
TOTAL	587,517	610,560	620,411	651,579

Source: Welsh Assembly Government

It should be noted that the numbers presented in Table 2.1 include disabled pass holders; the number of disabled and over 60s pass holders is disaggregated at local authority level. However, the table illustrates that the take up of passes amongst older people has increased steadily over time.

Table 2.2 indicates the current number of over 60s pass holders for selected local authorities. It also shows the number of concessionary journeys commencing within those local authority boundaries for the year 2009-10.

Table 2.2: Number of pass holders aged 60 and over and concessionary journeys, by local authority

Local authority	Number of pass holders aged 60 and over (September 2010)	Concessionary journeys commencing in local authority area (2009/10) (a)
Powys	23,513	447,153
Wrexham	23,708	2,156,928
Swansea	53,287	4,800,000
Cardiff	55,718	9,254,991
Carmarthenshire	38,134	1,446,461

Source: Local authorities

(a) Includes all concessionary pass holders (over 60s, disabled)

The number of concessionary journeys shown in Table 2.2 are annual headline figures and cannot be directly related to the number of passes in circulation, because it includes journeys made by pass holders living within other local authorities, for example a resident of Carmarthenshire travelling home from Swansea. However, the figures do suggest that passes are used more frequently by older people living within urban authority areas, where bus services can be expected to be more frequent and have longer operating hours. Our questionnaire interviews sampled older persons (aged

60 and over) in both urban and rural areas who use their passes at least once a fortnight.

Table 2.2 shows that the ratio of concessionary journeys to the number of pass holders is significantly higher in Cardiff, which demonstrates its status as a ‘honeypot’ destination, with older people travelling into the city from far and around.

2.2 Challenges

The popularity of concessionary bus travel amongst older people has increased the costs to WAG of the scheme. Table 2.3 shows that reimbursement payments made by WAG to bus operators have more than doubled in six years, to £66m in 2008-09.

Table 2.3: Local bus usage and WAG/local authority financial support

Financial year	Passenger journeys (million)	Reimbursement for free travel (£m)	Local authority support for bus services (£m)	Local Transport Services Grant (£m)
2000-2001	N/A	11	16	N/A
2001-2002	N/A	13	20	N/A
2002-2003	N/A	30	21	N/A
2003-2004	N/A	37	25	N/A
2004-2005	118	41	27	8.8
2005-2006	118	48	28	9.2
2006-2007	122	52	29	9.4
2007-2008	124	57	30	10.4
2008-2009	124	66	35	10.9
2009-2010	N/A	69	N/A	10.9

Source: Wales Transport Statistics 2009

The escalating costs of the scheme has been the subject of media attention² as this has had an impact on inter alia funds to implement discounted travel for 16-19 year olds, as was previously piloted in 2007. This is a concern to policy makers seeking to tackle the high number of 'NEETS' (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training), as the cost of public transport is considered a barrier to young people accessing new opportunities.

Within this context, the independent Ministerial Advisory Group has suggested to WAG that the universal entitlement to concessionary bus passes should be scrapped, with support instead being targeted at certain groups of people (e.g. jobseekers) or people living in a particular area (e.g. the south Wales Valleys)³. It is suggested that these changes could save £25m per annum.⁴

WAG has indicated that there is no intention to amend the entitlement or eligibility criteria for the concessionary bus travel scheme but, in response to rising costs, it has capped the concessionary fare reimbursement budget for 2010-11 at £69m, with the agreement of the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT, representing bus operators) and the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO, representing local authorities). In summary, the arrangements applying from 1st April 2010 onwards are:

- Each operator's average adult single fare as of 30th September 2009 is used, plus a 3% uplift approved by WAG, rather than the variable average fare each month (thus overcoming the risk of operators manipulating their single fares to improve reimbursement). This fare is known as the Representative Concessionary Fare, and can be identified for each bus operating depot, or group of services.
- The reimbursement factor (known as the Modifying Indexation Factor) was unchanged at 73.59% for the first and second quarters of the financial year, but is subject to quarterly review between WAG, the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) and the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT). With a fixed

² 'Sharp rise in cost of free bus passes for elderly drives teenage jobs aid plan off the road'. Western Mail, 26 July 2010.

³ Ministerial Advisory Group Phase 2 Report on Transport, July 2009.
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/publications/090715mag/?lang=en>

⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/wales_politics/8184100.stm

reimbursement budget this factor can be expected to reduce according to concessionary travel demand.

- Reimbursement is therefore calculated as Number of Journeys x Representative Concessionary Fare x Modifying Indexation Factor.

The new reimbursement arrangements have been successful in halting the increasing cost of the scheme. Nevertheless, challenges still remain. Changing demographics (i.e. an ageing population) means that the eligible cohort is increasing and demand for concessionary bus travel could therefore grow over time. It is possible that a progressively reducing rate of reimbursement for local bus operators may lead to the deregistering of some commercial bus journeys and changes in service patterns (e.g. lower frequencies and shorter operating hours).

The budget for WAG's Economy and Transport department will be reduced from £1,035m in 2010/11 to £888m in 2013/14⁵. Revenue spending will be reduced by 8.1% in real terms, whilst capital spending will be reduced by 35.5%. WAG has restated its commitment to retaining the concessionary bus pass scheme in its current form, although it is possible that this position may change following the National Assembly elections in May 2011.

It is therefore critical that a robust evidence base is assembled to demonstrate the effects of the concessionary travel scheme, on older people themselves but also the longer term savings it could offer to other departmental budgets (such as health and social care) and to other user groups (notably young people) who would benefit from the public transport improvements which may have been delivered as a result of the scheme.

2.3 Relevant Literature

2.3.1.1 Strategic Plan 2010-2013 (OPCW, 2010)

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales commenced her appointment in April 2008 as an independent advocate for older people in Wales. Four main objectives are set out in the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006:

⁵ Business leaders dismayed by deep transport cuts'. Western Mail, 18 November 2010.

- a) promote awareness of the interests of older people in Wales;
- b) promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against, older people in Wales;
- c) encourage best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales; and
- d) keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

The Strategic Plan sets out the activities through which the above objectives will be delivered during 2010-2013. In particular, the Commissioner will engage with and listen to older people and other key stakeholders throughout Wales, and develop an evidence base to underpin its work, to which this research is intended to contribute.

2.3.1.2 Response to National Transport Plan – One Wales: Connecting the Nation (OPCW, October 2009)

The Commissioner has asked WAG to ensure that the National Transport Plan takes a long-term, holistic approach to the needs of older people in Wales. The response makes clear OPCW's wish that public transport needs to be made safer and more accessible for older people; that cross-border recognition of bus passes is ensured to help those travelling to England for medical treatment; and that WAG should consider ways in which concessionary travel could be extended to rail services and taxis/community transport, so benefiting those living where bus services are poor or those who cannot use bus services.

The response makes reference to the 2001 Census of Population, which identified that a much higher proportion of pensioner households do not have access to a car than all households; 48% compared to 26% of all households. It is this section of society, predominantly comprised of low income households, which is most reliant on buses and thus depend on the concessionary bus travel scheme for their economic and social well-being.

2.3.1.3 England-wide Concessionary Bus Travel: The Passenger Perspective (Passenger Focus, July 2009)

The all-England concessionary bus travel scheme was introduced in April 2008, following the introduction of free concessionary travel within the pass holder's local authority area in April 2006. It differs from the scheme in

Wales in that it is limited to travel in the off peak period and is in the process of being limited to those aged over 65 by the year 2020 (the threshold in Wales is 60).

Passenger Focus (the independent bus and rail passenger watchdog) commissioned research into the England-wide concessionary bus travel scheme during January and February 2009. There were two main components to the research:

- eight focus groups (three with over 60s concessionary bus pass holders, one with disabled concessionary bus pass holders and four with non-pass holders) in Manchester, Bournemouth, Norwich and Hartlepool; and
- a survey of 2,000 concessionary bus pass holders and non-holders in Birmingham, Bath, Scarborough and Newark on Trent.

The research focused more on the travel habits of pass holders and non-pass holders rather than on the quality of life benefits offered by the English concessionary bus travel scheme. However, the research did demonstrate that free bus travel is making it easier for older (and disabled) people to get out of the house, visit friends and relatives, go shopping and take advantage of sport, leisure and recreational opportunities.

Pass holders and non-pass holders alike did express strong support for the scheme during the focus groups, citing it as the most significant thing the government had done to improve quality of life. However, a small number of pass holders felt that people should only receive a concessionary pass when they retire from work rather than at 60.

Most survey respondents wished to retain the scheme in its current form, with only 8% of pass holders and 13% of non-pass holders agreeing or strongly agreeing with the suggestion of replacing free travel with a half fare. A large majority (84%) of pass holders surveyed wished to see the concession extended to all types of public transport, but most felt that this was unrealistic due to the associated cost.

39% of pass holders aged 60 and over stated that they make a greater number of local journeys by bus within their local authority boundary since obtaining a concessionary pass, and 13% make more bus journeys outside their local authority.

The survey also demonstrated that the concessionary bus travel scheme has helped achieve modal shift from the private car, with consequent environmental benefits. 35% of pass holders stated that they were undertaking journeys by bus that they had previously made by car, whilst 12% stated that they were making journeys that they had not previously made by any means prior to the concession being introduced.

2.3.1.4 Opportunities and Challenges, our ambition for public policy in Wales (Age Cymru, November 2010)

This policy report is due to be published during November 2010 and seeks to provide an in depth analysis of the policy areas which affect older people and identifies ways in which the UK Government, Welsh Government and local authorities can work together to improve the quality of life of older people in Wales.

Extracts from the draft policy report relating to transport were supplied to Mott MacDonald by Age Cymru. This identifies that transport plays a vitally important role in helping people to maintain independence and wellbeing; ensuring communities are well-connected; and that services, facilities and amenities are accessible to all older people.

The report makes reference to statistics from www.poverty.org.uk, noting that half of all households without a car consist of individuals aged over the age of 60 and 66% of single pensioners do not have a car. Among households across all age groups without a car, around 40% feel that their local bus service fails to meet their travelling needs to the local town centre or shops, while around 65% believe it is inadequate for travel to their local hospital. These issues may affect older people who are socially isolated particularly adversely.

Age Cymru expresses strong support for the retention of the universal concessionary bus travel scheme, recognising that it provides an essential connection to services and amenities. However, the report acknowledges the importance of ensuring that transport policies deliver best value for public money. It suggests that free *local* travel for all older people is

protected (*italics added*). The report also emphasises the need to reform reporting and funding mechanisms used by WAG and bus operators.

The report also notes some existing barriers to bus use by older people, including:

- **Safety and accessibility of buses** – older people are sometimes put off using services because of experiences where buses move off before they have been able to take a seat or stop suddenly, often away from raised kerbs;
- **Condition and maintenance of bus stops** – adequate lighting, seating and shelter must be provided and regularly inspected to encourage more frequent use of some bus services;
- **Cross-border issues** – Age Cymru recommends that WAG works with the UK Government in guiding local authorities to arrange reciprocal arrangements locally, particularly in areas where people travel across border to access health services such as Powys; and
- **Lack of appropriate provision** – lack of availability of bus services and accessibility problems mean that many people still struggle to access safe, frequent and reliable public transport. Age Cymru suggests that options should be explored for extending the concessionary scheme to cover rail and provide taxi and community transport tokens on a national basis to improve the transport opportunities for older people who are unable to access bus services, as this becomes affordable.

The report also identifies the need to improve interchange arrangements between bus routes and railway stations, including accessibility to stations as well as the co-ordination of services.

3. Findings from the questionnaire interviews

3.1 Survey method

A face to face quantitative survey was conducted on street between 6th and 17th September 2010.

To be eligible for interview respondents had to:

- Be aged 60 or more years
- Own a concessionary bus pass
- Use the pass at least once a fortnight

This meant that occasional users of the bus pass were excluded from the survey sample.

A total of 666 interviews was conducted split between urban and rural locations as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Sample sizes

Location	Sample size
Urban	386
Swansea	130
Cardiff	127
Wrexham	129
Rural	280
Builth Wells/Newtown	87
Mold	96
Carmarthen	97

Source: Mott MacDonald

It should be noted that the locations classed as rural were market towns located in rural areas.

The questionnaire (available in **Appendix A**) was designed by Mott MacDonald staff in conjunction with staff from OPCW. Welsh versions of the questionnaire were produced to accommodate Welsh language speakers.

3.2 Survey findings

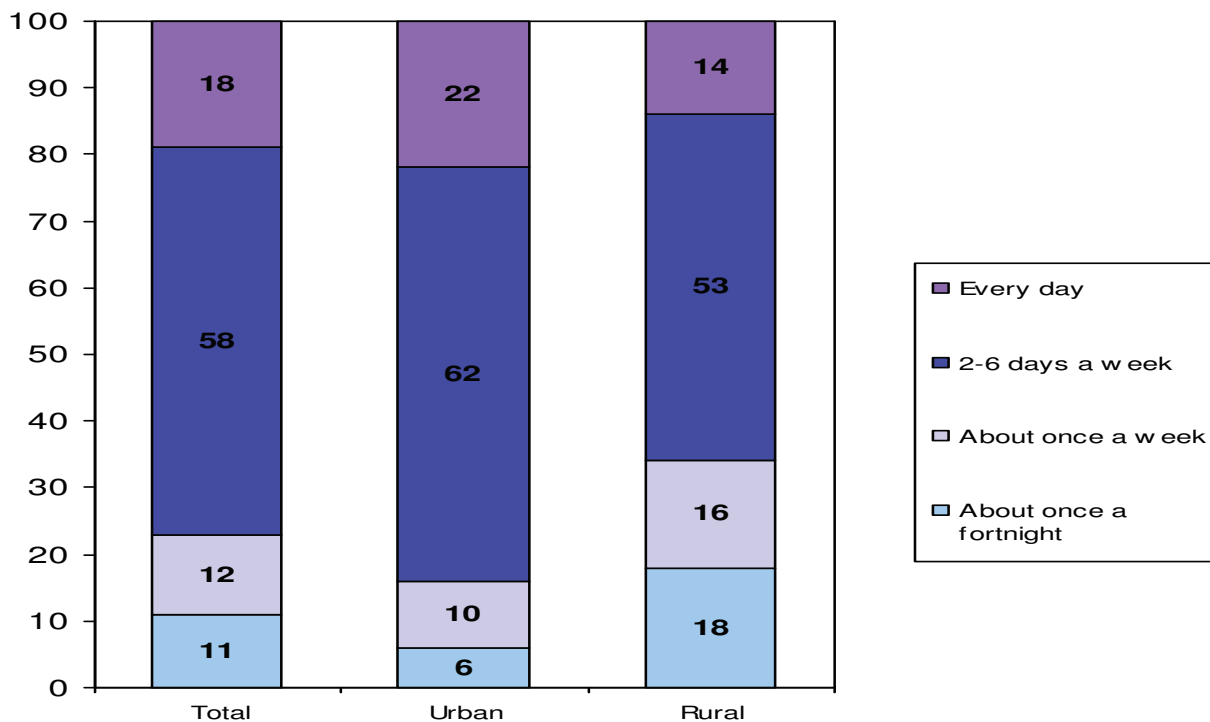
3.2.1 Use of the concessionary bus pass

Respondents were asked how frequently they used their concessionary bus pass. Amongst the survey sample (which excluded those who used the pass less frequently than once a fortnight), the pass was used frequently, with three quarters (76%) using their pass more than once a week and a fifth (18%) of participants using it once a day.

Respondents interviewed in urban sample points used the concessionary bus pass more frequently than rural respondents; over four fifths (84%) of respondents in urban areas used the pass more than once a week compared to two thirds (67%) of rural respondents (Figure 3.1).

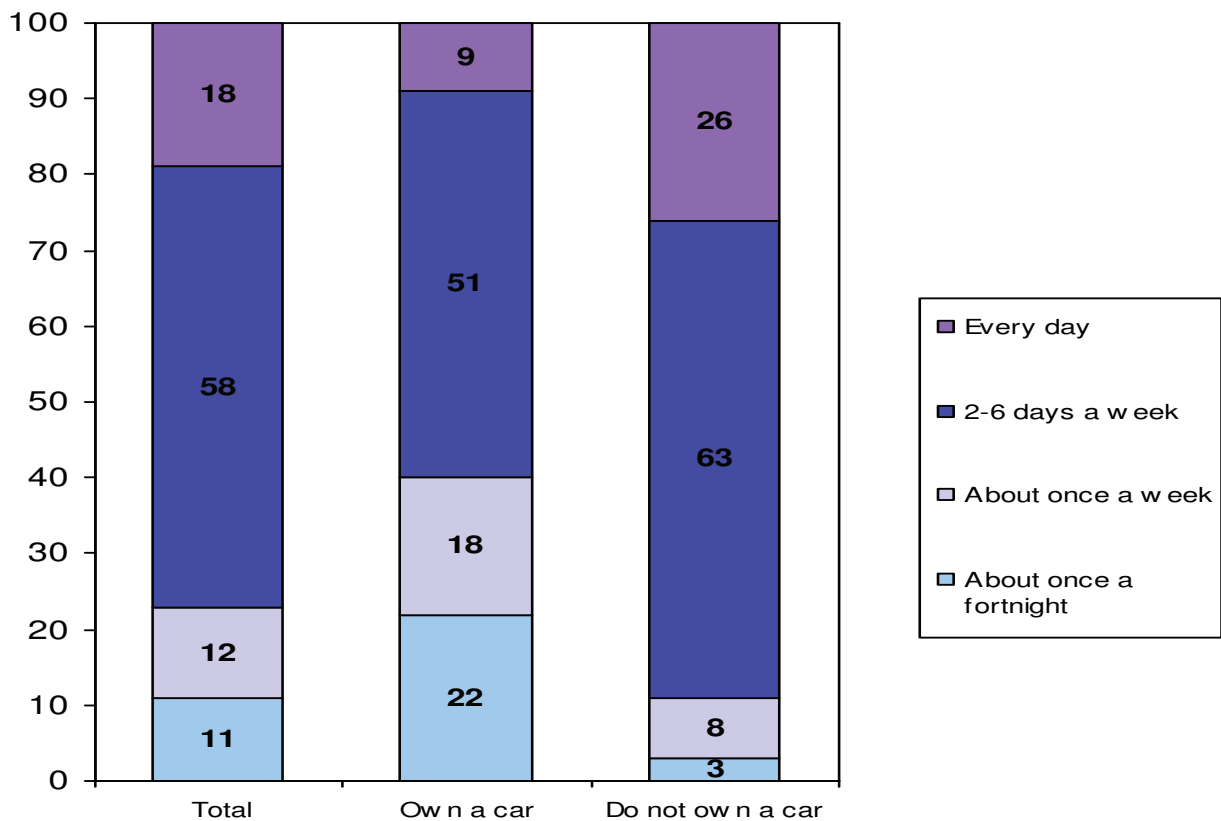
Frequency of use also varied by car ownership, with non car owners more frequent users than car owners; nine tenths (89%) of non car owners used the pass more than once a week compared to six out of ten (60%) of car owners (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.1: Frequency of using concessionary bus pass, by location (%s rounded)



Source: Q3 (all respondents) NB Numbers rounded

Figure 3.2: Frequency of using concessionary bus pass, by car ownership (%s rounded)



Source: Q3 (all respondents)

Respondents were asked a series of questions about how they used their concessionary bus pass.

Figure 3.3 below shows that the pass was used most commonly for essential household shopping trips, such as, food (88% of respondents ever used it for this purpose) and clothes (79% ever used)

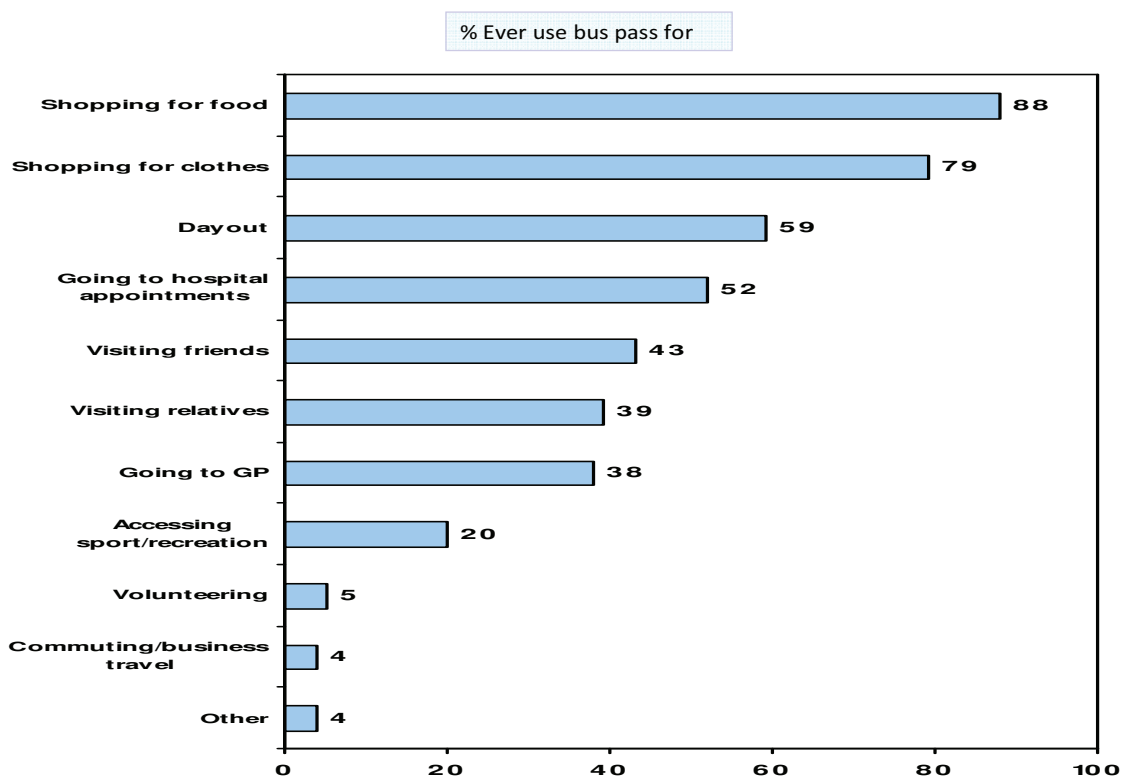
Use of the pass was not just confined to essential trips, but a large section of respondents also used the pass for leisure trips and for maintaining social networks:

- Days out/sightseeing (59%)
- Visiting friends (43%)
- Visiting relatives (39%)

The bus pass was also used by a large group of respondents for accessing health care and half (52%) used it to visit hospitals and just over a third (38%) used it to access GP services.

The bus pass was used by only a small minority of respondents for volunteering (5%) and commuting/business travel (4%)

Figure 3.3: Whether use Concessionary Bus Pass for type of trip



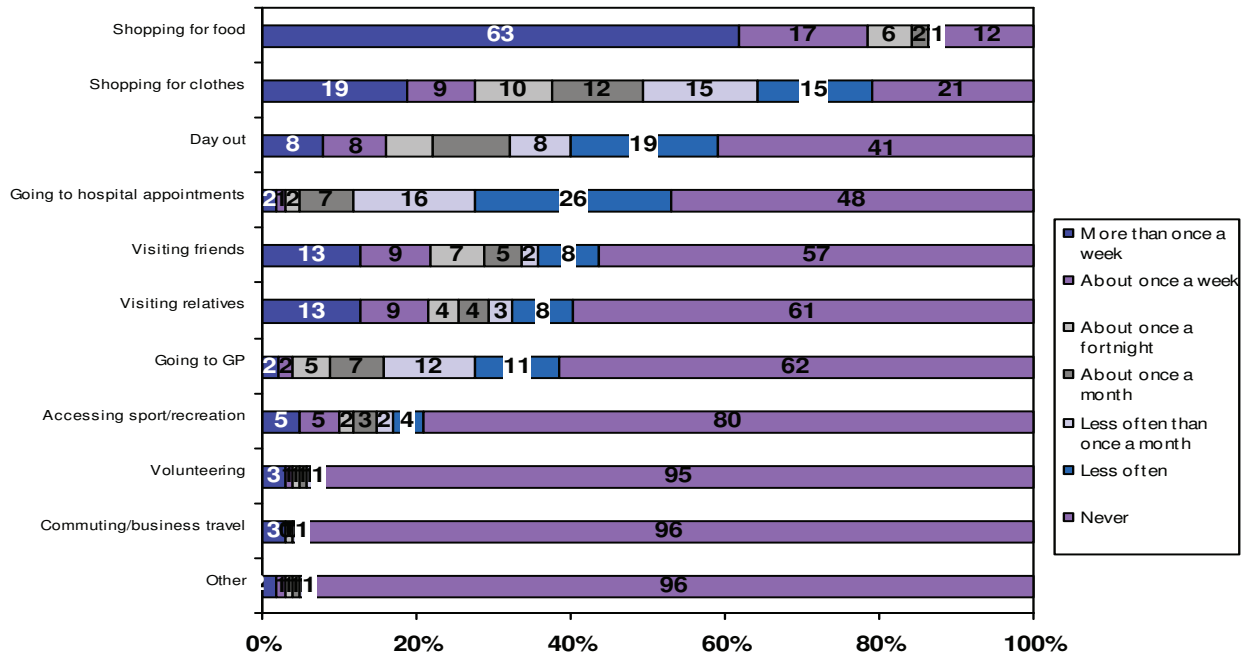
Source: Q4a (all respondents)

To understand further how bus passes were used, respondents were asked how frequently they used their bus passes for each purpose.

Figure 3.4 shows that the concessionary bus pass was used most frequently for food shopping trips (63% use it more than once a week for this purpose) and clothes shopping (19%).

These data suggest that the vast majority of all trips where the pass is used are for essential shopping trips.

Figure 3.4: Frequency of using Concessionary Bus Pass for type of trip



Source: Q4a (all respondents)

When using their concessionary bus pass, respondents were asked how far they had to travel for each type of trip that they conducted.

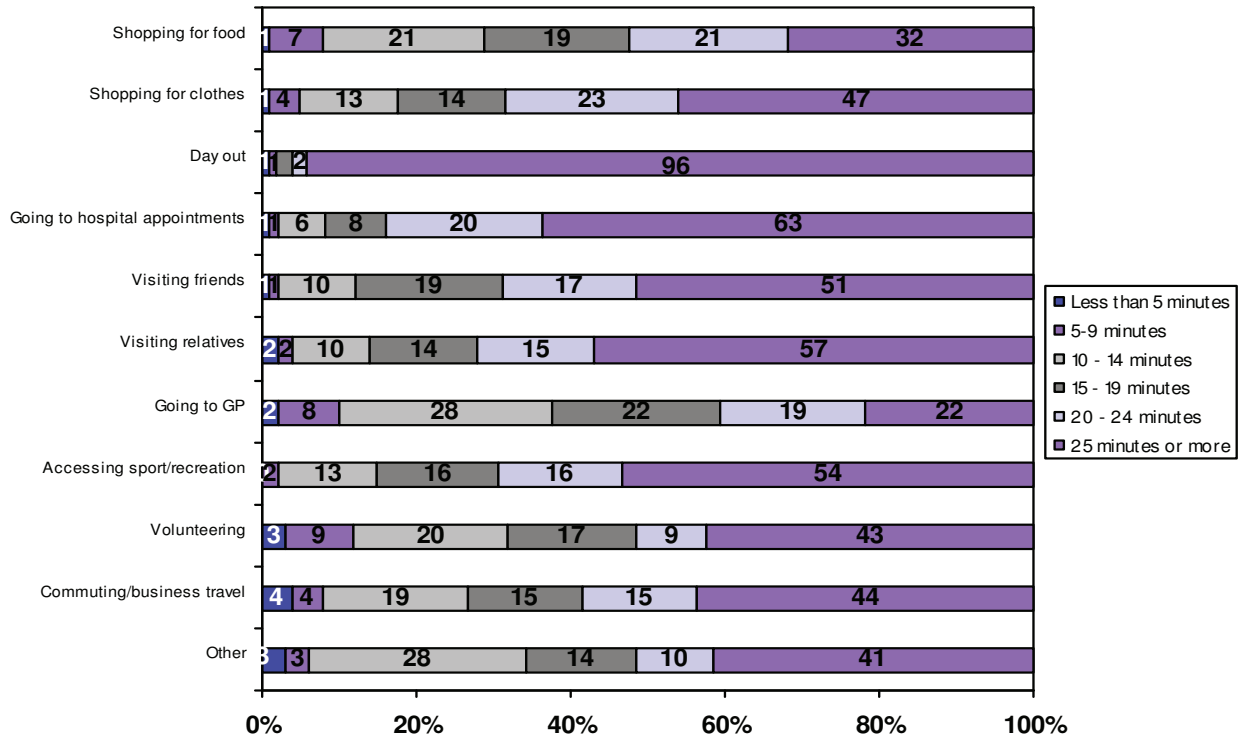
Figure 3.5 shows that the most common response for all trip types (apart from GPs) was 25 minutes or more. This suggests that for the majority of respondents services are not immediately on their doorstep and require a trip that is beyond walking distance.

There was a spread of journey times for *shopping for food* (the most frequently made trip type). While almost a third (32%) had to make a trip of 25 minutes or more, approximately a fifth had a trip of 10 – 14 minutes (21%), 15 – 19 minutes (19%) and 20 – 24 minutes (21%). However, fewer than one in ten (8%) had a trip of less than 10 minutes when shopping for food.

The length of trip required to access health services varied by hospital and GP. Hospital appointments required one of the longest trips, with almost two thirds (63%) requiring a trip of more than 25 minutes whereas trips to the GP

required one of the shortest trips (only 22% requiring a trip of 25 minutes or more).

Figure 3.5: Length of journey by trip type when using Concessionary Bus Pass



Source: Q4b (all respondents who use pass for trip type)

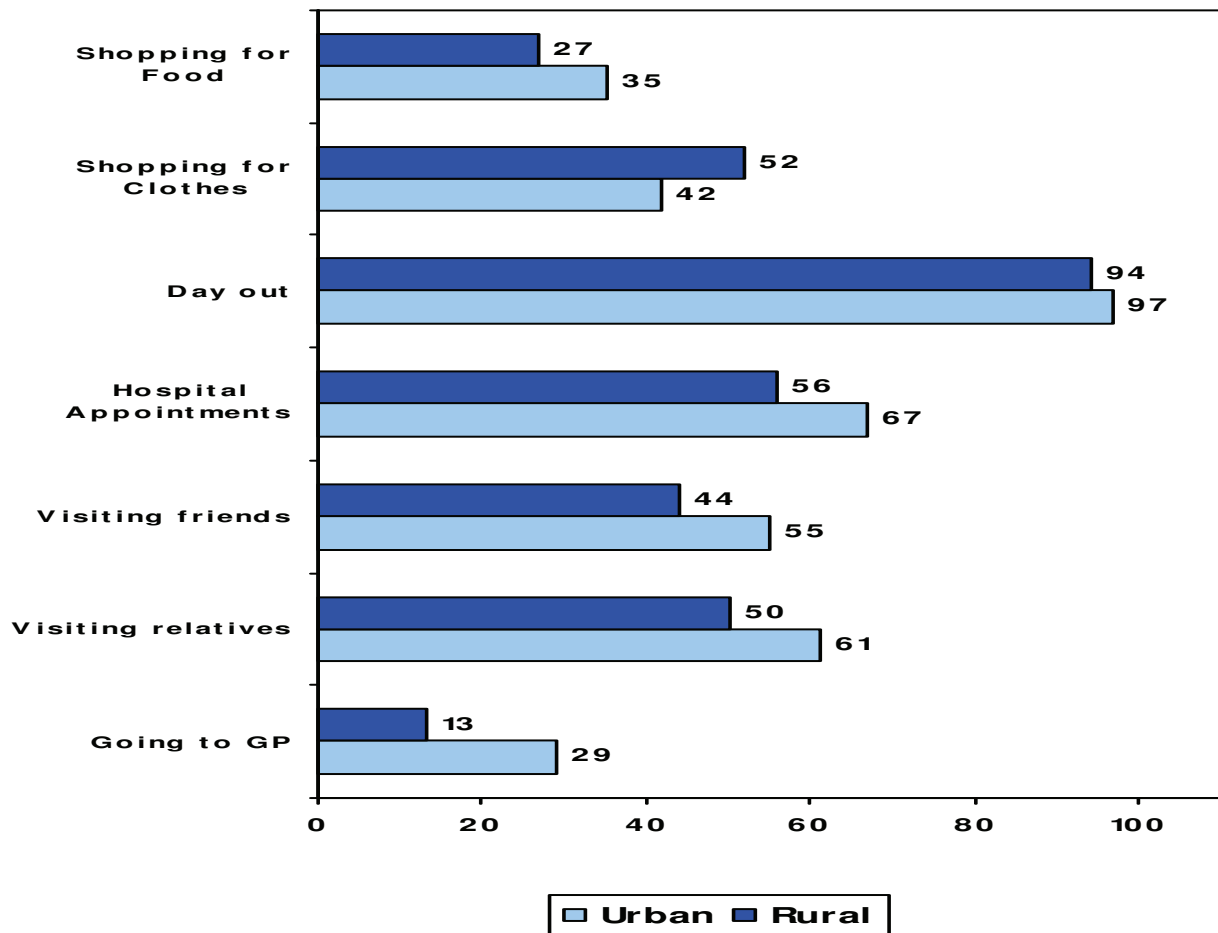
Figure 3.6 below looks at the percentage of respondents who had to make a trip of 25 minutes or more by urban and rural locations.

This shows that respondents interviewed in rural locations generally had a slightly shorter journey time than respondents in urban locations.

- Shopping for food (27% rural 25 minutes or more; 36% urban 25 minutes or more)
- Hospital appointments (56% rural; 67% urban)
- Visiting friends (44% rural; 55% urban)
- Visiting relatives (50% rural; 61% urban)
- Going to GP (13% rural; 29% urban)

Only trips for *shopping for clothes* were longer in rural locations (44% rural; 55% urban) suggesting less choice and availability in these locations and therefore a longer trip is required to achieve these.

Figure 3.6: Percentage of respondents whose journey is 25 minutes or more for trip type



Source: Q4b (all respondents who use pass for trip type)

3.2.2 Alternative methods of transport to the Concessionary Bus Pass

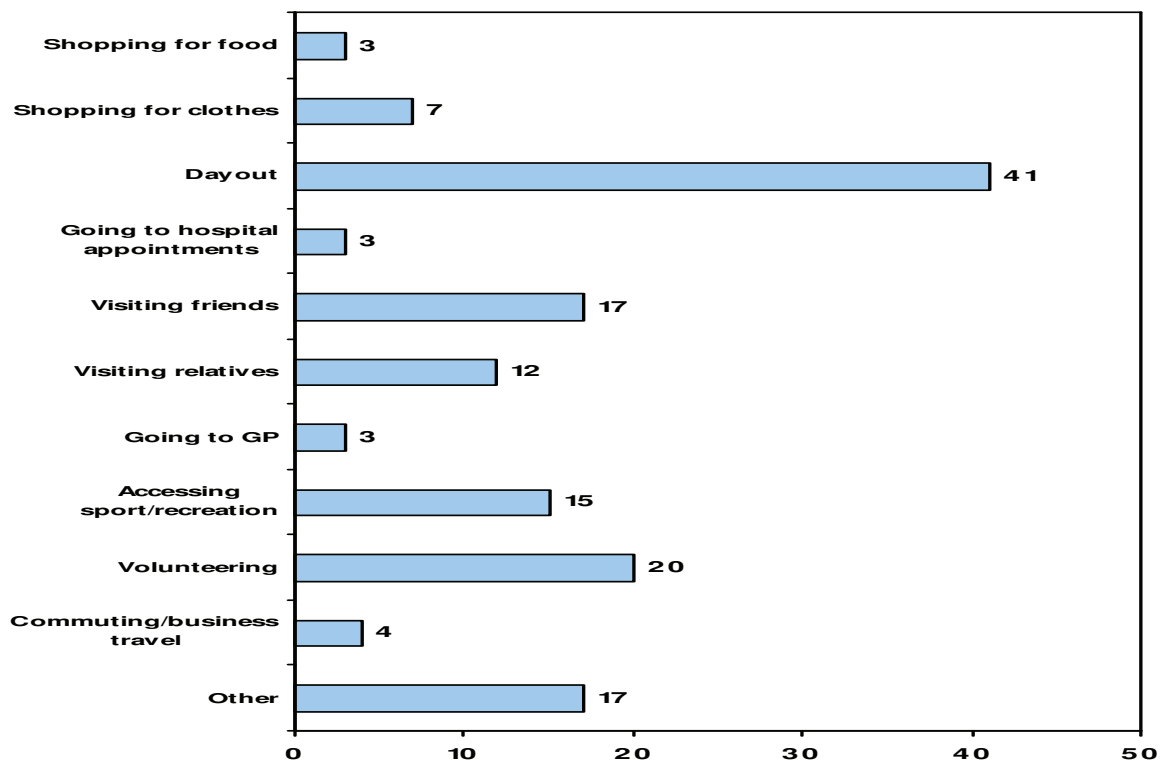
For each trip type that the respondent makes using his or her bus pass, they were asked how they would make the trip if they didn't have the concessionary bus pass.

Figure 3.7 below shows the percentage of respondents who would not make this type of trip if they did not have their concessionary bus pass.

These data show that the vast majority of respondents would still make essential trips, such as, food and clothes shopping trips. However, some respondents would no longer make some non essential trips, such as, days out (41% would no longer make trip), visiting friends (17%) and visiting relatives (12%)

The loss of the concessionary bus pass would also have an effect on those people who use the pass for volunteering activities, with a fifth (20%) saying that they would no longer make those trips.

Figure 3.7: Percentage of respondents who would no longer make trip type if didn't have Concessionary Bus Pass



Source: Q6 (all respondents who use pass for trip type)

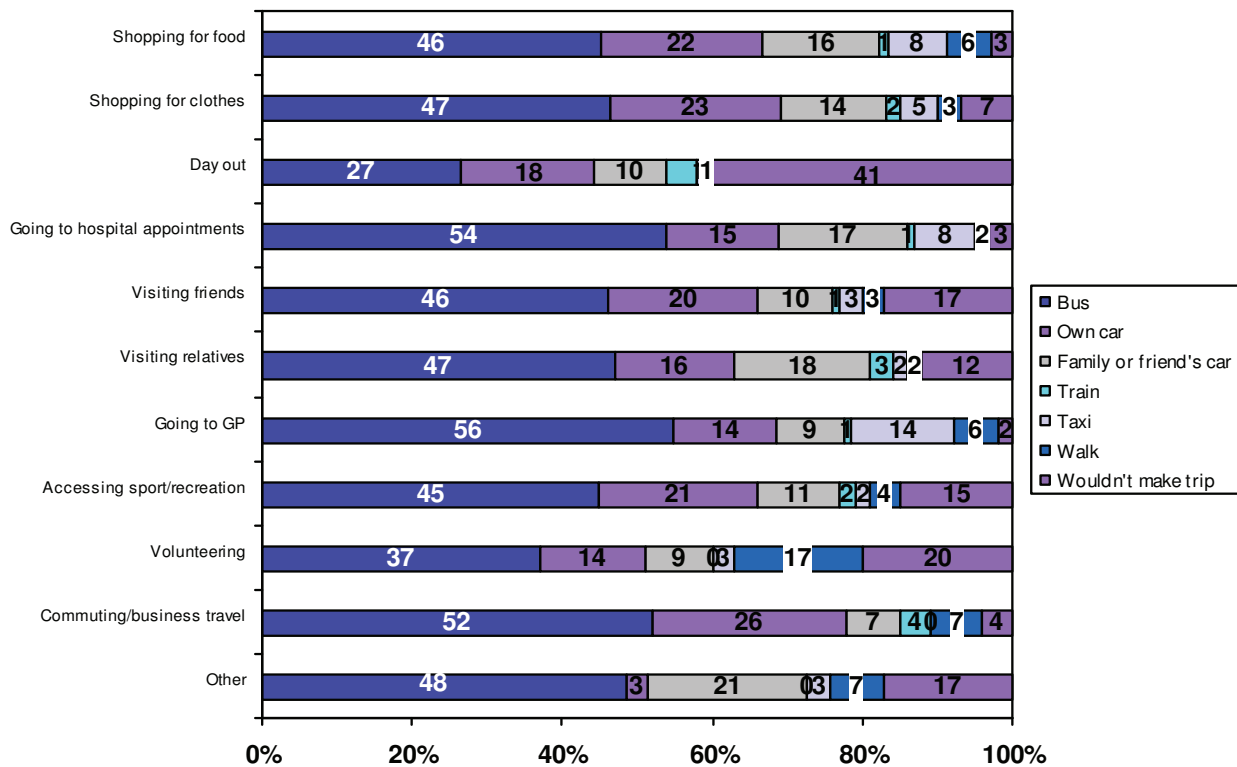
In terms of the type of transport respondents would use if they no longer had the pass, the results are similar for each type of trip made (Figure 3.8).

For most types of trip, just under a half would continue using the bus on a paid basis, with approximately a third switching to cars. Of those who would

switch to cars, most would use their own car but a large proportion would use the car of a friend or family member.

For example, for shopping for food trips just under half (46%) would use the bus, a fifth (22%) would use their own car and one in six (16%) would use the car of a family member or friend.

Figure 3.8: Alternative method of transport respondent would use if didn't have Concessionary Bus Pass



Source: Q6 (all respondents who use pass for trip type)

The method of transport that respondents would use if respondents no longer had the bus pass varies considerably by car ownership.

For car owners, if the concessionary bus pass did not exist most would switch from bus to car. For example, Table 3.2 shows that for *shopping for food* only a quarter (24%) would continue to use the bus and over half (54%) would use their own car instead and a further one in six (17%) would use the car of a family member or friend.

The fact that many car owners claimed that they would switch to cars without the bus pass suggests that the pass was successful in getting these respondents to use the bus more as a method of transport.

For those respondents who do not own a car, the majority would continue to use the bus with a small minority switching to car (using the car of friends or family).

For example, for *shopping for food* six out of ten (60%) non car users would continue to use the bus and one in seven (14%) would use the car of a family member or friend. One in eight (12%) would use a taxi for food shopping trips.

While the use of taxis was generally low for most trip types, there was a small group of non car owners who would switch to taxis for some trips:

- Shopping for food (12% of non car owners)
- Going to GP (18% of non car owners)
- Hospital appointments (10% of non car owners)

Given the frequency of *shopping for food* trips this switch to taxis could incur considerable expense for these respondents.

Table 3.2: Alternative mode of transport if concessionary bus pass did not exist

	Shopping for food		Shopping for clothes		Sightseeing/Day Out		Going to hospital appointments	
	Own Car	Do not own Car	Own Car	Do not own Car	Own Car	Do not own Car	Own Car	Do not own Car
Sample size	N=229	N=353	N=213	N=309	N=144	N=246	N=108	N=239
Bus	24%	61%	23%	63%	17%	32%	21%	69%
Car – own car	54%	1%	54%	1%	48%	0%	49%	0%
Car – belong to other	17%	14%	15%	13%	10%	11%	24%	14%
Taxi	1%	12%	0%	8%	1%	2%	3%	10%
Train	0%	1%	2%	2%	5%	3%	0%	0%
Walk	4%	7%	2%	4%	1%	0%	2%	2%
Wouldn't make trip	2%	4%	2%	10%	21%	52%	2%	3%

Source: Q6 (all respondents who use pass for trip type)

Table 3.3: Alternative mode of transport if concessionary bus pass did not exist

	Visiting Friends		Visiting Relatives		Going to GP	
	Own Car	Do not own Car	Own Car	Do not own Car	Own Car	Do not own Car
Sample size					N=65	N=186
Bus	24%	56%	27%	57%	22%	68%
Car – own car	60%	0%	49%	0%	54%	0%
Car – belong to other	13%	9%	19%	18%	17%	6%
Taxi	0%	5%	0%	3%	3%	18%
Train	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%	0%
Walk	0%	5%	1%	3%	3%	7%
Wouldn't make trip	2%	24%	4%	16%	2%	2%

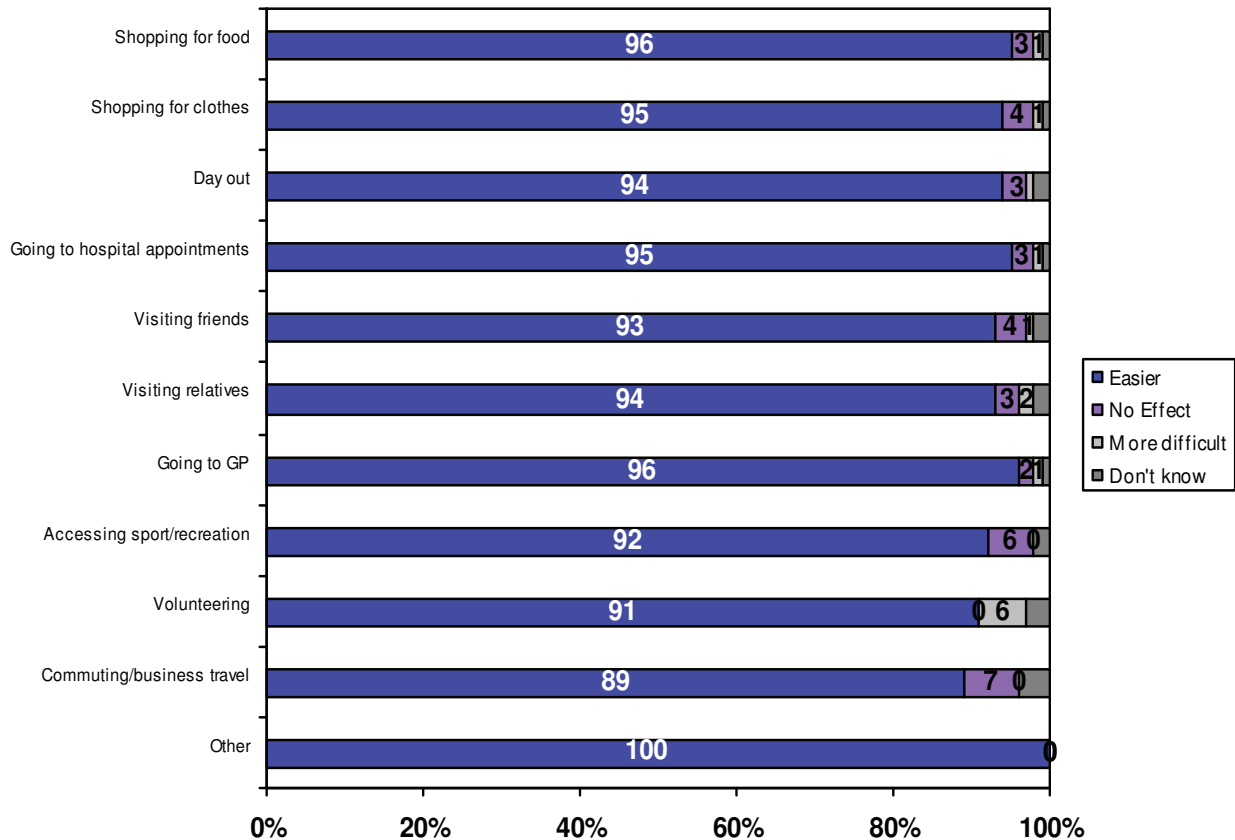
Source: Q6 (all respondents who use pass for trip type)

3.2.3 Opinion of effect of Concessionary Bus Pass on ease of travel

For each type of trip that respondents made using the pass, they were asked whether having their concessionary bus pass made it easier or more difficult to do that activity.

Figure 3.9 below shows that there was almost universal agreement that having the bus pass made it easier to conduct each trip type.

Figure 3.9: Whether Concessionary Bus Pass makes conducting activity easier or more difficult



Source: Q5 (all respondents who use pass for trip type)

3.2.4 Attitudes towards Concessionary Bus Passes

Respondents were presented with a series of attitude statements about the concessionary bus pass scheme. These statements were designed to provide an insight into the role of the bus pass on respondents’ social and economic well being. Figure 3.10 indicates the level of agreement or disagreement with the individual attitude statements.

Quality of life

There was a strong feeling among respondents that their quality of life would suffer if the bus pass did not exist.

Nearly eight out of ten (78%) respondents agreed that they *would feel more lonely and housebound without my bus pass*. The strength of feeling was extremely strong with six out of ten (62%) agreeing strongly.

A similar result was also found for the statement *without a bus pass my quality of life would suffer* (81% agreed overall, 66% agreed strongly).

Helping the community and family

There was mixed view on the impact of losing the concessionary bus pass on *helping out family*. While a third (35%) agreed that it would mean that they wouldn't be able to help their family out, nearly four out of ten (39%) disagreed.

Only one in seven (14%) felt that without the pass they wouldn't be able to volunteer. However, the incidence of volunteering was low amongst the sample and therefore low agreement with this statement is to be expected.

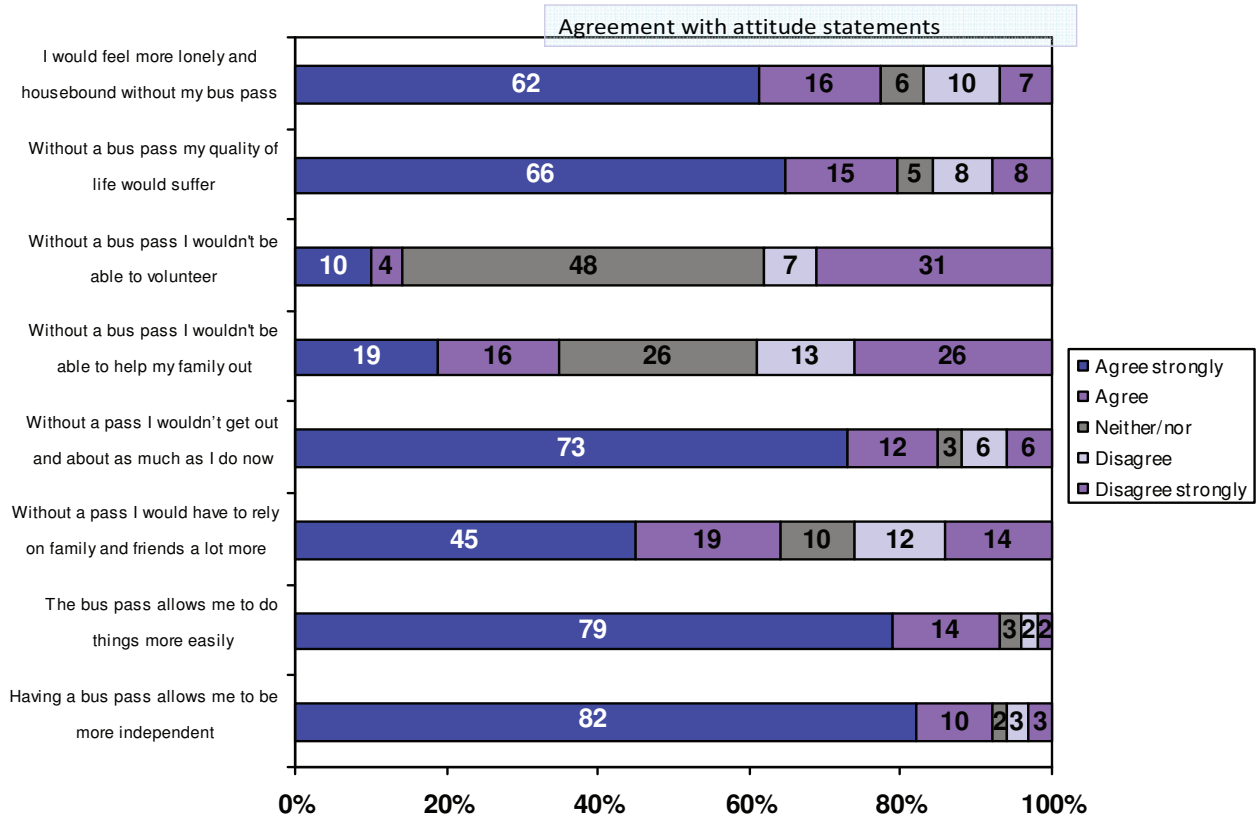
Independence

There was very strong agreement that the removal of the bus pass would have a detrimental affect on the independence of respondents:

- *Without a pass I wouldn't get out and about as much* (85% agreed; 73% agreed strongly).
- *The bus pass allows me to do things more easily* (93% agreed; 79% agreed strongly).
- *Having a bus pass allows me to be independent* (92% agreed; 82% agreed strongly).

There was a more mixed opinion about whether or not they would have to *rely on family and friends a lot more*. While the majority (64%) agreed that they would have to rely on family and friends a lot more without the pass, a quarter (26%) disagreed.

Figure 3.10: Agreement with statements about Concessionary Bus Pass



Source: Q10 (all respondents)

Attitude statements were also asked to ascertain respondents' views on alternatives to the current system and the economic impact of not having a concessionary bus pass. Figure 3.11 indicates the level of agreement or disagreement with these statements.

Alternatives to current system

There was extensive opposition to changes to the current system.

Nearly nine out of ten (88%) respondents disagreed that the bus pass should be replaced with half price travel (69% disagreed strongly). Less than one in ten respondents (8%) agreed with this option.

There was also strong opposition to the idea that bus passes should only be used off peak (79% disagree; 55% disagree strongly). While opposition to

this idea was still strong there was slightly more agreement (14%) than with half price travel (presumably because bus travel would still be free, albeit restricted).

Respondents did not feel that the *concessionary bus pass was an unnecessary burden on taxpayers*. Three quarters of respondents (76%) disagreed with this statement and the fact that respondents felt that it was affordable to taxpayers could partly explain why there was such opposition to changes to the current system.

Economic impact

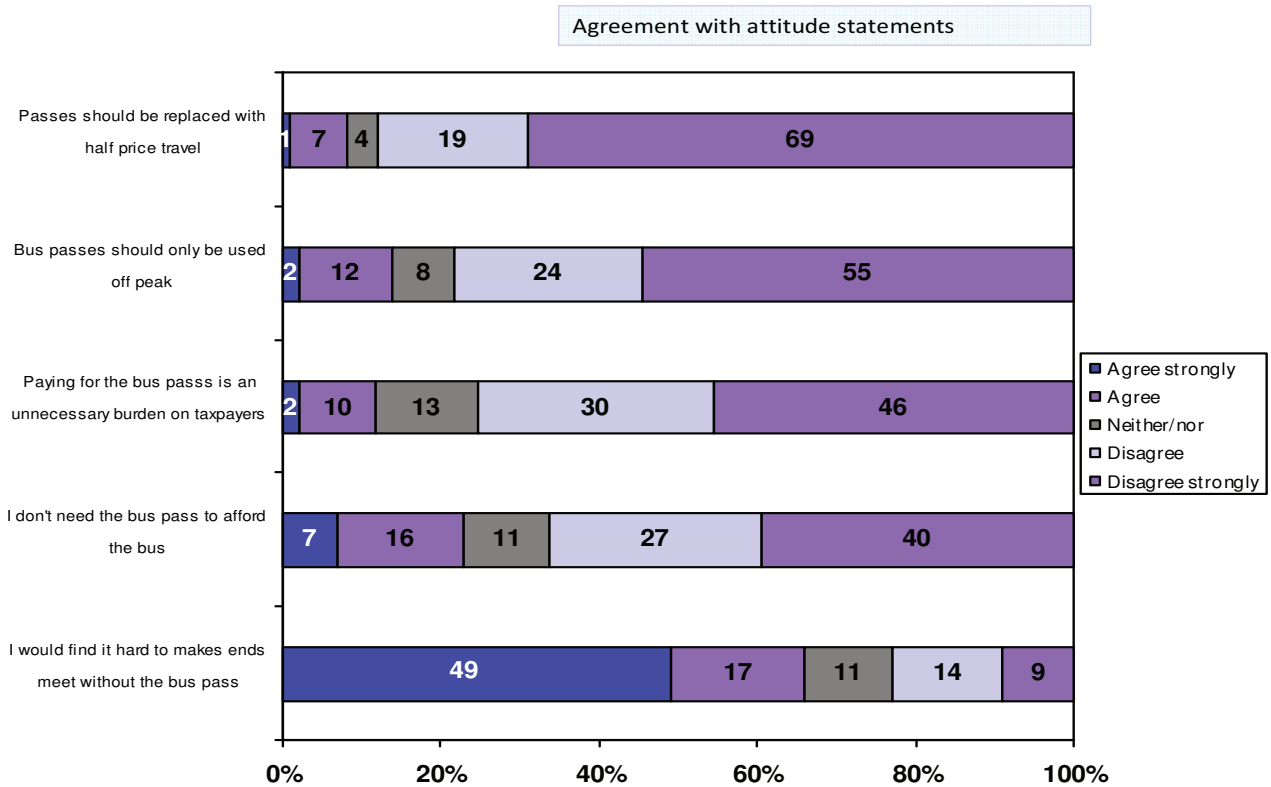
The majority of respondents felt that removal of the bus pass would negatively affect their economic circumstances.

Two thirds (67%) disagreed that *I don't need the concessionary bus pass to afford the bus*, with four out of ten (40%) disagreeing strongly.

Similarly, two thirds (66%) agreed that *I would find it hard to make ends meet without the bus pass*.

For both the above statements just under a quarter of respondents felt *that they would be able to make ends meet without the pass and afford the bus without the pass*.

Figure 3.11: Agreement with statements about Concessionary Bus Pass



Source: Q10 (all respondents)

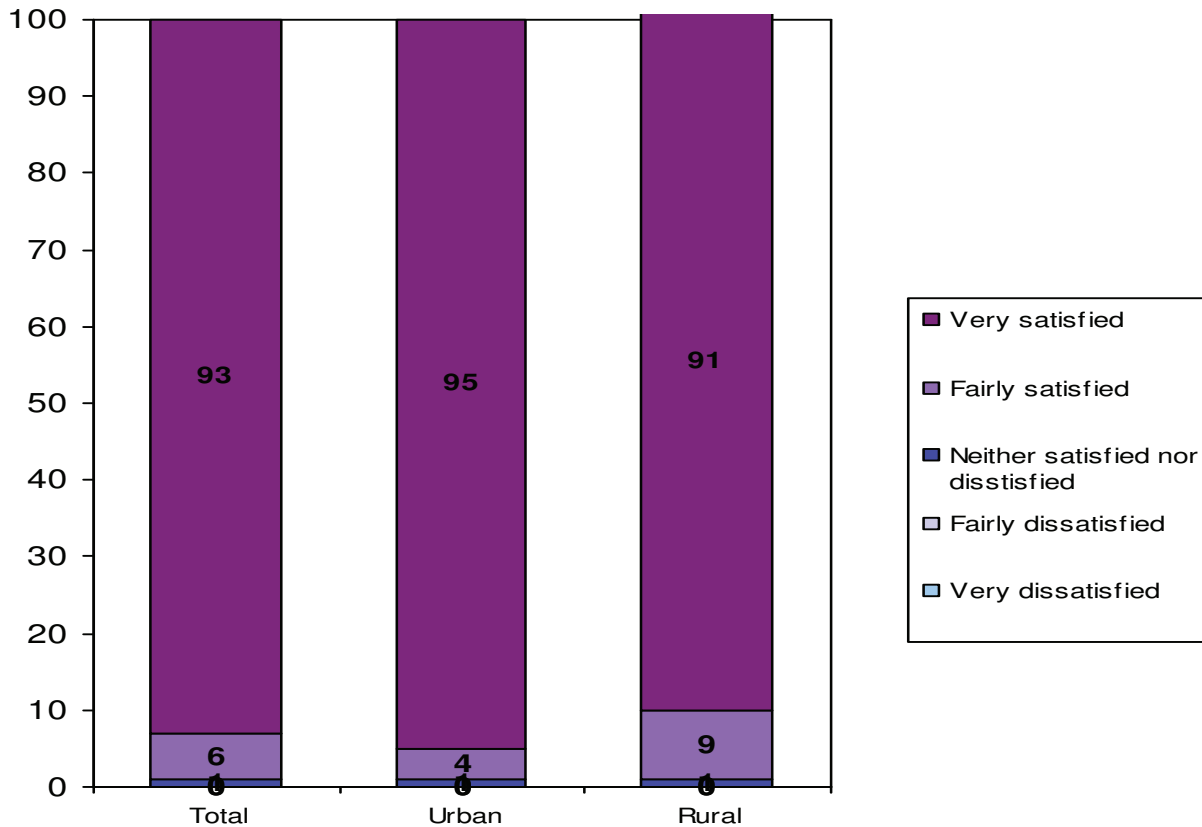
3.2.5 Satisfaction with Concessionary Bus Passes

Using a five point satisfaction scale respondents were asked to state how satisfied they were with their concessionary bus pass.

Satisfaction with the pass was virtually universal with over nine out of ten (93%) respondents very satisfied and a further 6% fairly satisfied.

There was little difference between respondents interviewed at urban locations and those interviewed at rural locations and satisfaction was extremely high among both sets of respondents, as shown in Figure 3.12 below.

Figure 3.12: Overall satisfaction with Concessionary Bus Pass



Source: Q7 (all respondents)

Respondents were then asked to say what the main benefits that the concessionary bus pass offers them; respondents were asked not to mention the obvious cost benefits of having a free pass. The question was asked spontaneously and without prompting.

Many of the responses reflected the freedom and independence that the bus pass offers respondents, as Table 3.4 shows. The most common answer was *freedom to get out of the house* (29%). Comments on a similar theme also received relatively high mentions: *can go out more* (14%), *independence* (8%) and *no need to rely on others* (7%).

The ease and the convenience of the bus pass scheme were also mentioned: *convenience* (14%), *no parking worries* (9%), *easy to get into town/shopping* (7%) and *makes life easier* (6%).

Table 3.4: Main benefits that the concessionary bus pass offers

Benefit	Total
	N=662
Freedom to get out of the house	29%
Convenience	14%
Can go out more regularly	14%
Can go to more places/where you wouldn't normally go	9%
No parking worries	9%
Independence	8%
Peace of mind/no worrying about cost	8%
Easy to get into town/shopping	7%
Less stressful than by car	7%
No need to rely on others	7%
Keeps you fit/active/well being	6%
Meet friends/people	6%
Makes life easier	6%

Source: Q8

3.2.6 Satisfaction with specific aspects of the bus service

Using a five point satisfaction scale respondents were also asked to say how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with specific aspects of the bus services that they use.

Satisfaction with all aspects of service was extremely high, with no areas receiving any meaningful levels of dissatisfaction (Figure 3.13).

Satisfaction was the highest for:

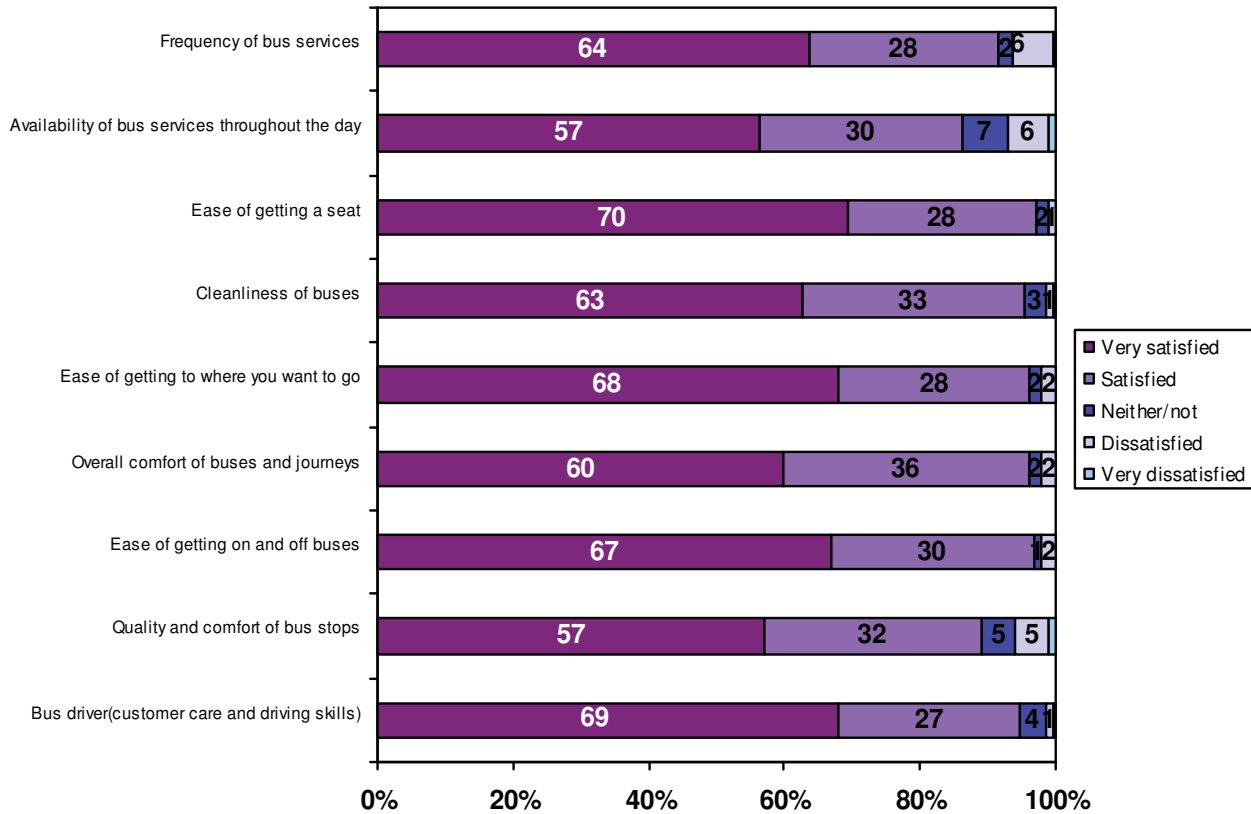
- Ease of getting a seat (70% very satisfied)
- The bus driver (their customer care and driving skills) (69% very satisfied)
- Ease of getting to where you want to go (68% very satisfied)

Satisfaction was still high, but slightly lower for:

- Availability of buses throughout the day (57% very satisfied)
- Overall quality and comfort of the bus stops (57% very satisfied)

Satisfaction was also high for ease of getting on and off the buses (67% very satisfied) indicating no accessibility issues.

Figure 3.13: Satisfaction with specific aspects of bus service



Source: Q9 (all respondents)

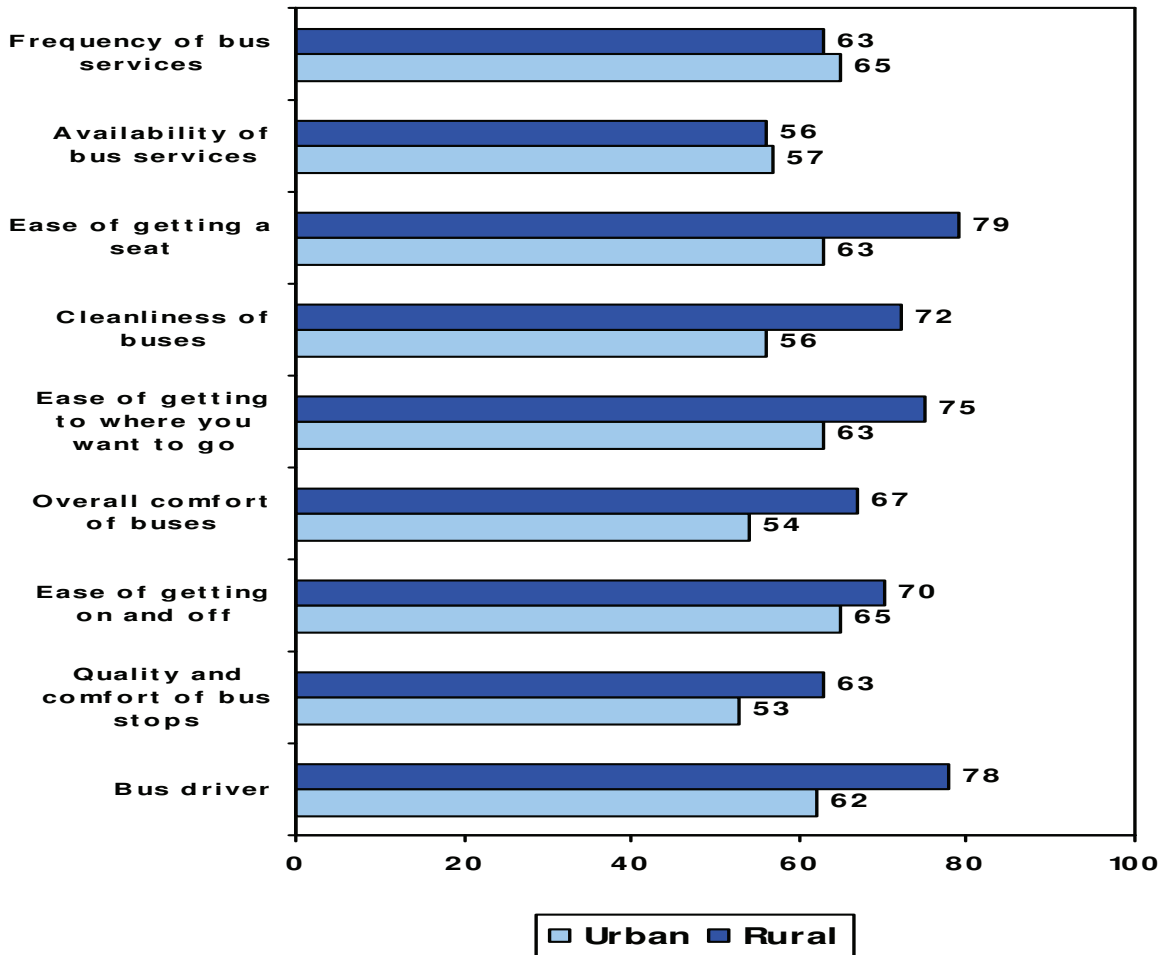
Figure 3.14 below compares satisfaction with specific aspects of the bus service by urban and rural locations. Because levels of satisfaction were so high comparisons have been made on the percentage of respondents providing the most positive response of *very satisfied*.

This analysis shows that respondents interviewed at rural locations were more likely to be very satisfied with specific aspects of the service than those in urban locations.

Differences between urban and rural locations were largest on:

- *Ease of getting a seat* (79% very satisfied rural; 63% urban)
- *Cleanliness of buses* (72% very satisfied rural; 56% urban)
- *The bus driver* (78% very satisfied rural; 62% urban)

Figure 3.14: Satisfaction with specific aspects of bus service by urban/rural locations



Source: Q9 (All respondents)

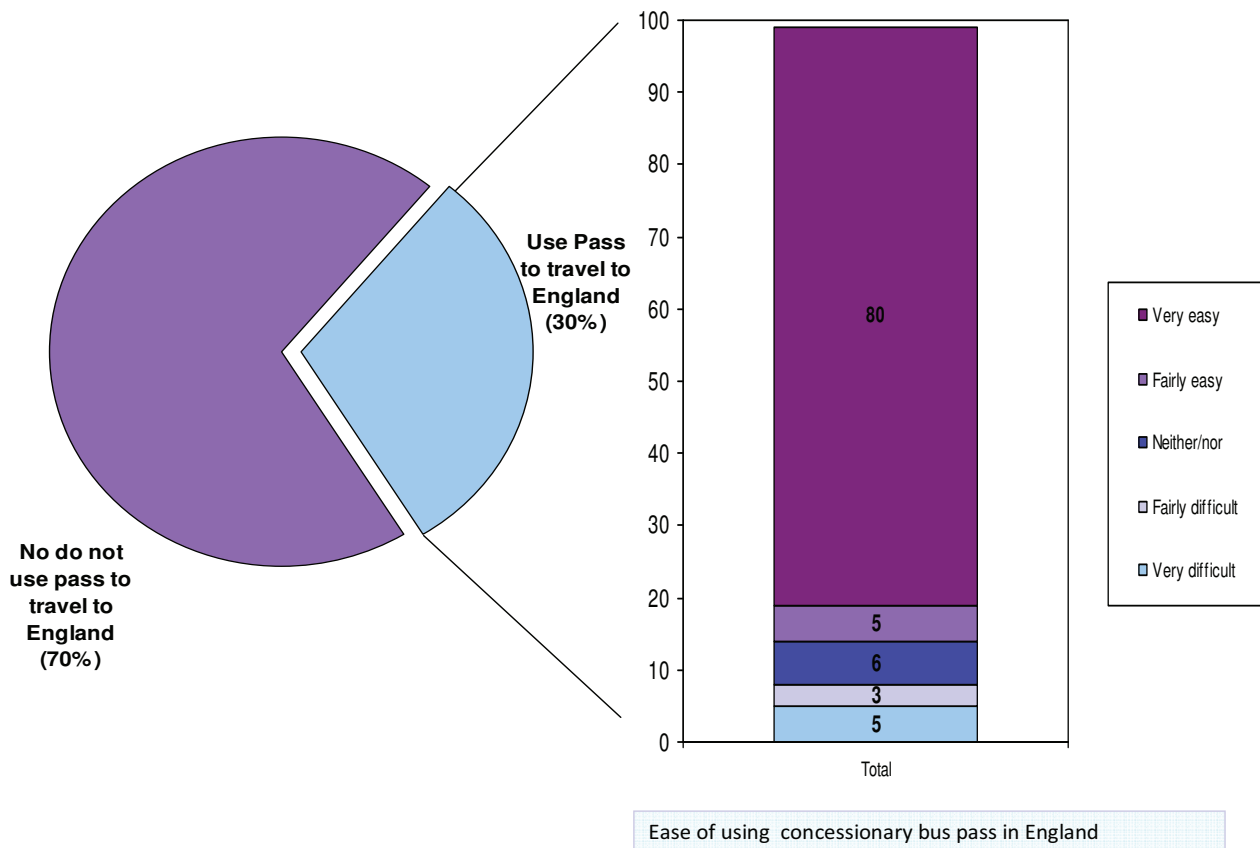
3.2.7 Use of Concessionary Bus Pass in England

Respondents were asked whether or not they used their bus pass to make trips from Wales to England.

Figure 3.15 below shows that just under a third (30%) of respondents had ever made this type of trip.

Respondents were then asked how easy or difficult it was to use the pass for this type of trip. The vast majority (85%) found this type of trip easy with only one in 12 (8%) stating that it was difficult.

Figure 3.15: Whether respondent has made trip from Wales to England/Ease of use for this type of trip



Source: Q11/Q12 (All respondents)

3.3 Effect of car ownership on opinion of the concessionary bus pass

Analysis of the data was performed comparing car owners with those who do not own a car. This analysis has revealed some large differences between these groups in terms of their demographic profile, their use of the bus pass and the effect that its withdrawal would have on their social and economic well being.

3.3.1 Profile of car ownership

Tables 4.5 to 4.7 below provide a profile of those respondents who do not own a car. It can be seen that those who do not own a car are more likely to be:

- Women (non car owners 69%, car owners 58%)
- Aged 70 years or more (non car owners 64%, car owners 48%)
- Disabled (non car owners 30%, car owners 17%)

Table 3.5: Profile of car ownership by gender

	Own car	Do not own car
Sample Size	N=282	N=380
Male	42%	31%
Female	58%	69%

Source: B1 (all respondents)

Table 3.6: Profile of car ownership by age

	Own car	Do not own car
	N=281	N=380
60 – 69 years	52%	35%
70 – 79 years	37%	44%
80+ years	11%	20%

Source: B2 (all respondents)

Table 3.7: Profile of car ownership by disability

	Own Car	Do not own Car
	N=282	N=380
Consider self to be disabled	17%	30%
Do no consider self to be disabled	83%	70%

Source: B4 (all respondents)

As can be seen from Table 3.8 below, the majority of respondents either did not know or refused to provide their annual household income.

However, from what data that do exist it can be seen that those who own a car appear to have a higher household income than those who do not own a car.

While these data are too incomplete to form any definite conclusions they do indicate that car ownership could be a relatively good surrogate measure for wealth.

Table 3.8: Annual Household Income by Car Ownership

	Own Car	Do not own Car
	N=282	N=380
Less than £5,000	1%	16%
£6,000 – £10,000	5%	16%
£11,000 - £15,000	8%	6%
£16,000 - £20,000	5%	1%
More than £20,000	3%	0%
Refused	67%	47%
Don't know	11%	13%

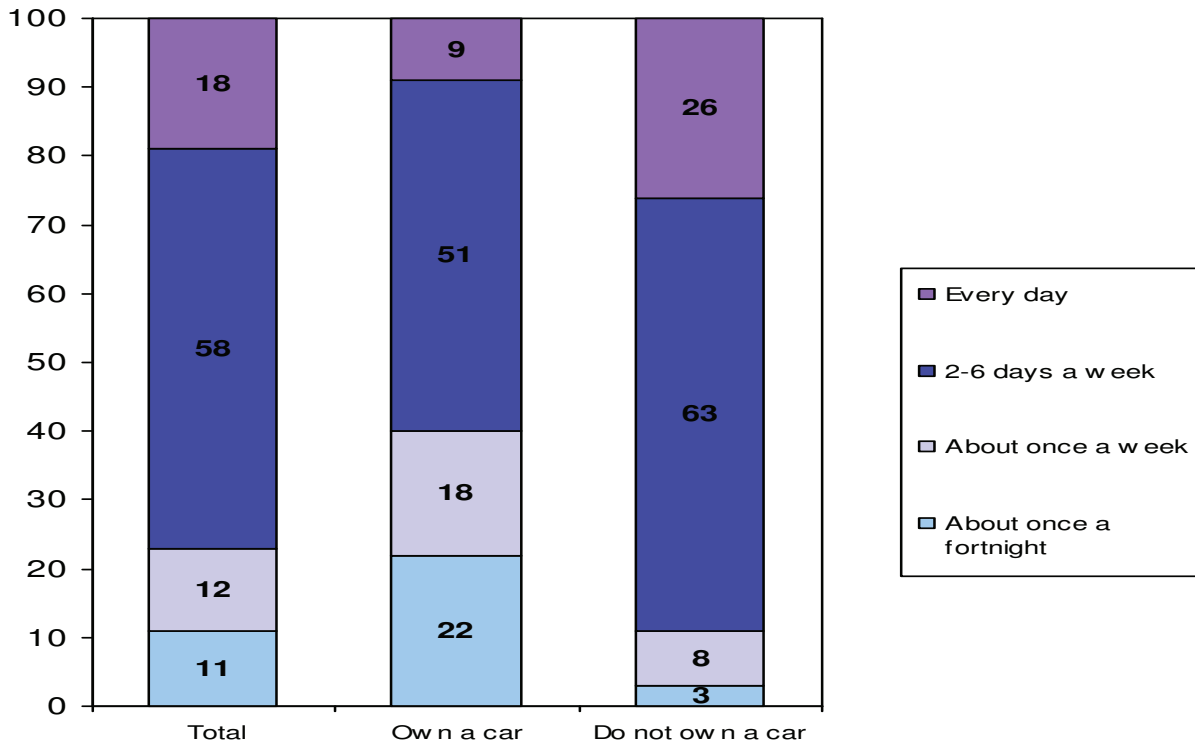
Source: B5 (all respondents)

3.3.2 Car ownership and use of the concessionary bus pass

As can be seen in Figure 3.16 below, frequency of use of the bus pass varied by car ownership, with non car owners more frequent users than car owners; nine tenths (89%) of non car owners used the pass more than once a week compared to six out of ten (60%) of car owners.

For non car owners the concessionary pass is therefore a more essential means of transport than for car owners.

Figure 3.16: Frequency of using Concessionary Bus Pass



Source: Q1 (all respondents)

As well as frequency of use, non car owners use the bus pass for a broader range of trip types than car owners.

Figure 3.17 below shows the percentage who ever use the bus pass for any of the listed trip types.

While both groups were highly likely to use the pass for essential *food shopping* trips, non car owners were slightly more likely to do so (non car owners 93%, car owners 81%).

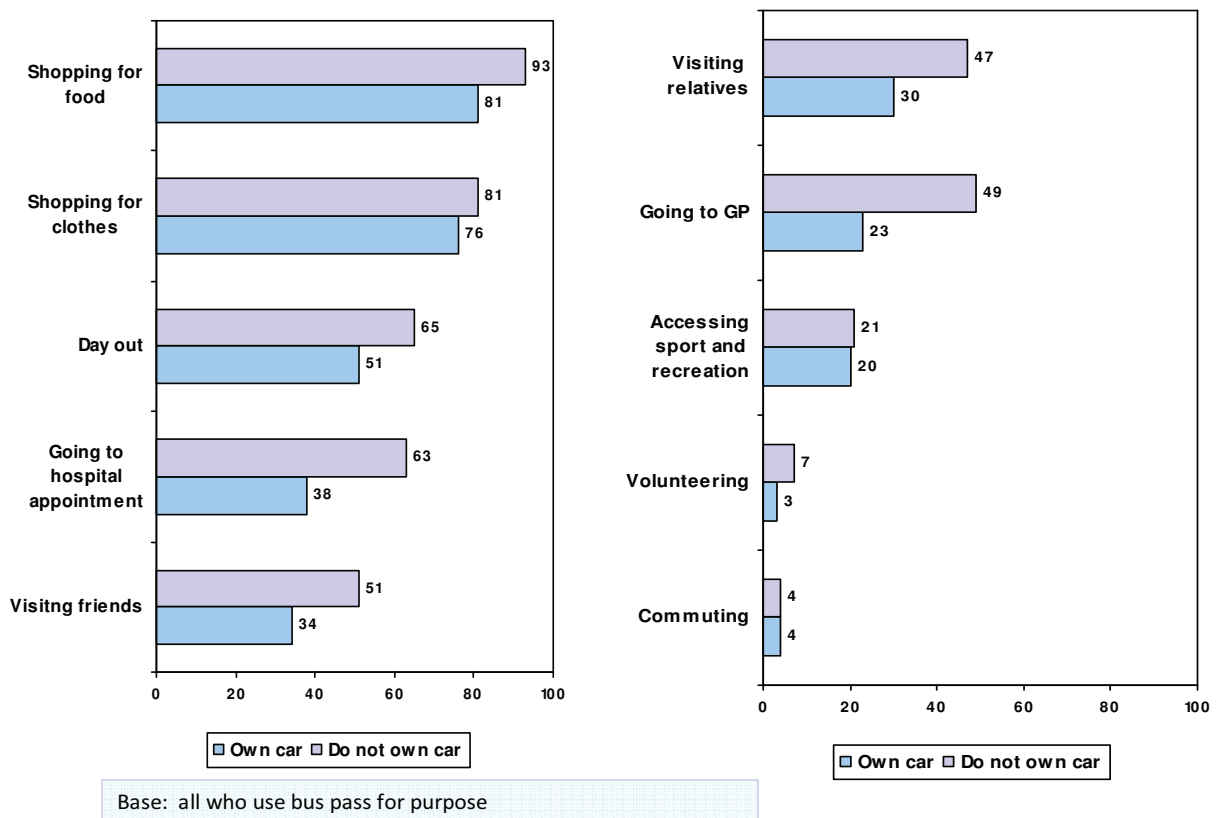
Non car owners were also much more likely than car owners to use the pass for maintaining social contacts, such as:

- *Visiting friends* (non car owners 51%, car owners 34%)
- *Visiting relatives* (non car owners 47%, car owners 30%)

The concessionary bus pass was also more likely to be used by non car owners to access health services than car owners:

- *Visits to GP* (non car owners 49%, car owners 23%)
- *Hospital appointment* (non car owners 63%, car owners 38%)

Figure 3.17: Whether use Concessionary Bus Pass for type of trip

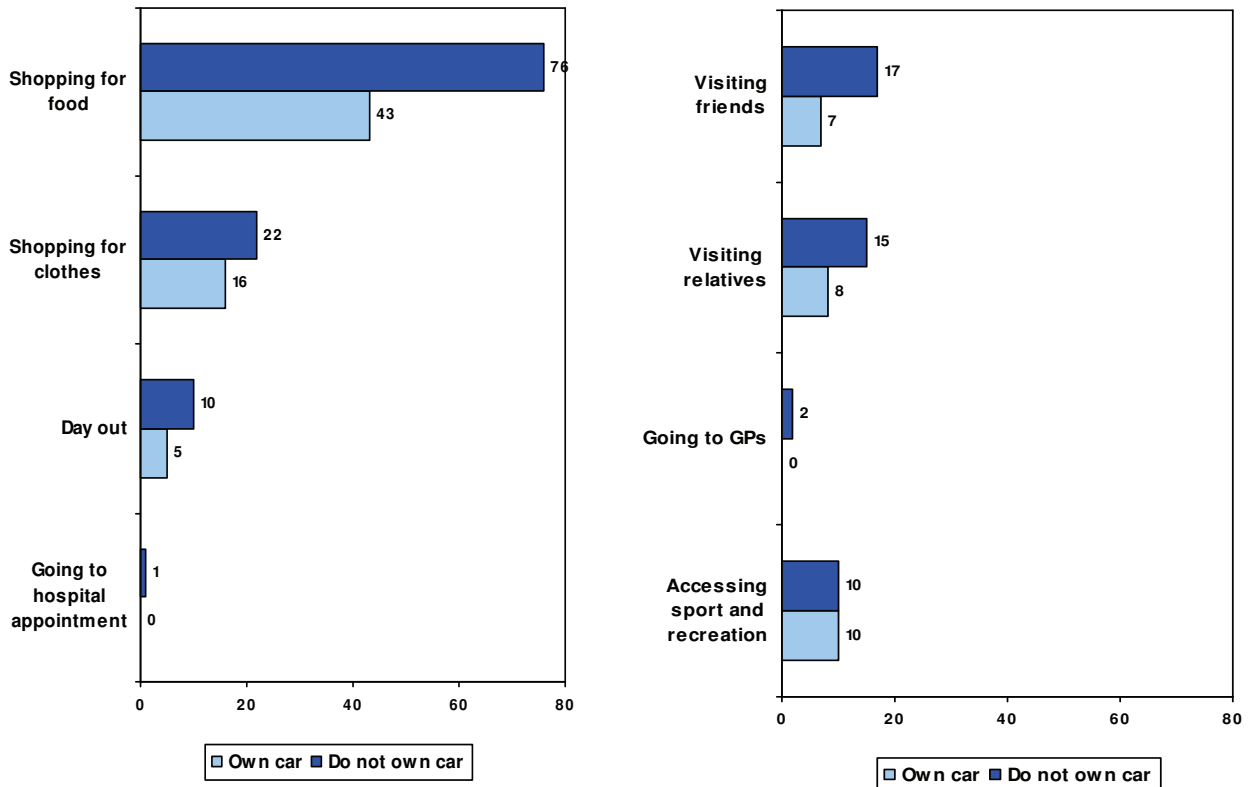


Source: Q4a (all respondents)

Figure 3.18 below also shows that, not only are non car owners more likely to use the bus pass for each trip type, they are also more likely to use it more frequently than non car owners.

For example, based on those respondents who use the concessionary bus pass for *shopping for food*, non car owners use the pass more frequently than car owners for this purpose (non car owners 76% more than once a week, car owners 43% more than once a week).

Figure 3.18: Percentage of respondents who use Concessionary Bus Pass more than once a week



Base: all who use bus pass for purpose

Source: Q4a (all respondents who use bus pass for purpose)

3.3.3 Car ownership and opinion of the concessionary bus pass

Analysis of attitude statements show that the concessionary bus pass has more impact on the lives of non car owners and its removal would have a more serious impact on their social and economic well being (Figure 3.19).

Given the fact that the profile of non car owners is more likely to comprise women, older people, disabled people and those with lower household incomes it can be concluded that its withdrawal would have a more negative effect on the more disadvantaged groups within society.

Quality of Life

Non car owners were markedly more likely to feel that their quality of life would suffer if the concessionary bus pass was withdrawn and that they would have to rely more on family and friends:

- Without a pass my quality of life would suffer (non car owners 96% agreed, car owners 58%)
- I would feel more lonely and housebound without the bus pass (non car owners 92% agreed, car owners 58%)

Independence

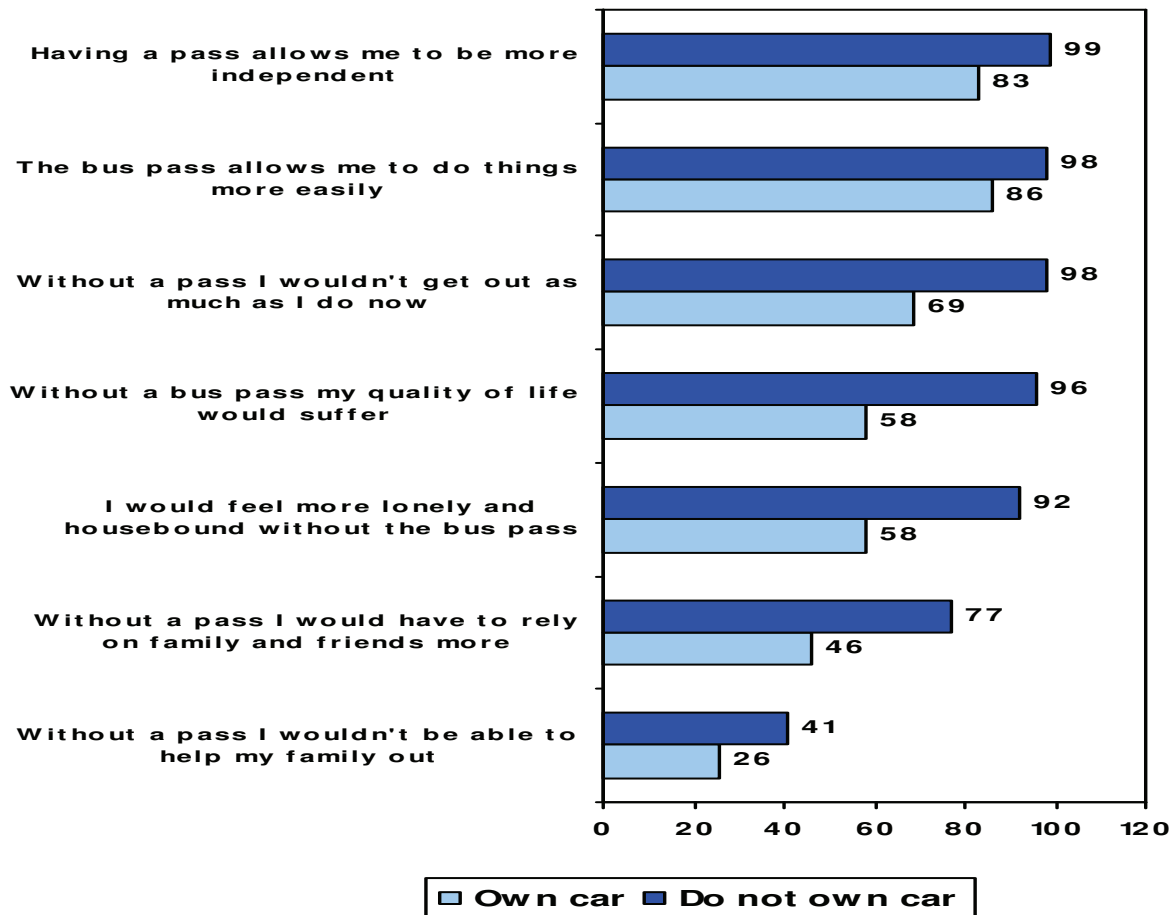
The bus pass enables those without a car to be more independent and get things done without the help of family and friends. The concessionary bus pass also allows car owners to feel more independent, but to a slightly lesser degree.

- Having a pass allows me to be more independent (non car owners 99% agreed, car owners 83%)
- The bus pass allows me to do things more easily (non car owners 98% agreed, car owners 86%)
- Without a pass I would have to rely on family and friends (non car owners 77% agreed, car owners 46%)

There is a strong feeling among non car owners that removal of the pass would mean that they would not be able to get out the house as much as they do now:

- Without a pass I wouldn't get out as much as I do now (non car owners 98% agreed, car owners 69%)

Figure 3.19: Agreement with statements about Concessionary Bus Pass by car ownership



Source: Q10 (all respondents)

Alternatives to current system

The views of non car owners and car owners were broadly similar on alternatives to the current system, with both groups having a negative response to the suggested changes. However, non car owners were slightly more negative than car owners.

Over eight out of ten (81%) of car owners disagreed that the passes should only be used off peak; a similar, but slightly lower percentage of car owners (75%) also disagreed.

Both groups disagreed that the pass was an unnecessary burden on taxpayers (non car owners 79% disagreed; car owners 70% disagreed).

Economic Impact

The economic impact of a withdrawal of the pass differed greatly between car owners and non car owners (Figure 3.20).

Among non car owners there was a very strong feeling that they *would find it difficult to make ends meet without the pass* (84% agreed; 66% agreed strongly).

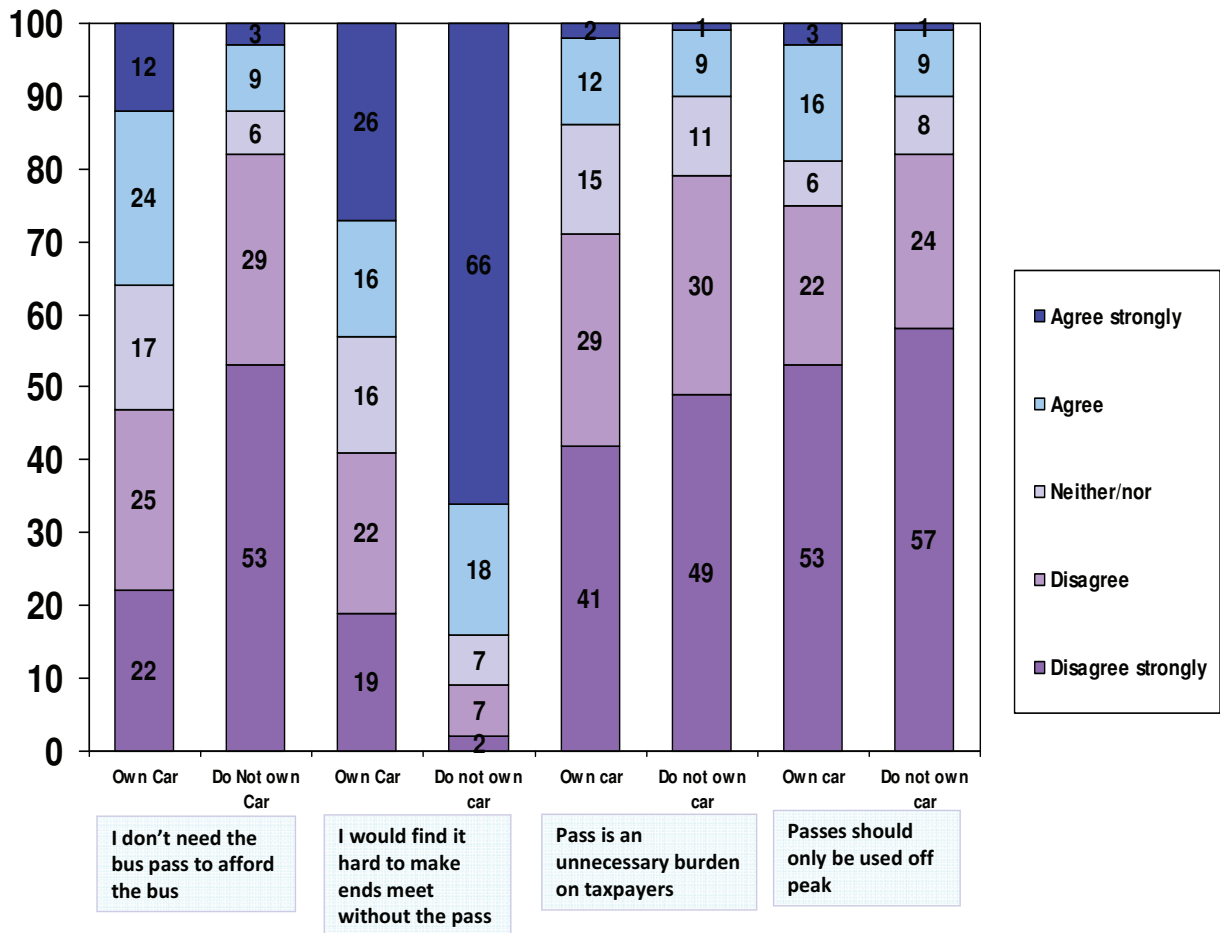
In addition to this a large majority of non car owners felt that they wouldn't be able to afford the bus without the pass:

- *I don't need the pass to afford the bus* (82% disagreed; 53% disagreed strongly)

In contrast, the views of car owners were more mixed, with a large minority feeling that the withdrawal of the pass would have little economic impact on them. For example, while four out of ten car owners (42% agreed) felt that *they would find it hard to make ends meet without the pass* a similar proportion (41% disagreed).

Similarly, there was a mixed view on whether or not car owners could afford the bus without the bus pass. A third (36%) of car owners agreed that they didn't need the pass to afford the bus. However, almost a half (47%) disagreed with this statement indicating that they did need the pass to afford the bus.

Figure 3.20: Agreement with statements about Concessionary Bus Passes by car ownership



Source: Q10 (all respondents)

4. Findings from the Focus Groups

4.1 Overview

To add depth to the face to face interviews and to explore issues arising from the questionnaire survey, two focus groups were conducted in Carmarthen and Wrexham on 14th October 2010. These towns were selected to obtain a cross-section of participants from urban and rural areas in north and south Wales. Focus group participants were selected from those who had indicated during the questionnaire survey that they were willing to take part.

The focus groups were semi-structured against a topic guide (**Appendix B**) which enabled older people to raise issues of importance to them, whilst probing their underlying attitudes and obtaining an understanding of the issues affecting them most.

4.2 Carmarthen

4.2.1 The group

The group consisted of five women and one man, of which the majority were either single or widows. All participants were retired and lived in the local area. A small number lived on the outskirts of the town centre, however most participants lived in more rural locations in nearby villages. Nearly all participants had lived in the Carmarthen area all their lives; however a small number had moved from England and Scotland to retire in Wales.

4.2.2 Car ownership

Only one participant had access to a car and this was mainly used to visit relatives that lived in remote locations on an occasional basis. Some respondents reported to getting lifts from friends or family members however there was an overall consensus that asking for a lift was always a last resort, preferring to be self sufficient whenever possible.

'I don't like to ask you see, they're busy enough so I don't want to be a burden'

4.2.3 Travel horizons

Most participants had busy social lives, either visiting family or friends, volunteering or participating in clubs such as the Women's Institute. A small number were carers and either looked after grandchildren or elderly relatives.

All female participants reported making regular routine journeys each week such as shopping, travelling to club meetings or visiting family on certain days of the week. This routine was rarely broken, regardless of weather conditions. More sporadic journeys tended to be visiting friends, hospital appointments or leisure trips. The male member of the group also reported making regular journeys, however his trips tended to have no real purpose other than to enjoy *'getting out of the house'*.

'Sometimes I go back and forth into town two or three times a day'

Travelling by bus was the main mode of transport for all participants and use of other modes such as the train or car were rarely used. Some participants reported travelling by taxi when their destination was not on a bus route such as visiting their local health centre or hospital.

All participants had made complex bus journeys, interchanging in Carmarthen town centre to travel to larger towns such as Haverfordwest or Swansea. These trips tended to be for leisure purposes and were less frequent.

4.2.4 Bus journeys and perceptions of bus services

The majority of participants travelled by bus at least four times a week, with some using the bus on six days. All participants found it difficult to travel on Sundays or bank holidays when there was a reduced service, so were less likely to leave the house. Most participants travelled on services after 10am; however a small number preferred to use earlier services as these were operated by a smaller, local bus company which provided a more personal service. None of the participants reported to using the bus in the evening.

'I always try to use buses run by the local bus companies, it's always the same driver'

Participants without access to a car tended to frequently use the bus for shopping trips, travelling into Carmarthen every other day. This was attributed to the fact they were unable to do 'weekly' shopping trips as they could not carry a large amount of bags.

Participants were asked how they felt about travelling by bus and the general consensus was extremely positive. Group members found it difficult to criticise the service they received and were enthused with all aspects of bus travel.

'I love catching the bus, it's a social thing and I've made so many friends'

All participants reported that the bus drivers were friendly, polite and helpful. Each group member recalled events where the driver had assisted them either by updating them on any service changes, dropping them closer to their house or helping them off the bus.

'Our bus drivers are lovely, there's two of them that drive our service and I couldn't say a bad word about either of them'

'We always have a bit of a joke or he likes to wind me up which makes my day'

When asked to comment on the frequency of service, the group still remained positive, even if they were served by a bus every couple of hours. Participants could recall their daily bus timetable and had built a routine around this so felt that an infrequent service was not a problem to them. A small number reported that additional services on Sundays or bank holidays would be welcomed as it would give them greater opportunities to visit their family.

'Why would I need more buses? I think it's just right for me, I have enough time to go into Carmarthen do some shopping and get the 2 o'clock bus home'

'The only thing I would say is that it would be nice to have a bus on a bank holiday when my grandchildren are off school'

Accessing information varied from each participant, however all participants avoided using the internet or telephoning bus operators. Visiting the library, asking the bus driver or finding out from friends or family were quoted as methods of obtaining information. One participant reported to completing a form to receive timetables through the post, whilst another relied upon reading the local paper.

'I've got no time for going online, the only line in my house is the washing line!'

The only participant with access to a car reported that they drove on rare occasions, preferring to travel by bus wherever possible to avoid congestion and trying to find a parking space within the town centre.

4.2.5 Use of concessionary bus passes

The majority of participants had their concessionary bus pass since the scheme's inception and used it every time they travelled by bus. The pass was used to make essential trips such as food shopping but was also used to visit friends and family, leisure trips or to visit the library or heritage sites.

'I'd hate to forget my pass!'

One participant reported that when she needed to make occasional trips to the hospital or to the local health centre she used her pass to travel by taxi at a concessionary rate. Interestingly, she was made aware of this by a friend rather than using official lines of communication. The rest of the group reported to being unaware that their pass could be used in such a way (*Post meeting note: discounted taxi travel for concessionary bus pass holders is available in Ceredigion but not in Carmarthenshire which may explain the lack of awareness*).

There was some confusion over boundary restrictions with participants unsure of the limitations of their pass and the group tried to identify towns where their pass could be used. As participants predominantly rely on information from their friends rather than using an official source, it was

perhaps unsurprising that group members were unaware of any boundary restrictions.

The majority of participants used their pass to travel within the local area, however a small number had travelled to Swansea using their concessionary pass.

When asked if their travel habits had changed since receiving the pass, there was a general consensus that free bus travel had greatly increased the frequency of trips made. The participant with access to a car rarely drove, opting to travel by bus for the vast majority of his journeys.

4.2.6 The benefits of the pass

There was agreement that the frequency of social and leisure trips would be reduced if the concessionary pass scheme did not exist. As most participants had no choice but to make regular shopping trips, the frequency of these trips would have to continue at the same rate. A small number reported that they would be forced to move if the scheme did not exist, either closer to family or in the town centre where they could make journeys on foot.

The group was asked to describe the best thing about having a bus pass and the most popular response was the ability to travel on any bus at any time within the local area for free. In addition to this, the group felt that the pass had enhanced their lives as it made them more independent and had given them the freedom to travel, reducing the need to rely upon friends or family.

'It makes me independent rather than dependant'

'My husband died two years after we moved to the area and I was really torn about moving back but since I got my pass I have a brilliant social life, it really is a god send'

4.2.7 The weaknesses of the pass

There were no negative comments regarding the bus pass and the group struggled to find any weaknesses with the scheme. When pressed to consider how they'd change the scheme the majority reported that they would not want to amend anything however there were some suggestions of including train travel within parameters of the scheme.

'The only thing I could say is that sometimes my pass doesn't work but the bus driver jokes that it's because I'm underage which makes me laugh no end!'

4.2.8 The future

Most participants felt that changing the scheme to an off peak system would have very little impact on their lives. Only a small number reported that they would have to travel later, however the group agreed that this was more acceptable than removing the scheme altogether.

The merits of half price travel were discussed and the majority of participants felt strongly that this would affect the number of journeys they made throughout the week, opting to travel for essential reasons only. A number of participants reported that they constantly had to budget in order to make their pension last throughout the week, therefore any additional costs for travel would have a severe impact upon their lives.

The group considered replacing the free concessionary pass with a flat fare and there was agreement that whilst this was better than paying full price, it would still not offer the same benefits as the current system.

'When you've had something for free for so many years and then you have to pay for it, it's not really fair.'

When asked to consider if the pass was an unfair burden to the tax payer the group were outraged. There was a general consensus that concessionary pass holders deserved free transport as they had contributed to the economy throughout their working lives, blaming the economic downturn on the banking industry.

'Why should we get penalised, I've paid tax for 40 years! It's the bankers fault not ours that the country is in this mess.'

Using alternative modes of transport such as walking or travelling by taxi are not feasible options for the majority of participants. Most participants do not live close enough to walk into Carmarthen or have mobility problems, and in addition travelling by taxi was considered to be expensive so would not be considered a suitable alternative to using the concessionary bus pass. Participants with families living in the local area reported that they could ask close relatives for a lift, however this was felt to be very much a last resort.

The group's knowledge of other concessionary schemes was limited and this could largely be attributed to the fact they heavily relied upon receiving information from friends or family. One participant was aware that their pass could be used to visit heritage sites, however this was because she was informed by a friend. When asked to suggest methods to improve communication with older people, group members suggested sending each pass holder a regular newsletter informing them of any boundary restrictions and providing information on where the pass could be used such as on taxis and visiting heritage sites. Providing leaflets on the bus or at the doctors surgery was also suggested.

4.2.9 Summary

The Carmarthen focus group were passionate that the concessionary pass scheme should not be removed as it provided them with a lifeline to activities that helped to improve the quality of their lives. Being independent was of great importance to participants and the group felt that this provided mental health benefits as it encouraged them to remain active avoiding isolation. The group felt that isolation was a major contributor towards depression in older people and many participants considered themselves to be at risk if they were unable to take part in activities or have an active social life. A number of participants were not in a financial position to afford to pay for the number of bus trips they are currently making. Therefore, if the scheme was removed they would be drastically affected both financially and also socially, as they would not be able to make the nonessential trips which give a sense of purpose to their lives.

4.3 Wrexham

4.3.1 The group

The group comprised three women and three men. The group members live in a variety of locations; some live in the suburbs of Wrexham and others live further afield in more rural areas with one member living near Bala. The group members were also a variety of ages; all are eligible for a concessionary fare pass but they have held their passes from 5 to 11 years.

One group member noted that whilst he has been eligible for his pass for the past 10 years, he had not applied for his pass until he felt he needed it due to mobility difficulties. Furthermore, prior to using the pass, one group member regularly walked to the shops or other services, but the pass has helped since she started suffering from arthritis.

4.3.2 Car ownership

The three men in the group said that they own a car. They tend to use their bus pass most of the time and only use the car for journeys or trip purposes which would be hard to undertake using a bus.

Two of the women in the group said that they regularly travelled by car until the death of their husbands. The pass has meant that they have been able to continue travelling to see friends and retain a level of independence.

4.3.3 Travel horizons

The group were asked to think about their 'travel horizons' and the destinations they regularly travel to using their concessionary pass. All of the group said that they regularly travel from Wrexham to Chester and they tend to use their bus pass for recreational purposes such as shopping, visiting friends or other social purposes. The pass gives them the ability to 'go on an outing' to meet their friends and the bus trip in itself is a social occasion.

It is interesting that the group noted that they can see more of the landscape when travelling on the bus compared to in the car; by offering improved visibility when travelling, the combination of the concessionary bus pass and bus services have expanded the social travel horizons of residents who previously only travelled for social purposes by car.

One member of the group said that he now uses the bus to travel on holiday. This year he used local bus services and his concessionary pass to travel to the Gower for a week. The trip took him 8.5 hours and he met people on the way, some of whom he has continued to keep in touch with.

4.3.4 Bus journeys and perceptions of bus services

The group were asked to think about the bus journeys they make, and their perceptions of local bus services.

The group felt that local bus services are generally very good. They usually run on time and the drivers are particularly friendly.

'They stop outside and help me with my bags into the kitchen. I know they shouldn't and I tell them not to get in trouble but they always offer to help'.

However, the group did note that some bus services are less reliable. The bus occasionally does not turn up or they do not keep to time. GHA Coaches were noted as being a particular concern for members of the group. A member of the group said that the punctuality of services can often depend on the driver. Some drivers have been known to arrive and depart their stop before their set time in an effort to make up time.

The group also discussed the vehicles used by operators and the environment on the bus. One member of the group noted that the vehicles are generally clean and tidy but they can be quite dirty if they have previously been used to provide school bus services. This comment elicited further discussion on unsociable behaviour by some young people using public transport.

More positively the group noted that the majority of people using the bus during the day are older members of the community, certainly demonstrating the success of the concessionary bus pass and the positive impact the pass has had for older members of the community.

'If the bus pass was stopped the buses would be empty! I'd have to do my shopping near home and I wouldn't meet my friends on the bus...'

The group noted that there seem to be more buses available now since the pass was introduced. They equated this to the pass raising the number of passengers and bringing in more income for operators.

4.3.5 Information

The group noted however that a lot of their friends are not aware that they can use their pass for travelling by rail on the Wrexham – Bidston line. Residents can transfer to a rail pass, but it is not worth it living in Wrexham given the above benefit. This is an anomaly and the group recognised the particular benefit this concession gives them.

Members of the group suggested that they access information on bus services in their area through talking directly with their bus driver or talking to members of staff at the bus station. Only one member of the group uses the internet and they all expressed unease with using the phone because of automated systems.

4.3.6 Using the pass

In discussing the use of the pass, members were pleasantly surprised, when talking about their own experiences, to hear that they were not alone in expressing surprise that bus drivers rarely check bus passes. They were concerned that the individual using the pass may not be the person to whom the pass was issued.

'The photo is very small... I don't know how they know if the pass is yours... sometimes I just think they look at the person and decide if they are old enough'

The group then discussed the use of the pass when travelling between Wrexham and Chester. They explained that Welsh residents can use their pass on a bus from Wrexham to Chester, Shrewsbury and Oswestry but the journey must start in Wales and finish in England and vice versa. They cannot break their journey. If they do break their journey, south of Chester but in England for example, they must then travel back into Wales before catching a bus north again to complete their journey to Chester.

The group also noted that Welsh residents cannot drive to the outskirts of Chester for example and then use that town's Park and Ride system.

'It's just something you have to work with. We are just lucky we can travel to Chester and England. Can people in England travel like that...?'

One group member suggested that he saves £200 a month in fuel now that he uses his bus pass when travelling to Chester to do voluntary work.

4.3.7 The benefits of the pass

The group were asked to think about the benefits of the pass.

One member of the group noted that she acts as a part-time carer for her friend with MS. She suggested that if the bus pass was removed she would not be able to travel to look after her friend. In addition, her friend gives her a £20 carers allowance as a form of 'payment' for looking after her. Whilst this is a relatively small amount of money it is valued by the group member and would be missed if she could not continue with this 'job'. The concessionary bus pass has facilitated her receipt of this payment.

Other members of the group noted that they use their bus pass regularly to travel to appointments at the doctors and hospital for example. Using their pass to travel by bus is more convenient and it means they don't have to pay parking charges at the hospital or ask a friend for a lift.

'It's good that we can use the pass whenever we want. I guess this is better than (sic) England...'

The group also discussed the 'value' of the pass. They all noted the greater 'freedom' the pass gives them and the feeling that they are no longer housebound. The pass also has a social value in that it enables them to meet people and see friends.

4.3.8 The weaknesses of the pass

The group also discussed any 'weaknesses' of the pass. They couldn't really think of any weaknesses in the pass directly; rather they were concerned that it would be very hard to use the pass in rural areas if there were restrictions introduced on its use at certain times of the day. In many areas, there are so few buses available that pass holders must travel early in the morning or in the evening if they want to make a round trip in one day; in travelling from Bala to Wrexham there are only 4 buses a day.

4.3.9 The future

When thinking about the future, members of the group suggested that if the pass was removed they would not travel to Wrexham. They would be more selective over the trips they make and the places they go and they would no longer make trips for pleasure. They would have to prioritise essential trips given their limited income.

'I'd still use the bus pass when I go shopping as I can't walk with heavy shopping bags...'

The group were then asked to think about alternatives to the existing full concessionary bus pass.

They suggested that they would prefer a half-fare pass to any withdrawal of the existing pass but this would have cost implications for passengers, particularly those on a low income. They also thought that this might also

lead to administrative problems on the bus as drivers checked each user's pass and gave change for their half fare.

Other options suggested by the group were:

- Raising the age limit to 65 or 70
- Introducing an annual administration charge
- Means testing the granting of a pass; or
- Introducing a 'carnet' style concession rather than simple card.

The group were then asked to comment on the potential withdrawal of the concessionary bus pass. This gained a strong response from the group.

'If you take the bus pass off people there will be uproar!'

The group suggested that people have got used to the pass. They would be very upset if there were proposals to take it away. They definitely do not see it as a burden.

'...and we have paid our taxes. This is something we are entitled to.'

Two members of the group strongly suggested that as the state pension is so low the concessionary bus pass is one way of helping their pension go further.

The group then began to question the motivation for arranging this focus group and research process. One person in the group thought this discussion might be a 'cover'.

'You'll make people worry the pass is being withdrawn and they will all be delighted when it is preserved!'

They all agreed that taxis are too expensive. The benefit of the concessionary bus pass is that it enables them to travel without using taxis. The group noted that residents of Wrexham are able to use their concessionary bus pass on rail services between Wrexham and Bidston stations. This is really welcome as it makes it easier to travel to Liverpool.

'I use it to go and see Everton play!'

4.3.10 Summary

All members of the group stressed the value of the bus pass. It plays a valuable role in giving them a level of freedom and independence they would otherwise be unable to achieve without the pass. They do not want to be reliant on friends or family for transport. The pass also enables holders to have a full and active social life; the group were particularly conscious of issues surrounding depression and associated health difficulties in older members of the community. They were clear that the pass has wider benefits for them than simply providing free travel.

In summary, the group do not want to see any changes.

'The pass is fine as it is. Please don't change it!'

5. Stakeholder consultation

5.1 Overview

To complement the review of relevant policy documents, strategic consultations were held with a selection of stakeholders, including user groups, selected local authorities, WAG and bus operators. These consultations took the form of telephone interviews, which were semi-directive against open questions, complemented by follow up email correspondence. The stakeholders interviewed were as follows:

National/local government

- Welsh Assembly Government (Head of Integrated Transport)
- City & County of Swansea (Acting Group Leader – Transportation)
- Wrexham County Borough Council (Transport Co-ordinating Officer)
- Cardiff County Council (Head of Concessionary Travel Unit)
- Carmarthenshire County Council (Transport Manager, Passenger Transport Operations Manager)
- Powys County Council (Head of Public Transport Unit)

User groups

- Age Cymru (Head of Policy and Public Affairs)
- Bus Users UK Cymru (Senior Officer for Wales)
- Alzheimers Wales (Acting Director for Wales)
- National Partnership Forum for Older People (Transport Sector Representative)

Bus operators

- Arriva Cymru (Concessionary & Smart Card Manager)
- GHA Coaches (Operations Manager)

The responses received have been grouped into the following themes, to maintain stakeholder anonymity where necessary:

- Satisfaction with concessionary bus passes and the bus service;
- Local authority administration of the scheme;
- Reimbursement arrangements;
- Amendments to the existing scheme; and
- Cross-border issues.

5.2 Satisfaction with concessionary bus passes and the bus service

The findings of the questionnaire interviews (Section 3) and focus groups (Section 4) demonstrate a high level of satisfaction amongst older people with regard to both their free concessionary bus passes and the bus service.

'The scheme has given older people greater opportunities to lead fulfilling lives'

This corresponds with the findings of the Living in Wales surveys commissioned by WAG, although many stakeholders observed that some older people would wish to see the concessionary scheme extended to rail services. In some areas of Wales this has already been done in a limited way as part of a pilot scheme (ending in September 2011):

- The Borderlands Line (Wrexham – Bidston)
- The Cambrian Coast Line (Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth/Pwllheli).
- The Heart of Wales Line (Swansea – Shrewsbury)
- The Conwy Valley Line (Llandudno – Blaenau Ffestiniog)

There is much support for the concessionary rail travel pilot scheme and many stakeholders would like to see an all-Wales scheme, but this is seen as unrealistic in the current economic climate. Protecting existing entitlements, such as the free concessionary bus travel scheme, is seen as more important.

Moreover, WAG has expressed the view that any universal concessionary rail scheme would detract from existing products. For example, Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) has launched a 'Club 55' promotion (scheduled to end on 12th December 2010) which offers people aged 55 and over return rail travel anywhere on the ATW network for £15 return (£13 with railcard).

'The concessionary bus pass scheme is as good as it's going to be...it won't be extended to rail services'

As the representative for bus users in Wales, Bus Users UK Cymru fields numerous complaints regarding bus services. However, the main complaints from older people relate to connections with other services and

inadequate evening/weekend provision – few complaints are received regarding driver attitude and other issues.

‘There is the perennial issue that buses never go where they (people) want to go – the route cannot please everyone’

‘Older people are just grateful to have a 24hr pass’

A number of older people have raised matters with OPCW which relate to bus services:

- A man living in a rural community was concerned about rumours that the free bus pass scheme was to be scrapped, explaining that the local bus service was his only means of transport, providing a crucial link to friends, vital services, and to shopping facilities. In addition, the bus pass allowed him simply to get ‘out and about’ on a daily basis;
- A woman living in north Wales complained about inadequate connection times between rural bus services, explaining that operators will not impose a mandatory five minute wait time on certain connections. This causes much anxiety amongst older bus users as there is often a long wait until the next bus, or there is no later bus at all; and
- A woman living in Neath Port Talbot highlighted the lack of public transport to a new medical centre which had been built outside the town centre. The centre was opened a year ago and the only way to reach it was by private vehicle. The woman pointed out that, without a car, or a bus link, the only other option is take a taxi, which can be very expensive. She felt strongly that older people are the principal users of public transport and their needs and views should be properly considered when planning developments such as this.

A number of older people have reported safety concerns on buses to Age Cymru. Poor driving standards, e.g. sudden acceleration and braking, affects passenger comfort. Older people who are less mobile aren’t confident that the bus will wait for them to alight. The condition of bus stops is another issue often raised. Many stops don’t have lighting, seating or shelter. Some stakeholders consider that there is room for improvement here.

Age Cymru also report that vehicle accessibility has been raised by wheelchair users at a forum in West Wales. Accessibility is a particular

issue in rural areas where many stops don't have raised kerbs. However, it is also an issue in urban areas where many buses can't reach the kerb because of parked cars – this was cited as a particular problem in Cardiff.

5.3 Local authority administration of the scheme

Funding for administration of the concessionary bus travel scheme originally came through the Local Transport Services Grant awarded by WAG to the 22 Welsh local authorities. However, local authorities complained that this was insufficient, so from 2004/05 WAG contributed £3 per pass in circulation per annum to cover administration costs. Each local authority invoices WAG for operating costs and administrative costs each year.

The local authority officers that we spoke to confirmed that the £3 per annum is sufficient to cover administration costs, particularly with a charge being levied on the public for lost passes. None of the local authority teams we spoke to has a member of staff dedicated to the administration of the concessionary scheme; all perform various roles. However, one officer noted that the administration payments did not leave any resource for monitoring compliance with the scheme.

5.4 Reimbursement arrangements

5.4.1 Recent changes

From 1st April 2010 the reimbursement arrangements were changed, so that reimbursement to bus operators was no longer calculated on the basis of the average adult single fare, but instead on the Representative Concessionary Fare which has been calculated for each bus depot or group of services.

'Before the reimbursement arrangements were changed, every time bus operators put up their fares, usually every six months, the amount reimbursed went up too'

Some anecdotal evidence was reported to MM whereby passengers had been told by bus drivers that routes were being withdrawn as a result of capping the reimbursement budget. However, WAG and local authority

officers are very pleased with the new arrangements and are of the view that bus operators should also be satisfied given that the arrangements were developed in consultation with the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT). Nevertheless, they acknowledge that it may be an administrative burden for smaller operators, particularly where the Representative Concessionary Fare varies between routes operated.

Now that the reimbursement budget has been capped, the reimbursement rate (set at 73.59p in the £ for the first two quarters of 2010-11) may reduce over the year as the available budget dwindles. WAG, local authorities and bus operators are working closely at the time of writing to review the reimbursement rate for the third and fourth quarters of the year.

Bus operators accept the reimbursement rate as being reasonable, but the problem is that the reimbursement does not reflect the length of the journey because it is based on a representative concessionary fare. This weakness in the current funding mechanism was also noted by Age Cymru, in the context of the recent debate in the Welsh media concerning the travel needs of younger people and older people.

Arriva cited the example of the Rhyl – Llandudno route, where it is only reimbursed at about £1.00 for a single journey, whereas the actual adult single fare is £2.50. However, it has been agreed between WAG and bus operators that only the boarding stage is recorded when the ticket is issued, as recording the alighting stage slows down boarding times, which then adds to bus journey times and operating costs.

'Recording boarding stages only (not alighting stages) makes reimbursement less accurate, but this is the lesser of two evils'

However, the introduction of the 2,500 new smart card ticket machines by WAG provided an opportunity for pass holders to tap in and out like the London Oyster card, which would have aided more accurate reimbursement. It appears, however, that the software has not been configured to allow this⁶, and 'tapping out' would probably require the installation of an additional

⁶ 'Sharp rise in cost of free bus passes for elderly drives teenage jobs aid plan off the road'. Western Mail, 26 July 2010.

reader on each bus so as to avoid conflict between boarding and alighting passengers.

Nevertheless, the smartcard technology does provide another opportunity to amend the reimbursement process. One potential option discussed with some stakeholders would be to charge each person's smartcard with a fixed sum of money per year, which could be deducted from every time the pass holder boarded a bus. This could have health benefits, for example older people would be more willing to walk short distances rather than boarding a bus to travel between stops. If pass holders were required to 'top up' their smart cards it could, however, penalise those older people using their passes most regularly.

5.4.2 Potential abuse of concessionary passes

Some instances of abuse were reported by stakeholders, and there was a view that a tightening of scheme administration would save money.

5.4.3 Potential future challenges

One cross-border bus operator reported that its English services were being hit by a 'triple whammy', suggesting that the England concessionary fares reimbursement budget will be cut by 13%, Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) reduced by 20% by 2015 as well as a reduction in the local authority bus revenue support budget.

The above budget cuts of course apply to England only as the responsibility for such budgets are devolved to WAG, whose spending decisions have yet to be made public (at the time of writing). For example, the decision may be taken to maintain the current BSOG budget. This would be welcomed by bus operators, as BSOG currently allows them to constrain their current fares. However, if WAG does decide to reduce BSOG bus operators may respond by increasing their fares and reimbursement payments would be increased as a result. There is some speculation as to how this would affect the reimbursement budget going forward.

5.4.4 Benefits to bus operators from concessionary fare income

It was observed by some local authorities that the number of concessionary journeys has not been increasing in 2010 at the rate that they had been in the preceding five years. This will be a concern to operators, as although they are supposed to be no better or worse off as a result of the concessionary scheme, they freely admit that they have been using the funds to pay for new Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant buses (all buses are required to be low floor by 2015) as well as to improve frequencies.

‘Undoubtedly it’s helped us buy new buses, and increase frequencies as well. It’s nice to have the base income stream guaranteed’

5.5 Amendments to the existing concessionary scheme

The findings of the questionnaire interviews (Section 3) and focus groups (Section 4) demonstrated older people’s strong opposition to any amendments to the existing concessionary bus travel scheme. These findings were communicated with stakeholders.

‘The concessionary pass is at the top of older people’s minds – many ask if it is going to disappear’

5.5.1 Peak period restrictions

Introducing peak period restrictions on concessionary bus travel was opposed by all stakeholders. Several local authority officers and bus operators observed that it would simply lead to two new peaks in demand during the morning and afternoon, i.e. after 0930 and before 1530.

‘A peak period restriction would simply create two peaks – it wouldn’t benefit the operators or save money’

‘The bus service has already been built up to accommodate the greater number of passengers, so peak time restrictions wouldn’t benefit us’

Bus Users UK Cymru cited experience in England, where older people have problems making hospital appointments because passes cannot be used at peak times. This restricts the times during which older people can make appointments, i.e. to between 1100 and 1500. It would be very difficult for doctors to ensure all older people were seen between these times, and it was noted that many patients will be aged 60 and over in any case.

Bus operators pointed out that a peak period restriction would hinder the ability of rural bus users to get to their destination and back within the time available.

5.5.2 Half-fare travel

Reintroducing half-fare travel was similarly opposed by all stakeholders, although WAG expressed a desire to understand older people's willingness to pay for bus travel, for example speculating about the fare level above which older people would start to be dissuaded from making non-essential trips (it should be noted, however, that WAG has no plans to amend the free concessionary bus travel scheme at the present time). WAG has not undertaken any surveys from the pass holder's perspective, but the findings of the MM research, i.e. that older people would either revert to their own car or travel for essential trips only, came as no surprise.

It was noted that many older people recognise that concessionary bus travel is an expensive scheme, but most do not understand that the bus operator is reimbursed at the same flat rate regardless of journey length. One stakeholder had received comments from older people suggesting that they may be prepared to pay a nominal flat fare per ride (e.g. 50p). Some bus operators and user groups felt that a flat fare could deter unnecessary short bus journeys from one stop to the next. This could encourage people to walk further, with consequent health benefits. However, maintaining the status quo would still be preferable from older people's own viewpoint, as the focus groups confirmed.

'A nominal flat rate would be the least worst case (if charging had to be introduced). But this would lose a lot of goodwill and the political kudos that comes from a free scheme'

Alzheimers Wales also expressed its strong support for retaining the concessionary bus travel scheme in its current form, and dementia support workers at the local service bases noted that the free passes are very helpful for carers whose relatives are now in care. They felt that any proposed change to the scheme would provoke anxiety amongst carers.

'We are aware of carers who use buses on a regular basis to visit their loved ones in the care homes. If they had to pay obviously this would add to their financial burden and they may not be able to visit as often as they would like'

It was noted by WAG that there are many complex linkages between the concessionary bus travel scheme and other departmental budgets. These are difficult to quantify, but it is clear that removing the free travel entitlement would adversely affect the health/social services budget, as older people would have to transfer from public bus services to health/community transport services in order to attend essential appointments. One stakeholder noted that University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff is served by 470 buses per day, and speculated how older patients would travel to the hospital if free travel was no longer available.

'I'm not in favour of introducing half-fare travel...this would defeat the objectives of the scheme. Would this not impact upon health budgets?'

Furthermore it was acknowledged by WAG, local authorities and bus operators alike that the concessionary scheme contributes to retaining commercial bus services that would otherwise have to be supported.

'We wouldn't deregister the entire service, but we would look to deregister early morning/late evening journeys if we didn't have the concessionary pass income'

A large proportion of bus patronage is comprised of concessionary pass holders. The proportion of course varies across individual routes, but as a snapshot GHA Coaches recorded 250,000 passenger boardings in

September 2010, and 115,000 of these (46%) were made by concessionary/disabled pass holders. Many commercial routes depend upon concessionary pass income, especially in rural areas. Arriva report that its commercial services around Barmouth and Colwyn Bay remain 'fairly robust' but its routes around Bangor and Holyhead, serving rural villages, would be deregistered without concessionary pass income.

'Any saving (from removing concessionary free travel) would simply be paid back in revenue support...it would be like robbing Peter to pay Paul'

Moreover, there are bus routes which already receive local authority revenue support which wouldn't have a sustainable patronage base without the concessionary pass scheme. GHA Coaches cited one of its routes which operates on Wednesdays only, which has 18 users per day. Only one of these users pays a fare.

It is clear that retention of the free concessionary bus travel scheme supports other policy agendas like improving access to work opportunities – if early morning/late evening services are curtailed then this would be made far more difficult.

5.5.3 Charging for the issue of concessionary passes

Several stakeholders suggested that charging pass holders for the issue of their smartcards may help recoup the cost of the scheme. For example, with the old half-fare scheme Wrexham County Borough Council charged older people £5 per pass. However, it was agreed that introducing such charges would penalise those who rely on their concessionary pass the most, i.e. older people on low incomes.

5.5.4 Means testing

WAG and local authorities are opposed to the means testing of concessionary bus passes, citing the administrative burden and associated costs. It was observed that means testing is not an exact science.

One stakeholder stated that it would not explicitly oppose means testing, but stated that universal benefits do encourage social cohesion. However, another stakeholder expressed strong opposition to means testing, being of the view that most wealthy people (with the possible exception of transport professionals) would not use their passes in any case.

'means testing of passes would look like charity...the average millionaire would never use one...there's only a cost if people use their pass so the actual cost saving would be moderate'

If costs had to be reduced, stakeholders suggested that increasing the age of eligibility would be simplest and fairest.

5.5.5 Changing the age of eligibility

It was unanimously agreed by stakeholders that the fairest way of managing the costs of the concessionary bus travel scheme would be to increase the age of pass eligibility in stages. One user group suggested that the age of eligibility could rise in line with pension age, i.e. to 66 in 2020 and 68 in 2046. Another user group reported the view that as long as the threshold was raised in stages so that no current pass holder loses their entitlement, opposition is unlikely.

No stakeholder sought to defend the use of concessionary passes for commuter travel, and pass holders' comments were noted, i.e. some felt that they should not be receiving free travel when they have not yet retired.

However, any proposal to raise the age of eligibility has not been formally endorsed by WAG. It was stressed to MM that this will be a matter for Ministers to decide.

5.6 Cross-border issues

Welsh pass holders are able to use cross-border services if their bus journey starts or ends in Wales, although they are generally unable to transfer

between bus services in England. The exceptions reported by local authorities are:

- **Chester** – pass holders can change buses at Chester Bus Station to reach the Countess of Chester Hospital, which is the local hospital covering much of Flintshire; and
- **Kington** – pass holders can change here for onward travel to Hereford, which benefits those travelling from Presteigne in Powys.

Access to health care for Powys residents was not identified by stakeholders as a problem, as there are direct bus services from Powys to Shrewsbury Hospital.

The large majority of respondents to the questionnaire interviews (Section 4) stated that it was easy to use their concessionary pass for trips into England. This finding was validated by WAG, the National Partnership Forum for Older People and bus operators.

All stakeholders considered that the cross-border arrangements work well from the Welsh pass holder's perspective and felt no reason to change them. The problem is for English concessionary bus pass holders. Pass holders living in Cheshire can travel to the end of bus routes in Wales, but pass holders from other English local authorities (such as Shropshire) cannot do so – their passes are only valid to the fare boundary. Examples of this anomaly include **Monmouth**, where Welsh pass holders can travel into Gloucestershire but English pass holders cannot use their passes to travel in the other direction, and **Whitchurch**, where English pass holders cannot use their passes to travel from Shropshire into Wrexham.

WAG and the National Partnership Forum for Older People noted the predicament of English pass holders, but the matter is clearly outside of their remit.

'Ideally Welsh passes would be valid in England and vice versa, but there would then be the issue of compensation, so I doubt it will happen'

5.7 Summary

The feedback received during the stakeholder consultations suggests that older people are generally happy with their concessionary passes and with the bus service. Bus Users UK Cymru and Age Cymru have each received complaints in this regard, but the findings of our own research suggest that these complaints represent only a small minority of older bus users.

Local authorities are very happy with the administration of the scheme. However, there is possibly a need to monitor compliance and prevent the abuse of passes. More resources would be required to improve monitoring, which may be unrealistic in the current economic climate but the savings accrued on the reimbursement budget could potentially recoup the additional financial outlay for WAG in the medium term.

WAG, local authorities and bus operators are generally happy with the new reimbursement arrangements, which have capped the costs of the concessionary bus travel scheme. However, in the context of potential changes to the scheme in terms of fares, hours of operation and eligibility, some user groups have questioned the scheme's value for money, and suggest that efforts be made to improve the accuracy of the reimbursement process before any changes are made. The concessionary smart cards provide the potential to achieve more accurate reimbursement. However, it would have been desirable to facilitate this during the original procurement process for the new smart cards and bus ticket machines. Nevertheless, the introduction of an all-Wales transport entitlement card (scheduled for 2014), covering rail and bus users of all ages, may provide an opportunity to address this problem.

Beyond ensuring a more accurate reimbursement process, stakeholders are reluctant to suggest any amendments to the scheme, as all are aware of how highly older people value their passes and the benefits that the passes bring to some of the most vulnerable members of society. However, it is generally considered that the most politically acceptable means of managing scheme costs (in the context of people working longer and retiring later) would be to raise the age of eligibility for concessionary passes, as long as it is ensured that no older person loses their current entitlement.

Cross-border issues were not viewed as a particular problem by any of the stakeholders that we contacted; at least from the perspective of Welsh pass holders which is the focus of our research. This is borne out by our own research (Section 4) and it is hoped that the local arrangements between Welsh and English local authorities will continue, so that access for older people to essential facilities in England is maintained in the future.

6. Summary and conclusions

6.1 Overview

In all activities undertaken, the Older People's Commissioner must give due regard to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons:

- Independence
- Participation
- Care
- Self-fulfilment; and
- Dignity.

We have summarised in the following sections how the concessionary bus travel scheme contributes to each of the above principles. Our conclusions are necessarily subjective but the extensive research undertaken during this commission, listening to the views of older people, user groups, bus operators, local authorities and WAG, provides evidence to support the statements made.

6.1.1 Independence

Without the concessionary bus pass, we suggest that many older people without access to a car would be housebound and denied access to essential facilities which enables them to maintain their independence. The pass gives older people greater freedom to access food/clothes shopping, hospital/GP appointments, days out and volunteering opportunities. It gives older people the ability to regularly visit and care for loved ones, which would become much more difficult if bus travel had to be paid for.

6.1.2 Participation

The concessionary bus travel scheme offers older people the opportunity to remain integrated in society. The availability of free bus travel enables older people to meet others and make new friends, reducing their isolation and loneliness. This in turn improves their quality of life and physical, mental and emotional well-being.

6.1.3 Care

This principle states that older people should have access to health, social and legal care so that they can optimise their well-being. Free bus travel removes a significant barrier to accessing these opportunities. We suggest that the potential for the scheme to relieve pressure on health and social services budgets is clear, in two main respects:

- the cost of the alternative health/community transport service which would need to be provided in the absence of free bus travel; and
- the ability of older people to use free bus services to access regular hospital appointments. Without these bus services, it is conceivable that a significant number of individuals would no longer be able to live independently, and would instead need to be placed in residential care at a much greater cost to the taxpayer.

Our contact with older people, as well as our consultations with various stakeholders, has demonstrated the numerous benefits that the concessionary bus pass brings to people's lives. Although we have not undertaken a full cost-benefit analysis as part of this commission, this evidence strongly suggests that the benefits of the scheme far outweigh the costs, and that the overall burden on the taxpayer would in all likelihood be significantly increased if free concessionary bus travel was to be discontinued.

6.1.4 Self-fulfilment

This principle states that older persons should have access to educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources and be able to develop their full potential. The results of the questionnaire interviews demonstrate that older people use their concessionary bus passes for visiting friends and relatives, days out, accessing sport/recreation and volunteering. Whilst non-essential, all of these trip purposes are important to optimising older people's well-being and fulfilling their potential.

The surveys have shown that many older people would be unable to make such trips if free concessionary bus travel was withdrawn. Self-fulfilment is therefore much less likely to be achieved.

6.1.5 Dignity

The availability of the concessionary bus pass clearly contributes to older people's dignity. Without it, the results of the questionnaire interviews and focus groups strongly suggest that many older people would have to depend on car-owning friends and relatives in order to undertake all but the most essential trips (e.g. days out, visiting friends/relatives/accessing sport and recreation), or not travel at all. For essential trips, such as food shopping and hospital appointments, older people would pay for bus travel, but with clear negative implications for household budgets and overall quality of life. Car owners would most likely switch to their cars for all trips, with clear environmental disbenefits.

6.2 Conclusions

This research project has focused on obtaining the views of older people themselves on the concessionary bus travel scheme, supplementing this with desk research and consultations with various stakeholders.

In general, older people are very satisfied with their passes and with the bus service. They do not wish to see any changes to the concessionary bus travel scheme.

It is clear that the free passes have a major impact on non-car owners' quality of life. Non car-owners are more likely to be older, female, disabled and have a lower income. The free passes also provide a significant financial benefit for those pass holders who do have access to a car.

The concessionary bus travel scheme offers older people the opportunity to remain integrated in society, improving their quality of life. The scheme brings wider benefits in terms of relieving pressure on health and social services transport budgets, and stakeholders have noted that the linkages

are complex. Bus operators have acknowledged that the scheme has helped renew bus fleets and support both commercial and tendered services which would not otherwise be viable. This positively affects the ability of younger people to access education, training and employment opportunities. It is clear that the interests of older and younger people are not mutually exclusive, and should not be pitted against each other.

'It (the concessionary bus pass scheme) has improved social mobility and helped persuade people to use the public transport system. It's been a great success'

The revised reimbursement arrangements have been effective in capping the cost of the scheme. However, if the concessionary fares budget has to be reduced in the future, rather than amending the terms of the scheme policy makers should focus on the reimbursement methodology to ensure that it fairly reflects distance travelled. The smartcard technology provides an opportunity to achieve this without adversely affecting passenger boarding times. Beyond this, raising the age of eligibility is viewed by older people and other stakeholders alike as the fairest way of managing scheme costs. Some older people comment that those of working age should not be entitled to free travel. As a last resort, a nominal flat fare may be deliverable, but it must be stressed that there is a strong commitment within WAG to retaining the concessionary bus travel scheme in its current form.

6.3 The next steps

Our research has provided an evidence base which demonstrates the benefits of the free concessionary bus travel scheme. However, our research merely forms a starting point in developing a robust argument for the retention of the current scheme in the face of financial challenges currently faced by WAG and local authorities, with the budget for WAG's Economy and Transport department due to be reduced by 12% in absolute terms in the next three years to 2013/14. Within this context, it is possible that WAG's commitment to retaining the concessionary bus pass scheme in its current form will be reviewed following the National Assembly elections in May 2011.

More detailed analysis would be beneficial in order to quantify the benefits of the concessionary bus travel scheme and present data in a format which can be easily understood by older people, user groups and policy makers alike. This analysis could include:

- Cost benefit analysis; and
- Data analysis using Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

Furthermore, although the benefits of the free concessionary bus travel scheme are clear, not all older people are able to access bus services. This may be due to accessibility problems, or the bus services may not operate at all. It would be beneficial to undertake further research to consider the wider transport and travel needs of older people in Wales, and explore options for improving opportunities where affordable, safe, frequent and reliable transport is not currently available.

6.3.1 Cost benefit analysis

The linkages between the concessionary bus travel scheme and other government budgets are complex. We have already speculated about the savings which the scheme brings in terms of the health and social care budgets, and the benefits that improved bus services have brought to younger people accessing education and employment. However, a full economic cost benefit analysis of the scheme would enable these complex linkages to be investigated in greater detail and the benefits quantified in financial terms, adding details to support the conclusions drawn from the research we have already undertaken.

With a reimbursement budget of £69m per annum, WAG is right to consider the value for money derived from the scheme. Our research suggests not only direct social impacts (positive) for the older people of Wales but also indirect benefits e.g. for public services and benefits for other bus users. Operators suggest that they have used the funds to pay for new DDA compliant buses (all buses are required to be low floor by 2015) as well as to improve frequencies. The frequency issue is of course of benefit to all age groups and has both an economic and environmental benefit in sustainability terms.

6.3.2 Data analysis using Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

There are many benefits in using GIS to analyse and present data. Maps can show complex relationships in an intuitive and easy to understand way. GIS also can be used for area profiling, pulling together multiple data sets to identify spatial patterns and commonalities or differences between areas.

With specific regard to the concessionary bus travel scheme, accessibility analysis could be used to measure how well places are served by the Welsh bus network. A scoring methodology could be developed, tailored to concessionary bus pass usage (i.e. preferred times of day/days of week to travel, access to specific destinations). Geographical intersection of the accessibility results with other socio-economic data sets would allow areas with common problems or advantages to be identified, classified and analysed.

Animated maps of Wales could be produced showing the areas with good public transport accessibility for pass holders, and other areas more difficult to reach. This analysis could be repeated at regular intervals to allow the impact on older people of changes to the public transport network (such as reduced bus service provision, which is very likely to occur if overall revenue funding for public transport services is reduced) to be tracked over time.

6.3.3 The wider transport and travel needs of older people in Wales

Our research has focused upon the concessionary bus pass scheme. However, the current financial challenges will adversely affect the ability of WAG and local authorities to fund the wider provision of transport and travel services in general. It is important that these wider impacts on older people are better understood. That transport plays a vitally important role in helping older people maintain their independence and well-being is clear from our research; however not all older people are able to access free bus services. Further research could be undertaken to more comprehensively understand the concerns of older people when they travel, and the quality of services and infrastructure provided. Rail services, community transport, private transport and taxis can all play a role in maintaining people's quality of life, and options should be explored to improve accessibility to these transport

opportunities. The research should also consider the potential implications of changes to current transport provision and accessibility for user groups other than older people, such as younger people and disabled people.

Appendices

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Appendix A. Interview Questionnaire

BUS SERVICE RESEARCH Q7398 (September 2010)

Good morning/afternoon. My name is.....and I am from QRS Research Ltd, an independent Market Research agency. We are undertaking a survey on behalf of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, which is Wales's independent advocate for older people to help them understand how people use their concessionary bus pass. It takes approximately 10 minutes and all answers are anonymous and strictly confidential.

Section A: Frequency and Nature of Bus Use

Q1: QUALIFIER: Can I just check, do you have a concessionary pass?

YES	1	CONTINUE
NO	2	THANK AND CLOSE

Q2: QUALIFIER: Do you have a pass because of? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Your age	1	CONTINUE
Your disability or impairment only	2	THANK AND CLOSE
Both	3	CONTINUE
Other	4	THANK AND CLOSE

SHOWCARD Q3

Q3: QUALIFIER: How often do you use your concessionary bus pass? **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Every day	1	CONTINUE
2-6 days a week	2	CONTINUE
About once a week	3	CONTINUE
About once a fortnight	4	CONTINUE
About once a month	5	THANK AND CLOSE
Less than once a month	6	THANK AND CLOSE

SHOWCARD Q4a**Q4a:** How frequently, if at all, do you use your concessionary bus pass for the following reasons?**SINGLE CODE ONLY PER ACTIVITY**

	Every day	2-6 days a week	About once a week	About once a fortnight	About once a month	Less than once a month	Less often	Never
a) Visiting friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
b) Visiting relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
c) Shopping for food	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
d) Shopping for clothes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
e) Accessing sport/leisure/recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
f) Days out/Seeing places of interest/Sightseeing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
g) Going to your GP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
h) Going to hospital appointments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
i) Commuting/Business Travel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
j) Volunteering activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
k) Other (please write in)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

**ASK Q4b-Q6 FOR THOSE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED AT Q4A CODES 1-7 ONLY.
TICK ALL THAT APPLY ON Q4b-Q6.**

SHOWCARD Q4b**Q4b:** On average, how long is your length of journey when you use your concessionary bus pass for these reasons? **SINGLE CODE ONLY PER ACTIVITY**

	Less than 5 minutes	5-9 minutes	10-14 minutes	15-19 minutes	20-24 minutes	25 minutes or more
a) Visiting friends	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) Visiting relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) Shopping for food	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) Shopping for clothes	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) Accessing sport/leisure/recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) Days out/Seeing places of interest/Sightseeing	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) Going to your GP	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) Going to hospital appointments	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) Commuting/Business Travel	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) Volunteering activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) Other (please write in)	1	2	3	4	5	6

SHOWCARD Q5

Q5: Does having a concessionary bus pass make it easier or more difficult to do the following activities, or does it have no effect? **SINGLE CODE ONLY PER ACTIVITY**

	Easier	No effect	More difficult	Don't know / NA <i>(DO NOT READ OUT)</i>
a) Visiting friends	1	2	3	4
b) Visiting relatives	1	2	3	4
c) Shopping for food	1	2	3	4
d) Shopping for clothes	1	2	3	4
e) Accessing sport/leisure/recreation	1	2	3	4
f) Days out/Seeing places of interest/Sightseeing	1	2	3	4
g) Going to your GP	1	2	3	4
h) Going to hospital appointments	1	2	3	4
i) Commuting/Business Travel	1	2	3	4
j) Volunteering activities	1	2	3	4
k) Other (please write in)	1	2	3	4

SHOWCARD Q6

Q6: If you didn't have a concessionary bus pass, which, if any, of these methods would you use to make these types of trip? **SINGLE CODE ONLY PER ACTIVITY**

	Bus	Train	Car – own car	Car – family or friends	Taxi	Walk	Wouldn't make trip
a) Visiting friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) Visiting relatives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) Shopping for food	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) Shopping for clothes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Accessing sport/leisure/recreation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) Days out/Seeing places of interest/Sightseeing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g) Going to your GP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h) Going to hospital appointments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i) Commuting/Business Travel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j) Volunteering activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k) Other (please write in)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SHOWCARD Q7**Q7:** How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your concessionary bus pass?**SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neither nor	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

Q8: Other than saving you money, what are the main benefits that the concession bus pass offers you? **PROBE FULLY AND RECORD VERBATIM**

SHOWCARD Q9**Q9:** And how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of the bus services that you use? **SINGLE CODE ONLY PER STATEMENT**

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither nor	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
a) The frequency of bus services	1	2	3	4	5
b) Availability of buses throughout the day and evening	1	2	3	4	5
c) Ease of getting a seat	1	2	3	4	5
d) The cleanliness of buses	1	2	3	4	5
e) Ease of getting to where you want to go	1	2	3	4	5
f) Overall comfort of buses and the journeys	1	2	3	4	5
g) Ease of getting on and off buses	1	2	3	4	5
h) Overall quality and comfort of the bus stops	1	2	3	4	5
i) The bus driver (e.g. their customer care and driving skills)	1	2	3	4	5

SHOWCARD Q10

Q10: I am now going to read out some comments that other people have said about the concessionary bus pass. Taking your answer from this card please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each. **SINGLE CODE ONLY PER STATEMENT**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Concessionary bus passes should be replaced with half priced travel	1	2	3	4	5
b) I would feel more lonely and housebound without my bus pass	1	2	3	4	5
c) Concessionary bus passes should only be used off peak	1	2	3	4	5
d) Paying for the concessionary bus pass is an unnecessary burden on taxpayers	1	2	3	4	5
e) I don't need a concessionary bus pass to afford the bus	1	2	3	4	5
f) Without a concessionary bus pass I wouldn't get out and about as much as I do now	1	2	3	4	5
g) Without a pass I would have to rely on family and friends a lot more	1	2	3	4	5
h) Without a pass my quality of life would suffer	1	2	3	4	5
i) Without a bus pass I wouldn't be able to volunteer	1	2	3	4	5
j) Without a bus pass I wouldn't be able to help my family out	1	2	3	4	5
k) I would find it hard to make ends meet if I didn't have a pass	1	2	3	4	5
l) Having a bus pass allows me to be more independent	1	2	3	4	5
m) The concessionary bus pass allows me to get things done more easily	1	2	3	4	5

Q11: Do you ever attempt to use your concessionary bus pass to make trips from Wales into England?

YES	1	Go to Q12
NO	2	Skip to Q14

Ask Q12 for those that answered Yes code 1 @ Q11. All others skip to Q14

SHOWCARD Q12

Q12: Which of these phrases best describes how easy or difficult it is to use your concessionary bus pass for trips into England. **SINGLE CODE ONLY**

Very easy	1
Fairly easy	2
Neither easy nor difficult	3
Fairly difficult	4
Very difficult	5

If FAIRLY OR VERY DIFFICULT, Codes 4 or 5 @ Q12 ask.....

Q13: Why do you say that it is fairly or very difficult to use your concessionary bus pass for trips into England? **PROBE FULLY AND RECORD VERBATIM**

ASK Q14 TO CAMARTHEN AND WREXHAM INTERVIEWS ONLY - OTHERWISE SKIP TO DEMOGRAPHICS

Q14: We are planning to undertake a focus group of concessionary bus pass users where we will talk in more depth about the issues raised in our interview today. The focus group would be held during the daytime at a venue near this location and would last about two hours. Participants would be paid £20 for their time. Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group of concessionary pass users?

YES	1
NO	2

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: PLEASE ENSURE YOU TAKE RESPONDENTS CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER ON VALIDATION PAGE IF CODED 1 @ Q14.

ASK ALL - Section B: Demographics**B1. GENDER**

Male 1
Female 2

B2. AGE: (Write in exact age and code below): _____

60 – 64	1
65 – 69	2
70 – 74	3
75 – 79	4
80+	5
DK / NR	8

B3. Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person? SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes 1
No 2

B4. Can I also ask.....Do you or does anyone else in your household own a car?

Yes, I own a car	1
Yes, my husband/wife/partner owns a car	2
Nobody in my house owns car	3
Other (Write in)	4

B5. What is your annual household income?

Less than £5k	1
£6k-£7k	2
£8-10k	3
£11-12k	4
£13-15k	5
£16-20k	6
£21-25k	7
£26-£30	8
£31-35k	9
£33-40k	10
More than £40k	11
Refused	12
Don't Know	13

Q7398 BUS RESEARCH

RESPONDENT DETAILS (validation purposes only)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

FULL POST CODE

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

TEL.....

INTERVIEWER DETAILS

I confirm that I have undertaken this interview strictly in accordance to your instructions and it was conducted within the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society with a person unknown to me.

SIGNATURE.....DATE.....

NAME.....

Appendix B. Focus group discussion guide

Concessionary Bus Pass Research: Discussion Guide

Introductions

Introduce self/Mott MacDonald – an independent market research agency commissioned to undertake research on behalf of Older People's Commissioner for Wales.

Explain the process, Data Protection and MR Code of Conduct

Ask permission to audio record the group. Welsh-English interpreter??

Background:

- Participants to introduce themselves: first name, family, working/retired, lifestyle, how they spend their time etc
- How long have you lived in/around the area? How far from the nearest town centre do you live?

Travel horizons:

- Tell me about your regular journeys, where are you travelling to?
- How far are the journeys?
- What mode of transport do you generally use?
- Does this vary by distance/type of journey? In what ways?

Bus journeys and perceptions of bus services:

- How often would you say you use the bus?
- How do you feel about using the bus? What are the positives and negatives about using the bus? *Spontaneous first then probe issues such as:*
 - *reliability of buses*
 - *frequency*
 - *comfort*
 - *cleanliness*
 - *ease of access*
 - *ease of getting a seat*
 - *ease of getting where you want to go/changes required/ routes*
 - *access to bus stops*
 - *drivers*
 - *safety*
 - *fares*
- Do you ever look for information about bus journeys? When/why? Do you ever have to plan bus journeys?
- How easy is it to find the information you want? How do you search for it?
- Are there times when you could use the bus but don't? Tell me about these? *Spontaneous first then probe: night time, Sundays, on my own, if there are too many changes, longer journeys, if food shopping/carrying something large*
- What mode would you use in these situations? Do you have access to a car?

Concessions:

- How long have you had a concessionary bus pass?
- How often do you use it?
- Why do you use it? Every journey, specific types of trips: *Probe: shopping, for food, for clothes, visiting friends, attending appointments, work/volunteering, days out*
- Are there any trip types that you wouldn't make if you didn't have a concessionary bus pass? Why / not? What types of trips, e.g. days out, volunteering etc.
- How far do you travel using it? (for Wrexham in particular - Do you travel over the border into England? How does that work?)
- Has your travel changed since you had the pass? In what way? *Probe: More journeys, more shorter journeys, change in mode of travel? Do you use your car less now that you have a pass, or do you just travel more often?*
- What's the best thing about having a bus pass?
- What other value do they provide for you? How do you judge value? What criteria are you using to judge the value? *Probe:*
 - *financial value*
 - *independence*
 - *improved QoL*
 - *freedom from relying on family/friends*
 - *able to do more*
 - *able to work/volunteer*
 - *able to visit friends/family*
 - *can access further away places*
- Aside from the above what do you think are the benefits/weaknesses of the concessionary pass? *Spontaneous first then probe: Explore issues such as cost to the tax payer, not valid for services wholly in England, not valid on trains.*
- Do you think there should be any changes made to the concessionary bus pass? *Spontaneous first then suggest potential ideas*

In England the bus pass can only be used outside of peak hours.

- *How would you feel about this?*
- *Would it have any impacts on you?*

Some people have suggested that concessionary passes should be replaced by half price travel instead.

- *How would you feel about this?*
- *Would it have any impacts on you?*
- *How about a flat fee for a journey? E.g. 50p for any journey?*
- *How would you feel about this?*
- *Would it have any impacts on you?*

There is a suggestion that concessionary bus passes are an unnecessary burden on tax payers?

- *How do you feel about this?*
- *Would it have any impacts on you?*

- If you didn't have a concessionary bus pass would it impact on your life? In what ways?

Other concessions:

- Are you aware of any other concessionary passes? E.g. for rail?
- Do you have any other concessionary tickets?

If yes:

- What for?
- How often do you use it?
- When would you use this instead on bus pass? *Probe: types of journeys*

Sum up

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-380
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/06448/12

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions Committee
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Cardiff Bay
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July 2012

Thank you for your letter dated 14 June 2012, regarding the Petition your Committee is considering on recent changes to local bus services in the Lampeter area.

We are currently looking very closely at how Welsh Government funding for local bus services can be better targeted to deliver improved services for passengers. I expect to make an announcement on how we intend to take these proposals forward later in the year. As part of this work, we have looked at the legislative framework for buses in some detail and I will be considering whether we should seek to change that framework in the future.

Local authorities do have powers under the Transport Act 2000 (as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008) that allow them to make Statutory Quality Bus Partnership Schemes. Under these arrangements, local authorities are able to work more closely with bus operators to plan and deliver local bus services that better meet the needs of local passengers and communities. In making these schemes, local authorities are able to set out requirements around the provision of service standards, frequencies, timetables and maximum fares. It is for a local authority to determine if it is appropriate to proceed with a Statutory Quality Bus Partnership Scheme as a way to improve local bus services in their area.

Carmarthenshire County Council and Ceredigion County Council have formally consulted on the introduction of a new Statutory Quality Bus Partnership Scheme for the main Aberystwyth, Lampeter to Carmarthen bus corridor, and we are working closely with them to ensure that this Scheme is still appropriate for this Corridor, given the recent actions by Arriva Buses Wales.

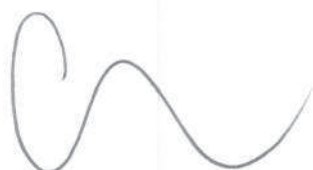
In relation to the Bwcabus service, which is part funded by the Welsh Government, I have asked my officials to bring the feedback that your Committee has received to the attention of Carmarthenshire County Council who manage the scheme on our behalf.

Carmarthenshire County Council does undertake comprehensive monitoring of the service and collects a wide range of operational information which they share with us. Recent feedback on the operation of this service has been good. For instance, I am pleased to report to the Committee that in June 2012:

- 74% of passengers making journeys on the Bwcabus scheme stated they are extremely satisfied with the punctuality of services;
- 97% of requests for transport by passengers registered to use the Bwcabus scheme were successfully accommodated;
- Changes to pre booked journeys on the scheme occurred on average only a couple of times per week, and these were only minor timing changes; and
- The vast majority of calls from passengers at the dedicated call centre handling the bookings for Bwcabus were answered within 10 seconds, with very few calls lost.

I am also assured that Carmarthenshire County Council is pursuing an extensive programme of community engagement designed to publicise the Bwcabus service to the widest possible number of residents living in the area covered by the Scheme. Welsh Government officials also meet officers from Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion County Councils on a regular basis to monitor the performance of the service, and ensure that any necessary service revisions are introduced promptly.

Finally, I would also like to reiterate that the Bwcabus scheme forms a key part of the Welsh Government's programme of delivering improvements to the public transport network, and as such I was pleased to accept an invitation from Carmarthenshire County Council to formally launch the recent extension of this very successful service in Lampeter on the 9 July 2012.



Carl Sargeant AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities

PET(4)-14-12 : Tuesday 16 October 2012

P-04-380 : Bring back our bus! Petition against the removal of scheduled bus services from east Lampeter, Cwmann & Pencarreg

E-mail from Arriva to Committee

Dear Abigail

I write in reference to a recent e/mail from Mr William Powell AC/AM to my colleague at Arriva Trains Wales, in respect of our Service 40 bus service between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen.

In this communication it is stated that some of our drivers have informed petitioners of changes to the service. I can confirm that changes are taking place from the 23rd September 2012, however these are minor timetable changes with no changes taking place to the current route.

Other than these minor timetable changes we have no other plans to make any changes to this service.

For your information I attach a copy of the timetable that is effective from the 23rd September 2012

Best Regards

Simon

Simon Finnie

Head of Operations – Wales.

Rhif y gwasanath Nodiadau	Service Number Codes	50	40	50	40	10 UF	50	40	20	50	40	50	40	50
Aberystwyth University		1310	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Aberystwyth Gorsaf Bws Bus Station		1130	1200	1230	1300	1315	1330	1400	1415	1430	1500	1530	1600	1630
Llanfarian		1138	1208	1238	1308	1323	1338	1408	1423	1438	1508	1538	1608	1638
Llanrhystud		1150	1220	1250	1320	1335	1350	1420	1435	1450	1520	1550	1620	1650
Aberaeron, Scwar Alban Square		1207	1237	1307	1337	1352	1407	1437	1452	1507	1537	1607	1637	1707
Llanarth Llanina Arms		1215	....	1315	....	....	1415	....	....	1515	....	1615	....	1715
Theatr Felinfach		1250	....	1350	1405	....	1450	1505	....	1550	....	1650	....
Cei Newydd, Stryd y Parc <i>New Quay, Park St</i>		1227	....	1327	....	....	1427	....	....	1527	....	1627	....	1727
Synod Inn		1237	....	1337	....	....	1437	....	....	1537	....	1637	....	1737
Llanbedr PS Lampeter (Black Lion)		1304	....	1404	1421	....	1504	1521	....	1604	....	1704	....
Llanybydder Square		1317	....	1417	1434	....	1517	1534	....	1617	....	1717	....
Llanllwni Tegfan Garage		1322	....	1422	1439	....	1522	1539	....	1622	....	1722	....
Pencader Y Scwar <i>Square</i>		1332	....	1432	1449	....	1532	1549	....	1632	....	1732	....
Alltwallis Masons Arms		1339	....	1439	1456	....	1539	1556	....	1639	....	1739	....
West Wales General Hospital		1354	....	1454	1511	....	1554	1611	....	1654	....	1754	....
Carmarthen Gorsaf Bws Bus Station		1516	....	....	1616	....	....	....	....	....
Carmarthen Gorsaf Tren Railway Stn		1400	....	1500	1520	....	1600	1620	....	1700	....	1800	....
Swansea City Gorsaf Bws Bus Station		1609	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Bridgend, McArthur Glen		1716	....	....	....	....	....
Caerdydd, Gorsaf Bws Cardiff Bus Stn		1746	....	....	....	....	....

Rhif y gwasanath Nodiadau	Service Number	40	50	40	50
	Codes				NS
Aberystwyth Gorsaf Bws	Bus Station	1700	1730	1800	1830
Llanfarian		1708	1738	1808	1838
Llanrhystud		1720	1750	1820	1850
Aberaeron, Scwar Alban	Square	1737	1807	1837	1907
Llanarth Llanina Arms		....	1815	....	1915
Theatr Felinfach		1750	....	1850	....
Cei Newydd, Stryd y Parc	<i>New Quay, Park St</i>	....	1827	....	1927
Synod Inn		....	1837	....	....
Llanbedr PS	Lampeter (Black Lion)	1804	....	1902	....
Llanybydder Square		1817	....	....	....
Llanllwni Tegfan Garage		1822	....	....	....
Pencader Y Scwar	<i>Square</i>	1832	....	....	....
Alltwallis Masons Arms		1839	....	....	....
West Wales General Hospital		1854	....	....	....
Carmarthen Gorsaf Tren	Railway Stn	1900	....	....	....

Nodiadau

NS	- Dim ar dydd Sadwrn
NT	- Y tu allan i'r tymor yn unig
S	- Dydd Sadwrn yn unig
SD	- Dydd llun i ddydd gwener amser ysgol yn unig
SH	- Dydd llun i ddydd gwener ar gwyliau ysgol yn unig
T	- Yn ystod y tymor yn unig
UF	- Gwasanaethu ar ddydd gwener yn ystod amser tymor prifysgol yn unig

Codes

NS	- Not Saturdays
NT	- Non term time only
S	- Saturdays Only
SD	- Monday to Friday Schooldays Only
SH	- Monday to Friday School Holidays Only
T	- Term time only
UF	- Operates Fridays during university term times only

Aberystwyth - Aberaeron - Lampeter - Carmarthen - Cardiff**10, 20, 40****Suliau a Gwyliau Cyhoeddus (heblaw Diwrnod Nadolig, Gwyl San Steffan a Dydd Calan)
Sundays & Bank Holidays (except Christmas Day, Boxing Day & New Year's Day)**

Rhif y gwasanath <i>Service Number</i>	40	40	20	10
Nodiadau <i>Codes</i>				U
Aberystwyth Gorsaf Bws <i>Bus Station</i>	0900	1400	1415	1545
Llanfarian	0908	1408	1423	1553
Llanrhystud	0920	1420	1435	1605
Aberaeron, Scwar Alban <i>Square</i>	0937	1437	1452	1622
Theatr Felinfach	0950	1450	1505	1635
Llanbedr PS <i>Lampeter (Black Lion)</i>	1004	1504	1519	1649
Llanybydder Square	1017	1517	1532	1702
Llanllwni Tegfan Garage	1022	1522	1537	1707
Pencader Y Scwar <i>Square</i>	1032	1532	1547	1717
Alltwallis Masons Arms	1038	1539	1554	1724
West Wales General Hospital	1049	1554	1609	1439
Carmarthen Gorsaf Bws <i>Bus Station</i>	....	....	1614	1744
Carmarthen Gorsaf Tren <i>Railway Stn</i>	1055	1600	1618	1748
Swansea City Gorsaf Bws <i>Bus Station</i>	....	....	....	1837
Bridgend, McArthur Glen	....	....	1714	....
Caerdydd, Gorsaf Bws <i>Cardiff Bus Stn</i>	....	....	1744	....

Nodiadau

U - Gwasanaethu yn ystod tymor prifysgol, yn cychwyn dydd sul cyntaf y tymor

Codes

U - Operates during university term time only, starting the Sunday prior to term

Rhif y gwasanath <i>Service Number</i>	40	20	50	40	50	40	50	40	50	40	50	40	50
Caerdydd, Gorsaf Bws <i>Cardiff Bus Stn</i>	....	1040	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Bridgend, McArthur Glen	....	1110	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Carmarthen Gorsaf Tren <i>Railway Stn</i>	1111	1206	....	1211	....	1311	....	1411	....	1511	....	1611	....
Carmarthen Gorsaf Bws <i>Bus Station</i>	1122	1212	....	1222	....	1322	....	1422	....	1522	....	1622	....
West Wales General Hospital	1126	1216	....	1226	....	1326	....	1426	....	1526	....	1626	....
Alltwallis Masons Arms	1141	1231	....	1241	....	1341	....	1441	....	1541	....	1641	....
Pencader Pencader Y Scwar <i>Square</i>	1148	1238	....	1248	....	1348	....	1448	....	1548	....	1648	....
Llanllwni Tegfan Garage	1158	1248	....	1258	....	1358	....	1458	....	1558	....	1658	....
Llanybydder, Heol-y-Gaer	1203	1253	....	1303	....	1403	....	1503	....	1603	....	1703	....
Llanbedr PS <i>Lampeter (Natwest)</i>	1215	1305	....	1315	....	1415	....	1515	....	1615	....	1715	....
Synod Inn	....	....	1243	....	1343	....	1443	....	1543	....	1643	....	1743
Cei Newydd, Stryd y Parc <i>New Quay, Park St</i>	....	....	1252	....	1352	....	1452	....	1552	....	1652	....	1752
Theatr Felinfach	1228	1318	....	1328	....	1428	....	1528	....	1628	....	1728	....
Llanarth Llanina Arms	....	....	1302	....	1402	....	1502	....	1602	....	1702	....	1802
Aberaeron, Scwar Alban <i>Square</i>	1242	1332	1312	1342	1412	1442	1512	1542	1612	1642	1712	1742	1812
Llanrhystud	1257	1347	1327	1357	1427	1457	1527	1557	1627	1657	1727	1757	1827
Llanfarian	1309	1359	1339	1409	1439	1509	1539	1609	1639	1709	1739	1809	1839
Aberystwyth Gorsaf Bws <i>Bus Station</i>	1315	1405	1345	1415	1445	1515	1545	1615	1645	1715	1745	1815	1845

Rhif y gwasanath Nodiadau	<i>Service Number</i> <i>Codes</i>	40	10 UF	50	40	40	20
Caerdydd, Gorsaf Bws Cardiff Bus Stn	....	....	....	....	....	....	1840
Bridgend, McArthur Glen	....	....	....	....	....	....	1910
Swansea City Gorsaf Bws Bus Station	....	1701	....	....	....	....	....
Carmarthen Gorsaf Tren Railway Stn	1711	1756	....	1811	1911	2006	....
Carmarthen Gorsaf Bws Bus Station	1722	1802	....	1822	1922	2012	....
West Wales General Hospital	1726	1816	....	1826	1926	2016	....
Alltwallis Masons Arms	1741	1821	....	1841	1941	2031	....
Pencader Pencader Y Scwar Square	1748	1828	....	1848	1948	2038	....
Llanllwni Tegfan Garage	1758	1838	....	1858	1958	2048	....
Llanybydder, Heol-y-Gaer	1803	1843	....	1903	2003	2053	....
Llanbedr PS Lampeter (Natwest)	1815	1855	....	1915	2013	2105	....
Synod Inn	....	....	1843	....	....	....	....
Cei Newydd, Stryd y Parc New Quay, Park St	....	....	1852	....	....	....	....
Theatr Felinfach	1828	1908	....	1928	....	2118	....
Llanarth Llanina Arms	....	....	1902	....	....	....	....
Aberaeron, Scwar Alban Square	1842	1922	1912	1942	....	2132	....
Llanrhystud	1857	1937	1927	1957	....	2147	....
Llanfarian	1909	1949	1939	2009	....	2159	....
Aberystwyth Gorsaf Bws Bus Station	1915	1955	1945	2015	....	2205	....

Nodiadau

NS	- Dim ar dydd Sadwrn
S	- Dydd Sadwrn yn unig
SD	- Dydd llun i ddydd gwener amser ysgol yn unig
SH	- Dydd llun i ddydd gwener ar gwyliau ysgol yn unig
UF	- Gwasanaethu ar ddydd gwener yn ystod amser tymor prifysgol yn unig

Codes

NS	- Not Saturdays
S	- Saturdays only
SD	- Monday to Friday Schooldays Only
SH	- Monday to Friday School Holidays Only
UF	- Operates Fridays during university term times only

Cardiff - Carmarthen - Lampeter - Aberaeron - Aberystwyth

10, 20, 40

**Suliau a Gwyliau Cyhoeddus (heblaw Diwrnod Nadolig, Gwyl San Steffan a Dydd Calan)
Sundays & Bank Holidays (except Christmas Day, Boxing Day & New Year's Day)**

Rhif y gwasanath <i>Service Number</i>	40	40	20	10
Nodiadau <i>Codes</i>				U
Caerdydd, Gorsaf Bws Cardiff Bus Stn	....	....	1840	....
Bridgend, McArthur Glen	....	....	1910	....
Swansea City Gorsaf Bws Bus Station	....	....	....	1931
Carmarthen Gorsaf Tren Railway Stn	1100	1620	2006	2026
Carmarthen Gorsaf Bws Bus Station	1106	1626	2012	2032
West Wales General Hospital	1110	1630	2016	2036
Alltwallis Masons Arms	1121	1641	2027	2047
Pencader Pencader Y Scwar Square	1127	1647	2033	2053
Llanllwni Tegfan Garage	1137	1657	2043	2103
Llanybydder, Heol-y-Gaer	1142	1702	2048	2108
Llanbedr PS Lampeter (Natwest)	1153	1713	2100	2120
Theatr Felinfach	1206	1726	2113	2133
Aberaeron, Scwar Alban Square	1221	1741	2127	2147
Llanrhystud	1234	1754	2142	2202
Llanfarian	1247	1807	2154	2214
Aberystwyth Gorsaf Bws Bus Station	1253	1813	2200	2220
Aberystwyth University	....	....	....	2205 2225

- Nodiadau** U - Gwasanaethu yn ystod tymor prifysgol, yn cychwyn dydd sul cyntaf y tymor
- Codes** U - Operates during university term time only, starting the Sunday prior to term

PET(4)-14-12 : Tuesday 16 October 2012

P-04-380 : Bring back our bus! Petition against the removal of scheduled bus services from east Lampeter, Cwmann & Pencarreg

Email from Peter Hoskins

These remarks are offered in addition to those I submitted on 19/5/2012.

The current state of provision of conventional bus service between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen remains a contentious issue. Since the introduction by Arriva of their controversial service 40 between these places the anger of inhabitants of settlements no longer adequately served by conventional bus service resulting from their casual omission by Arriva from its route has increased. Meetings have been held with both Westminster and Cardiff Parliamentary representatives. The already bad situation is exacerbated by the extension of the notorious Bwcabus scheme which is offered as a substitute for conventional service and found to be thoroughly unworkable although enthusiastically promoted by the Welsh Government and the local authorities who are all blind to its manifest shortcomings.

The source of the unsatisfactory provision now suffered is the premature withdrawal by First from participation in service X40 in December 2009 leaving Arriva as the sole participant. This was a most regrettable move on the part of First and one in which they later allegedly saw the folly. The word was that they then approached one or both local councils and sought to resume participation but were turned down. If there is any truth in this then the local councils are implicated and in my view should be asked to give reasons.

Arriva then took over the X40 service on a temporary basis without participation from any other service provider and later secured the contract for the whole of it. The truncation of two services was allegedly approved by the Welsh Government. These were (1) the 6.30 departure from Carmarthen which began from a newly established outstation in the old station yard in Pencader running out of service to Lampeter until March 2010 and (2) the 19.15 departure from Aberystwyth which terminated at Lampeter town hall and then similarly ran out of service back to Pencader.

These truncations caused significant inconvenience and hardship to regular users. Needlessly running out of service angered former passengers north of Pencader who were no longer able to board to get to work in Lampeter and beyond. Naturally losing custom is a speedier business than recovering it. It took time for former passengers to realise that service had been partly restored. Many former passengers never returned. The last service from Aberystwyth similarly lost a significant amount of business. Passengers would board at Aberystwyth and travel all the way to Carmarthen perhaps to continue by train.

Lampeter students at regular intervals filled the bus on a Friday evening to capacity for a night out in Carmarthen. The last X40 service from Aberystwyth to Carmarthen became the 17.20 departure at the hands of Arriva.

Matters took a serious turn for the worse earlier this year when Arriva thwarted the plans of the Traws Cymru Network project to establish a successor service T1 to service X40. The eleventh hour submission by Arriva of applications to register two commercial services 40 and 50 obliged the Traws Cymru Network Manager to suspend immediately the tendering process to seek service providers to undertake the operation of the planned service T1 upon the award of contract. Overnight what had been the best service yet between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen was replaced by the worst.

Arriva service 40 has from the outset been an unmitigated social, financial and operational disaster. The Optare vehicles provided to X40 participants had to be surrendered to the authorities who owned them and had made them available for the duration of this subsidised service.

Arriva deployed a number of unsuitable and less robust vehicles on services 40 and 50. In no time these vehicles proved to be unreliable.

Services ran late, broke down en route or were cancelled. Passengers were lost and revenue from service 40 fell appreciably. Times and routes did not suit many users of the former service X40.

Running times between Aberystwyth to Carmarthen were arbitrarily reduced by approximately half an hour for no other reason than to cover the outward and return journeys with the time allowed by law beyond which a mandatory break must be taken by the driver. The working timetable was soon shown to be unworkable and has been noted by VOSA inspectors who have consequently undertaken a succession of visits to the Arriva Aberystwyth depot.

A series of timetable changes since the inception of service 40 has not in any way alleviated the inconvenience and hardship suffered by inhabitants of settlements from which service has been withdrawn. A drastic reduction in the level of Aberystwyth town and country services was imposed on 23rd September 2012. This has inevitably resulted in further inconvenience and hardship for service users. For example the 19.00 service to Carmarthen has been withdrawn while the 18.00 southbound service now terminates in Lampeter. The last departure for Carmarthen leaves at 17.00 hours. Paradoxically the activities of other local service providers flourish and increase. Arriva service X32 has been withdrawn as a money loser but in contrast the new service T2 appears to be prospering.

The situation I have sought to describe cannot be suffered indefinitely.

It calls for remedial action by the Welsh Government and the local authorities in Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire. The prohibition of subsidised services over routes traversed by commercial services must be challenged and overcome. Money wasting distractions such as Bwcabus must be exposed for the scandalous misguided misadventures they are and abandoned with all haste. I cite the example of West Yorkshire County Council with links to some relevant pages on their web site.

My attention was initially drawn by an item on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01mnr3d>

West Yorkshire URLs:

<http://www.wymetro.com/>

leading to:

<http://www.wymetro.com/news>

leading to:

<http://www.wymetro.com/news/releases>

leading to:

<http://www.wymetro.com/news/releases/12-06-22QCs>

leading to:

<http://www.wymetro.com/news/releases/qualitycontracts/>

leading to:

<http://www.wymetro.com/news/releases/qualitycontracts/Questions>

<http://www.wymetro.com/news/releases/qualitycontracts/CC>

and others.

These matters have to be considered seriously by the Welsh Government and jointly by Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire County Councils if there is any concerted interest in restoring conventional bus services to what they were in this area in December 2009. While the interests of service providers are allowed to remain treated more favourably by the law than the public interest there can be no prospect of remedy.

In conclusion I should like to draw the attention of readers to the necessity of improving the level of conventional bus service in the area not just for the benefit of local inhabitants but for the benefit of tourists. These have traditionally provided revenue to the area but are not well served by public transport. Many of them enjoy travel by bus and occasionally some from over the border are surprised to find that their English free travel passes are not valid in Wales. If the interests of tourism and of the wider business community are not to be threatened by inadequate bus services then remedial action must be taken promptly and not delayed. Bwcabus and other on-demand services are of not the slightest use to tourists and only stand to impede random and spontaneous travel by all of us for no justifiable reason. The provision of public transport remains a very contentious issue in this area and deserves more favourable attention than it has received from the authorities of late if it is to survive practically unregulated as it currently is in the hands of private enterprise. The Welsh Government and both local authorities must take into consideration social as well as financial issues.

PET(4)-14-12 : Tuesday 16 October 2012

P-04-380 : Bring back our bus! Petition against the removal of scheduled bus services from east Lampeter, Cwmann & Pencarreg

Response from Miriam Perrett

I am writing in support of the following petition:

"P-04-380 Bring Back our Bus! Petition against the Removal of Scheduled Bus Services from East Lampeter, Cwmann and Pencarreg

Petition wording:

We request the urgent implementation of a properly scheduled & timetabled bus service in these affected areas & would urge those governmental agencies concerned, to commit to this on our behalf, at the earliest possible opportunity."

The X40 timetabled bus service that used to run through Cwmann and Pencarreg was withdrawn at very short notice (most of us had a bare 3 weeks' warning, and that only because the Cambrian News found out about it and ran a story). It has been replaced by "Bwcabus". In a matter of weeks, the people in these villages went from having a timetabled hourly service to having a bus that is only available if someone else has not bagged it first, and which even if available has to be booked half a day in advance. A good deal of life is not amenable to advance booking in this way, especially if you are old, unwell or have children; and a lot of people cannot afford to use taxis. Co-ordinating the erratic availability of Bwcabus with such things as doctor's surgery times is very problematic. (When my cat needed to go to the morning surgery at the vet's at short notice, I was reduced to taking it in a wheelbarrow!)

People living along the road that runs through Cwmann and Pencarreg had in many cases chosen to do so expressly because there was public transport available, and are now in difficulties. It is the A485, the main road from Lampeter to Carmarthen; the expectation that there should be a proper timetabled bus service along it is surely not unreasonable.

It is a fast, busy road with no pavement or lighting on most of its length, but people are being obliged to risk walking along it in order to carry out their business. I live on the A485 and a recent visitor to my home (with whom I had not discussed the bus situation) remarked quite spontaneously that far more people were walking past the window than on previous occasions when he had visited. The walk is hazardous enough in daylight; with winter coming up, more people will be faced with having to risk it after dark. People who are too old or disabled to walk far do not, of course, have even this risky choice. It is about 3 miles from Pencarreg to Lampeter.

We really need a regular, timetabled service restored to this route.

Procedures should also be put in place to ensure that bus services cannot simply be discontinued at a few weeks' notice (or lack of notice) in this fashion. It creates havoc in people's lives. At least one person on the route came close to losing her job because it was not clear whether she could guarantee being able to get to work. Public transport is not some kind of optional extra; it is an essential service.

Yours sincerely,
Miriam Perrett

Agenda Item 3.14

P-04-402 Council Prayers

Petition wording:

We the undersigned call upon the Welsh Government to amend the Local Government Act 1972 to afford each local authority in Wales the opportunity to decide whether it would like to hold council prayers during each council meeting and have it formally recorded on the official business agenda.

Petition raised by: Rev Alan Hewitt

Date petition first considered by Committee: 2 July 2012

Number of signatures: 155



Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-402
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/06638/12

William Powell AM
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

31st July 2012

Thank you for your letter dated 9 July regarding the petition that has been received requesting the Welsh Government to introduce legislation that explicitly enables local authorities in Wales to include prayers as a formal part of the proceedings at their meetings.

The background to this issue is the ruling of the High Court in R (on the application of the National Secular Society and Clive Bone) –v– Bideford Town Council, that local authorities could not rely upon the power within section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to include prayers as part of the formal proceedings of council meetings. In response to this decision the UK Government commenced section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which provides local authorities in England with a general power of competence.

The general power of competence within the Localism Act does not extend to Wales. However, local authorities in Wales are able to make use of the well-being power within section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, which enables them to do anything which would promote the social, economic or environmental wellbeing of their areas or citizens.

It is of course a matter for local authorities to determine whether they can rely upon the well-being power to include prayers as part of the formal business of their meetings. If they determine to utilise the wellbeing power they will also need to satisfy themselves that they have complied with their public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 before including prayers as part of the formal business of their meetings.

In the event that they are not content to rely on the well-being power it does remain open to local authorities to hold prayers before the start of meetings, an option I am aware many authorities have chosen to take.

I can confirm that the Welsh Government has given careful consideration to the request to introduce legislation, but is of view that such legislation is not necessary. We believe that the official business of local authorities, having regard to their statutory duties, should be focussed on the provision of goods and services and facilitating the well-being and inclusion of all the community, and we are satisfied that local authorities in Wales already have sufficient powers to enable them to do this. As part of our consideration of this matter we have had full regard to our public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2012, and are satisfied that these have been met.

If you require any further information from me in respect of this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'C' followed by a wavy line that tapers off to the right.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities