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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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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.



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