

Enterprise and Business Committee

Integrated Public Transport Inquiry

World Café event, National Waterfront Museum Swansea,
Thursday 15 November 2012

Purpose

The aim of this event was for the Enterprise and Business Committee to listen to the views and experiences of public transport users and user groups to provide an evidence base for its inquiry into integrated public transport in Wales.

A World Café is a discussion in an informal setting where participants share experiences and explore issues in small groups.

26 people attended from the following organisations: Ataxia South Wales, BayTrans, Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People, Bus Users UK, Bus Users UK Cymru, Disability Awareness Group (Taff Housing Association), Federation of Small Businesses South Wales, Heart of Wales Line Forum, Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association, North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum, Passenger Focus, Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association, Preseli Rural Transport Association, Railfuture, Railfuture South Wales, Severn Tunnel Action Group, Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers Association, Swansea Access for Everyone.

Assembly Members hosted a series of round table discussions on the following five themes: fares and ticketing; coordination of services and timetables; marketing, communication and information provision; integration with land use and other policy areas; quality and reliability of services and infrastructure.

Each group fed back its comments to a final summary session. The following were the key points from the discussion.

1. Fares and ticketing: how far fares provide value for money and whether ticketing systems simplify or complicate travel.

- **“Fares are not fair”** – pricing structures are not clear and it is not easy to understand why costs can vary so much between different areas, different operators and between local and long-distance travel.
- An alternative view was that fare structures were not as important as communicating fare information to the customer more easily and clearly.
- Fares can on occasion be bizarre (e.g. being cheaper to travel from Ebbw Vale to Cheltenham via Cardiff than from Cardiff to Cheltenham on the same train).

- The system can be confusing (**a “dog’s breakfast”**, e.g. tickets not being valid on services run by different bus operators, even where they cover the same routes).
- Public transport fares can compare favourably with the cost of travelling by car, but the convenience of using the car often masks the real and full cost of driving.
- **Travelling between different modes of transport should be “seamless”** in terms of payment and ticketing.
- There should be full integration of payments and ticketing between Wales and the rest of the UK. Would that require primary legislation though?
- The **Welsh Government’s** pilot GO CYMRU card (**Wales’s version of an Oyster card**) was considered an example of good practice, although it could be more transparent in how journeys are charged, and it was felt that it should carry concessions and offers.
- PlusBus was also considered good practice, although the initial journey to the train station is not included in the scheme.
- **Arriva’s Club 55 and the Pembrokeshire Railcard were also well regarded.**
- Disabled travellers **don’t receive the same standard of service, so there** should be discounts for them and their carers.
- **People who don’t have online capability are disadvantaged from booking in advance.**

2. Coordination of services and timetables: issues involved in changing between different modes of transport and service providers, and also travelling between different areas, as well as how easily users can access public transport.

- There is inconsistency between standards of information between different travel operators, with little integration or coordination between them.
- Integrated travelling is difficult, in particular for disabled passengers, owing to lack of accessibility and communication between different service providers, and lack of integration between bus and train travel times.
- Lack of coordination between transport modes can cause stress for passengers - there need to be longer waiting times so that train and bus services or even train services by different operators all link up.
- Waiting facilities at interchange stations need to be improved.
- Timetables can be confusing - **“you need a degree in timetabling”**.
- Timetables tend to be commercially driven as opposed to catering for the requirements of users (e.g. services not running in the evenings or on Sundays).
- Timetable information should show accessibility provision for each service.
- Access to information, especially for disabled people, is poor; this could be improved with the provision of large print and audio timetables.
- There are anomalies when crossing the border with England.
- The Active Travel Bill will provide the opportunity to improve provision, but the Bill should include walking routes to transport hubs.
- Community Transport is the neglected link, but it must be integrated with other modes, particularly in rural areas where older people can feel isolated in their own homes. **It requires a “banging of heads”**.

- Can taxis provide a community transport link in some areas?
- Carrying bikes on buses and trains can be problematic - good practice example from Canada where buses carry bikes on the front of the vehicle.

3. Marketing, communication and information provision: how easy users find it to access information on services both before and during their journey.

- Information provision during the journey is inadequate, particularly the lack of signage, real time information, and information for disabled people concerning accessibility.
- Bus services are particularly unreliable and are often the reason why integration breaks down. Availability of information **for buses is poor; 'real-time' information would therefore** be most useful, as it would alert users to any delays and enable them to make alternative plans if required.
- Wales lags behind England in this area, and rural areas in particular are poorly served.
- Problems have been experienced with Traveline information, including lack of fare information.
- Quality of customer service from Arriva call centres can be poor, as most **staff don't have local knowledge of the stations.**
- Bus timetables change so frequently the printed versions tend to be out of date almost as soon as they are published. Train and bus timetables do not often link up.
- New technology on trains and buses (e.g. audio visual facilities on buses) **often doesn't work.** There should be more audio announcements on buses.
- Transport staff have a vital role in providing information, help and advice.
- The next rail franchise provides the opportunity to specify that transport staff walk the train.
- There should be better integration between public transport and shop mobility provision.
- Closure of public services (e.g. post offices, hospitals) reduces the number of outlets that provide travel information.
- Employers should have a role in providing travel information.
- It is important to encourage young people to travel on public transport from an early age by making it easy to use for them and their families.
- Transport information for tourists is very important, both online and on paper.
- There is poor integration between different local authorities and regional transport consortia.
- Transport providers need to improve their marketing strategies.
- Community Transport provision is sometimes difficult to obtain.
- Community Transport providers find that both they and local authorities have limited resources available to provide information.
- Transport information needs to be available/accessible and up-to-date both online and in paper format.

4. Integration with other policy areas: how well public transport services are coordinated with wider policies such as land use planning, housing, education and health to ensure that transport services are provided when facilities or services are being developed.

- New development tends to focus on car usage: public transport is usually an **“add on”**, e.g. **large out-of-town** retail developments.
- A number of participants spoke about the difficulties they have experienced **in visiting outlets such as McArthur Glen in Bridgend which is “virtually impossible” to reach by public transport.**
- There is a need for greater involvement between local authorities and transport providers at planning stages to help tackle these issues.
- It is not clear how transport fits into the whole view of public service provision.
- All public service venues (e.g. health, leisure, education) should strategically consider their accessibility by public transport in the long as well as the short term.
- Bus stops need to be situated directly outside hospitals so that patients and visitors do not have far to walk.
- Transport providers should review the timetables of buses to take into account hospital visiting hours and the needs of users.
- There is a need for adequate car parking at train stations to encourage **more users to “park and ride”, with longer opening hours so that they do not close in the early evening.**
- There is also a need for better bus links to train stations.
- In some rural areas the only option if you are not a car user is Community Transport.
- Local Development Plans are the key mechanism for achieving an integrated planning approach between transport and other policies.
- Accessibility needs will vary for different groups of people - the whole spectrum of disability needs to be catered for.
- Less thought is given to people with visual impairments.

5. Quality and reliability of services and infrastructure: the quality of services and interchange facilities such as bus stops and bus and train stations.

- Quality varies widely - **it’s a “mixed bag”/“pot luck”**, and different economic conditions have an impact on services provided.
- Quality of services for disabled travellers is heavily dependent on the behaviour of the wider population, e.g. passengers or luggage occupying or blocking dedicated disabled spaces.
- Quality of services for disabled travellers varies depending on whether they have booked in advance and have requested assistance at the station. This makes it difficult for disabled travellers to travel on the spur of the moment, as assistance at the station may not be available.
- Flexibility of travelling on public transport for all passengers needs to be improved, so that it is as easy to travel on the spur of the moment as it is to plan a journey in advance.

- There should be first class carriages on Arriva trains.
- In the event of severe delays or cancellations passengers can find it difficult to contact family and friends because of the lack of communication channels on services. Stations that are not staffed (such as Llanelli station) are a problem in terms of safety as well as access to information.
- Standards of transport need to be improved and made consistent – powers under the Transport Act could be better utilised in this regard.
- Standards of accessibility on buses can vary widely.
- Transport staff need to be trained to serve all accessibility needs.
- Transport staff are important for creating a sense of security – concerns about safety and security are significant deterrents to using public transport.
- Anti-social behaviour can be a real problem on some services and needs to be addressed.
- The British Transport Police need to take more action with anti-social behaviour, as currently there is a risk to public transport staff as well as users.
- Cleanliness and comfort are also crucial, and a lack of cleanliness or comfort can put people off travelling by public transport. Many bus operators have significantly older vehicles, which are in poor condition, and there is a general lack of uniformity across services.
- There can be conflicts between passengers – wheelchair passengers and others, such as mothers with prams, all need proper space provision.
- **Many types of buses don't have sufficient space for more than one wheelchair user, and so wheelchair passengers travelling together are unable to do so.**
- If services are right for disabled people then they will be right for the rest of the population.
- Travel operators should consult users more.
- The location of stops and interchange stations could be improved (e.g. Swansea where the train and bus stations are a fair distance apart).
- Concern that public sector budget cuts will impact on public transport services.

Committee Service

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