



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1343
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/01005/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

15 June 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 18 May to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language on behalf of the Elin Wyn Davies regarding Petition P-06-1343 to provide free public transport for all secondary school pupils. I am responding due to my portfolio responsibilities.

One of the key aims of the Welsh Government's Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, is to reduce the cost of sustainable travel for everyone in Wales, including young people, and we are currently looking at a range of options to make travel by public transport and active travel choices easier and more affordable for all in the community.

Unfortunately, we have been faced with a challenging funding settlement from the UK Government. Following the Covid pandemic, we have had to prioritise our bus funding to ensure essential bus services are maintained whilst keeping fares as low as possible through the conditions set out in the Bus Emergency Scheme, that has successfully sustained the bus industry over the past 2 years. These financial pressures alongside the current complex, fragmented system of fares and ticketing on local bus services across Wales, due to the deregulation of the bus industry, is limiting our influence on fares as they are currently set by the operators themselves on commercial services or by terms of contract, as stipulated by local authorities on tendered services.

We do however fund and provide the MyTravelPass scheme ([Home ♥ mytravelpass | Welsh Government](#)) for 16 to 21 year olds which provides approximately 1/3 off the cost of bus travel. There are also a number of bus network tickets available across Wales. Details can be obtained from the following web link: [Bus Fares \(traveline.cymru\)](#).

The proposed Bus Bill, which we will be bringing to the Senedd in early 2024, will provide us with the opportunity to look a fresh at bus service delivery across Wales, fairer fares and ensure that school transport is aligned with the public transport offering. As our aims are ambitious, these reforms will take time, but it is vital that we get this right to support learners and our wider reform programme.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

As you are aware, the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 places duties on local authorities to assess the travel needs of learners in their areas, and to provide free transport for learners aged 5-16 who live more than 2 miles (if at primary school) or 3 miles (if at secondary school) from their nearest suitable school on the basis of age, distance, aptitude and safety.

An initial review of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure took place in 2020/2021 which concluded that a more detailed review of the Measure was required due to the complex nature of learner's travel needs.

Work has now commenced on this wider review of the Measure which, working in partnership with local authorities, the industry as well as children and young people, will identify the barriers as well as opportunities and innovative approaches to learner travel. Key findings and examples of good practice from local, national and international research will inform advice due to be submitted for me to review this summer. It is vital that we take the time to gather the evidence and work with partners to develop sustainable and affordable policy options for all learners in Wales.

Elin raises some very important points in the petition and I have asked officials to ensure that her concerns are fed into the review of learner travel.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Lee Waters AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change