

Lee Waters AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Deputy Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1338
Ein cyf/Our ref LW/01426/23

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee

24 August 2023

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 July from the Committee regarding bus funding and “Petition P-06-1338 Extend the bus emergency scheme and develop national bus recovery plan”.

I published a [statement](#) on 16 June with partners from the bus industry and local authorities setting out further information on our financial support to the industry for this financial year.

I also announced on Tuesday, May 23, the Welsh Government is making £46m available from bus budgets to support BES and the Bus Transition Fund (BTF) arrangements for the whole financial year. This funding will also keep the strategic TrawsCymru services running.

The BTF, which commenced on 25 July 2023 and developed collaboratively with Local Authorities, Welsh Government, Transport for Wales (TfW) and the industry has replaced the Bus Emergency Scheme which came to an end on 24 July. It will provide immediate financial support to bus operators in Wales so that those vital services can continue. It will also provide time for local authorities to undertake meaningful assessment of existing bus services across Wales through regional planning teams led by TfW, looking specifically at the future provision of bus services around new travel trends that have emerged since the pandemic within the budget envelope available.

Over the last few months, these Regional Network Planning Teams have been meeting regularly. My officials are also fully engaged in conversations with the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers and the WLGA.

The funding available will ensure that the majority of the current services will be protected across Wales. We have asked the Regional Planning Teams and TfW to prepare an overview of changes to services. Although some services may change to reflect different travel patterns following the pandemic.

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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.

We have also been discussing with TfW, industry partners and trade unions on how we can best shape a campaign to get people back onto buses. To start that work, we have been looking at market insights to try and determine where any campaign can have the greatest impact and encourage as many people as possible to use the bus.

The aim of a back to bus campaign will be to encourage previous users back to using buses as well as encouraging new customers. This work led by TfW will be introduced later this year.

My ambition is to bring stability to the bus industry following the pandemic as operational costs have increased against a decrease in overall patronage unfortunately. The work we have done and the relationships we have built in responding to this challenge have put us in a stronger position to get ready for franchising, and the issues it has highlighted make the case for reform unanswerable. This support is the next step in managing our path away from emergency funding and through an orderly transition towards a future franchised model. That will give us the platform to build a bus system based on the needs of people, not on the needs of the market. However, for it to be sustainable, we will still need more people using our buses, and will be working to encourage people to do so.

Yours sincerely,

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

Lee Waters AS/MS

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