

# Minutes of the **Cross Party Group on Disability** 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023 (via Zoom)

## **Present:**

Mark Isherwood MS (Chair), Sioned Williams MS, Megan Thomas (Secretary), Amanda Say, Gary Simpson, Trevor Palmer, William Fawcett, Rhian Davies, Jan Thomas, Jenny Carroll, San Leonard, Zoe King, Cari Jones, Tracey Blockwell, Kat Watkins, Monique Craine, George Lockett, Ian Patton, Shaun Bendle, Sheryll Holley (Captioner), Hilary Maclean (Captioner), Owen Williams, Jan Underwood, Ryland Doyle, Lara Warlow, Lorraine Cosgrove, Jack Dunne, Shahd Zorob, Gareth Marshall

## **Apologies:**

Llyr Gruffyd MS, Becky Ricketts, Sophie Mason, Zoe Richards, Dee Montague, Jessica Laimann, Christine Stewart

## **1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed members and noted apologies.

## **Matters arising from the previous minutes.**

Cari asked if Megan had followed up on the Scrap the Charges group.

Megan said this has not been completed but that she will prioritise this work.

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

**Proposed:** Sioned Williams MS

**Seconded:** Cari Jones

## **2. See Around Britain**

Prior to introducing Marg, the Chair reported that concerns had been raised around the amount of time being given to See Around Britain at the start of CPGD meetings.

Following notification that Prince William is unable to assist with See Around Britain, Marg said they need to explore a wide range of avenues to support Commissioning a TV series to raise the profile of SAB. He had drafted a letter which encapsulates their request which was shared with members prior to the meeting.

Rhian Davies confirmed that Disability Wales, Learning Disability Wales and See Around Britain will be meeting next week to discuss this further.

Mark Isherwood MS and Sioned Williams MS agreed to support the commissioning of a tv series.

## **3. Updates from the Chair and Secretary**

Megan informed the group that next CPGD will hopefully be a hybrid one on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

## **4. Experiences of Public Transport – Gary Simpson**

Gary shared his experiences of public transport. Gary's local railway line is the Wrexham to Bidston. The route suffers from many cancellations and the Bidston station is not accessible. It is an island station and has no lifts. To expect disabled people to alight at this platform to continue their journey, is not appropriate.

From speaking to other disabled people, Gary reported that people are weary of travelling by public transport. Cancellations and inaccessible trains and stations cause stress and anxiety.

He also raised concerns about some of the new fleet of trains not having toilets, forcing passengers to get off the train and use a toilet on the platform.

Gary has joined the Unite Regional Disabled Members' Committee, Unite National Disabled Members' Committee and the TUC National Disabled Members input groups. He was proud to report that the Unite Committee in Wales was the one that proposed that the Unite National Disabled Members' Committee and the TUC adopt the Social Model of Disability. Gary was pleased to report that Flintshire does now have a fleet of accessible taxis but they are only used for school runs.

Gary also reported that his experience of applying for a bus pass was harder than applying for PIP.

William Fawcett highlighted the Passenger Charter. He said that if passengers were left at the wrong railway station, then it's the railway's responsibility to provide an accessible vehicle to take passengers to their destination.

In terms of bus pass applications, Sioned reported that she raised the issue with the First Minister previously and he pledged to look into it. She therefore suggested sending a joint letter with Mark Isherwood MS to the First Minister seeking an update. The Chair agreed.

Trevor suggested Gary joins the Transport for Wales Accessibility Panel.

The chair suggested inviting TFW to a future CPGD meeting and asked the secretary to organise.

## 5. Closure of Lloyds Bank Branches - Ian Stanton

Ian spoke about the closure of his local Lloyds bank which he says discriminates disabled people. The closures also apply to other areas in Wales.

He said that Lloyds have decided that branches and cash are superfluous. He has made several attempts to speak to Lloyds without any reasonable response.

Ian circulated several leaflets to the group prior to the meeting highlighting some of the branches affected by closures.

He said the banks do not consult locally prior to closing branches. The Financial Services sets strict guidelines for banks before they alter cashpoint or banking services, but he feels that Lloyds are not complying. Legally, they now have to provide free access to cash within a 3-mile limit.

The chair suggested inviting representatives from UK Finance (previously British Bankers' Association) to attend a 2024 meeting. This was agreed by all.

Bill also suggested inviting a government representative. The chair explained that Finance is not devolved to Wales, but the group could ask an official to attend.

## 6.AOB

**Chris Dunn, Diverse Cymru, Taith Funding - Zoe king instead of chriss dunn**

Diverse Cymru has been appointed as Taith Champions. Taith is a Welsh Government funded international learning

exchange programme delivered by Cardiff University. It is designed to provide life changing opportunities for learners and people across Wales to undertake educational exchanges. Diverse Cymru undertook one of the exchanges in May where they took a group of staff and learners to Crete. As Champions, their role is to support and encourage a wide range of organisations to apply for a Taith grant.

There are some groups of people that are underrepresented in accepting and going for these opportunities such as disabled people, adults with additional learning needs, people from economic pre-disadvantaged backgrounds and black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The next call for funding opens on 5<sup>th</sup> October and will support organisations who want to focus on international partnerships and strategic collaboration.

### **Actions:**

1. Invite Transport for Wales to a future CPGD meeting.
2. Mark Isherwood MS and Sioned Williams MS to write to the First Minister seeking an update on the bus pass application process.
3. Invite representatives from UK Finance (previously British Bankers' Association) and a UK Government representative to attend a 2024 meeting.