

Cross-Party Group Minutes

Meeting Minutes:

Cross Party Group Title:	Public Transport
Date of Meeting:	3 rd May 2023
Location:	Teams

In attendance:

Members of the Senedd & Support Staff:

Carolyn Thomas (Chair)	Labour
Jack Sargeant	Labour
Huw Irranca-Davies	Labour
Altaf Hussain	Conservative
Andrew Jenkins	Office of Sioned Williams (Plaid Cymru)
Billy Jones	Office of Luke Fletcher (Plaid Cymru)
Ioan Bellin	Office of Rhys ab Owen (Plaid Cymru)
Beth Taylor	Conservative Group Office
Helen Boggins	Vikki Howells (Labour)

External Attendees:

Name:	Organisation
Aaron Hill (Secretariat)	CPT Cymru
David Beer	Transport Focus
Cllr William Denston Powell	Transport Focus
Tim Peppin	WLGA
Peter Kingsbury	Railfuture Wales
Barclay Davies	Bus Users Cymru
Sian Donovan	Pedal Power
Martin Murphy	Unite the Union
Sue Arrowsmith	
Ceri Taylor	Transport for Wales
Kaarina Ruta	WLGA
Adam Keen	
Lee Robinson	Transport for Wales

Scott Pearson	Newport Transport
Chris Owens	Coach Tourism Association (CTA)

Apologies:

Name:	Title:
Peredur Owen Griffiths MS	Plaid Cymru
Luke Fletcher MS	Plaid Cymru
Natasha Asghar MS	Conservative
Andrew Morgan	Wales & Borders Superintendent, British Transport Police
Lewis Brencher	Comms & Engagement Director, TFW
Colin Thomas	Commercial Manager, Newport Bus
John Williams	Williams Coaches

Summary of Meeting:

- Carolyn Thomas opened the meeting and welcomed members to this year's Annual General Meeting
- Election of Secretariat - Nominations were sought for the secretariat of the group. Carolyn Thomas nominated Aaron Hill and this was agreed by those present.
- Election of Chair - Nominations were opened for a Chair of the group. Jack Sargeant MS nominated Carolyn Thomas, Seconded by Huw Irranca-Davies MS, and this was agreed by those present.
- The Chair introduced two speakers for the discussion regarding the future of the bus industry in Wales. The first was given by Tim Peppin from the WLGA. Tim covered the following points during his presentation:
 - a. Wider environmental issues facing the bus industry
 - b. Behaviour from pandemic has continued - delivered shopping, working from home etc all impacted on bus numbers
 - c. We need a Transport system that helps us become a more equal, prosperous and healthier society
 - d. Proposals on franchising - on principal looking to move away from commercial to more planned network aimed at looking at needs and tackling disadvantage
- The Chair introduced the second of today's speakers, Aaron Hill Director, CPT Cymru. Aaron covered the following points in his presentation:

- a. Enormous impact of pandemic: Tighter lock down in Wales, Change in habits baked in ie wfh, Concessionary passengers have returned to bus usage less - 40/50% of pre-pandemic levels,
 - b. The importance of the bus industry: £64bn of value added to the economy by bus users each year in the UK, 60% of all public transport journeys are made by bus, 35% bus users reported bus journeys help their mental health. Provides route out of isolation
 - c. Funding challenges: Austerity, impact of pandemic, End of Bus Emergency Scheme - £150m provided over 3 years
 - d. Challenges of the end of BES: Between 15-20% of all bus services will be cut in Wales when BES comes to an end, 3-400 bus drivers jobs at risk, Only 20% of services will remain unaltered
 - e. What do the people of Wales think? If bus was not an option 41% would switch to car, 28% of people are worried about finding an alternative, 54% worried their travel will get more difficult, 92% worried travel to work or education will become more expensive if services cut.
 - f. Where next? If we see drivers leave and passengers out of habit of catching the bus it will become harder to achieve aspirations around model switch. #BackTheBus campaign - timing important.
- The Chair opened the floor for discussions around the topics raised during presentations:
 - a. Andrew Jenkins – regarding a back the bus campaign: a trade off between acting now to add some resilience or wait and see what post BES situation like. If it is case of waiting post-july to see what funding is like, conversations can take place in that time to draw a plan. Question of how much we value buses. One of advantages of acting now is that people are talking about the issue. If we wait to long, conversation shifted and now longer be a priority.
 - b. Martin Murphy, Unite. Unite - started back the bus campaign - concerned about jobs and drivers. Drivers seen as an afterthought - glad that is now being considered. Drivers thinking of leaving industry due to instability.
 - c. Barclay Davies - running campaign to promote bus services. Events in Conwy Valley - services lost. People were saying they catch bus and that is sometimes the only human interaction they have in a day. Cuts do have consequences. People worried about getting to drs and dentist appts, shopping, seeing family. Important that users get notice when routes cut and what their options will be.
 - d. Chris Owens – Alpine Travel, Coach Operator in Llandudno. Don't think politicians understand the implications of their conversations. Bus drivers leaving and going to coach driving because of uncertainty. Political conversation coming out is toxic - making it difficult for staff and passengers alike. Coach never been busier - concept people not willing to travel isn't true - they are the same customers travelling on coach. Need greater engagement with TFW and Local Authorities.

- e. David Beer, Transport Focus: TfW needs to engage communities, Collaboration in campaigning. Campaign needs to support service that is there at the moment. Importance of cost, convenience, confidence and complexity to get people back on the bus.
- f. Scott Pearsons: Every cabinet member should look at budget and realise every portfolio will be impacted by these cuts. Should continue to funding until April next year to properly assess impact on departmental budgets
- The Chair agreed to write to the Deputy Minister with an overview of the items discussed during the meeting.
- The Chair closed the meeting.