

# P-06-1425 - Reverse the decision to stop T2 buses calling at Garndolbenmaen

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 16 Medi 2024  
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Reference: SR24/8621 - 2

**Petition Number:** P-06-1425

**Petition title:** We ask the Welsh Government to reverse its decision to stop T2 buses calling at Garndolbenmaen

**Text of petition:** On 5th November 2023 a new bus timetable was introduced by the Welsh Government and all the T2 buses which pass through Garndolbenmaen were withdrawn and T2 buses are by-passing the village.

The ability of people in Garndolbenmaen to travel to work, to school or to hospital appointments will be all but impossible.

There has been no consultation whatsoever with the people of Garndolbenmaen on these changes to the T2 bus service.

Most of these problems could be resolved with virtually no extra cost if the T2 service was retained to Garndolbenmaen. This would require only an extra 8 minute detour (less than two extra miles) if all the T2 buses were to continue to call at Garndolbenmaen. The minor extra expenditure would be mitigated by the avoidance of public expenditure on paying for taxi fares for school students and those people on low incomes who travel to Ysbyty Gwynedd for appointments. It would also restore a useful bus service between Garndolbenmaen and Cricieth which is now included in the new T2 bus route.

This practical proposal to resolve the problem has already been suggested by local councillor Steve Churchman, and it would be helpful if others would



also support this campaign for the T2 service to be retained for the people of Garndolbenmaen.

## 1. Background

TrawsCymru is the Welsh Government funded medium and long distance bus network in Wales. It comprises a range of services connecting destinations across Wales and in some cases into England.

Previously, the Welsh Government worked with local authorities which procured TrawsCymru services on its behalf. Since 2021 the procurement process has led by Transport for Wales (TfW).

The T2 connects Bangor with Aberystwyth. In November 2023 TfW announced changes to the T2 and T3, including that “the T2 service will now serve Criccieth instead of Garndolbenmaen, which will be served by the new T22 services which will be entering service soon”.

The T22 was introduced on 12 February, connecting Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Blaenau Ffestiniog. The timetable indicates that this provides 6 services in each direction Monday to Saturday which stop at Garndolbenmaen. The service does not stop at the vilage on Sunday and there does not appear to be an alternative service.

Although the former T2 timetable is no longer available on the TrawsCymru website, media reports indicate that Garndolbenmaen was served by eighteen T2 Traws Cymru bus services each day, with five services on a Sunday.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government has a target that, by 2040, 45% of journeys will made by public transport, walking and cycling. A bus reform Bill is expected during this Senedd which the Welsh Government hopes will help deliver on this goal.

As this Senedd Research article shows, bus passenger numbers have been declining for many years across Great Britain, including Wales. The pandemic saw a rapid decline which has not recovered.

The Welsh Government has been providing emergency support to the bus industry following the collapse in passenger numbers as a result of the pandemic. Most recently it announced £39m in the current financial year the form of the Bus Network Grant (BNG) for local authorities to “secure bus services that they deem socially necessary that the commercial market will not provide”. The statement says the BNG will “act as a bridge from the emergency funding that has been provided to bus franchising”.

The letter from the Cabinet Secretary on this petition describes the changes to the service outlined above. It says:

Based on an examination of passenger demand as part of these changes, Transport for Wales re-routed the T2 service to operate via Criccieth and Rhoslan rather than Dolbenmaen and Garndolbenmaen, which are served instead by the new TrawsCymru T22 service which links these two communities with a regular bus service to Caernarfon and Porthmadog.

The letter does not make reference to the apparent reduction in service frequency, or the absence of a Sunday service.

### 3. Welsh Parliament action

In Plenary on 17 January Mabon ap Gwynfor MS, highlighted the impact of the change to the T2 service on students, and the fact that the Welsh Government’s National Transport Delivery Plan 2022-27 chapter on bus services states that a “new strategic approach to service design” is being developed. It continues:

Our service designs will build on the extensive engagement we have undertaken in the development of Bws Cymru. We will also consult on any future changes, with local authorities, and user groups before making major changes.

The Member asked the then Deputy Minister for Climate Change:

... whether it’s right that Transport for Wales did not consult with bus users and those communities, and will you look again to ensure that the communities of Garndolbenmaen, Llanuwchllyn, Llandderfel and others do get that full service that they need?

The Deputy Minister responded by apologising for the interruption to services, explaining that TfW had been working with Gwynedd Council planning “changes to the network to provide better coverage, in fact, on the corridor between Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog” referring to the T22. He explained a “slight delay” in launching the T22 service as being the result of difficulties in introducing electric vehicles, and pointed to the expected February launch date.

On 9 January, during the debate on the Draft Budget 2024-25, Delyth Jewel MS highlighted the additional funding allocated to support TfW rail services in the budget, commenting:

... while these vast quantities of money are being used to plug holes in the TfW rail budget, bus services are being starved of funding. Over the weekend, we learned that the T2 bus service through Garndolbenmaen has been axed at short notice. At the end of last year we witnessed the closure of the Bwcabus service that connected some of the most isolated, geographically, communities in south-west Wales. These are only a few examples of a wider pattern of the erosion of bus services, particularly in rural areas that don't have access to the rail network, or indeed Valleys communities, where car ownership is proportionally far lower than in cities.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.