

P-06-1498 Introduce a bus service from Abergavenny Bus Station to The Grange Hospital

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 24 Mawrth 2025
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Reference: SR25/10746-1

Petition Number: P-06-1498

Petition title: Introduce a bus service from Abergavenny Bus Station to The Grange Hospital

Text of petition: When people are upset, anxious and extremely stressed, as either a patient or loved one, other options are not safe. Also we should be reducing car use to fight against Climate Change. Introducing vital services such as this, would be a good first step.



1. Background

The petitioner is calling for a bus service between Abergavenny bus station and the Grange hospital. Newport Bus currently operates a service linking the hospital with Cwmbran rail and bus stations, as well as Newport city centre where connections to Abergavenny can be made.

More detail on how the bus network is currently planned and funded is provided below.

1.1. Planning bus services

Bus services in Wales currently operate within a deregulated market meaning that, while operators receive some government support, the majority of local bus services operate on a commercial basis.

Although licensed bus operators are free to register any service they wish to operate, local authorities have a duty under section 63(1) of the Transport Act 1985 (the Act) to secure services to meet public transport requirements which would not otherwise be met through the commercial market. These are known as 'socially necessary services'. The Act also enables a local authority to enter a contract to pay a subsidy for services if the service would not otherwise be provided at all, or to a particular standard.

1.2. Welsh Government support

The Welsh Government's main bus service funding / subsidy mechanism is the Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG). BSSG comprises a Live Kilometre Support Grant which is paid to all operators for each kilometre driven delivering a registered service and constitutes about two thirds of the BSSG. The remainder is used by local authorities, along with their own budgets, to support socially necessary services.

The Welsh Government also provides additional funding, for example through support for concessionary fares schemes and the TrawsCymru long distance bus network.

Emergency funding

Following a collapse in passenger numbers as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Welsh Government has provided emergency support to the bus industry through a series of grants. The most recent iteration of this support is the Bus Network Grant (BNG) for local authorities to “secure bus services that they deem socially necessary that the commercial market will not provide”.

Announcing the BNG in March 2024, the Welsh Government said it will “act as a bridge from the emergency funding that has been provided to bus franchising”.

1.3. Plans for bus franchising

The Welsh Government plans to introduce legislation requiring bus franchising throughout Wales, and permitting the establishment of new municipal bus companies. Responsibility for planning most bus services would pass to Transport for Wales (TfW) and the Welsh Ministers.

TfW and the Welsh Government have published Our Roadmap to Bus Reform outlining how franchising would be implemented. Under these plans, the franchising authority (the Welsh Ministers) would specify the services and how they will run, including routes, vehicle standards, timetables and fares. Operators would then bid for contracts to run these services.

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, Ken Skates MS has said he intends to introduce the Bill in March 2025.

2. Welsh Government action

In his letter to the Chair dated 25 February the Cabinet Secretary states that “it is not always possible or feasible to provide direct bus links to the Grange Hospital from all communities”.

The Cabinet Secretary suggests that aside from the services currently operating “there is no evident interest from bus companies to introduce other bus services [to the hospital] on a commercial basis”.

The letter also outlines that:

Monmouthshire County Council...recently went out to tender to procure a bus service between Abergavenny and Pontypool, which included an

option for operators to extend journeys to the Grange Hospital. However, no operators submitted bids for the route extension to the hospital...

Last year we funded a trial bus service linking the Grange Hospital to Pontypool, Newbridge and Blackwood for a period of six months, but passenger use was modest, which demonstrated the challenges in establishing new direct bus links to The Grange on a sustainable basis.

The Cabinet Secretary also says he has asked TfW (working with local authorities and Corporate Joint Committees) to consider links to hospitals and key health care facilities as plans for the bus network under franchising are developed.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The issue of bus services linking communities with the Grange hospital has been raised on several occasions in Plenary, particularly in the lead up to the hospital opening in 2020 and in response to the trial service referred to in the Cabinet Secretary's letter (see above) being cut.

In October 2024, Laura Anne Jones MS asked the Cabinet Secretary about services between the hospital and Abergavenny in particular. In response, the Cabinet Secretary referred to this petition and stated he had asked "officials to take a look at the feasibility of such a route, of course, in the context of the availability of budgets".

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.