



Ein cyf/Our ref – KS/PO/281/2025

Llŷr Gruffydd MS
Chair Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

10 June 2025

Dear Llŷr

Bus Services (Wales) Bill

Thank you for inviting me to give evidence on the Bus Services (Wales) Bill (“the Bill”) to the Committee 7 May 2025, and for your diligent scrutiny of the Bill. I am writing to provide you with the further information requested by the Committee on that date.

1. The Committee asked me to write to further advise about how the views of children and young people and families could be consulted and could be taken under section 6(4) of the Bill.

1.1 I agree with the Committee that listening to and acting on the views of children, young people and families will be an important step in planning bus services and their delivery. The young people who have recently worked with us on learner travel and wider bus reform have made a significant difference in our approach to on-going policy development.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales

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.

- 1.2 Recent engagement includes work with Transport for Wales and the Office of the Children's Commissioner, young people who spoke to Welsh Government officials at a dedicated transport session at the Young Wales residential in Bala over half term in February, and children who have been actively involved, through Children in Wales, in the refresh of the All Wales Travel Behaviour Code.
- 1.3 As the first zone scheduled to go live, consultation on the network in South West Wales begins in July 2025. Young people and families are amongst groups that will be specifically targeted for their views through social media and in-person events. There are practical issues around consulting with children about the wider bus network. In reality, their bus use is largely managed by others, that is, they will either be using school transport or will be accompanied by an adult on their bus journey. However, further consideration is being given as to how to consult with children and recognising that they are the future users of buses.
- 1.4 Transport for Wales published a document in early June 2025 titled "Commitment to Involving Communities" specifically looking at the commitment to engaging with users in the South West. This document can be found here: [Commitment to Community Engagement in South West Wales](#)
- 1.5 Transport for Wales are seeking to progress a Young Person's Engagement Forum and will be teaming up with a third sector provider to enable this. They envisage this work to progress through the second half of this year.
- 1.6 In the meantime, they have recently established links with the advisory panel established by the Children's Commissioner for Wales. The inaugural workshop with them in February – a diverse group of 20 – included discussions on:
 - fares – looking at existing initiatives in Wales and elsewhere in the UK
 - safety - particularly women and girls
 - accessibility - including for wheelchair users and young parents with pushchairs
- 1.7 The advisory panel recommended that TfW:
 - increased the number of buses and trains during peak hours to reduce overcrowding
 - provide additional wheelchair spaces on buses
 - have more discount options for students and young people and better advertise them

- develop an app that can enable people to book trips across modes and keep an eye on service disruption
- employ a diverse range of staff for buses and trains who are kind and compassionate and help make public transport feel safer for them.

1.8 The feedback has been vital in helping TfW shape the Uno project (the multi modal app which is in development) and gives helpful input that can be considered as we move towards bus reform.

1.9 In addition to the above projects, around 30 young people are signed up to TfW's digital customer panel which is used to ask panel members to share their views to help shape the way Wales travels.

2. In the context of considering section 1(5) of the Bill, the Committee asked if we could provide any examples of where part of a non-qualifying services meets the distance condition in section 1(3).

2.1 Currently there are no examples in Wales where an existing long-distance service would be subject to the provisions of the Bus Bill.

2.2 However, there is an example in England (for which the definition of "local services" under section 2 of the Transport Act 1985 also refers to 15-mile conditions). The Oxford Tube, from Oxford to London, is registered as a local service between Carterton, Witney, Oxford and Lewknor, and also between Hillingdon and London Victoria. If this journey were in Wales, the Carterton to Lewknor via Witney and Oxford, and the Hillingdon to London Victoria, portions of the service would meet the conditions in section 1(3) of the Bill given the proximity between those embarkation/disembarkation points. However, the portion between Lewknor and Hillingdon is not registered as a local service with the Traffic Commissioner under the 1985 Act, and, if it were in Wales it would not meet the conditions in section 1(3) of the Bill, because the distance between those points is more than 15 miles.

2.3 It is possible that in the future part of a long-distance service in Wales could fall under the definition set out in section 1(3) of the Bill, but this would be unusual.

2.4 Currently many long-distance services, for example, National Express services that might stop in Cardiff have the options to stop at Sophia Gardens, the Castle, and the

University. These short distances are not registered as local bus services, nor would they be caught by the definition in section 1(3), because although those points are within 15 miles of each other, passengers can only embark there; they do not disembark at these points but instead they continue on the service to the destination (beyond 15 miles).

3. I offered to provide detail of the consultation and engagement work that's going to happen in relation to the Welsh Bus Network Plan.

3.1 As set out in sections 6(4) and 8(4), the Welsh Ministers are required to consult with the persons listed prior to publication of the Network Plan. In order to ensure early publication of the Plan following Royal Assent, Transport for Wales is developing an approach to consultation, which will ensure those listed will have an opportunity to scrutinise and feedback on the draft Plan. This will include access to an electronic interactive map of the Wales-wide Plan detailing routes and geographical areas (for standard and flexible services respectively), and principle stopping points. It is intended that consultation on the initial Plan will be held during this summer/autumn over twelve weeks.

3.2 I am committed to involving communities in bus reform and we want to ensure they have had their say on the changes. Whether they are a regular bus user, occasional passenger or someone that never uses bus services, we want them to get involved in the engagement and share their views to ensure we build a network that local people can use.

3.3 As noted above, Transport for Wales has published a document, "Commitment to Involving Communities". It focuses on the methodology for consultation on the base network in South West Wales, and includes more detailed information on the delivery of bus services in the region. As the first region to be rolled out there has already been significant work undertaken with the CJC and local authorities to understand the needs of the local communities and the best way to consult publicly. This document will be adapted and updated as we near the other zones going live.

3.4 This Commitment document provides detail on:

- Who we are actively engaging with in the region
- The specific items on which we are inviting views, opinions and feedback

- When we will be actively engaging regional communities, service users and potential service users on refranchising the South West zone
- What our engagement in local communities will look like and how people can take part.

3.5 Engagement with the public will be carried out digitally and in-person, as I recognise that many people either do not have access to digital system or simply prefer to talk to someone face to face. I want to ensure that we speak to users, and also potential users of our local bus services.

3.6 May I also draw the Committee's attention to pages 22-27 of the Roadmap to Bus Reform which we updated in March 2025, which lays out further detail on our plans to talk to the public about their bus services.

www.gov.wales/bus-reform-wales-our-roadmap-franchising

4. I offered to provide Committee with further information about the research being undertaken with the Welsh Centre for Public Policy and how this is informing our work on the draft contracts.

4.1 Welsh Government officials and Transport for Wales are working with a range of key stakeholders, including researchers and international tendering authorities, to understand best practice in developing bus service contracts to ensure a successful and sustainable network. This work is informing the development of an early draft of a contract, primarily based on the template contract currently used to secure Traws services. I hope to share the draft in confidence with the Committee in early July.

4.2 The Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) are currently developing a research piece titled "Success factors for contracting and awarding bus franchising in Wales". The research aims to answer two overarching questions:

- In bus franchising, what practices or features of contracting and awarding show promise in achieving desired quality improvements and policy outcomes whilst delivering value for money?
- How can contracting, including incentives, help to enable: modal shift by increasing bus patronage; Net Zero 2050; transport integration; and transport poverty reduction?

- 4.3 This piece of work, co-produced with Welsh Government officials and Transport for Wales, has welcomed input from various experts and franchising authorities across the world, all of which have successfully implemented and sustained models similar to the model proposed under the Bill.
- 4.4 We have had presentations from transport authorities in Sweden (Västra trafik), Norway (Ruter), Ireland, Jersey, Queensland Australia, and Singapore. Also, UK cases from Liverpool City Region and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough combined mayoral authorities.
- 4.5 We have also had presentations from the following experts - the Institute for Transport and Logistics Studies in the University of Sydney, Prof Peter White at the University of Westminster and Dr Van de Velde from TU Delft in the Netherlands. The research paper is due to be submitted to officials in late June and I will share this with the Committee as soon as possible.

5. The following provides details of the current cross-border services operating, as requested.

- 5.1 The following table lists the services crossing between Wales and England with stops on both sides of the border:

Contracted by Welsh local authorities = 35

Contracted by English local authorities = 18

Overall total = 53

Contracted by Welsh LAs	
461	Llandrindod to Hereford
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SC 23	Newport to Hereford
PC X46	Wrexham to Whitchurch
PC 146	Wrexham to Whitchurch
73	Oswestry to Llanfair Caereinion
B82	Oswestry to Vyrnwy Dam
72	Chepstow to Mitcheldean

69	Chepstow to Monmouth
C4	Chepstow to Sedbury - Beachley
X48	Llandrindod Wells to Craven Arms
X75	Shrewsbury to Rhayader
X15	Builth Wells to Hereford
X11	Builth Wells to Ludlow
4S	Mold to Chester
4B	Broughton to Chester
4	Mold to Chester
1	Wrexham to Chester
10A	Connahs Quay to Chester
10	Connahs Quay to Chester
2A	Wrexham to Oswestry
2	Wrexham to Oswestry
T8	Corwen to Chester
558	Montgomery to Shrewsbury
79B	Llanrhaeadr to Oswestry
79A	Llangynog to Oswestry
79	Llanrhaeadr to Oswestry
74A	Llanfyllin to Shrewsbury
74	Llanfyllin to Shrewsbury
72	Llanfyllin to Oswestry
72D	Llanfyllin to Oswestry
41A	Presteigne to Newton via Knighton
T12	Machynlleth to Wrexham
T14	Brecon to Hereford
T7	Chepstow to Bristol

Contracted by English LAs	
442	Cleghonger to Abergavenny

707	Coleford to Chepstow (CT provider)
24	Coleford to Monmouth
34	Ross on Wye to Monmouth
35	Ross on Wye to Monmouth
35A	Monmouth to Mitcheldean (CT provider)
54	Bridstow to Monmouth
66	Hereford to Monmouth
MCS Route 2	Coleford to Monmouth Comprehensive School
738	Knighton to Ludlow
740	Knighton to Ludlow
73	Llanfaircaireinion to Oswestry
78	Oswestry to Llansilin
41	Kington to Knucklas
54	Cefn y Blodwel to Oswestry
71	Four Crosses to Oswestry
5	Chester to Wrexham
811	Hoylake to Broughton

Once again, I want to thank the Committee for their time. I will respond to the Committee's additional queries dated 23 May in due course.

Yours sincerely



Ken Skates AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales