



## TraCC Response to the NAFW Inquiry into Integrated Transport

January 2013

### Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru

Established in 2003, Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru (TraCC) is the Regional Transport Consortium for Mid Wales and is a voluntary partnership between the three Mid Wales local authorities of Ceredigion, Powys and Gwynedd (for the Meirionnydd district). Gwynedd is also a partner in Taith, the North Wales Regional Transport Consortium. TraCC is one of four Regional Transport Consortia in Wales. TraCC has become responsible for the development of integrated transport policies and strategies at a regional (Mid Wales) level and for the development and management of associated regional transport grant funding programmes.

TraCC undertook extensive public and stakeholder consultation during the preparation of its first Regional Transport Plan (RTP) and the Plan gained Ministerial approval in December 2009. The three local authorities have now commenced delivering a range of schemes funded through RTP Capital Grant (as well as Road Safety Capital and Revenue Grants) and has supported the local authorities in securing Sustainable Travel Centre Capital Grant, regeneration grants and funding through the Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI). Alongside European grants, this funding has been used to complement regional grant funding allocations to deliver a range of meaningful integrated transport schemes. TraCC submitted its first RTP Annual Progress Report in September 2011 which shows successful delivery of a programme that is beginning to make a difference. The RTP APR for 2011/12 was submitted to the Welsh Government at the end of September 2012 and has shown further improvement.

The shared TraCC RTP Vision is:

*'To plan for and deliver an integrated transport system in Mid Wales that facilitates economic development, ensures access for all to services and opportunities, sustains and improves the quality of community life and respects the environment.'*

The TraCC RTP has 10 objectives/ priorities, most of which support the aims and shared national and regional delivery of the Road Safety Delivery Plan are:

1. Reduce the demand for travel.
2. Minimise the impact of movement on the global and local environment.
3. Improve safety and security for all transport users.
4. Improve travel accessibility to services, jobs and facilities for all sectors of society.
5. Improve the quality and integration of the public transport system including the role of community transport.
6. Provide, promote and improve sustainable forms of travel.
7. Maintain and improve the existing highway and transport infrastructure.
8. Ensure travel and accessibility issues are properly integrated into land-use decisions.
9. Improve the efficiency, reliability and connectivity of movement within and between Mid Wales and the other regions of Wales and England.
10. Deliver a co-ordinated and integrated travel and transport network through effective partnership working.

More information about TraCC along with copies of publications can be found on the TraCC website: [www.tracc.gov.uk](http://www.tracc.gov.uk)

## **Integrated Transport in Mid Wales**

Integration needs to occur across all modes of transport/ travel and should include:

- Physical access (to vehicles and infrastructure);
- Service route coverage;
- Connections/ changes between different modes;
- Timetabling of services; and
- Availability of up-to-date, easy to read and understand travel information (prior to making a journey and during a journey).

Key features of passenger transport in Mid Wales include:

- A bus service network that is almost entirely viewed by bus operating companies as not being commercially viable and thus requires considerable (and increasing) financial support (subsidy) from public sector budgets;
- Higher than national average journey distances and annual bus mileage for local bus services – grown by 26% since 2000;
- Predominance of 'Hail and Ride' rather than formal/ designated stops with waiting facilities and 'flags';
- Higher than national average (9.7%) growth in rail patronage since 2008/09 , despite lower than national average service frequencies;
- Ageing population with 25% of the Mid Wales population aged over 60 years. This inevitably brings increased pressure on passenger transport service budgets and especially in connection with the Welsh Government's Concessionary Fares Scheme for the over 60s. There is a natural public expectation that there will be a sufficient number of services on which to use Concessionary Fares Smartcards in rural areas;
- On fifth of Mid Wales households without access to a car;
- Poor access to a range of services and opportunities by passenger transport, as demonstrated by Accessibility planning undertaken as part of the development of the TraCC RTP and recognised in the Welsh Government's own Spatial Plan;
- A requirement for around £9 million of public funding to support the existing local bus network;
- 28% reduction in Local Transport Services Grant (from £1,817,000 in 2007/08 to £1,307,000).

TraCC has been engaged in the recent Bus Funding Review, led by the Welsh Government and undertaken jointly with representatives from local authority RTC, the bus industry and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). A Report with a number of recommendations has now been published. A key recommendation of the Review is the introduction of a new grant funding arrangement for funding local authority supported and commercial local bus services – formerly known as Local Transport Services Grant (LTSG), now to be known as Regional Transport Services Grant (RTSG). The new arrangement will come into being from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 and will replace the current arrangement which sees LTSG provided directly to the 22 individual local authorities. The proposal is that the new RTSG will be provided to the four RTC commencing next Financial Year (2013/14).

RTC must also prepare a Regional Bus and Community Transport Network Strategy for their area. There is a clear opportunity for each RTC to better understand existing service provision, identify 'gaps' and target available resources and effort at establishing a core regional service network, supported by a range of more local 'feeder' services connecting into the core network at interchanges (,hubs') located at strategic positions on the network.

A new Business Plan is currently being developed by the Welsh Government for the TrawsCymru service network, the development of which includes TraCC/ individual local authority representation at the Strategic Board and corridor/ route levels. It is critical for TraCC that TrawsCymru services

and associated quality infrastructure contribute and form an integral part of the Mid Wales integrated transport system.

### **Progress towards better integration in Mid Wales**

To date there has been significant investment from RTP Capital Grant budgets in passenger transport facilities to support better physical integration. RTP Capital Grant is provided by the Welsh Government to TraCC local authorities and has been allocated to regionally-prioritised TraCC RTP schemes. Examples include funding support for:

- Aberystwyth Passenger Transport 'Gateway' (re-modelled Bus Station adjacent to the Railway Station);
- Improvements to interchange facilities at Brecon and Blaenau Ffestiniog;
- Support for the early development of options to improve passenger and interchange facilities at Aberystwyth Railway Station (part of the Enhanced National Station Improvement Scheme in Wales);
- Development of options for improvements to Newtown bus interchange;
- Funding of new vehicles and booking equipment for Community Transport schemes;
- Development of park and ride/ park and share options; and
- Funding of new vehicles and interchange facilities for the Bwcabus project in southern Ceredigion.

In addition, TraCC has managed the regional roll-out of the Welsh Government's Concessionary Fares Smartcards project, prepared sustainable travel guides for key Mid Wales towns (including the CILT Cymru National Transport Awards-winning Brecon Guide), purchased software to enable the local authorities to prepare departure sheets and other timetable information to a regionally-consistent standard and supported the marketing and publicity activities of Community Rail Partnerships and

At present, individual local authorities and bus companies devise timetables for local bus services, the Welsh Government and individual local authorities for TrawsCymru services and individual bus companies for commercially-operated services. This can happen at any point in the year, although registration and the provision of due notice of services is required with the Traffic Commissioner. Train Operating Companies (TOCs) draw-up timetables for rail services in consultation within (and the permissions of) the wider Rail Industry. There are normally two opportunities to change rail timetables per annum and in reality, there is little opportunity to influence any changes from a local authority perspective.

TraCC seeks to address integration between various forms of passenger transport through its Passenger Transport Working Group which includes representation from the Community Transport (voluntary) sector, Traveline Cymru, Welsh Government and by invitation, representatives from bus and rail operating companies and through the Policy and Planning Group, bringing together policy initiatives and develops possible interventions from the Passenger Transport, Active Travel and other officer working groups.

TraCC and individual local authority officers are engaged in Community Rail Partnerships (Cambrian Railways Partnership and Heart of Wales Line Forum) and TraCC has established a Regional Rail Partnership that includes representation for Arriva Trains Wales, Network Rail, Welsh and neighbouring English local authorities, Community Rail partnerships and Wales Freight Group.

As TraCC now works to prepare the required Bus and Community Transport Network Plan, it will be necessary to re-engage with public transport operators, voluntary sector and representatives of rail and bus user groups. However, in developing proposals for the better integration of passenger transport services in rural Mid Wales, TraCC must seek to manage rather than unnecessarily raise expectations. Proposals must be realistic and affordable and not all interventions will be delivered

by TraCC/ its local authorities – there is a firm responsibility placed upon the Welsh Government (Rail Franchise, TrawsCymru and primary source of grant funding to TraCC/ its local authorities) and on passenger transport operators (quality, reliability and a reasonable level of entrepreneurialship/ financial risk-taking subject to the wishes of their share-holders). The aim is to create a stable and affordable passenger transport system in rural Mid Wales that supports a range of shared economic, social and environmental objectives and outcomes. There are clear opportunities for both the Welsh Government and local/ regional government to use the opportunities presented by the review and re-letting of the Wales and Borders Rail Franchise (from 2018) to significantly improve passenger transport integration and drive-up quality/ standards and improve frequencies to meet forecast demand.

## **TraCC Response to the National Assembly for Wales Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport**

***Question: How can the integration of rail, bus and community transport services in Wales be supported and improved to meet the needs of communities and businesses in both rural and urban Wales?***

The straightforward answer is that the Welsh Government, local authority Regional Transport Consortia (RTC), rail and bus industries, Community Transport (CT) (voluntary) sector all must work more effectively together to plan, fund and deliver an integrated transport system that recognises the differences between urban and rural areas and directs an appropriate level of resource to address these differences.

For rural Mid Wales, there must be recognition that to achieve the shared economic, social and environmental public policy objectives and outcomes, passenger transport services require financial support to provide even a minimum ‘safety net’ of services. Public (and by association, voluntary) sector budgets are all now under great pressure with additional funding being required from the un-hypothecated local authority Rate Support Grant to off-set declining Government grant funding and to meet public need or expectations. However, the problems of social exclusion and poor access to essential services and opportunities in rural areas remain. Roles and responsibilities of organisations for ensuring that the public can access a range of essential services and opportunities need to be clarified – e.g. non-emergency passenger transport. The current de-regulated environment has been shown to lead to instability in service provision in rural areas, particularly where operators register services on a commercial basis (for various reasons) but soon withdraw the registration dues to the ‘un-profitability’ of the service. Inevitably, the onus falls on the local authority to ‘plug the gap’.

There must be adequate resourcing for transport planning and delivery at a national and regional level:

- TraCC currently receives only 13.7% of available RTP Capital Grant, Local Transport Services (revenue) Grant. For some time TraCC has argued for a review of this arrangements which would better recognise the different needs of rural areas of Wales.
- Current RTP five year programme period comes to an end in 2014/15 and work is already underway (led by the Welsh Government and allied to the Simpson Compact) to identify the planning and funding framework for post 2014/15. Any recommendations arising from this Inquiry will need to influence these discussions.
- The recommendations for implementation of the Bus Funding Review are to be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 and there are RTC resource implications, as well as challenges to better link forward planning and available budgets with existing resource and a review of existing

services. There will also be raised public expectations, concerns and political implications for local Members to manage.

Key areas of concern that currently threaten better passenger transport integration include:

- Declining regional and local authority revenue budgets required to support the operation of socially-necessary services in rural areas of Wales;
- Limited capacity of local authority passenger transport units – need to review, define and achieve a balance between resourcing statutory duties (e.g. Home to School transport) and wider passenger transport role (e.g. marketing/ promoting services, supporting improved non-website based passenger transport information (standards, quality and availability) and support and direction for Community Transport Development Officer posts (currently located in the voluntary sector);
- The relationship between the roles and responsibilities associated with the Welsh Government's National Transport Plan and RTC Regional Transport Plans – particularly in terms of respective roles and responsibilities for developing, planning, funding and managing delivery of rail schemes;
- RTC ability to influence future capital projects (e.g. Trunk Road improvement schemes that will benefit road-based passenger transport and National Stations Improvement programme and investment in new stations) and future revenue projects - e.g. Wales and Borders Rail Franchise, TrawsCymru and improved passenger service frequencies;
- Lack of agreed and implemented standards for the provision of passenger transport information – particularly for local bus services, at the road-side stops and shelters at bus stations and in rural locations. This includes resourcing the inspection and maintenance regime; and
- Passenger transport currently operates in a de-regulated market environment (particularly the bus industry) and this serves as a barrier for local authorities (and Welsh Government) to encourage operators to work in a more integrated way. Even in areas like Mid Wales where very few services are commercial, there is a need to review legislation.

Community transport often fulfils a valuable role in rural integrated transport systems and has always been recognised as such in Mid Wales. However, the voluntary sector operates with constraints (ability to register routes alongside more 'conventional bus service operators, resources and financial sustainability of schemes).

For much of Mid Wales, the introduction of the long sought-after hourly passenger service on the Cambrian Main Line between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury would make the biggest single contribution to better integration of passenger transport services, offering greater opportunities to integrate local and longer bus services at existing and possible future station locations. For many years, TraCC and its local authorities have urged the Welsh Government to introduce the service which is a current NTP commitment. TraCC and the Welsh Government could then look to improve local or TrawsCymru bus access to already-frequent services to/ from stations at Merthyr, Abergavenny, Carmarthen and Hereford.

**Question: How successful are Regional Transport Consortia in supporting the provision of effective, integrated public transport?**

It is important to remember that this is not just a local authority/ RTC responsibility and that there is a key central role for the Welsh Government in terms of leadership and as primary source of grant funding to local authorities/ RTC for devolved areas of responsibility. There is also a role for the private and voluntary sectors as service providers and for either commercial or not for profit operations. Therefore, it can only be claimed that RTC are successful as far as their current remit allows – only a very limited amount of RTP Capital Grant has been made available thus far to

enable RTC to improve passenger transport infrastructure. There are currently very limited opportunities to influence decisions of the Rail Industry.

In response to the Simpson Review and emerging Compact, last year Ceredigion and Powys county councils chose to merge its existing two units to create a single Passenger Transport Coordination Unit managed by one interim joint manager. In many ways this anticipated the outcomes of the Bus Funding Review that would require joint working to administer grant funding to be provided through the RTC. This new arrangement provides a more formal basis for working together to ensure better integration across at least two local authorities. At present, Gwynedd Council has chosen to continue to work as before but alongside the new Ceredigion/ Powys arrangement.

Following the implementation of the recommendations of the Bus Funding Review, it will be even more critical that sufficient Revenue funding is provided to support local bus services. RTC must also seek to respond to the Review by ensuring that sufficient management and administrative resources are directed towards this new regional role. Much firmer links between transport planning and delivery will be required. The key challenge will be to manage the impact of the significant budget reductions.

The current RTP Five Year Programme comes to an end in 2014/15 and it is essential that a new and improved arrangement at regional and national level is implemented in good time. It is understood that RTC are to be engaged in this work as a work-stream arising from the Simpson Compact. There may also concerns that the current working arrangements which have enabled RTC to be developed and entered into are not secure or enshrined in any formal national arrangements, despite the 'gravitation' towards RTC of additional duties and responsibilities.

There is a need for the Welsh Government to change how it funds various local authority/ RTC transport activities, reviewing annual budgets, providing more indicative budgets for future years and streamlining the various grants and their individual terms and conditions and reporting requirements which currently require a disproportionate level of RTC resource to administer and can divert valuable, scarce resources from project delivery.

The current system of annual budget-setting by the Welsh Government (and associated requirement for annual RTC Delivery Plans) restricts the ability of local government/ RTCs to plan service provision and implement longer-term passenger transport measures. The ability of operators to de-register or change services (with 56 days' notice) can also undermine plans to improve integration and can de-stabilise service networks. As described above, the Rail Industry operates in a different way altogether.

As referred to above, base-line Accessibility Planning was undertaken as part of the development of RTC RTPs (2008/09). As part of the development and implementation of the Welsh Government's Wales Spatial Plan, it was hoped that this valuable work would be taken further by various key partners so as to better plan meet the distinct needs of each Welsh region. Despite the development of local planning authority Local Development Plans (establishing local service centres), unfortunately this is has not happened at a more regional/ national level and we are seeing restructuring of key public services (e.g. health) taking place without due consideration of accessibility and ability to travel to more centrally-located service centres. Redressing this issue should be a primary concern to all.

TraCC has worked closely with Traveline Cymru for many years to promote Traveline services and to deliver a number of local/ regional projects. TraCC has also shared exhibition stands with Traveline at local and national events (e.g. Royal Welsh Show, Aberystwyth Show and eisteddfodau). TraCC sees Traveline Cymru as being the central point in the provision of a range of travel information to the public.

In future, RTC may wish to consider passenger transport operator (private sector) representation on RTC boards as well as reviewing engagement through officer working groups.

The availability of RTC central resource remains a potential barrier to more effective passenger transport service co-ordination and integration (as well as in dispensing other core duties). A small Revenue Grant provided by the Welsh Government supports the employment of a minimum level of RTC staff to support the central coordination and administration the RTC but an effective RTC relies additionally on the availability of local authority staff and Members to engage in regional work programmes and effective governance, decision-making and reporting arrangements. There are clear opportunities associated with the Simpson Compact but also significant budgetary pressures at a local authority level which will have an impact on available staffing resource to support increased work through the RTC.

***Question: How effectively does Welsh Government policy support public transport integration?***

Key current statements of Welsh Government policy that support passenger transport integration include the Wales Transport Strategy (WTS) and National Transport Plan (NTP). RTC RTPs were required to align with the aims and objectives of the WTS (2008) but RTPs preceded the original NTP (March 2010). In addition, the Wales Spatial Plan (2004), Wales Programme for Government (2011) and Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan (2011) support and promote better integration as do more localised shared regeneration plans. However, it would be true to say that in reality (and with little exception), it has been largely left to RTC and individual local authorities to make the links and seek better integration with whatever resources have been placed at their disposal.

Implementation of the changes arising from the Bus Funding Review that will see an enhanced RTC role in the administration and planning of bus service budgets will enable RTC to focus on better integration at a strategic regional level for the first time. However, the immediate concern will be to manage the impact of reduced budgets on current service provision. It is hoped that opportunities will arise to improve value for money and gain efficiencies arising from collaborative working. There are however, practical barriers to delivering well-meaning policies that seek more effective integration as referred to above, some of which arise from the de-regulated environment in which bus services currently operate, very real differences between bus and rail service and infrastructure planning and funding and the relationship between Welsh Government and RTC/ local authorities in planning, demonstrating leadership and in providing sufficient funding for improvements.

Practicalities that need to be overcome by putting policies into practice include adequate provision to access existing waiting facilities (bus stops, improvements to railway stations, car and cycle parking, information).

***Question: In particular, the Welsh Government is considering the establishment of Joint Transport Authorities in Wales, and the feasibility of operating the Wales and Borders rail franchise on a not-for-dividend basis. Additionally, the Minister for Local Government and Communities has indicated that he is considering the use of quality partnerships and contracts in delivery of bus services. How far would these proposals improve integrated public transport provision in Wales?***

It is acknowledged that there is some variation across the four 'Regions' in terms of resources and capacity across the whole highways and transportation function but the fundamental reason being that until the Simpson Compact was adopted, the Transport (Wales) Act 2006 (and subsequent Transport Planning Orders) merely enabled local authorities to voluntarily work together to prepare Regional Transport Plans (in place of Local Transport Plans). Much of the system that is now in place has been 'pioneered' (or evolved) with little Welsh Government strategic vision or guidance, other than a Review of Transport Planning and Delivery undertaken in 2009/10. This is evidenced

by the lack of clarity between national (NTP) and regional/ local (RTP) planning and funding responsibilities but the gradual drift to providing more grant funding through RTC but not necessarily reviewing or streamlining the associated reporting procedures to match the still relatively low level of funds made available to the RTC (and temporary agreement on percentage distribution to each RTC) and the continued threat that (based on crude measures of annual spend against original funding allocation), if the current system is not seen to be working, it can all be taken away again. Until very recently, this has not helped foster a relationship of mutual understanding or trust between the RTC and the Welsh Government. Fortunately the two RTP Annual Progress Reports required to be published to date provide sufficient evidence that RTC are effective planning and delivery bodies and indeed could do more given additional resources.

It is the TraCC local authorities' view is that its local authorities are best placed to understand and deliver a range of highways and transport services and that considerable benefits of working in collaboration have already been identified on a number of initiatives (e.g. Simpson Compact 'Quick Wins') and as far as TraCC is concerned, entered into the current voluntary arrangement as far back as 2003. A robust, yet flexible Legal Agreement has been agreed that clearly defines the TraCC Board role (as delegated to it by the individual local authorities) and sets out associated governance and decision-making arrangements and structures. Ceredigion and Powys county councils have chosen voluntarily to work more closely together with a joint passenger transport unit manager to improve the efficiency and integration of the two units. Ceredigion, Powys and Gwynedd also work together as part of the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent arrangement and Ceredigion and Powys work together as the Central Wales Infrastructure Collaboration (CWIC) on engineering and consultancy services. Whilst acknowledging that there is always room for all organisations to improve, there would be a danger that an imposed Joint Transport Authority would seriously (and unnecessarily) undermine the good work already established in Mid (and other areas of) Wales to which the Welsh Government has been party and the additional cost of establishing JTAs would not be justified as long as the four existing RTC continue to work effectively.

TraCC is supportive of the proposed 'Quality Outcomes' as part of Bus Funding Review. Statutory Quality Bus Contract (SQBCs) or Statutory Quality Bus Partnerships (SQBPs) are seen as being a possible way of protecting public investment in passenger transport (bus) infrastructure and driving-up the quality and reliability of bus services either at a regional/ route level or local network level. The TraCC Board has been asked by the Welsh Government to consider its support for the piloting of SQBPs on the TrawsCymru service network and possibly for the Aberystwyth area. It is understood that whilst the Welsh Government is keen to promote the use of SQBPs/ SQBCs in Wales, it is reliant on individual local authorities to implement them with its support. It is hoped that SQBPs/ SQBCs can make a significant contribution to better integration of local and longer distance bus services (fares and discounts, ticketing, information, marketing, reliability etc) but integration with rail services will remain outside of their scope.

TraCC would support the Welsh Government in exploring the opportunities for creating a replacement rail franchise that is 'not for dividend' but any new franchise needs to allow for growth (development and introduction of new services, acquisition of additional rolling stock and staffing). The franchise should also more closely link the improvement of capital assets (such as railway stations) to the operations (services) – at present, this is disjointed for various historical reasons. Any franchise review should put the people of Wales at the forefront of its considerations and should identify where more commercially-viable (less subsidy) routes can generate revenue for investment (or to balance the books) on services that are dependent on public subsidy. As part of the re-franchising, it will be essential to ensure connections to other UK and European destinations are maintained and improved. TraCC seeks to be involved throughout the re-franchising process to ensure that its published regional passenger transport priorities are supported in any new franchise or management arrangement.



**Question: *What innovative approaches to delivery of public transport in Wales might be considered to improve integration?***

Exploring a much closer (national) relationship between all forms of passenger transport services and infrastructure would be welcomed. Ultimately, there is a need to provide an integrated passenger transport system that offers real travel choices to the population of Wales, recognising urban and rural needs and finding ways to overcome differences.

Policies tend to be in place but practicalities have a habit of getting in the way of delivering real changes (whether considered as 'innovative' or not). Good examples include integrated (multi-modal/ operator) fares and ticketing and the use of Smartcard technology to reduce cash transactions. It was recently announced that we would need to wait until the new Wales and Borders Rail Franchise for the roll-out of smartcard (travel entitlement cards) due to the fundamental differences between how bus and rail services are funded and managed.

Much has been made about Bwcabus project operating in southern Ceredigion and northern Carmarthenshire and there has been considerable investment in the form of local authority staff time and support for funding for vehicles, infrastructure and ICT (Europe, Welsh Government and TraCC). There is now an expectation that the Welsh Government takes the initiative and makes it clear as to how this model is to be rolled-out to other areas of Wales to support emerging RTC Network Strategies/ Plans.

As part of its Bus and Community Transport Network Plan, it is very likely that TraCC will prioritise key routes between key settlements of regional or national significance and local service centres along which to focus investment of public subsidy to support bus services or along which commercially provided services will be encouraged. Some of these core routes will be served by TrawsCymru or rail services and the core network will be supported by locally-provided feeder services connecting at key interchanges or 'hubs'. These feeder services may be provided by community-based transport (often 'not for profit') operators or as demand-responsive or taxi bus services. This is the type of innovation that may work best in rural areas of Wales and may represent the most effective use remaining public money.

Examples from continental Europe demonstrate that much of what we would collectively like to do is actually 'do-able' (and possibly therefore no longer 'innovative'?) and we need to learn from what is happening elsewhere and join-in. Examples of proven (yet under-used) interventions are the use of GPS tracking on vehicles (to support real time information provision and more efficient monitoring and management of services), bus priority lanes and junction signalling that give local bus services the 'competitive edge' over private motor cars in areas of urban traffic congestion

Providing passenger transport is in effect about providing travel choices to reduce reliance on/ use of private motor cars (for a number of social and environmental reasons) and providing a 'safety net' for the 20% of the population who do not have access to a car and would thus be socially (and economically) excluded. It makes complete sense to invest on the basis of public policy but building robust business cases for justifying/ prioritising investment in infrastructure and services can be difficult, especially where budgets are under pressure and there are a number of competing priorities (such as health and social care, education and skills training).

**Question: *How effectively do key stakeholders, particularly transport operators and public bodies, cooperate to ensure effective service delivery?***

There is considerable co-operation between local authorities, transport providers and service users through RTC and this relationship has been well established for a number of years following the development of the first round of RTPs. The recent Bus Funding Review has also brought operators, local authority/ RTC and the Welsh Government together as had development of the Concessionary Fares and Smartcards schemes. Information sharing has traditionally been a casualty of the 'competitive' nature of the de-regulated environment, particularly with regard to sharing and comparing information on patronage levels of both commercial and supported services. This also applies to rail, where much 'confidential' information of value to RTC/ local authorities for transport planning purposes is held by Train Operating Companies. Demand-forecasting (using industry standard models and by talking with operators) is critical to building effective business cases for investment in infrastructure and services.

TraCC/ its local authorities are reasonably certain that relationships are in place in Mid Wales to ensure effective service delivery in a largely rural context. The de-regulated bus operating environment lies at the heart of cooperation between local government, bus operators and the public. The relationship between the DfT, Welsh Government, Network Rail, ORR and TOCs lie at the heart of the issues to do with the rail industry. The ability to work across organisations with different priorities to achieve better integration is thus difficult to achieve without significant change – a change that would need to be led by the Welsh Government.

***Question: How can the creation of a Network Rail Wales devolved route support effective, integrated public transport in Wales?***

Prior to the changes that brought about devolved Network Rail routes, rail planning and scheme sponsorship was controlled out of regional offices in England (with Mid Wales regularly dealing with Manchester and Swindon offices). Having a Wales (and English Borders) devolved route should be an advantage to both the Welsh Government and RTC/ local authorities and provide greater opportunities for better integration of rails services within the UK as a whole and between rail and other forms of passenger transport. A devolved route should bring benefits in terms of better understanding and relating to the issues in Wales and the four regions. However, it is dependent upon a willingness to listen and actively support or promote. For Mid Wales, there is a danger that the focus will continue to be on delivering electrification and enhanced facilities and services on the more populous Southern and Northern main lines (and Valleys in the South). Another danger is that whilst much of the North-South line runs through England, there will not be as much attention given to cross-border operations (particularly to or from Mid Wales) or to services between the West Midlands, London and the North.

To date in Mid Wales, we have yet to see any tangible benefits and indeed, some projects (e.g. station improvements) are continuing to be managed by Network Rail out of its Manchester office.

***Question: What are the implications of the England and Wales High Level Output Specification and Statement of Funds Available for Control Period 5, published by the UK Government, for the development of integrated rail services in Wales?***

The UK Government's strategy for Control Period 5 is based on four priorities:

- To create an electrified route linking core centres of population and economic activity;
- To increase capacity and accelerate journey times between key UK cities;
- To facilitate commuter travel into major urban areas, helping to expand the effective labour market, an helping people to access a wider range of jobs; and
- To improve railway links to major ports and airports.

There are undoubted benefits to integration of passenger transport services arising from these priorities and the project proposals (mainly in South Wales) associated with delivering these

priorities. However, current proposals offer little for Mid Wales and there is a real need for continued investment, with the Cambrian Main Line designated as a European TEN-T (rail) route. There is a real concern that despite the development by TraCC of a first Mid Wales Rail Strategy with regional rail investment priorities for Mid Wales, opportunities to fund a range of investments in Mid Wales railway lines will be lost in CP5 (2014-19) and possibly in CP6 (2019-24) also. As TraCC has consistently stated to the Welsh Government and Rail Industry, even a relatively modest rail investment programme is unaffordable based on existing levels of grant funding provided to TraCC. It is therefore critical that TraCC is able to influence national spending plans of the Welsh Government and Network Rail (as well as influencing the content of the new of the Wales and Borders Rail Franchise)

The need to maintain and improve cross-border stakeholder relationships is critical to all but one RTC in Wales.

***Question: What examples of good practice in public transport integration can be identified within Wales, more widely within the UK and internationally?***

There are very many good examples, some further afield and many closer to home. So far, however, in Wales we haven't managed to apply and use these examples for various reasons. These reasons may include:

- Limited involvement in pan-UK/ European projects (bench-marking etc);
- Limited staffing resource and breadth of experience of local authority passenger transport unit and transport planning staffing resource and resulting inability to draw on previous experiences and ideas and utilise peer groups and networks
- An emerging divide between what goes on in other areas of UK and in Wales – including dialogue/ cooperation and sharing of ideas between DfT and Welsh Government.

Distinct pockets of good practice do exist across Wales. For example, local authorities individually or through RTC have a proven track record of delivering capital infrastructure to support local bus services (such as new bus stations, shelters, park and ride, acquisition of new accessible vehicles, real time information). The Rail Industry has traditionally been responsible for funding improvements to railway stations, albeit investment has been slow in coming forward and there is a need to improve a very large 'backlog' of stations in poor condition across Wales. Local authorities have begun to see the value in establishing corporate passenger transport units (bringing together education and social services transport functions with the 'highways' passenger transport function) and more recently in looking at opportunities to work on a regional basis to achieve efficiencies of scale.

In Mid Wales, the Bwcabus project has enabled services to be provided six days a week between 07.00 and 19.00 where services were previously limited. The new service offers connections to core service routes at a series of 'hubs' (interchanges) and uses state of the art technology to manage bookings and connections. It is essential that the scheme is fully evaluated (passenger numbers and growth, operational costs, views of users etc) so as to enable the Welsh Government and local authorities to develop similar schemes elsewhere. Mid Wales has also been central to the development the Welsh Government's TrawsCymru network and recent investment in the Aberystwyth Passenger Transport 'Gateway' project has demonstrated the physical ability to bring together buses, rail, taxis, walking and cycling in one central location.

In general however, a much larger step is required to integrate the planning and prioritisation of funding for passenger transport services with land use planning, economic development/ job creation, health and social care provision and the provision of education and skills training. Current opportunities exist at a local level (e.g. through Local Health Boards and community planning and

regeneration initiatives) but there is not yet evidence that a similar change is happening at a national (Welsh Government) level.

There is an opportunity for practitioners working in the field of integrated transport planning and passenger transport service delivery to work more closely together through professional bodies (such as ATCO) and with representatives of public transport operating companies and the travelling public to begin to establish consistent standards of quality and establish networks for the exchange of ideas and best practice. There is an opportunity for the Welsh Government to better engage in this process.

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