

Welsh Government Response to the Enterprise and Business Committee's report on Integrated Public Transport in Wales

Executive Summary

This document sets out the Welsh Government's response to the Report on Integrated Public Transport in Wales, published by the Enterprise and Business Committee on 22 May 2013.

An effective, affordable and well integrated public transport network has a key role to play in enhancing Wales' economic competitiveness and enabling people to access jobs and services. There are a number of challenges in achieving this, and I welcome the work of the Enterprise and Business Committee in considering how we may overcome these challenges. I am pleased to be able to accept almost all recommendations, at least in principle.

In accepting the majority of the recommendations, I am pleased to be able to indicate that work on implementation of many of the recommendations is well underway.

A detailed response to the 25 recommendations and detailed actions identified by the Committee is set out below.

Recommendation 1. Continue to lobby the UK Government for a statutory relationship between the Welsh Government and Network Rail, including devolution of powers to specify high level outputs for Welsh rail infrastructure, similar to the powers of the Scottish Government

Accept in principle

As set out in our evidence to the Part 2 of the Silk Commission, the further devolution of rail powers is already under discussion with the UK Government. The final decision on whether to take on rail infrastructure responsibilities must be informed by a clear understanding of the costs and the risks.

Financial Implications

Unknown at this stage, but any discussion of devolution of rail powers would have to include discussions around transfers of budgets to accompany new powers.

Recommendation 2. Continue to lobby the UK Government for an enhanced role in the rail franchising process as it affects Wales, particularly powers to specify franchise agreements that comprise predominantly Wales-only services, such as the current Wales and Borders Franchise

Accept in principle

As set out above, the further devolution of rail powers is already under discussion with the UK Government. Work is underway to identify priorities for a new Wales and Borders rail franchise specification.

Financial Implications

Unknown at this stage, but a devolution of rail franchising powers will require a renegotiated budget transfer from DfT.

Recommendation 3. Continue to lobby the UK Government for bus regulation and registration powers to be devolved to Wales, including making the Traffic Commissioner for Wales accountable to the Welsh Ministers

Accept

Bus regulation is one of the areas for further devolution identified in the Welsh Government's evidence to Part 2 of the Silk Commission.

Financial Implications

We do not know the financial implications of regulating the bus industry, as costs would vary depending on exactly what form regulation would take. The financial implications would form a key part of the decision making process in relation determining a suitable approach for regulating buses.

Recommendation 4. Use all the powers at its disposal to drive public transport integration, and ensure staff at all levels of government have the skills and tools to deliver effective public transport policy

Accept

Public transport integration is a priority and is already reflected in our grant programmes, for example in the Regional Transport Plan Grant and in our approach to developing the Metro concept in South East Wales.

From April 2013, our funding in support of socially necessary bus and community transport services is aimed at encouraging multi-modal and cross-boundary strategies. Future funding will depend on operators meeting minimum quality standards that passengers most wish to see, which includes integration with other modes.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications; this can be done through existing funding.

Recommendation 5. Exploit the opportunity presented by the renewal of both the National and Regional Transport Plans to promote integrated public transport and ensure effective coordination and delivery of policy at national and regional levels.

Accept

I am currently determining the priorities for the new transport planning framework. It is clear that integrating public transport and ensuring that national and regional priorities are coordinated should be a focus for any new framework.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this recommendation. The financial implications of the new transport planning framework will be considered in detail as the framework is developed.

Recommendation 6. Ensure that changes to the planning system to be introduced through the forthcoming Planning Reform Bill include a strengthened requirement for all major development schemes to (a) include adequate public transport provision and actively promote sustainable, integrated public transport or else they will be refused planning permission; and (b) consult transport planning bodies at an early stage, including those schemes funded by the Welsh Government.

Reject

The forthcoming Planning Reform Bill is intended to streamline the planning system and relieve it of unnecessary burdens and procedures. It is not intended that the forthcoming Bill should address issues of policy which is kept regularly up to date through revision to Planning Policy Wales. The Planning Policy framework in the form of PPW and TAN 18 already establishes a clear policy framework for requiring new development to be located in locations which are accessible by integrated public transport. The planning system cannot regulate the operation of private transport companies. However, by ensuring that development is sustainably located the need for travel can be reduced. We expect PPW to be interpreted by local planning authorities and brought forward in Local Development Plans which forms the legal basis for making planning decisions; PPW is also a material consideration to planning applications.

As far as recommendation 6 is concerned the Town and Country Planning (Development Management) (Wales) Order already sets out the requirements for the highway authority and Welsh Ministers to be consulted in relation to planning applications, consequently we believe that the necessary provisions to meet the Committee's recommendation are already in place.

Financial Implications

None because the recommendation is being rejected.

Recommendation 7. Ensure that walking and cycling links to public transport services and infrastructure are prioritised in delivery of the Active Travel (Wales) Bill, and take steps through wider bus and rail policies to enhance walking and cycling infrastructure and provision for bikes on buses and trains.

Accept

The consideration of the links between public transport and active travel provision can be included in the delivery guidance for the Active Travel (Wales) Bill. We will encourage bus operators to consult passengers on the demand for bike-carrying facilities. The timeliness of services and on-board space are issues that affect the provision for buses and bikes on trains.

Financial Implications

There is no additional funding required to fulfil this recommendation, but it will lead to better targeting of the existing funding for active travel.

Recommendation 8. Establish appropriate delivery mechanisms to mainstream transport planning across the work of all Welsh Government departments, particularly in relation to access to health, education and social services

Accept

A specific project to ensure that link transport provision and health reform has been established. Understanding the transport demands of a range of services will be an important focus for future transport planning work and is already being built into the bus network strategies being developed as part of the requirement for our new bus funding arrangements.

Financial Implications

There is no additional funding required to fulfil this recommendation, but it will lead to better targeted funding in this area.

Recommendation 9. Ensure that the integrated transport task forces established in north Wales and south east Wales lead to clear, costed delivery plans that take account of wider policy areas such as health and land use planning.

Accept in principle

The South East Wales Integrated Transport Task Force has already published its report. The North East Wales Integrated Transport Task Force report is due at the end of June. I will consider the contents of both reports carefully to ensure that recommendations can be implemented effectively.

Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications as a result of accepting this recommendation. There may be financial implications arising from the recommendations of the Task Forces, and these will be given careful consideration as part of the development of delivery plans.

Recommendation 10. Establish whether effective use is being made in Wales of provisions under the Transport Act 2000 (as amended) to improve bus services, and promote their implementation to facilitate greater cooperation and coordination of services

Accept

In implementing the new bus funding regime, I have been clear that I want to encourage local authorities to establish statutory bus Quality Partnership Schemes using the powers available to them under the Transport Act 2000.

Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications of accepting this recommendation, as this can be accommodated within existing funding.

Recommendation 11. Move towards greater regulation of the bus market in Wales, including consideration of a franchise approach to bus route/network tendering based on supply side competition

Accept

Although bus regulation is non-devolved, I accept the underlying principle of the recommendation.

Local authorities already have powers to make, with the consent of the Welsh Ministers, bus Quality Contracts which are, in effect, franchises.

I am using our funding to leverage better outcomes and I have been clear that future bus funding will depend on bus operators delivering quality standards that passengers most wish to see. This might include statutory Quality Partnership Schemes between local authorities and bus operators, which would bring about more co-ordinated and effective expenditure.

Financial Implications

We do not fully know the financial implications of regulating the bus industry, as costs would vary depending on exactly what form regulation would take. The financial implications would form a key part of the decision making process in relation determining a suitable approach for regulating buses. Bus Quality Partnership Schemes would make use of existing funding.

Recommendation 12. Ensure that new bus funding arrangements and Regional Bus and Community Transport Network Strategies prioritise service coordination and high quality information, including quality standards and restrictions on the frequency of timetable changes.

Accept

As part of implementing the new bus funding regime, we have been clear that we expect local authorities to set minimum standards.

Future funding will depend on operators delivering quality standards that passengers most wish to see. This might include statutory Quality Partnership Schemes between local authorities and bus operators, which would bring about more co-ordinated and effective expenditure, and improved information. We are already funding three full-time Bus Compliance Officers under the auspices of Bus Users Cymru to monitor the performance of bus services throughout Wales. I am committed to continuing to support this activity.

Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications as a result of accepting this recommendation, as it relates to how existing funding will be targeted.

Recommendation 13. Establish whether the duty to develop bus information schemes under the Transport Act 2000 is being met by Welsh local authorities and provide support to ensure compliance.

Accept

The future funding of bus and community transport services will depend on operators achieving quality outcomes that passengers most wish to see. We recognise that the provision of accessible and up-to-date information is key to encouraging more people to use public transport.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of accepting this recommendation. A local authority may require a service provider to achieve improved information and recover reasonable costs from that operator.

Recommendation 14. Press all transport operators to work together and with relevant stakeholders to implement best practice in coordinating timetables, connecting services and publishing real time information to provide seamless links between bus, rail and community transport networks.

Accept

I recognise that timetable integration and service connections are a key challenge in providing a truly integrated transport network. There are examples of good practice but the large number of operators and the market-led system does mean that the picture is not consistent.

We will continue to work with bus and rail operators to make improvements in this area. Future funding will depend on bus operators delivering quality standards that passengers most wish to see, and that might include better-coordinated timetables.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of accepting this recommendation.

Recommendation 15. Develop a fully integrated public transport ticketing scheme for Wales across all transport networks as a priority alongside delivery of the GoCymru e purse.

Accept in principle

Options to develop an integrated ticketing system have been considered. The Go Cymru Smartcard has been trialled in north and south Wales.

Future funding of bus services from Welsh Government will depend on bus operators delivering quality standards that passengers most wish to see, and that might include integrated, multi-modal ticketing.

Implementation of this recommendation will depend on the availability of funding to progress.

Financial Implications

Options to develop a fully integrated e-ticketing system in Wales have been considered. Further consideration of the options will be required before

approval and. the delivery of such a system is dependant on the availability of finance.

Recommendation 16. Identify best practice in developing public transport interchanges and facilities, and work with stakeholders to develop and implement standards for the provision of such infrastructure

Accept

The Welsh Government has supported the development of a number of public transport interchanges. Our future funding of bus services will depend on operators and other partners meeting quality standards, and those might well include better interchanges.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of accepting this recommendation.

Recommendation 17. Revisit the ten recommendations made by the Equality of Opportunity Committee on the accessibility of transport services for disabled people, and update us on progress made in implementing those recommendations

Accept

An update on progress in implementing the recommendations of the Equality of Opportunity Committee report is attached at Annex 1.

Financial Implications

None

Recommendation 18. Develop a thorough understanding of passengers needs to inform Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process and the new Wales and Borders Rail Franchise

Accept

We are already engaged in the development of Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process. We will discuss with Network Rail how they are embedding the user perspective in that process.

We will develop understanding of user priorities to inform the future Wales and Borders franchise.

Financial Implications

There may be some financial implications as a consequence of accepting this recommendation. The financial implications of the Long Term Planning Process and the next Wales and Borders franchise will be considered as part their development but developing an understanding of the user perspective might require additional research or other work to be commissioned. The case for such additional work will be determined on the basis of the cost benefit, subject to a sufficient budget being available.

Recommendation 19. Ensure inter modal integration is a key component of the new Wales and Borders Franchise, which should encompass integrated information, ticketing and timetabling

Accept

The importance of modal integration will be explored in the development of the new Wales and Borders franchise

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a consequence of accepting this recommendation. The financial implications of the next Wales and Borders franchise will be considered as part their development.

Recommendation 20. Roll out the Bwcabus model to rural areas in Wales not currently connected to the main bus network.

Accept in principle

The Welsh Government continues to support Bwcabus financially, having allocated up to £350,000 for the period 2012-15. We encourage local authorities, bus and community transport operators, and people who live in rural communities to visit and learn from the Bwcabus experience.

Financial Implications

There would be cost implications of a wider roll out of the Bwcabus service. The current service costs around £120,000 per annum in revenue, with further European and local authority funding. These services are unlikely to become self-funding and will continue to require support from public funds. Any expansion of the Bwcabus service would have to be subject to the availability of funding.

Recommendation 21. Work with relevant stakeholders to deliver consistent and high quality community transport provision across all the Regional Transport Consortia.

Accept

I have increased the funding available to support community transport to £2.5m in 2013-14.

Financial Implications

None beyond the additional funding already identified above.

Recommendation 22. Increase support for innovative community transport schemes and promote good practice to maximise the opportunities offered by the sector, particularly to provide services where there is commercial market failure

Accept

The funding under Regional Transport Services Grant in 2013-14 represents an effective doubling of the funding available to support good quality community transport services.

Financial Implications

None beyond the additional funding already identified above.

Recommendation 23. Provide greater certainty over longer-term funding to enable community transport operators to plan and invest in the future

Accept in principle

I understand the importance that community transport operators attach to this and we will continue to examine the scope for multi-year funding arrangements. Funding arrangements will need to remain flexible in order to respond to unexpected service changes.

Financial Implications

None from accepting the recommendation.

Recommendation 24. Identify and resolve inconsistencies between local authorities on whether they not only allow, but also encourage, community transport operators to tender for commercial bus services

Accept

Local authorities have been reminded by my officials that community transport can often provide a cost-effective alternative to conventional bus services, depending on circumstances.

Financial Implications

None.

Recommendation 25. Aim to strengthen regional transport structures so that they have the executive powers and capacity to plan and deliver all elements of integrated transport, including a thorough evaluation of the Passenger Transport Executive model

Accept

I recognise the need for improvement in the way integrated transport is planned and delivered. Work to identify the best model to deliver all elements of integrated transport is under consideration.

Financial Implications

None from accepting the recommendation.

Equality of Opportunity Committee report – linked to recommendation 17

Ref	Recommendation	Update
1	<p>Recommendation 1. The Committee places the highest priority on ensuring that the implementation of the National Transport Plan takes into account the needs of disabled people, and recommends that the Welsh Government takes steps to ensure its engagement with disabled people's groups is further enhanced</p>	<p>I have asked that a Charter be developed for disabled public transport passengers, and that will be developed from the work being done to identify quality outcomes for bus passengers.</p> <p>Bus Users UK in Wales is reviewing with bus operators and local authorities their progress in responding to the recommendations in its report on access to public transport by passengers who are sensory impaired. That report focuses in particular on improving information, engagement and training.</p>
2	<p>Recommendation 2. The Committee believes that transport related dialogue between local authorities, transport providers and disability groups could be enhanced, and recommends that the Welsh Government ensures that such dialogue is further mainstreamed into service planning mechanisms.</p>	<p>Future funding will depend on bus operators delivering quality standards that passengers most wish to see, and that might include improved engagement with disability groups on design, safety, access and training, and limited timetable reviews. The Regional Transport Consortia are required to consult widely in developing their Regional Bus and Community Transport Network Strategies, which I will consider later this year.</p>
3	<p>Recommendation 3. The Committee recognises the costs involved in providing free bus travel for older and disabled people in Wales, but recommends that the Welsh Government continues to protect this highly important policy.</p>	<p>The concessionary fares scheme remains in place and has been extended to cover seriously injured armed services personnel and war veterans as promised in the Government response to the Equality of Opportunity Committee report</p>
4	<p>Recommendation 4. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government makes representation to the UK Government to reconsider its decision to remove the mobility component of Disability Living</p>	<p>Welfare reform has led to fundamental changes in the benefits system since the recommendation was made.</p> <p>The Welsh Government's guidance on concessionary bus travel has</p>

Ref	Recommendation	Update
	Allowance for people in residential care	<p>been updated to reflect the phased introduction of personal Independence Payments as a successor to Disability Living Allowance.</p> <p>The Blue Badge Scheme regulations have been amended to link eligibility for a badge to the new benefit - Personal Independence Payment. In order to mitigate the effects of welfare reform and maintain equity as far as possible, the eligibility criteria include receipt of enhanced rate for Mobility Activity 1 - Planning and following a journey, or standard rate Mobility Activity 2 - Moving around.</p> <p>The link to the Higher Rate Mobility Component Disability Living Allowance remains for those under 16 or over 65 where relevant.</p>
5	<p>Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government revises its guidance to local authorities on concessionary bus travel to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - include the introduction of a common application form for all local authorities, developed in consultation with learning disability groups, to ensure it is user friendly, uses appropriate language and is accessible to all; - clarify the criteria for use of companion bus passes 	<p>The Welsh Government has encouraged the 22 local authorities to develop a common application form for concessionary bus travel.</p> <p>The move to regional funding in 2013-14 will enable the existing 22 designs to be reduced to four, and it is hoped that a single design will follow in due course.</p> <p>The criteria for companion passes is contained in Welsh Government Guidance, and that has been reissued to local authorities.</p>
6	<p>Recommendation 6. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government considers options by which legislation could be used to enhance disabled people's accessibility to taxi services, and makes</p>	<p>The Welsh Government highlighted taxi licensing as an area for further devolution in its response to Part 2 of the Silk Commission.</p> <p>Later this year the Law Commission will publish its final report on its</p>

Ref	Recommendation	Update
	representations on a preferred option to the UK Government	review of taxi licensing, and that will present the opportunity to consider new and better mechanisms to improve accessibility.
7	Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should work with the Community Transport Association to better understand the distribution of drivers and availability of physical equipment to ensure that better use is made of those resources.	The Regional Transport Consortia are required to optimise the use of resources through their Regional Network Strategies that will underpin future public funding of bus and community transport services. The Welsh Government is looking at options for better patient transfer in the health service, and that includes how resources are utilised. The community transport sector is involved in that work.
8	Recommendation 8. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government ensures transport providers and local authorities work with disabled groups to get a better understanding of how the format and provision of information could be improved	The Public Transport Users' Committee published its report on Information Provision in April 2012. It made six recommendations which we are implementing
9	Recommendation 9. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should include training on accessing transport in the curriculum for SEN students	The recommendation was rejected.
10	Recommendation 10. When developing shared spaces and schemes involving dropped kerbs, the Welsh Government and local authorities should engage with disabled persons groups from the start of the planning process	Under the Active Travel (Wales) Bill, design guidance is being developed for active travel schemes which will pick up some of these issues. The Group developing the guidance includes representatives of disabled people and will be subject to formal public consultation, which will include engagement with disabled people.

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