



Cymdeithas  
Cludiant  
Cymunedol  
Community  
Transport  
Association

## National Assembly for Wales

### Cross Party Group on Community Transport

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at 12:00

Ty Hywel, Dining Room 3

**Present:** Eluned Parrott AM (Chair), Hatti Woakes (North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum), Ceri Cryer (Age Cymru), Iwan Williams (Older People's Commissioner's Office), Paul Harding (AM Support Staff), Sian Summers-Rees (CTA Wales), David Brooks (CTA Wales)

#### 1. Welcome, introductions & apologies:

Eluned opened the meeting by asking members to introduce themselves and thanked everyone for their attendance. Apologies had been received from Bethan Jenkins AM and Janet Finch-Saunders AM.

Before moving onto the main agenda items, Eluned pointed out that Cross Party groups have to comply with new rules which include holding an AGM, publishing minutes and financial reports on the Welsh Government's website. This is to ensure complete transparency and openness.

Eluned also mentioned that the Presiding Officer had noted that the Cross Party group on Community Transport had not met for 18 months. The group's mission statement is on the Welsh Government's website, but the group recognised that the mission statement probably needs refreshing even though the challenges faced by Community Transport remain largely the same. Eluned informed the group that she will contact the Presiding Officer and meet with other AM's to invigorate the group and seek further attendance.

**Action: Eluned to forward the link to the Cross Party group's mission statement.**

It was proposed and seconded that Eluned would continue as Chair for the group and that Siân Summers-Rees, Director of CTA Wales, would act as secretariat.

#### 2. Minutes of the meeting 25<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and matters arising:

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the previous meeting. Eluned noted that she would talk to members regarding topics of future meetings and agree by e-mail.

### **3. CTA Presentation – ‘Overview of Community Transport provision and the State of the Sector Report’:**

Sian began the presentation with an overview of Community Transport in Wales and gave a snap shot of statistics in the newly published State of the Sector Report. Sian spoke about how demand for services had increased significantly since the last report was published in 2010, putting greater pressure on Community Transport operators and service delivery.

Sian talked about different examples of Community Transport including Dial-a-Ride, Community Car schemes, Group Hire and Wheels 2 Work projects. The legal framework in terms of Section 19 & 22 permit regulations means that Community Transport operators cannot make a profit which makes sustainability difficult. However, Sian mentioned that the benefit of the permit system is that Community Transport does not operate under the same operating restrictions as commercial providers.

Sian noted that although volunteer numbers in the sector remain high, there has been a drop in paid staff. The report also highlighted that the average age of vehicles has increased and there is no vehicle re-placement fund in Wales.

In terms of funding, Local Authorities have taken over from the disbanded Regional Travel Consortia’s and are still working on regional basis, however there is no new investment coming into the sector. Community Transport operators are currently waiting to hear if there are any cut backs to the Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG) for 2015/16 and there are also concerns over the late notification of the grant which has planning implications for operators. In terms of procurement and commissioning, Local Authorities are reluctant to adopt community benefit clauses as part of the weighting of tendering, making it difficult for Community Transport to win contracts.

Sian also spoke about other issues facing Community Transport including commercial bus companies complaining to the European Union that the permit regime is unfair competition and the challenges/opportunities for Non-Emergency Patient Transport delivery in Wales.

In conclusion, Sian noted that Community Transport is making a positive contribution and difference to the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Wales. The report’s main recommendations included recommendations for WG to consider:-

- Implementing a funding review of the sector to examine the fairness of current funding arrangements; this should include a review of concessionary fares, consideration of the reinstatement of a capital grant fund as well as a review of the Bus Service Support Grant (BSSG) in the context of the specific difficulties faced by the community transport sector.
- Promoting the need for funding awards on a minimum three-year cycle wherever possible to better enable effective strategic planning.

- Consulting on the development of an all-Wales strategy for community transport which would:
  - set out the Welsh Government’s vision for the role of the sector as an integral element of the public transport network;
  - examine the capacity of community transport organisations in the sector;
  - foster increased collaborative working across boundaries;
  - establish performance quality standards (which were aligned with CTA’s);
  - enable the provision of adequate and effective information and publicity on community transport;
  - ensure funding is fair and equitable across the country;
  - eliminate geographical inequality in relation to both access to, and the cost of, services for passengers.

#### **4. Q & A session:**

Although there were no specific questions regarding the presentation, Eluned made the point that there is a need to develop a better understanding of what the future of Community Transport will look like e.g. how does Community Transport fit with the wider transport mix in relation to the National Transport Plan? Eluned also stated that we need to aim to widen the discussions in relation to Community Transport and not just discuss large infrastructure projects such as the M4 relief road.

Hatti made the point that it would be beneficial to harness the thoughts and views of people living in rural communities to a greater extent in an attempt to highlight rural transport issues, thereby promoting Community Transport.

Iwan expressed an offer of support on behalf of the Older People’s Commissioner in helping to promote the awareness of Community Transport and made the point that many older people rely and value their local Community Transport scheme.

#### **5. Topics for future meetings:**

Non-emergency patient transport was noted as a key topic for future meetings. Examples of reduced services in health such as some maternity services in West Wales being transferred to Glangwili hospital has had some negative impacts for patients and relatives. There are opportunities for Community Transport to play an important role in transport to health.

The National Transport Plan was also noted as a future item for discussion.



Cymdeithas  
Cludiant  
Cymunedol  
Community  
Transport  
Association

## **6. A.O.B:**

Sian raised the CTA Wales Conference taking place on 4<sup>th</sup> March at the Liberty Stadium, Swansea. The Deputy Minister for Health Vaughan Gethin AM will be making the opening address.

## **7. Date of next meeting:**

Date to be confirmed (subject to discussion between Eluned and Presiding Officer (TBA)).