

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes	Enterprise and Business Committee
Gwasanaethau Bysiau a Thrafnidiaeth Gymunedol yng Nghymru	Bus and Community Transport Services in Wales
BCT 06	BCT 06
Penny Jones	Penny Jones

Consultation questions

Question 1 – how would you describe the current condition of the bus and community transport sectors in Wales?

Very sad. The new T5 is a big improvement since it insures connections at Cardigan and Aberaeron, though once a bus had pulled out in Cardigan before our bus arrived, fortunately it comes back the same way on the other side of the road and the bus driver of the bus I had arrived on said he would hail it down for me, as they are meant to wait. Our bus had been 5 minutes late. I pointed out to the bus driver on the second bus that he should have waited telling him how stressful it was to be on a bus hoping for a connection – he replied to tell me how stressful his job was. I was shocked. I am sure bus drivers must be under a lot of pressure with the time keeping on roads which are so unpredictable with cows, tractors and road works galore.

Saying how good the T5 is I see they have cut the 9pm bus from Haverfordwest. This is the biggest problem – no evening services after 7pm and no Sunday services. The loss of the Sunday service is massive. It makes it impossible to have weekends away or weekend visitors as you can't get to or from the trains on a Sunday.

Question 2 – why do you think the number of bus services and the number of bus passengers is declining in Wales?

It is an uphill struggle trying to provide bus services in such a rural area as West Wales where most places can't be reached. The bwcabus is a solution. In my experience the things that make the buses less accessible are:

1. People are not aware of the availability of buses – there is NO advertising of bus services. For example we have a good service to and from Goodwick railway station but I find people do not know about it. Having said that, the lunch time train used to work to get to the T5 to go north but with the new timetable you have to wait an hour. There is no bus to the 10am train either and on a Saturday the train arrives late at 8.45pm and misses the bus that meets the same train all week as it arrives 15 minutes earlier.
2. If you ever miss a bus connection you cease to trust the buses and will be put off for life. I once missed a connection in Aberaeron as my bus was late coming in and the bus had gone to connect with the last bus in Cardigan (7pm ((now 7.11pm))), I had to hitch when I wasn't well, it was no joke and luckily Summer. When buses are tracked (Richard Bros know where their buses are all the time) why can't they ensure connections. When bus drivers know the phone number of the driver of the bus you are trying to catch they will ensure you catch it. I have the phone number of the bus driver who meets the Goodwick train as the train is sometimes late and she (the bus driver) will wait when she know you are on the train. Why can't trains be in touch with bus companies or the information of the train's progress be accessible to the bus driver – in the technological age, it must be possible. Some drivers have hands free phones.
3. It isn't clear whether bikes are allowed on buses some drivers allow them. On the Morris buses from Carmarthen they will not even allow a folded up bike. On the new T5 buses there is less space for pushchairs/wheelchairs (only one side is available instead of the two sides). In America they have racks to put bikes on the outside of the buses. Bikes need to be able to go on buses. Biking is hard enough in our mountainous country and it would help the environment fantastically if bikes could go on buses.
4. Bus passengers are the lowest of the low, people who do not drive, young people, elderly, disabled – voiceless people – who are not going to make a fuss, if they could they would get a car to be able to travel reasonably.
5. Having said the T5 connections are better, and to my surprise also connects to the T2 at Aberystwyth which was an enormous relief having passed many an hour waiting for the connection to Machynlleth and beyond, other connections are not so good. Buses miss each other by 5 minutes and then it means waiting an hour at the least. You could hardly use the buses for work when they are so un customer friendly.

6. The buses are too expensive – it is cheaper to drive a car unless you have a bus pass of course. For a family it is extremely expensive.

Question 3 – what do you think is the social, economic and environmental impact of recent changes in bus and community transport service levels?

I think losing the Sunday service will have had a massive impact on people, as I said before for getting to trains but also visiting hospitals or friends or family or shopping or whatever else people need to do. It totally curtails life. There is no Sunday service between Haverfordwest and Aberystwyth and between Cardigan and Carmarthen. If you look at a map you will see a quarter of Wales cut off from the rest of the world on a Sunday.

The environmental impact is massive, think of all the diesel cars being driven when people could be on buses.

Question 4 – what do you think the Welsh Government should do to support bus and community transport in Wales?

I think bus services should have an advertising campaign, bus drivers should be able to contact each other to ensure bus connections, bus drivers should be consulted (they never have been) as they know the situation and are wonderful on the whole, fares should be subsidised, bikes should be allowed on buses.

There should be more of an incentive to go on buses. I am an artist

and have been thinking of an event/art work on a bus that would attract people – there could be a competition for artists on buses with the Arts Council of Wales which would be an advert in itself. You need to run a whole campaign for people to go on buses.

Once when I complained to Richards Bros about the bus leaving before the train arrived I was told “The train should be on time”. I don’t think any of the Richards Bros team have ever been on a train. It would be helpful for you people to come here and experience the buses.

Question 5 – what do you think Welsh local authorities should do to support bus and community transport services?

As above

Question 6 – what do you think about proposals to devolve bus registration powers to Wales? How should these be used?

I am not sure what this is. But being Wales empowered would help as our situation is particular to Wales.

Question 7 – please tell us whether you think further powers to regulate the bus industry in Wales are required and why?

I hear there have been problems between bus companies and arriva was always a problem in the Aberystwyth area (it was one of their buses that made me late that day in Aberaeron) so whatever is needed to achieve the aims I have highlighted.

Question 8 – what other action can be taken to ensure that bus and community transport services meet the needs of people in Wales?

The campaign mentioned above – ADVERTISING – ARTWORK – something unusual to make people come on buses. I once ran a drawing tour on a bus and actually was curtailed when I took my dog and Morris Bros had just changed their policy the day before and dogs were not allowed which was a difficult situation with a whole group of people.

Please tell us anything else you would like to mention this topic, thank you for contributing to our inquiry.

I think I have said it all above. I became a passionate bus user as I decided to give up the car after going to Sheffield to do an MA for two years and enjoyed the wonderful public transport there. I made the decision to save the environment. People think I am mad but I have a lot of fun on the buses, you meet people, I have good healthy exercise getting to and from the buses and it is actually very easy to carry heavy items on wheels on the buses as they are so physically accessible. It is much easier going to a town as you have no need to park and you are taken to the town centre. As there are no evening buses I book Cilgwyn community electric car to go out in an evening when it is further than walking distance. I have a bus pass so it is easier for me, but most of my friends are over sixty but still use cars unless they can't drive. I know one other like me and it is such fun meeting her. She is under sixty but determined. I gave up the car before I was sixty so paid my way then. It is an enormous adjustment, but you soon work out ways to get to appointments, shopping, take the animals to the vet!!