

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 33	BCT 33
Janet Finch-Saunders AM	Janet Finch-Saunders AM

Consultation questions

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

Welsh Government cuts to bus operator grants have meant devastating cuts to service across Wales, leaving many people living in more rural areas increasingly isolated, and without a means to get to work, the shops, or health care services.

Numerous constituents have made representations to me, regarding the lack of community transport and cuts to bus services, most commonly in the most rural and isolated areas of my constituency.

The passenger numbers here are not high, but community transport provides a vital service to those who do live here – in particular, older people and those with health or mobility issues. Access to health services is a key priority, but enabling access to shops and social opportunities is also invaluable.

The affect that cuts to bus and community transport in north and rural Wales, including Aberconwy, have had – and will continue to have – a devastating and very real effect on people’s lives.

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

The Welsh Government’s cuts to the bus operator grant, and lack of recognition of the importance of public transport to our rural communities.

A lack of public consultation before services are changed or removed – and lack of public awareness of changes to services, leading to disillusion with the service.

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

Cuts to bus routes, and reductions in services to more rural areas, such as Rowen in my constituency of Aberconwy, have a large effect on residents who may have relied on these

services to get to work. This can have a negative effect on the economy, and on the chosen career paths and employment options of younger people.

Additionally, such cuts restrict access to public services. For those who find it harder to access health services, they may not feel that it is worth it, and a health condition could deteriorate and result in a much larger cost to public services. People should feel able and enabled to access public services as appropriate – not constricted by reduction and cuts to bus and community transport services.

I have also received representations relating to changes to bus routes with little notice. These changes may seem minor in terms of the overall route, but often seem to have missed considerations of geography and demographics – for example, a recent change to a route in my constituency, has been to carry straight along an A-road, instead of coming up the residential road running alongside it. This road is on a steep hill, and there are a large proportion of older people living here who struggle to reach the next bus stop along. So whilst the change to the timetable may seem minor, it does have a much larger impact on those who use that service. Finally, bus timetables at bus stops are sometimes out of date by a number of years. Updating these as timetables are revised should be a matter of course. Where there are no electronic bus time signs, the hardcopy of the timetable at the bus stop is the only reference for passengers, so this can cause some inconvenience.

The effects to the environment as a result of an increased use of cars and private transport will clearly be detrimental. Public transport is often lauded as the sustainable and clean way to get from A to B, and cuts to such provision mean that people will be forced to use private transport more and more. There is potential that this will lead to further bus services cuts as demand for reduced services falls.

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

Undo Welsh Government cuts to bus operator grants have meant devastating cuts to service across Wales, leaving many people living in more rural areas increasingly isolated, and without a means to get to work, the shops, or health care services.

Identify the needs of rural communities across Wales and look at ensure services are provided to connect communities – particularly at key times, e.g. school/office morning runs, midday lunch/shopping times, school home times, and evening ‘rush hour’ times.

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

Ensure that published timetables are correct and up-to-date, including those at bus stops.

Ensure that every community under their remit has suitable public transport provision.

Fully consult with all those affected by potential route changes well in advance of any such change, and ensure that representations are properly considered.

Work with private and third sector service providers to ensure joined-up services, with suitable service coverage for all communities – rather than over-provision in some and none in others.

Ensure that services are suitable for those with sensory impairments, such as sight loss or hearing loss.

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

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

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

Improved services will mean that more people will use them – bus operators will generate more revenue and be able to reinvest back into the service.
Ensuring a reliable service with full coverage of all communities, and services at appropriate times, will encourage use by the public, allowing the service to grow.
People need to be able to have faith in their bus and community transport services – to be able to be confident that the timetable and route published are correct, and that the bus will turn up at the correct time. They need to be able to be confident that if they rely on the bus to get to/from work, they will be able to get to/from work every day.

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