



undeb cenedlaethol y myfyrwyr



national union of students

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Tuesday 10 January 2017

Ken Skates AM
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure
Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Re: My Travel Pass

We are writing to express our grave disappointment at the Welsh Government's recent decision not to extend the My Travel Pass scheme when the pilot comes to an end in March, and to urge you to reconsider.

We are extremely concerned about the thousands of young people who will face an increase in travel costs as a result of this decision. Affordable transport to college and sixth form, as well as to work placements, is crucial for young people in Wales so that they may access education. However, in recent years cuts to local government budgets have meant that the transport available for further education students has increasingly come under threat.

You may know that NUS Wales published a report called 'Pound In Your Pocket' in 2014. It gave an overview of students' experience of financial support in Wales. Our research highlighted that a significant proportion of further education students were being forced to spend money in order to access their education. Indeed, 62% of them had costs associated with travel and the majority of these costs were £20 or more.

The research also found that the cost of travel was putting a strain on students' abilities to balance their commitments between work, study, and family life, with 37% of students who pay more than £20 a week reporting this. We also compared the costs of students who live in Office for National Statistics' classified urban postcode areas against those who live in rural areas. What we found was that rurally-based students spent more time and more money on transport.

It was with this research in mind that we raised this very issue in our [manifesto](#) ahead of last year's National Assembly elections, which we are sure you recall. In it, we recommended that the 'next Welsh Government extend concessionary travel on public transport to all FE students, building on the My Travel Pass bus scheme for 16-18 year old students, to ensure none are excluded from opportunities due to transport costs.' You will also recall our [Apprentices Manifesto](#), which recommended that 'all parties commit to introducing a travel card that covers apprentices aged 16-25.'

It is clear that there is a need for a scheme that supports students with the cost of travel in order to combat these issues. Cutting My Travel Pass will be a regressive step which will disproportionately affect those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who live in rural areas.

Whilst we recognise that the take up of the scheme has not been particularly high, with only 7% of those eligible using the system, we believe that this is not because the scheme itself is unnecessary,

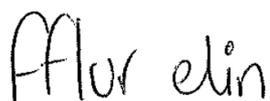
but rather because it has not been advertised effectively. Indeed, before the introduction of the scheme, our research showed that a significant proportion of students did not understand how to receive support with the cost of travel.

We are therefore calling on the Welsh Government to re-consider its decision to scrap the scheme, and instead place more emphasis on effectively informing young people about how to receive a travel pass. NUS Wales is prepared to offer assistance in engaging with students in this regard.

We look forward to receiving a response at your earliest convenience.

Please be aware that we have sent a copy of this letter to the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Skills and to the Chairs of the Children, Young People, and Education Committee and the Economy, Infrastructure, and Skills Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Fflur Elin
President, NUS Wales



Carmen Smith
Deputy President, NUS Wales