



Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-710  
Ein cyf/Our ref KS/06302/16

Mike Hedges AM  
Chair - Petitions Committee

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

10<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 24 August seeking my views on petition P-05-710 raised by Whizz Kids, calling on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure disabled people can access public transport as and when they need it.

Accessibility to public transport is not devolved to the Welsh Government and is a matter for the Secretary of State for Transport. Our expectation is that the devolution settlement for transport will be further strengthened with the passage of Wales Bill currently before the UK Parliament and the transfer of responsibility for rail franchising in Wales currently being negotiated with the Secretary of State for Transport. This improved devolved settlement for transport matters will not however, transfer responsibility for anti discrimination legislation to the Welsh Ministers. This shall remain a matter reserved to the UK Government.

That said, the Welsh Ministers and public authorities in Wales are required to exercise functions in accordance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty introduced by section 149 of the Equality act 2010. On this basis, I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consideration of the issues raised by Whizz-kids, that will serve to shine a light on some of the areas in which accessibility to public transport can be improved.

There are two specific matters highlighted in the text of the petition on which I would like to take this opportunity to comment to help the committee consider this important issue.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Firstly, in relation to accessible public transport when required without the need to plan assistance at least 24 hours in advance. This relates to the passenger assistance programmes offered by rail operators and is a licence requirement imposed on Train Operating Companies (TOC) as regulated by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). The ORR is working with train operators to improve access to stations and trains by strengthening their disabled people's protection policy (DPPP), which must be approved by the ORR. A DPPP sets out, amongst other things, the arrangements and assistance that an operator will provide to protect the interests of disabled people using its services and to facilitate such use.

The committee will appreciate that with more than three quarters of stations within the Wales and Borders franchise being not staffed, this presents particular challenges to the train operator in Wales to maintain access to our rail services to disabled people and people with restricted mobility. Requiring advance notification of passengers' requirements to travel on our railways provides an opportunity to ensure that passengers' travelling experiences are as positive as they can be across the whole of the railway network in Britain. Our ultimate objective is to enable passengers to travel without additional assistance being required.

Secondly, I agree that making disability awareness training available to train crew, bus, taxi and private hire vehicle drivers is a key requirement if inclusive and accessible public transport services is going to become a reality. This is an issue that has been considered previously by the Bus Policy Advisory Group, in respect of bus services in Wales, and we are considering how best this training can be delivered either as part of the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC) regime, or as part of the Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standards. The UK Government's Disabled Passengers Transport Advisory Committee is also undertaking research into the quality and availability of disability awareness training in Great Britain. The findings from this research will inform how best we can improve disability awareness training available to operators across all modes of public transport in Wales.

*Yours ever,*



**Ken Skates AC/AM**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure