



## Cross Party Group for North Wales Grŵp Trawsbleidiol Gogledd Cymru

# Note of the Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Moving North Wales Forward – Improving the Region's Transport

## Present

Llyr Gruffydd AM (In the Chair), Mark Isherwood AM, Sian Gwenllian AM, Darren Millar AM (Part), Eluned Morgan AM (part), Brett John (Office of Llyr Gruffydd AM), Tim Peppin and Stephen Jones (WLGA)

Speakers: Dewi Rowlands, Welsh Government, Simon Lander, Transport for Wales and Iwan Prys Jones, North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

Apologies: Ken Skates AM, Hannah Blythyn AM, Rhun ap Iorwerth AM and Jack Sargeant AM

## Presentations and Discussion

### **Dewi Rowlands, Department for Economy and Transport**

In the absence of the Cabinet Secretary Ken Skates AM, Dewi Rowlands gave a briefing on the Welsh Government's priorities for improving Transport with an emphasis on specific plans for North Wales.

### **Policy Context**

Regional development has to be seen in the context of national initiatives. There is a need to update the national transport strategy which was last revised in 2008. Significant developments since 2008 include the Future Generations Act and the need to decarbonise transport as far as possible. The most up to date national document is the National Transport Finance Plan update of 2017:

<https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-12/national-transport-finance-plan-2017-update.pdf>

Major change is occurring in transport: -

- Changes in the market for buses
- The new Wales and Borders Franchise (rail)
- New technology in transport and decarbonisation
- A commitment to improve road transport in Wales

### **Buses**

Transport for Wales are looking at integrated ticketing for buses and rail across Wales. The Government is implementing a national bus network and considering a new model of bus provision given the recent failure of many independent transport operators as the deregulated market founders.

The Government is considering a white paper that will enable it to regulate, lead and plan the delivery of bus services (the model in use in London and administered by Transport for London).

The new rail franchise will enable Transport for Wales to work with rail provider and bus operators to make bus and rail work together.

### Role of Transport for Wales (TfW)

The Government is looking to transform public transport provision. Transport for Wales will be the key change agent in delivering a new public transport system in Wales.

The Government will retain policy making and high level transport planning functions. Transport for Wales (TfW) will give advice, design and deliver schemes and manage and procure services. TfW will manage transport expenditure and budgets associated with capital improvements and service delivery to the public.

### Partnership Working

The Welsh Government is taking a broad-based partnership approach to improving transport across Wales.

The Government has worked with Growth Track 360 on rail.

The Cabinet Secretary has engaged with the Metro Mayors in Merseyside and Greater Manchester. For the benefit of mid Wales there have been discussions with Shropshire and the Midlands Engine Mayor.

A steering group of TfW, Transport for the North, the Ambition Board and Councils (North Wales and some neighbouring councils in NW England) has been set up to improve the connectivity of transport hubs (Deeside and Wrexham, Rhyl, Prestatyn, Abergele and St. Asaph, Llandudno and Colwyn Bay and Mon a Menai and North Anglesey).

Work has started on a transport network to serve Deeside Industrial Park and the development of a transport hub around Wrexham station and bus station.

### Road Improvements

North Wales needs investment in its trunk road network. Key investments that the WG have committed to are: -

- The Bontnewydd By-pass (Caernarfon)
- The A494 (red route)
- The third Menai Crossing
- Flood prevention works at Abergwyngregyn
- Removal of the A55 roundabouts

There is a programme of pinch point improvements: -]

- The Black Car roundabout Llandudno Junction
- Junctions 3 – 6 on the A483
- A541 and A 525 (Mold and Ruthin)
- North to South Improvements along the A470 corridor

A resilience study on the A55 is scheduled to be delivered by 2020.

### Rail

The Government has sought to work constructively with the UKG DfT and has secured commitment to a series of studies to improve the network in lieu of electrification (Cardiff to Swansea). In North Wales this includes: -

- Improvements to capacity (for through services from Wales) at Chester Station
- Improved services and line speeds for the Wrexham to Bidston line
- New stations at Deeside Industrial part and a remodelled Shotton Station (interchange)

Professor Mark Barry is working on business cases for rail infrastructure enhancements across Wales that will require UKG support. The Welsh Government sees it as critical that it is able to influence UKG policy and decision making on investment.

There will be a substantial DfT fund for new stations and a Welsh submission will be made to this fund.

Councils have received funds to improve active travel and safer routes in communities.

### **Iwan Prys Jones, North Wales Economic Ambition Board**

The Ambition Board seeks to improve the linkage of economic and transport planning for the benefit of the regional economy and prosperity.

There are a lot of ideas and schemes that need to be linked together into a single cohesive strategy to improve the region's transport network. Thinking on rail, bus, active travel and roads need to be integrated. A holistic approach to developing a comprehensive network is required.

Public Transport is in poor shape: -

- Bus and rail services do not connect
- There is a decline in bus services
- North Wales rail travel is more expensive than elsewhere in rails and other neighbouring regions e.g. Merseytravel
- Services are diesel based and do not take account of the decarbonisation agenda.

There is growing congestion from use of the private motor car and growing lorry transport volumes.

Public transport needs to be deployed to reduce pressure on roads by offering viable alternatives to commuting to work. Reducing the use of the strategic highways network for work commuting is a priority of the Board and the Transport Cabinet Members of Councils.

The Ambition Board is supporting WG work on rail via GT360 and the North Wales Metro concept by participating in WG led partnerships.

The Growth Bid will enable: -

- Schemes to link rail services with car sharing, park and ride, bus services, active travel and the development of integrated transport hubs.
- The pilot of decarbonised forms of transport
- Summer time services for tourism based on decarbonised transport

### **Simon Lander, Transport for Wales**

TfW will have a key role in procuring transport services and investment.

Transport for Wales has appointed Keolis Amey as its operator of the Wales and Borders franchise. Keolis Amey will also act as a development partner for the proposed North Wales Metro.

TfW will be the brand for the Wales and Border Franchise and the stations in the franchise.

The presentation of Simon Lander is attached.

## Discussion

### **Sian Gwenllian AM**

Sian pointed out that most public transport in her constituency is by bus and that therefore she would like to see more priority given to maintaining and improving bus transport.

Sian supports the development of new models of provision and regulation for bus transport. The de-regulation era has run its course with 2 local operators recently losing their licenses. Austerity has removed the capacity of Councils to financially support bus transport and ideally WG would re-empower councils to regulate and commission services.

Sian indicated her support for social and co-operative models of service delivery and the deployment of new fuels like hydrogen for buses.

Llyr Gruffydd supported Sian in reporting that the traditional private sector won't deliver adequate bus services in the current financial environment. A new approach is required.

Dewi and Iwan responded positively to Sian and Llyrs' comments: -

- The Government wants to meet the aspirations articulated by the Members.
- TfW will be researching and advising on new models for the regulatory framework for buses
- There will be pilots of services under new regulatory and contractual frameworks

- There are pilots of socially managed bus services in South West Wales which are relevant to the rural areas of North Wales

### **Mark Isherwood AM**

Mark queried: -

- The commitment to and cost of dualling all of the railway line between Wrexham and Chester (There is currently a short single-track section from Rossett over the A483 to Wrexham Station)
- Whether shared ticketing could include tourist attractions like the Llangollen Railway
- Whether references to a North East Wales Metro and similar initiatives in the North West of the region could be combined into a single North Wales Metro concept.
- Will the Welsh Government be dependent on the Chancellor's Statement on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 for monies to invest in rail?

Dewi Rowlands and Iwan Prys Jones responded: -

- The WG is seeking funding for the doubling of the line between Rossett and Wrexham and working on its justification (from a business case point of view). The doubling of the line is also included in the GT360 submission to the Wales and West Corridor Study by TfN, Network Rail and the DfT.
- A single North Wales Metro approach would better suit the NWEAB and the concept of seamless travel around the region.
- There is currently no money allocated for rail enhancements in CP6. The Chancellor and the DfT need to outline how rail enhancement proposals will be developed and financed in the future. Wales is campaigning for allocation of 11% of enhancement monies having 11% of the network in the UK.
- Mark's questions also triggered discussion of the creation of a North Wales Transport Body with powers delegated from the WG and potentially the Local Authorities. This is a devolution ask of the NWEAB.

### **Tim Peppin**

Tim asked what the Government will be doing to support decarbonisation in transport.

Iwan Prys Jones and Dewi Rowlands reported then thinking on schemes within the Growth Deal that would enable the provision of low carbon fuel (Electric and Hydrogen) generated from low carbon sources.

The NWEAB is planning to create an energy body that could manage specific supply schemes and give advice to community groups on local energy generation.