



Russell George AM  
Chair  
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

19 November 2019

Dear Russell,

I refer to your letter dated 21 October in relation to the evidence provided by the Traffic Commissioner for Wales to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee on the 9 October. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on sections of his evidence.

The framework referred to was put in place before the appointment of a full time Traffic Commissioner for Wales and as such Welsh Government was not given the opportunity to influence its content. I would however note that Welsh Government is keen to seek input to any future review of the framework especially in relation to the impact on the Traffic Commissioner for Wales's responsibilities. I recognise the importance to develop and foster a positive relationship with all concerned and the opportunity for future collaboration and input.

In your letter you refer to the bus seminars that have been developed and delivered across Wales to Public Service Vehicle (PSV) operators in recent years. You will recall that I launched a five point plan in support of the bus industry in Wales in October 2016. This included a bus summit to seek and capture the views of industry stakeholders, as well as providing vital support to bus operators through Business Wales and Finance Wales.

The bus operator seminars which were held in 2017 and 2018 across Wales provided bus operators with vital support involving Business Wales, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), the Traffic Commissioner for Wales and Welsh Government. Their purpose was to educate bus companies on safe working practices, and provide vital business support for sustainable development. These seminars have proved to be successful. I recognise the need to continue and further develop such seminars and to ensure that all PSV operators attend. I also recognise that a similar approach is also needed for the Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) industry in Wales on the basis of road safety, the economy and business sustainability and development. The Traffic Commissioner has already commented that for every one PSV operator in Wales there are approximately nine HGV operators. It is therefore vital and valid that this support is also made available and provided to the HGV industry as well. I intend to work with the new Traffic Commissioner when appointed to further develop and put in place a programme that will benefit both the PSV and HGV industries in Wales.

As the Committee is aware, we are undertaking a process of reform in relation to the planning and delivery of bus services in Wales which will contribute to our ambition of high quality, low carbon, multi-modal and integrated public transport network that meets the needs of the travelling public. The Buses (Wales) Bill is a key element of this reform agenda. The Bill will

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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.

include provisions relating to improved partnership working arrangements, franchising and local authority run bus services.

The Traffic Commissioner obviously plays a key statutory role in the bus registration process. Now that the Welsh Ministers and Assembly have enhanced executive and legislative competence in relation to bus registration, we will of course continue to explore how best those powers might be used in the future to improve bus service provision in Wales. Traveline Cymru is not a statutory body for this purpose and as such it is not able to take on the functions of bus registrations presently discharged by the Traffic Commissioner. I am, however, keen to work with the new Traffic Commissioner for Wales when appointed, to review the current bus registration process and explore opportunities.

The Air Quality Independent Review Panel, which is non-statutory, was appointed to provide expert independent advice to Welsh Government on local authority plans to achieve urgent compliance with nitrogen dioxide limit values. The Panel comprises membership from Welsh Government officials and external members, with a range of expertise covering transport, air quality, health and social research.

The Terms of Reference require the Panel to impartially scrutinise the evidence and provide advice to Welsh Government on any limitations and how to manage these in the time available.

Local authority plan documentation is shared with the panel for scrutiny 14 days prior to meetings, and members complete a checklist assessment covering the full range of business case and technical aspects. Any significant matters raised by the panel are shared with local authorities for their consideration and response. Where necessary, local authorities are required to undertake further assessment or provide additional detailed advice to ensure that Welsh Government can have confidence that plans are satisfactorily robust.

I understand that further advice from the Panel will follow to the Minister for Environment, Energy & Rural Affairs in late November regarding Cardiff Council's revised final plan which was submitted in October. The panel will also consider the revised plan of Caerphilly County Borough Council in March and further advice will be shared with the Minister shortly thereafter.

I acknowledge that Nick Jones has already provided his views on future opportunities relating to the Traffic Commissioner in Wales which has been included in his annual reports and recent valedictory report. However, I also welcome the opportunity to work with the UK Government and other relevant bodies, including the new Traffic Commissioner for Wales when appointed, to look at the opportunities available for improved synergies and closer working, which will include actively pursuing the quality of service provided to the people of Wales.

I hope that the above response clarifies my views on the matters you have raised.

Yours sincerely,



**Ken Skates AC/AM**  
Gweinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth  
Minister for Economy and Transport