

Welsh Government
Consultation Document

BUS SERVICES POLICY DISCUSSION

Improving local bus services in Wales
Consultation response form

Response from:

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QUESTION 1

Under current arrangements, local authorities are required to prepare and publish local transport plans. Do you agree that local transport plans should set out how local authorities are going to deliver local bus services in their areas? If you do not agree, please explain why.

Agree

Local bus users should have the opportunity to contribute to and be engaged with properly costed planning and delivery of their local bus services via consultations and workshops. Bus Users Cymru has found customer panels add value to the planning of services.

Bus Users Cymru has concerns that there are committed and experienced staff in many local authorities but that over time, because of funding cuts, the numbers have been eroded with resultant skills gaps.

Any local bus services plan needs to be properly funded and resourced and the possibility of ring fencing of public transport funding should be explored

However, history shows us that the regional approach works very well in Wales because it can address cross border issues and better focus the available funding, while retaining the experience and local knowledge of individual local authorities

We consider partnership working to be key especially for cross border issues

Local authorities would need clear and concise guidance on development of local bus strategies

Relationship with land use planning must be recognised and developed

QUESTION 2

Under current arrangements, bus operators are required to give not less than 56 days' notice to the Traffic Commissioner before bus routes are added, varied or removed. Should the period of 56 days be lengthened, shortened or remain the same?

In our view 56 days is about right. Operators, with the agreement of local authorities, have the facility to apply for short notice variations if circumstances dictate and it would be unrealistic to expect an operator to run a non-viable service for more than 56 days.

It is essential however that Traveline Cymru receives the information at the same time as the Office of the Traffic Commissioner.

QUESTION 3

Do you agree that local bus operators be required to consult with local authorities before applications to the Traffic Commissioner are submitted to remove, vary or add bus routes?

Agree

If local authorities are to be given responsibility for developing bus services for passenger benefit it is essential that bus companies consult with them before changes to services and information on changes must be made available to bus users in advance of the change.

QUESTION 4

Integrated ticketing arrangements enabling passengers to travel by bus or by rail in any area in Wales will help deliver our metro programmes and improve transport accessibility. Should local authorities and the Welsh Government have the power to set up regional and national ticketing schemes?

Yes, because while some schemes do exist and some operators are being proactive in setting up some ticketing initiatives it will always fall on local authorities/government to act as "honest broker" so as to avoid CMA restrictions.

QUESTION 5

Do you agree that the development and delivery of the TrawsCymru® longer distance bus network should be brought under the control of the Welsh Government under franchise agreements? If you do not agree, please explain why?

Agree

The TrawsCymru® network is key to linking settlements not served by the rail network and as such must not be allowed to suffer from or compete with operators' market pressures. We consider the Welsh Government is best placed to manage in order to achieve the required level of integration of services and ticketing.

The TrawsCymru® network needs to integrate with the Wales and Borders rail network and must work with the new franchisee for ticketing and integration.

QUESTION 6

Do you agree that local authorities should be allowed to set up bus franchising schemes in their areas and if so, what safeguards should be in place to ensure that the benefits of a competitive bus industry is not lost? If you do not agree, please explain why?

Agree with caution

Local authorities should have the power to set up bus franchises in their areas but there would need to be sufficient funding available for the franchise,

Such schemes would need to address ticketing issues and barriers to using public transport such accessibility to bus stops, information etc.

Issues could be addressed such as bus lane provision and parking therein; linking people to places of work, health care and leisure activities; ensure provision of ticketing for people on irregular work patterns

QUESTION 7

Do you agree that the Welsh Ministers should establish the quality of local bus services to be met by operators by issuing statutory guidance after consultation with stakeholders? If you do not agree, please explain why.

Agree

The Welsh Voluntary Quality Standards Scheme should be the basis on which quality is established but any guidance would need to take account of fragility of some operators and address regional variances

Any statutory guidance should address the quality and relevance of provision of information and address such issues as provision of facilities at bus stations and other interchanges

QUESTION 8

Do you agree that the Welsh Ministers should issue statutory guidance after consultation to establish the quality expectations for infrastructure (bus stops and bus shelters) and the display of accessible passenger information? If you do not agree, please explain why.

Agree

Regrettably infrastructure quality is variable which is not helpful for increasing passenger confidence. Local authorities are responsible for the installation and upkeep of bus stops, information displays etc but all too often these items are last on the list when funds are thinly stretched.

The passenger needs to know what to expect with a consistency across Wales and improvements in quality will increase confidence and patronage.

QUESTION 9

Do you agree that local authorities should be allowed to set up bus companies to operate local bus services? What requirements should be met before a local authority can set up its own bus company?

If you do not agree that local authorities should be allowed to set up their own bus companies, please explain why.

In principle Bus Users Cymru has no object to local authorities setting up bus companies but history shows a decline in the numbers and very few municipal operators survive. There are other ways of achieving consistency of services such as targeting funding where commercial operators do not consider services to be viable.

A major drawback is, as stated in answer 1, a reduction in experience and skilled staff following funding cuts.

Would there be competition and would they be allowed to use taxpayers' money to compete against commercial operators?

QUESTION 10

Do you have any further observations that you would like to make known in relation to the provision of local bus services in Wales?

Bus Users Cymru is very encouraged to see the bus rising to the top of the political agenda but the quality of bus service provision is too variable.

Bus passengers need consistency of punctuality and reliability, as well as provision of information, ticketing and integration.

More bus priority measures are needed because congestion remains the biggest threat to successful modal shift.

It must be borne in mind that bus services are the key to delivery of all other policies and provide access to healthcare, work and leisure activities.

Your name/organisation and postal/email address

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Please tell us which group you are responding on behalf of? (tick one)

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Central Government | Public Transport User Groups <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Local Authority (Wales) | Environmental Groups |
| Local Authority (England) | Disability Groups |
| Rail Industry | Community Groups |
| Commissioners / Ombudsman | Freight Operators / Users |
| Advisory Groups | Bus Industry / Operators |
| Media | Air Industry / Operators |
| Emergency Services | Sea Industry / Operators |
| Health Sector | Trade Unions |
- Other (please state)