



Cymdeithas
Cludiant
Cymunedol
Community
Transport
Association

NTP 06

**Enterprise and Business Committee:
Scrutiny of Welsh Transport Policy and Reprioritised National Transport Plan**

CTA Cymru Response

1 Background

CTA Cymru welcomes the opportunity to contribute views to the Committee's scrutiny, as above. The Community Transport Association is a rapidly growing UK-wide charity, operating on a devolved country structure, giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations in the third sector delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. The CTA also promotes excellence through training, publications, advice, events and project support to promote voluntary and community local transport providers.

CTA Cymru works to support our members across Wales through our offices near Swansea and Rhyl. The Welsh Assembly Government provides core funding to the CTA as "the voice of community transport" in Wales, to enable us to support and develop new and existing CT operators across the country and to serve as advocate and promoter of the sector. We have sought feedback from our Committee for Wales to inform this response.

Q1 What are the key issues affecting transport in Wales, and how far are they addressed by the change in priorities within the National Transport Plan?

From CTA's perspective, the key issues affecting transport are reductions in bus funding grants such as the Local Transport Services Grant (BSOG) and the Bus Services Operator Grant (BSOG), particularly with the rising cost of fuel. This will disproportionately affect community transport operators locally, who struggle with sustainability due to the not-for-profit nature of their services, and may well exacerbate issues regarding access and connectivity for our most vulnerable citizens. This is especially so following the proposed closure of the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative (CTCFI), which has allowed the use of concessionary fares on 15 pilot schemes for elderly and severely disabled people unable to use their bus pass on conventional public transport*.

We are concerned that despite community transport (CT) being mentioned in the NTP section entitled "Ongoing Commitments", there is no specific action for CT in any of the following years or commitment to funding the sector, and would welcome discussions with the Welsh Government on how we can support the sector to deliver

the NTP's vision for integrated transport, and how we might develop more co-ordinated funding for the sector to take this forward.

Q2 How far does the change in priorities within the National Transport Plan address, and strike the appropriate balance between, the strategic priorities stated in the Wales Transport Strategy, namely:

a. *reducing greenhouse gas emissions*

CTA has no comment on this.

b. *integrating local transport*

The document mentions a commitment by Welsh Government to “working more collaboratively with the community transport sector” and to develop guidance for local authorities to do the same. However, as we stated in our 2009 response to the National Transport Plan consultation, we would also like to ensure that CT is included as a valid part of the range of transport and access solutions developed in Sustainable Travel Centres, to ensure social inclusion. This includes the need to improve the provision of travel information, including CT, especially for disabled people. The reprioritised plan does not seem to underline the need for integrating different transport modes.

c. *improving access between key settlements and sites*

Presumably, all the actions listed in the NTP are focused on improving access between key settlements. However, where there are gaps in the transport network and access issues, CT services are well placed to help to address these, particularly in areas where conventional public transport services are not profitable. This may well become more important as Local Authorities face reductions in LTSG during the coming financial year. The CTA would be happy to discuss opportunities for further development in gap-filling CT services with officials.

d. *enhancing international connectivity*

CTA has no comment on this.

e. *addressing safety and security*

CTA has no comment on this.

Q3 The Minister has stated that the National Transport Plan has been prioritised to “tackle poverty, increase well-being and assist economic development”. How far does the change in priorities within the National Transport Plan contribute to achieving these objectives and are they consistent with those included in the Wales Transport Strategy?

CTA Cymru agrees fully with the Minister's stated priorities, and feels that the first two align very closely with the role of CT, which provides transport for those disadvantaged by age, disability, location and/or income. We are pleased to see a seemingly greater emphasis on the social outcomes of improving transport,

particularly in areas such as the Heads of the Valleys and other strategic regeneration areas.

However, whilst walking and cycling are given considerable prominence in the reprioritisation and may indeed “increase well-being”, these options will not be available to a sizeable percentage of the population due to disability, limiting health conditions, or indeed those who live in rural areas who need to travel much longer distances to access services. The demographic curve shows an increasingly ageing population whose specialist and individualised transport needs have to be considered and planned for the future.

Q4 Are the priorities contained in the Minister’s statement the correct objectives for Welsh transport policy?

CTA Wales believes they are correct.

Q5 How far does the prioritised plan meet the Welsh Government’s obligations in relation to sustainability and equality?

CTA Cymru is unable to comment in terms of sustainability. On equality, we welcome the pledge in the NTP to “maintain our commitment to free concessionary travel on local bus services for elderly and disabled people”, but are disappointed that the CT Concessionary Fares Initiative (CTCFI) which CTA manages on behalf of Welsh Government, will come to an end in March 2012*. This pilot scheme, a first in the UK, which has been running since 2005 was set up by Welsh Government to address the inherent inequality in the mainstream concessionary fares policy which meant that very elderly and disabled people who are unable to use their bus pass on conventional bus services were able to use CT instead. Nearly 1.3 million journeys will have been undertaken by participating schemes over the last years, and our members are therefore unsure how ending CTCFI enables the Welsh Government to meet its obligations on equality.

END

*We understand that the Minister has just announced (9 February) an extension to CTCFI whilst a further evaluation takes place shortly. However, we do not have any further details at this stage.