



Ein cyf/Our ref KS/06660/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM  
Chair of the Petitions Committee

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02 July 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 3 May on behalf of Joe Powell regarding petition P-05-885 Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport for Citizens with Learning Disabilities in Wales.

Most bus services across Wales are provided in response to bus operators' analysis of demand, cost and profitability. Neither the Welsh Government nor a local authority is able to require a bus operator to run a particular service without subsidy or to consult with passengers.

Under the current legislative framework, local authorities are able to enter into contracts to pay subsidies to support local bus services, where bus services are not available or not provided to the required standard without public funding. Each local authority is responsible for determining which services in regards to bus or community transport to subsidise, based on its assessment of local circumstances and priorities. Local authorities use whatever budgets they have set aside for that purpose, supplemented by Welsh Government grant funding.

It is important to emphasise that our funding is provided to supplement local authorities' expenditure in support of bus and community transport services from their own budgets, not as a replacement. Our guidance document on this issue states that in developing their proposals for utilising their funding, local authorities should continue to involve as well as consult and work closely with stakeholders as a minimum. This includes organisations representing persons with protected characteristics.

We recently consulted on our Improving Public Transport White Paper. The White Paper set out proposals for reforming the planning and delivery of local bus services across Wales. The proposals include enabling legislation which would provide local authorities with tools to enable them to influence the provision of bus services in their area. The White Paper also included proposals for improving the provision of information about bus services, which would result in public access to more consistent and reliable information on bus services.

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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.

Throughout the consultation we have been engaging with representative groups, including Disability Wales. We have also been having discussions with bus operators and representatives of the industry as part of our consultation engagement events, which took place in February and March 2019 across Wales.

The formal consultation period for the White Paper has now closed. We are currently reviewing the consultation responses and will publish a report in due course. We will be taking all of the comments and consultation responses into consideration and this feedback will help inform our next steps for local bus services policy in Wales.

I can also confirm that customers with a Concessionary Travel Pass from a Welsh local authority can travel for free on certain Transport for Wales (TfW) rail services. The following routes are covered by the scheme:

Wrexham – Hawarden Bridge (Borderlands Line)  
Machynlleth – Pwllheli (Cambrian Coast Line) – October to March only  
Llandudno – Blaenau Ffestiniog (Conwy Valley Line)  
Shrewsbury – Llanelli/Swansea (Heart of Wales Line) – October to March only

Customers are required to obtain a free ticket from the ticket office before travelling. If there is no ticket office or if it's closed, this can be obtained from the conductor on the train. Any customer with a Concessionary Travel Pass can also get one-third off tickets to travel on the Cardiff and Valleys network after 0930 Monday-Friday and any time at weekends and bank holidays.

These routes are identified in a number of ways, including suggestions by individuals, as well as local authorities, bus operators, Bus Users Cymru and others. Those suggestions are reviewed by the TrawsCymru Strategic Management Board which then advises me on options for extending the network, if affordable. A review is expected to be undertaken shortly.

Further information can be found on the TfW rail website: <https://tfwrail.wales/ways-to-save/concessionary-travel>

You may also be interested to know that we are currently drafting a strategy to tackle loneliness and isolation in Wales. We know that transport is vital to our social connections and to enabling people to be connected to their communities. We will be considering how we can provide access to more inclusive and affordable transport as we progress this work.

Yours sincerely,



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