



north wales economic ambition board
bwrdd uchelgais economaidd gogledd cymru

REPORT TO TRANSPORT DELIVERY SUB-GROUP

DATE

Title: *Bus Wales Bill Update and Regional Bus Review*

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1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To update Members on progress with the Bus Wales Bill and associated work-streams. An update is also provided on progress with regional bus network development work currently underway.

2. Decision Sought

2.1 Members are invited to note the update and the proposals for further reports at future meetings.

3. Reasons supporting the need for a decision.

3.1 There are potentially implications of the Welsh Government impending legislation on bus reform. The report provides an update on recent developments for members.

3.2 The papers also provides an update on work underway to stabilise and support bus networks in North Wales. The sector has seen considerable volatility in recent years.

3.3 Finally, the original version of the White Paper contained proposals to establish Regional Transport Authorities. This issue is now to be included within the proposed Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill, a draft of which was issued in late 2019. The paper provides an update on the bill proposals in so far as they relate to the transport element of the proposed Corporate Joint Committees.

4 Background and Relevant Considerations

Bus White paper

4.1 In late 2018, the draft Public Transport (Wales) Bill was published and subject to consultation, which closed in March 2019. As a result of the consultation process, it is understood that changes have been made to the proposed legislation, these are detailed below.

- The proposals for Taxis and Private Hire vehicles will not feature in the final Bill. WG are currently considering how to take forward work to improve taxi licensing and further proposals will be presented in due course.
- The proposals to revise Joint Transport Authority legislation has also been removed from the final draft Bill. These proposals are now incorporated in the Local Government and Elections White Paper which has recently been published.
- Additionally, the proposals to revise the age change to the Concessionary Fares scheme has also been removed from the proposed Bill.

4.2 As a result of these changes only bus service changes will be included in the final proposed Bill, which we understand will become the Bus Services (Wales) Bill. This will comprise two main areas of activity:

1. Enabling Provisions to support the development of bus networks.
 - a. There will we understand be three enabling powers in the next version of the Bill when it is presented for consultation.
 - A new Welsh Partnership Scheme – replacing the previous proposal for Enhanced Quality Partnerships
 - Franchising Powers
 - The power to operate Local Authority Bus Services
2. Information Sharing Powers
 - a. There will be two main powers to support LA in relation to information provision.
 - Local Authorities will be able to request detailed information from operators, where proposals to revoke bus services are made, so that up to date information is available to plan for replacement s.63 services.
 - The provision of open date to support app based or real time information systems.

4.3 We understand that a revised Bill along the lines noted above will be presented to the Senedd later this year and will then be subject to detailed consultation, prior to legislation being tabled for approval. This consultation process will include the usual provisions for Impact Assessments and will be supported by Explanatory Notes.

4.4 Once the detailed White Paper is available, further information will be provided for Members so that a full response to the consultation can be given.

Development of a Regional Bus Network

4.5 Presentations have previously been provided to Members regarding the potential for developing a regional strategic bus network and approach. This is based on the difficulties that have been experienced in recent years, with bus operators ceasing to trade with consequential impacts on both bus services and costs for local authorities in re-provisioning.

4.6 Members will also recall that funding was provided by Welsh Government for regional bus coordination, with a budget being available over a number of financial years. It has proven difficult to identify a secondment into this role, and progress has been slow as a result, despite some support from Gwynedd Council.

4.7 As a result, some consultant time has recently been procured, using the available budget, to provide additional capacity and support to develop some proposals for member consideration. Transport for Wales are currently carrying out a network review for Gwynedd, supported by WG. Flintshire have previously carried out a detailed review of their network and have advanced proposals to establish a Quality Partnership on the route between Chester and Rhyl. There are also pilot proposals developing for Demand Responsive Transport in the Conwy Valley. The work will build on these studies and seek to develop an approach for the whole of the region.

4.8 The initial work plan comprises the following elements: -

- To identify and propose corridors that will establish a regional strategic bus network
- To develop proposals for quality partnerships along these routes
- To work up proposals for DRT as infill to the core network
- To consider options to establish an “operator of last resort” in the region
- To support the transport decarbonisation programme

4.9 The work has recently commenced. Positive discussions have been held with TfW to ensure that the work dovetails with projects and pilots they have underway. Positive discussions have also been held with some bus operators to see what the potential for a strong partnership would be. The response has been positive and there is support to develop a model for the future and to seek a long term partnership arrangements that would secure a mix of public and private investment in regional bus services.

4.10 It is proposed that some initial proposals from the work will be available for the next meeting of the Sub-Board. Subject to progress, a presentation on initial outcomes and planned next steps will be provided to Members.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no specific financial implications from this report, it is mainly information on planned legislation and work currently underway. The legislation when finalised will have financial impacts, but these will be highlighted in future update reports or during the consultation that should follow.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no specific legal implications from this report. The proposed Welsh Government Bills will have significant impacts, but specific consultation periods on these Bills will be carried out and Members will have the opportunity to comment during required consultation periods.

7. Staffing Implications

7.1 There are no specific staffing implications at this stage – the report provides updates on work currently underway.

8. Impact on Equalities

8.1 There are no specific equalities implications at this stage – the report provides updates in work currently underway. Detailed consultation on any reports where impacts are possible will be carried out at the appropriate consultation process.

9. Consultations undertaken

- 9.1 There are no specific consultations required at this stage – the report provides updates in work currently underway. Detailed consultation on any reports where impacts are possible will be carried out at the appropriate consultation process.

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. Monitoring Officer – responsible body:

I welcome this timely report on the developing legislative landscape in the area of local government and transport.

ii. Head of Finance – responsible body:

Paragraph 5.1 of the report states that there are no financial implications to this report, and its purpose is to provide information on the proposed legislation and the work currently underway. There will be financial impacts following the completion of the legislation, which will be highlighted in future reports, or during the consultation.