

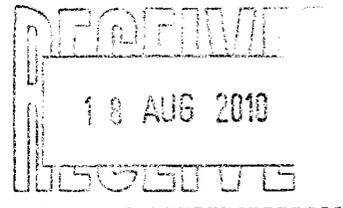


South East Wales Transport Alliance
Ty Gwent
Lake View
Llantarnam Park
Cwmbran
NP44 3HR

Ms Christine Chapman A.M.
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

9th August 2010

Our ref: S3-03 MB



Dear Ms Chapman

Petition P-03-143 Ysgol Penmaes

Thank you for your letter of 12th July 2010.

The issues raised by the petition, in terms of the need for improved transport links in deep rural areas such as Powys, are ones which our colleagues in TRACC, the regional transport consortium for Mid Wales, will be much better placed to comment upon.

Your letter has therefore been forwarded on to Chris Wilson, the TRACC Co-ordinator for consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey James O St J".

**Councillor Jeffrey James O St J
Chairman**

cc Chris Wilson, Co-ordinator TRACC
Anthony O'Sullivan, Chairman Sewta Directorate

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-143
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/01636/10

Christine Chapman AM
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF
CF99 1NA

11 August 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ieuan Wyn Jones'.

Thank you for your letter of 12 July, on behalf of the Petitions Committee, in response to the petition submitted to the Committee by Catherine Lewis and Ysgol Penmaes, and which was about improving transport links in rural Wales.

You asked a number of specific questions arising from the petition, and I shall answer in the order in which they were raised.

The review of financial support to the bus industry is continuing. This exercise is considering how we can achieve the optimum outcome for each pound of public money that we spend. The review is looking at our funding to bus companies that helps to keep down fares, and to local authorities to subsidise bus and community transport services. You may be assured that the work will take fully into account the transport issues facing rural communities, including the typically less frequent provision of local bus services, and the importance of those services to people who live in such communities.

In March 2010 I approved the Year 1 programme of the Regional Transport Plan for Powys that includes the following sustainable transport schemes:

- Newtown Interchange
- Community Transport enhancement
- Smarter Choices travel to school / work cycle parking programme
- Welshpool – Buttington cycle route
- Welshpool, Newtown to Llanidloes and Hay-on-Wye to Glasbury cycling schemes

Further details can be found on the TraCC website - <http://www.tracc.gov.uk/>. My officials are monitoring Regional Transport Plans to ensure that they deliver the intended improvements locally.

Innovative transport services, such as the Bwcabus service in Carmarthenshire, are often more appropriate and affordable in meeting the public transport needs of rural communities. Bwcabus is proving to be hugely successful with demand more than 45% higher than last year. We are currently working with our partners to identify opportunities for expanding the scheme, and my officials have encouraged other rural local authorities to learn more about the Bwcabus approach, to see what lessons it has to offer them.

Finally, the National Transport Plan will take forward the process of achieving an effective integrated transport system in Wales. As you know, it builds on previous initiatives to better integrate public and community transport along with walking and cycling so that investment in the transport system helps us to deliver One Wales. The Assembly Government's established Rural Proofing process will help to ensure that the Plan will improve the accessibility of key services and facilities by people who live in rural Wales. As you know, the Assembly Government's consultation on rural health planning looked at how core services could be delivered closer to patients. The report "Deep Rural Localities" by the Wales Rural Observatory acknowledges that rural residents need to travel if services cannot be provided locally, and in such circumstances there is a clear role for demand responsive and community transport schemes. Further detail is contained with the Plan, available via <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/det/publications/100329ntpen.pdf>.

I hope that this is helpful.



Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport



Cyng / Cllr Trevor Roberts, Cadeirydd / *Chairman*
Swyddfa TraCC Office, Canolfan Rheidol, Rhodfa Padarn, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 3UE

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Dyddiad / *Date:* 12th August 2010

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Dear Ms Chapman

RE: Petition P-03-143 Ysgol Penmaes

Thank you for your letter of 12th July 2010 addressed to Cllr Jeffrey James, Chair of the South East Wales Transport Alliance (Sewta) which has since been forwarded to me.

As you will hopefully be aware, Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru (TraCC) is the regional transport consortium for Mid Wales - a voluntary partnership between the three Mid Wales local authorities of Ceredigion, Powys and Gwynedd. TraCC published its first Regional Transport Plan (RTP) in September 2009 (approved by the Minister in December 2009) having been adopted by the three Mid Wales local authorities and TraCC Board. A copy of the TraCC RTP is available on the website: www.tracc.gov.uk.

TraCC and its local authorities have recognised that there is a need to work together to improve passenger transport provision and promote environmentally sustainable and accessible travel choices. There is full recognition of the distinct needs of rural areas as identified early on in the RTP development process through extensive stakeholder and public engagement. As well as developing the RTP, TraCC has commissioned and published two key reports which will now guide provision of local and regional passenger transport services and infrastructure in Mid Wales and will also be used to influence the delivery of the Assembly Government's National Transport Plan commitments in the Region (such as the provision of an hourly passenger service on the Cambrian Main Line Railway by 2011).

The local authorities individually (or in collaboration) manage and deliver the operational (revenue) aspects of contracting operators to provide public local bus services but the TraCC RTP provides the strategic direction/ context and planning for the delivery of these services and seeks to fund associated Capital infrastructure. Local authorities have the statutory responsibility for providing home to school transport in their administrative areas.

In the region of 95% of local bus services rely upon local authority revenue support for their operations. This is largely provided by the Welsh Assembly Government to local authorities on an annual basis as Local Transport Services Grant (LTSG), a portion of which is also provided to support Community Transport in Mid Wales. There has been some concern expressed that the formula used to allocate this funding now provides greater benefit to the

more urban and populous areas of Wales but which are served by a greater proportion of commercially-run bus services. In this sense, rural areas where there is a greater need for public subsidy to support and provide services, appear to be losing out. Clearly, there is merit in investigating the distribution of LTSG so as to ensure both equity and value for money.

Representatives of TraCC and its local authorities would be pleased to expand on this reply or provide further information should the Committee wish them to do so.

Yours sincerely



Chris Wilson
TraCC Co-ordinator
On behalf of the Chairman

Cc Councillor Jeffrey James O St J, Chairman of Sewta



DFM response

Ieuan Wyn Jones AC/AM
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog /Deputy First Minister



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-143
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/02706/10

Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
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Dea Christine

31 December 2010

Thank you for your letter of 22 November 2010 on behalf of TraCC who have concerns about the formula used to calculate funding for Local Transport Service Grant (LTSG).

I am aware that some, predominantly rural, local authorities have expressed concern about the mechanism used in the past to calculate allocations to local authorities. The formula was based on population density as well as the number of rural wards in the authority (i.e. fewer than 4 people per hectare). Changes in the mid-year population figures for 2008-09 resulted in more of the funding being allocated to urban authorities. It was in recognition of this anomaly that in 2009 -10 and 2010 -11 I put in place measures to ensure that no authority received a reduction in its grant allocation. I was particularly pleased to be able to provide grant of £11.3m in 2010 -11 that is a real-terms increase of 4% for all authorities.

One of my priorities in the recently published National Transport Plan is to work with local authorities on the effective delivery of LTSG. We have been in discussion with the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers on how best we can achieve this. I hope to announce my decision on the future of bus subsidies, including LTSG, shortly.

Ieuan Wyn Jones

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-03-143
Ein cyf/Our ref DFM/00531/11

Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

17 March 2011

Dear Christine

Thank you for your letter of 26 January about the future of bus subsidies in Wales.

I am pleased to say that I am providing around £184m over the next 3 years to maintain the concessionary fares scheme for elderly and disabled people. In addition, local authorities will be contributing around £30m over the same period. We have worked closely with both the Confederation of Passenger Transport and the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers to make changes to the reimbursement arrangements for operators that will ensure the financial certainty of the scheme.

On 14 January 2011, I announced I am making available £11m in Local Transport Services' Grant to local authorities to help support and protect rural and socially necessary services. I have also agreed to maintain funding next year for bus service operators' grant at the same level as in 2010 -11.

Looking to the future, you will remember that my officials have been discussing with local authorities and bus operators how we can target more effectively our funding for supporting local bus services whilst ensuring we protect rural services. A number of options have been looked at and these will need to be considered very carefully before the Assembly Government announces a decision on the way forward.

We will ensure that the Petitions Committee and all Assembly Members receive details in due course.

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Gweinidog dros yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for the Economy and Transport

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