

Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport

Evidence from Dick Cole, Bryn y Cwm Community Forum

While I welcome the Committee's inquiry into integrated public transport and the focus on delivery mechanisms and innovations that might be introduced, I fear that little practical improvement is likely in the foreseeable future while Welsh Government funding is so severely constrained.

The challenges of better integrating public transport, and public transport with private transport, have been generally well-understood by SEWTA and Monmouthshire County Council for many years. Their problem is ability to deliver. Officers strive to improve the timetable coordination of commercial and subsidised services often so infrequent as to be self-defeating; feasibility studies for bus facilities and car parks at railway stations may be affordable but implementation of their conclusions is a distant prospect; the less able members of society have received some benefits, but wait for many more (eg an Access for All bridge at Abergavenny rail station originally programmed for 2008/09).

Joint Transport Authorities may assist the more effective use of some resources and regional coordination, but are likely to do little to address local deficiencies, and are presumably not intended to become agencies with overall control duties. New rail franchising arrangements need to encourage rail operators to invest in integration measures that will generate business. Some rural bus subsidies might be better applied to more responsive and flexible car-based schemes.

Philip Inskip has provided useful evidence on such possibilities as bike hire, whole-journey ticketing and the need to overcome lack of confidence in using public transport; his catalogue of trip difficulties illustrate the scale of the integration challenge – not insuperable with modern technology but impossible without greater control and investment.

Evidence from the key stakeholders and transport experts will be of greater help than these comments from a member of the public who has been seeking greater transport and highways investment at Abergavenny for fifteen years. Apart from resources, the fragmentation and lack of regulation of the main players in this complex market place seems to be a key issue.

I hope the Committee will go further than repeating often-stated but seemingly unaffordable or politically unacceptable solutions, and will come up with some achievable and sustainable low-cost measures that would make seamless journeys at least a little easier. Rising motoring costs have restored the demand for integrated public transport; the efficiency of movement

between our dispersed land uses will depend on meeting that demand, which is likely to increase as the effects of Peak Oil take effect.

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