

Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport

Evidence from  
Lloyds Coaches



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Lloyds Coaches would like to take this opportunity to thank the Enterprise and Business Committee of the National Assembly for Wales for the opportunity to submit a response to its inquiry into the future of integrated transport in Wales.

Lloyds Coaches is therefore please to submit the following response.

If I can be of any further assistance to you in the interim please do not hesitate to contact me through the contact details displayed above.

**How well is Welsh public transport integrated, particularly in relation to bus, rail and community transport services, and what factors limit integration?**

In rural Wales it is difficult to integrate the modes of transport mentioned due to the geographical terrain as well as influencing factors and pressures on the various modes including cost effective utilisation of resource (transport economics). In the bus industry this will include constraints to operational times of services governed by peak journey operations and the resources (vehicles and labour) available as well as ensuring strategic connections with other bus services operated as a part of a strategic bus network.

Sparse population in rural areas are reflected in frequency of services and investment levels in terms of operational costs giving rise to very tight profit margins.

Other obstacles include physical locations of railway stations in rural areas including lack of complimenting infrastructure and signage between modes at locations of sale and cross mode exchange of passengers.

Other issues may include the cost element of cross modal travel in places where schemes such as PlusBus or other similar ticketing are not available.

Other obstacles may include the lack of willingness by operators who are protective of their own operational territories, concerned by possible revenue abstraction especially in relation to commercially operated services/journey and are unable to see that joined up thinking in terms of co-ordination between modes may bring about higher revenue returns.

Other obstacles relate to lack of cross modal public transport information be it paper or web based with exception of Traveline Cymru that is.

Reliability and punctuality issues may also be a deciding factor amongst travellers which does not promote passenger confidence in connections. In rural areas this could result in passengers becoming stranded at remote locations for lengthy periods of time especially when considering low frequency routes.

The lack of dedicated cross modal hubs between various modes also prohibit and restrict the possibility of cross modal travel especially in rural areas with fear of safety to those passengers concerned.

Although Lloyds Coaches do not operate urban services it is however envisaged that co-ordination is better in those areas from better frequency of bus services in relation to higher population and locations of railway stations.

### **How successful are legal, policy and administrative / delivery arrangements in Wales in supporting effective, integrated public transport services that meet the needs of Welsh travellers?**

At the moment integration between modes rely upon the willingness of the operator(s) in question to participate.

Other issues relate to the existing financial constraints placed upon the private and public sectors in terms of budgets and finances available to create such schemes, including the necessary marketing and publicity drive that needs to be undertaken to promote such schemes. In complimenting such schemes there is possible infrastructure investment needed. Schemes have taken place in various regions, however lack of funding prevents further schemes from happening.

### **What steps can be taken to improve public transport integration in Wales?**

Improved publicity and marketing – improved passenger awareness

Improved infrastructure including signage between hubs and cross modal travel information in the shape of real time bus information or even scheduled timetable information.

Improved ticketing arrangements between all modes – one ticket fits all?

Creation of new strategic hubs catering for cross modal travel between rail, bus and community transport.

Improved co-ordination between services in general where possible.

Inclusion of ‘buffer connection times’ where possible (dependant on resources and economics) allowing for late arrivals of services that are feeding into another service.

However the inclusion of such times on certain bus routes may affect the total economics for that particular service in terms of profitability versus additional resource costs.

### **How can the integration of rail, bus and community transport services in Wales be supported and improved to meet the needs of communities and businesses in both rural and urban Wales?**

There must be a willingness by local authorities and the Welsh Government to work in partnership with transport operators in delivering services.

At the moment due to financial budget constraints certain local authorities in Wales are only performing reactionary and functionality tasks within their remit as opposed to taking a proactive out of the box approach.

There also needs to be support from the public sector at various levels in improving the overall perception and attractiveness of public transport in comparison to the private car, which may include simple marketing techniques to improved infrastructure.

Better co-ordination is also required between community transport and bus and rail services in effective utilisation of resources thus reducing any duplicated journeys. This would include the design of strategically placed community transport hubs along bus/rail routes that would feed in and out of the main corridor services.

In line with this concept the need for real time bus/rail/community transport information at the strategic hubs is needed in ensuring that strategic connections are always made in ensuring customer trust and confidence in the cross modal journey, more so in remote and rural areas of Wales. This also included bus to bus services.

### **How successful are Regional Transport Consortia in supporting the provision of effective, integrated public transport?**

As stated in the previous answer, the public sector at the moment is reactive only as opposed to being proactive. Certain transport consortia's work extremely well. It is also vitally important that officers within consortia's have the necessary skill sets, drive and enthusiasm in the public transport industry itself.

It is not unheard of that due to local authority budget pressures and amalgamation of departments and functionalities officer recruitment to public transport departments has involved personnel who have been moved across or slotted in to transport functions having been trained and having a career interest in other backgrounds not including transport and as a result the required drive, passion and enthusiasm for industry success is not present.

Other issues relate to funding in ensuring that key tasks and aspirations have a chance of being met.

### **How effectively does Welsh Government policy support public transport integration? In particular, the Welsh Government is considering the establishment of Joint Transport Authorities in Wales, and the feasibility of operating the Wales and Borders rail franchise on a not-for-dividend basis. Additionally, the Minister for Local Government and Communities has indicated that he is considering the use of quality partnerships and contracts in delivery of bus services. How far would these proposals improve integrated public transport provision in Wales?**

The establishment of Joint Transport Authorities may possibly save on Wales National financial costs in saving duplication of personnel staff roles and functionalities within the 22 local authority transport departments that were created following the reorganisation of local authorities in Wales during 1996.

The creation of joint transport authorities would dispel of issues relating to local authority boundaries which may affect the operation of tendered services that presently operate across several local authority areas and borders. This may possibly improve on any decision making process when considering such routes.

I am unable to comment about the future rail franchise in Wales as I have had no previous involvement or experience on this aspect of public transport.

Quality Contracts would be the last resort for implementation, and should only be considered at a point when all other avenues of ensuring quality bus services in Wales have been exhausted.

Other avenues would comprise of voluntary quality partnerships when considering the professionalism of bus operators in Wales.

A voluntary quality partnership should be the starting point and would be initiated by more of a 'carrot' rather than a 'stick' approach consisting of a pure partnership between the private and public sector in service delivery and possible funding mechanisms afforded to local authorities.

A voluntary quality partnership should consist of an undertaking on both sides giving firm long term commitment in relation to the quality, service delivery and growth of a particular service. This could be done initially along the Welsh Government's TrawsCymru long distance routes?

Initiating Quality Contracts could be detrimental on certain routes as the additional depreciation costs for modern more higher specified quality vehicles could out way the income generated on the service and as such make the service itself unviable and unsustainable long term without further financial support or even affect the cost effectiveness of a particular contract in terms of passengers carried or even resulting in higher contract prices.

### **What innovative approaches to delivery of public transport in Wales might be considered to improve integration?**

There already exists the PlusBus scheme and also the North Wales Rover. However it is felt that not enough publicity and marketing is given to push such schemes.

At Lloyds Coaches we have devised and implemented our own scheme with Arriva Trains Wales. We approached Arriva Trains Wales pre summer 2011 and suggested that we accept each others weekly and day return tickets between the origin and final destination of both the bus and rail services being provided between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth.

This scheme utilised the strengths of both services in order to give the intending passenger a greater choice of journey opportunities in making it easier for passengers to use either mode of transport which in turn would hopefully stimulate the market. This initiative proved successful and is still in place. It has also brought Lloyds Coaches acclaimed industry awards both in Wales and the UK as a result.

The vehicles utilised on the route in question, that being the X28 Coastliner also adorned a specially commissioned in house designed livery including route branding denoting railway stations served along the route including the Welsh Government building at Aberystwyth.

Another innovative approach would be to introduce a simple to purchase and use ticket that could be used on bus, rail and community transport throughout Wales.

**How effectively do key stakeholders, particularly transport operators and public bodies, cooperate to ensure effective service delivery?**

As mentioned in a previous answer within this document, due to the present financial climate certain local authorities undertake reactive and functional tasks only.

There is a willingness by bus operators in Wales to work with local authorities and the Welsh Government in developing voluntary partnerships. This is the case at present between Lloyds Coaches and the Welsh Government relating to the new T2 Aberystwyth – Bangor service. However in some areas due to non industry personnel within certain local authorities the full grasp and understanding of the industry is not available to them.

**What examples of good practice in public transport integration can be identified within Wales, more widely within the UK and internationally?**

- Traveline Cymru web based journey planner and telephone information
- PlusBus
- Lloyds Coaches X28 Coastliner service (Machynlleth – Aberystwyth) including joint publicity and marketing
- First Great Western booklet dedicating pages on how to get to/from the station via other modes of transport

Lloyds Coaches are very keen to discuss other possibilities and innovative solutions with the Welsh Government in delivering high quality services in Wales for the future and at the same time reduce pressures on public budgets.

One of the options to be considered is an innovative ‘thinking outside of the box’ approach in introducing revenue sharing mechanisms in line with voluntary quality partnerships.

Lloyds Coaches would be willing to engage with the Welsh Government in further proactive and positive discussions.

Lloyds Coaches recognises the remit of the Welsh Government in delivering sustainable high quality public transport in Wales for the future to aid with the aspirations of improved economy in providing transport provision for commuters, provision of education and also health amongst others.

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