



**Cymdeithas  
Cludiant  
Cymunedol**

**Community  
Transport  
Association**

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drwy addysg a menter*

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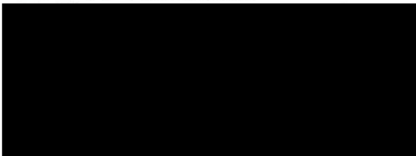
*Delivering social change  
through leadership,  
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Mrs M Macleod



**Date - 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

**Your reference - P-04-678.**

Dear Mrs Macleod,

I have been requested to write to you by the Public Transport Division of the Welsh Government regarding your concerns raised with the National Assembly for Wales petitions committee.

Firstly, in order to fully address your concerns outlined in the petition, I will outline the position with regards to community car schemes which operate across the whole of the UK.

Currently the legal basis for the operation of community car schemes is under car sharing legislation as set down Public Passenger Vehicle Act of 1981, Section 1 (4) (a) (b). As you are aware this means that community car schemes are outside the scope of the Private Hire / Taxi Licensing regimes. Across the UK community car schemes operate differently, however what they all have in common is that they must be run on a not-for-profit basis and must only use volunteer car drivers. By far the majority of these schemes are run by volunteers using their own cars. The volunteers receive mileage reimbursement but this must only cover the vehicle's operating costs (it cannot include other costs such as drivers wages or office overheads). It is illegal for the schemes to charge additional overheads as they would no longer be within scope of car sharing legislation. Many community car schemes do not get any funding and are run entirely by volunteers.

For many older people community car schemes provide a lifeline and as such we feel that the legislative framework under which it operators

should be protected. If the legislation was to change those schemes that rely on volunteers using their own cars would cease to exist. Thousands of vulnerable and isolated people across the UK, especially in rural areas, would be left without access to any transport. Nonetheless in response to your concerns I assure you that CTA encourages all community car schemes, as a matter of best practice, to seek solutions to ensure accessibility needs are met as far as possible.

Secondly, I was asked to investigate your specific complaint which was with regards to a scheme which receives funding from the Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG). The BSSG funding is provided by the Welsh Government and administered through local authorities. As result of the funding it receives the scheme must take "*... full account of the provisions contained in the Equality Act 2010 and all associated regulations and guidance regarding the accessibility of vehicles to people with disabilities*".

Further investigations made me aware that the specific scheme to which you were referring was Pontarddulais Community Car Scheme, which is a scheme that purchases and uses its own cars. I therefore investigated your specific complaint and summarise my findings as follows:-

- Pontarddulais car scheme registered a request from you for the instalment of a grab handle into the car to help you get in and out.
- The scheme states that following approaches to three dealerships (from which the vehicles were purchased) and Allied Mobility they came to the conclusion that they could not fit grab handles in any of their vehicles. The scheme also states they were informed that installing a grab handle retrospectively could potentially be dangerous and could lead to the car scheme being liable if an accident was to occur.
- You raised your complaint to City and County of Swansea (who administer the BSSG funding). As a result a local authority officer informed Pontarddulais car scheme that they must ensure they are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The officer informed them that if the scheme did not comply with your accessibility requirements then they risked the withdrawal of their funding.
- In December 2015 Pontarddulais car scheme purchased a new, four seat, accessible car (a Citron Berlingo) from GM Coachwork. This new car has two grab handles to help passengers get into the car and also has an integrated step to assist people. The scheme states they have informed you of the new developments and you should have also received information as to when the car is available as well as booking information.

As a result of my investigation I can conclude that Pontarddulais Car Scheme is now fully compliant with the terms and conditions of the BSSG funding. It could be the case that your petition, which was received on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015, was superseded by the purchase of the new vehicle. I therefore hope you feel that your complaint has been satisfactorily dealt with and that the accessibility issues have been duly resolved. Although I acknowledge that it has taken a long time to bring this matter to conclusion for which I would like to express my apologies.

If you have any further difficulties or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely



**Siân Louise Summers-Rees**  
CTA Director for Wales

cc. William Powell AM, Chair of Petitions Committee, [committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk)

Owen Williams-Jones, Public Transport Division, Welsh Government, [Owen.Jones-Williams@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Owen.Jones-Williams@wales.gsi.gov.uk)