

27 April, 2009

Cmemo 134/01

RP/BJH/Cmemo134/01

Environment Planning and Transport Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Marketing, Membership &
Fundraising Department
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Dear Sir

Re: **POLICY REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

The Youth Hostel Association (England and Wales) appreciates the opportunity to comment upon the above document and would appreciate being involved in any further consultation.

YHA has 230 hostels, of which 38 are located in Wales. The Association has 270,000 members and 2.1 million overnights were recorded in our hostels last year (40% from young people aged under 18).

About 30% of our visitors to Wales are from overseas and many are dependent upon Public Transport. The YHA is a partner in the All Wales Flexipass Scheme, and offers £1 off to all visitors, who have a valid pass, for overnight fees at its hostels. (Is this worthy of a grant from the National Assembly?).

The YHA supports improved public transport for use by all its members, both for environmental and commercial reasons. YHA is particularly aware of the needs of its young members, and also the considerable number of visitors from overseas, who stay at its hostels.

The Association is concerned that it was not invited to submit written evidence or attend a meeting of the Committee to discuss its views as outlined in Annex 1.

The Association is concerned that sea and air transport is not included in the review as these are important to people visiting and transiting Wales. The role of post buses should also be seen as an integral part of the Welsh transport system.

We support the concept of integrated public transport – but also the need for integrated fares and timetables. We are concerned that some counties, especially those in South Wales, do not meet their obligations under the Transport Act 2000 to ensure that timetable booklets are available. We do not consider that TIGER and SWIFT are

making any progress to provide timetables or integrated transport (except perhaps at Caerphilly).

The Association believes that public transport should be available to all, not just the people of Wales (3.1). Tourists, especially young people and overseas visitors, also rely on a good integrated transport system.

We wish to make comments on a number of points in your consultation report:

1.6 Bus services are popular by necessity. Rail and tram services would be more popular if available. The Assembly and also SRA should support such developments, eg Bangor- Caernarvon, Newport-Ebbw Vale, Pontardulais-Swansea.

1.9 We are concerned that the Strategic Rail Authority is concentrating its major expenditure in England, and that Wales is not getting its per capita share.

We agree that leadership is needed at a National level. There are numerous cases of the withdrawal of cross border (county) services, especially in the evenings. No attempts have been made by local authorities to co-operate in funding services which run through two or more counties (except in the case of Gwynedd and adjacent counties). TIGER and SWIFT are not the answer.

We support the introduction of a Passenger Transport Authority and give as a good example Strathclyde, including Urban and Rural Areas, and suggest the Assembly studies this example of good practice.

1.10 The Assembly should also consult car users to ensure that they can consider a move from private to public transport. YHA members show a high percentage use of public transport when on holiday, even though some also have the use of a car. We have good examples of such transfer in the Lake District and Peak District, where visitors arrive by car but use public transport in their holiday area.

2.10 We agree – there must be room on buses for heavy luggage, bicycles and wheelchairs. Accurate departure and journey times must be available at the stop. We can quote good examples, especially in London.

2.12 There has been a decline in rail travel in the Newport-Swansea-Carmarthen Axis. Rail travel forms a lower percentage of travel than in England. It is essential that this corridor has a reliable 20 minute Service to Swansea and 30 minute beyond. (Southampton-London has a 15 minute service and other examples can be given). The Assembly should investigate reasons for lack of rail usage in the major corridor in South Wales.

We are concerned to hear that the SRA will not fund coach services to support the National Rail Network of Wales, eg Aberystwyth Carmarthen as suggested by PRISM.

2.14 The National Assembly requires adequate funding and a larger Transport Grant.

- 2.15 This is not a good way of moving forward. We are concerned that no Objective 1 Grants have been used for public transport.
- 2.21 These are not strong enough. The plans are Local and need to fit into a National scene. There must be integration to provide through services.
- 3.1 Not just the people of Wales but also visitors. We support your vision. There must be excellent provision of information on site, available in printed forms at home and not just information centres. Travel lines are not ideal for planning journeys in advance – especially for visitors. We support the timetables issued by Gwynedd and Conway – as excellent.
- 3.5 Quality partnerships must not be at the expense of rural areas. All routes should be treated equally, and resources not just concentrated on one route.
- 3.13 This should be available to all over 60 years of age. Young people should have 50% (not 66%) bus fares.
- 3.18
and
- 3.19 We support these recommendations.
- 4.1 Organisations supporting public transport should be able to have an input into the consortia. There is a lack of public consultation.
- 4.2 The consortium are unable in some cases to organise thorough and interchangeable ticketing – eg First Services to Cardiff Bus. This poses problems for our visitors to Cardiff. There must be National Leadership and consensus.
- 4.10 The National Assembly should define this role and provide leadership, not just attend meetings and report back.
- 4.12 There should be an all Wales branding, not a local branding. Standards should be raised in all areas, not just some quality services. There may be the need for high quality express bus services to link with rail services – eg Newtown-Brecon-Merthyr, Bangor-Portmadoc, Aberystwyth-Carmarthen. We would prefer an all Wales arrangement, not just local consortia.
- 5.4 We agree and suggest that they Strathclyde be considered as a model.
- 6.1
to We support your monitoring and evaluation, which must take into account young
6.8 people and visitors.

Recommendations

3(a) Must be improved.

3(e) YHA would wish to be included.

9 We have reservations and support a PTA

Yours sincerely

R L Pittard
Chairman – National Countryside Committee