



**Disability Wales ● Anabledd Cymru Consultation Response:  
National Assembly for Wales Policy Review of Public Transport:  
October 2001**

- 1.1 Disability Wales/Anabledd Cymru is the national association of disability groups in Wales working to promote the rights, inclusion, equality and support of all disabled people in Wales.
- 1.2 We would refer you to our submission of August 2000, entitled "Policy Review of Public Transport in Wales". A copy is attached for your information.
- 1.3 **We were disappointed to note that in the Summary of Recommendations there was no explicit reference made to the promotion and implementation of a fully accessible integrated public transport system for Wales. Such a statement would demonstrate the National Assembly for Wales' commitment to tackle the discrimination disabled people currently encounter when using the present transport system.**

**Existing organisational structures**

- 2.1 Regarding the suitability of existing numbers of regional consortia to deliver improved integrated public transport services;
- 2.2 We would support the recommendations in this chapter; regarding Recommendation 7, we would exhort local authorities to consult with local organisations of disabled people to establish local need for accessible transport services.
- 2.3 We would wish to see accessible public transport provision as a key element of any compacts, terms of reference or working agreements adopted by the Consortia.

## **Options for organisational change**

3.3 We do not have a particular view on which organisational model would be best suited to meet the transport needs of disabled people in Wales; however, we would stress the need to promote and develop a seamless, accessible and integrated transport chain across Wales and beyond.

3.4. We would envisage that to deliver such a transport chain would require a strong leadership role from the National Assembly for Wales, probably through the establishment of a strategic passenger transport authority. It is clearly essential that effective communication links are made between an overarching authority and transport executive agencies, and appropriate mechanisms put in place to encourage passenger feedback.

3.5 We would exhort that any structures or models adopted include the capacity for effective consultation mechanisms which would enable disabled people to have a voice in the design and development of an accessible public transport system.

**October 2001**

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## **Policy Review of Public Transport in Wales: August 2000**

**Disability Wales supports a comprehensive public transport system accessible to all. We stress the importance of accessible transport policies both in enabling disabled people to live as independently as possible and to be fully included as equal members of the community. Provision for disabled people should not be regarded as a matter of welfare or a “special” additional service, but as an economic necessity especially for those at work.**

Disability Wales notes that, where a public transport system has been made fully accessible, it has resulted in greater public use and improved schedules, showing greater efficiency and cost effectiveness. Disability Wales supports the bus and light rail systems which achieve this and welcomes the development of recent systems which are totally accessible. Disability Wales notes a Sheffield study which shows that it is the inadequacies of transport which confine frail, elderly people to their homes. It observes the failure to integrate transport services and to ensure that they are (demand) responsive to people's needs.

Disability Wales calls for **legislation requiring public transport services to be accessible to all**. There is a need to ensure that, as transport services are made more competitive through deregulation, all new vehicles must be accessible, and the various licensing authorities should be given the power to ensure this. Further, where local authorities support services, Disability Wales calls for any grant

to be conditional on use of accessible vehicles.

Disability Wales welcomes the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee's Recommended Specification for Buses used to Operate Local Services, and calls for agreed standards which manufacturers can adopt. . We acknowledge that Parts III and V of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 have made a substantial contribution to improving access to transport for disabled people. The establishment of the Disability Rights Commission in Wales should mean that disabled peoples' rights under the Act will be monitored and enforced.

Disability Wales commends the requirement that **all who manage and operate transport services should have adequate and appropriate training** and that **disability organisations should be consulted at the earliest stage of proposals** relating to transport schemes and staff training. Disability Wales also calls for inclusion of **disability equality training** as an integral part of education and training for all professions concerned with any aspect of transport.

Access to public transport is often due to the inability to get as far as the nearest pick-up point or terminus, and this may be made even more difficult in town centres with pedestrianisation schemes. Disability Wales therefore calls for a **co-ordinated approach to urban design** which ensures that transport users needs are recognised, and that the range of transport services relate to each other. The design of bus stations is important and proper attention given to **communication**, especially for people with impaired sight or hearing. Announcements in all places need to take these needs into account, with publicity in suitable type as well as at an appropriate height for reading from a wheelchair.

### **Bus Services**

Disability Wales is greatly concerned at the lack of access on minibuses, both for scheduled services and also for other services such as education, health, social and community services, and voluntary organisations. It deplores the failure, especially in rural areas without public transport, to co-ordinate the transport which is

available.

DPTAC bus design standards are inadequate even where applied and these standards are rarely applied by transport operators in Wales.

Disability Wales stresses the importance of a fully integrated system accessible to all. We call for a **re-design of vehicles to meet their primary function** (as for "Bustlers" providing services for shoppers). DW notes that properly equipped minibuses are a very suitable form of transport for disabled people.

It is with concern that Disability Wales notes that **voluntary Dial-a-Ride** schemes are expected to fill the gap left by statutory authorities and private operators that fail to provide (or assist with the provision of) accessible transport services. **Such schemes are complementary to other forms of transport and not a substitute for them**, and furthermore require proper funding to maintain their services. Disability Wales welcomes the approach in Devon where a comprehensive policy has been developed to meet needs in rural areas.

Given the paucity of accessible bus services in Wales, Disability Wales calls on local authorities to consider issuing **travel vouchers**, to be used for taxi and other personal transport services, as an alternative to bus passes.

### **Taxi Services**

In certain circumstances **taxi services are important in meeting individual transport needs**, though their cost will limit their use. Disability Wales welcomes the development of accessible hackney carriages ("black cabs") and, as for other transport stresses the importance of agreed design standards. DW strongly supports Government proposals and local authority policies (e.g. Swansea, Cardiff) that **limit all of a significant proportion of new or renewed licenses to operators using accessible taxis** and urges all licensing authorities to do the same. DW commends to authorities

the schemes in London Boroughs and in Lothian (in Scotland) in providing subsidies through a 'taxi card' scheme for disabled people.

### **Rail Services**

The Disability Wales survey of access to railway stations shows the severe limitation of rail transport for ambulant and wheelchair disabled people. Unless access to stations is possible and parking is available, access to the train itself is pointless. **Even where access is possible, many stations are now unstaffed** part time or all the time and without information about train running times.

Disability Wales notes the **limited designated wheelchair space on trains, together with the lack of accessible toilet facilities**, which inhibits their use, especially where several people with mobility problems are travelling together. Pre-booking is also a problem when travel plans cannot be predetermined (because of other factors such as urgent business meeting) and where a connection is missed through train delays. It should be remembered that, apart from the South Wales main line and two trains daily on the North Wales coast route, the rest of Wales is not served by mainstream (Intercity) services. Since privatisation, problems with **interconnection** are increasing. Services do not wait for connecting trains. Arrangements for transfer at connecting stations, such as Birmingham, and Chester and Crewe - changes at both of these needed for some North Wales trains - are often unsatisfactory. Even with notice, there are many instances where arrangements have failed and disabled passengers stranded. Disability Wales notes that where railway systems are accessible greater use is made of them by all passengers.

Disability Wales urges that **all elements in a fragmented privatised rail system should develop co-ordinated access policies for disabled passengers to ensure development of a uniformly accessible service.**

### **Air Travel**

Whereas in general the provision for disabled passengers is good for air travel in access to and within airports (where prior booking is usual, other than for shuttle services), the **design of passenger**

**accommodation in aircraft, and especial of toilet facilities, is poor.** Disability Wales deplores the failure of holiday travel companies to give clear and accurate information about travel for disabled people, and the lack of suitable facilities in aircraft owned by many charter airlines.

Disability Wales welcomes the reduction in the practice of seeking information on "offensive" personal attributes and calls for an immediate end to such practices by all airlines.

Disability Wales calls for all airline operators to introduce accessible aircraft and to provide appropriate training for staff.

### **Sea Travel**

Disability Wales welcomes improvements in **ferry design and ferry operator practice** to enable disabled travellers to use facilities within marine safety regulations. It is noted, though, that newer designs for faster hydrofoil ferries (Seacat etc) are not accessible.

Disability Wales call for all ferry operators to introduce accessible ferries and to provide appropriate training for staff.

### **August 2000**

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