

FAO Environment, Planning and Transport Committee
From:
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Thank you for providing me the opportunity to take part in this consultation. My main comments, such as they are, are based around key subjects as follows:

Relationship of this consultation to other consultations

I am not clear how the various NAW consultations initiated in the last year or so relate to one another, nor how any recommendations will be followed up in a co-ordinated way. For example, I recently provided some feedback to the Transport Framework consultation. It is likely in my view that the remit of these initiatives and some of the issues subsequently raised will overlap. We must not let the bureaucracy of these consultations prevent real actions from being taken.

Number of local authorities, regional consortia, etc

Wales has a population of just under 3 millions people, Great Manchester about 2.5 million. Wales has 36 unitary authorities, numerous other public bodies and several voluntary consortia involved in transport. Manchester has a handful of local authorities a PTA and far less potential for death by committee. We desperately need to reduce the number of bodies involved in shaping and delivering public transport initiatives and define clear objectives and deliverables for the body or bodies that remain. Perhaps an all Wales body or perhaps as you recommend a number of bodies based around the voluntary consortia (SWIFT, etc) already in place. These should be perhaps under Assembly influence and not local authority control. Much as I support local democracy and the role of local authorities I do not believe they have the expertise, the funding or the will to cooperate to really make a difference. The assembly is there to make a difference so should grasp the nettle and take full control of matters such as public transport.

Real regulatory influence over all public transport policy and execution

The situation we now have in Wales for the executive, regularity and operational control over transport matters is crazy. The Assembly can determine roads policy, the SRA (not under assembly control) rail policy, the Department of Transport air policy etc. For Welsh transport issues to be dealt with effectively requires an all Wales body accountable to the Assembly. If we are to really make a difference and develop a co-ordinated Wales focused transport policy we need an Assembly sponsored transport executive. Similar arguments can also be made for the private organisations who deliver transport services in Wales - most notably rail. The case for an all Wales/Borders franchise should/must be followed up vigorously given recent negative sounds coming out of London's Department of Transport. Similarly Railtrack cannot persist with an organisational structure

that sees Welsh rail infrastructure managed in an uncoordinated manner across the old BR Western, Central and North Western regions. This structure has seen each of these groups focussing recent investment in the London geography of their respective regions leaving Wales relatively underfunded in relation to Railtrack's overall investment portfolio in recent years. We will continue to be at the periphery if this persists. Given the level of public subsidy and Welsh tax payers money going in to Railtrack the Assembly has an obligation to argue the case for a more equitable reorganisation and level of accountability.

Strategic Projects

Aside from proposing a more effective governance structure for public transport in Wales I believe the Assembly should identify some clear strategic projects that it should be responsible for driving through to completion (even if privately funded and executed). For example a Cardiff/Valleys Light Rail scheme, a new International Airport near Newport, a much improved north/south A470 road route, etc. Without being seen to 'stand' for anything or do anything of lasting strategic value, the Assembly risks being viewed as an inert and expensive irrelevance in this field. This would be a pity as it is in my view the only body in Wales that can exact any real change in transport provision in Wales. I would welcome the opportunity to be involved in this ongoing debate.

Best Regards
Mark Barry

PS I understand the Assembly initiated a feasibility into the potential for a Light Rail link to Cardiff Bay - is this publicly available? I have not seen any reference to this undertaking on the NAW website. Furthermore, although I have asked both Cardiff CC and the Assembly previously I still have not had an answer to a key question in relation to this scheme. - We know the Bute Avenue scheme was only partially completed with a further phase to remove the rail embankment still to complete. From early reports it seemed as though funds had been secured by the assembly to provide for the completion of this scheme in a few years (when it will hopefully include a Light Rail element). However I am no longer clear whether this money has been ring fenced or whether in fact the Assembly have devolved this matter to Cardiff CC who are unlikely to have the funds to complete this work.