

Mr Richard Edwards AM,
Chair,
Environment, Planning and Transport Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay,
CARDIFF.
CF99 1NA

10th October 2001

Dear Mr Edwards,

Consultation Report – Policy Review of Public Transport

Thank you for inviting the Mid Wales Partnership to comment on your consultation report 'Policy Review of Public Transport'. We welcome this review and in particular the vision of an integrated, accessible, affordable and attractive public transport service.

I hope that the comments listed below (in response to your summary of recommendations contained in Chapter 7) will assist you and your colleagues with this review

R1: Agreed – we also believe that the sharing of best practice would be most helpful.

R2: This would be a welcome move at both the national and regional government levels. However for local authorities, the overall level of funding available may be a constraint. There also needs to be a major (cultural) shift in attitude towards the use of public transport – customers will not use public transport unless it is the best option for them. At current levels of provision and standard this will be very difficult to achieve in rural Wales.

R3: Agreed (subject to the comments at each bullet point)

- concessionary fare scheme etc:- Agreed.
- information centres etc:- Agreed.
- second generation public transport etc:- Not particularly relevant to Mid Wales – there are other more pressing priorities.
- all Wales passenger group etc:- It is difficult to comment on this recommendation without further details as to the group's role/function/powers etc.
- interchanges etc:- Agreed.
- develop park and ride facilities etc:- Good idea – but of limited use only in Mid Wales.
- school transport demonstration project etc:- Do not agree – proposals for bespoke school buses could not possibly be cost effective in rural Wales – efforts to improve the overall quality of bus fleets would be welcomed and more effective.
- community transport etc:- We welcome this recommendation - however current legislation is unhelpful in allowing community schemes to play their part in mainstream provision.

- long distance coach provision etc:- We strongly support this recommendation, subject to no interference with existing local services – additional provision should be complementary to existing bus and rail services

R4: We are confused by this recommendation, particularly as local transport plans have already been produced in consultation with neighbouring local authorities. The Mid Wales Partnership produced an Integrated Transport Strategy some three years ago. We are also puzzled by the recommendation that local authorities prepare regional public transport strategies whilst in recommendation 6 below the proposed regional consortia would appear to have overall responsibility for the delivery of those strategies. We believe that such an arrangement could be confusing.

R5: This in part already happens as Transport Grant funds are now focused on partnership working. There may also be good reasons to fund local initiatives and other schemes proposed in Local Transport Plans – there will be a need to ensure that such cases are not overlooked

R6: Please see our comments on recommendation 4 above. Also whilst agreement on the delivery/implementation of objectives is paramount it must be recognised that partner organisations will remain independent.

R7: We support the case for a regional consortium for Mid Wales. Whilst local authorities will inevitably play the leading role, we believe that to be successful the consortium would need to have a broader base than local authorities alone. The current arrangements have worked well in Mid Wales where a broader partnership has added value in policy and strategy development.

R8: As mentioned above, the existing informal arrangements have worked well in Mid Wales and attempts to introduce more formal statutory arrangements could well prove counter productive.

R9: We would welcome Assembly representation, however this would not be a matter solely for local authority partners.

R10: We agree with the need for a better profile for public transport and the need for better marketing and branding to improve modal shift, but we do not see how this is necessarily linked with the consortia.

R11: Agreed

R12: We agree and also suggest that information on best practice should be widely disseminated.

R13: Agreed

R14: Agreed

Finally with regard to the recommendations and options contained in Chapters 4 and 5, the Partnership's views are as follows

- a PTA for the whole of Wales is not supported but that the possibility of a PTA in South East Wales is a matter for consideration by the relevant local authorities/organisations in that region,
- the continuation of the current regional consortia (subject to (i) above) should be supported. Any changes to their role should be considered only on merit, and where clear improvements/advantages can be demonstrated. Transport services should also continue to be delivered through the local authorities in Mid Wales,
- the Assembly is reminded of the varying transport needs in Wales arising from considerable economic, social and spatial variation and that it must continue to differentiate between rural and urban areas in the application of its policies.

As mentioned earlier I hope the aforementioned comments are of assistance to you. Should you require any further information etc. then please give me a call and I will do my best to assist.

Yours sincerely

Mal Thomas
Secretary