

## **The National Assembly for Wales**

Environment, Planning & Transport Committee  
Consultation Report – Policy Review of Public Transport

### **Response by David Dixon, Traffic Commissioner for Wales**

1. Traffic Commissioners established by the Westminster Parliament are responsible for licensing operators of large goods and passenger road vehicles, punctuality of local bus services, and conduct of holders of vocational driving licences for large vehicles. They carry out their duties in accordance with the relevant legislation.

2. The Welsh Traffic Area (which was created in 1999) is one of eight Traffic Areas in Great Britain under the aegis of the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR). England is divided into six Traffic Areas and Scotland (like Wales) has a Traffic Area covering the whole country. Each Traffic Area has its own Traffic Commissioner; I am responsible for the West Midland Traffic Area as well as for Wales.

3. As Traffic Commissioner, my duties include granting PSV operator licences, and considering their future when evidence is presented to me of unsafe practices (e.g. prohibitions for mechanical defects, breaches of drivers' hours regulations), of behaviour casting doubt on an operator's good repute (including any convictions), or if there is doubt about the financial resources available to them. My powers include curtailment of fleet size and revocation of licences.

4. I maintain a register of local bus services, and have powers to impose financial penalties on bus operators (currently by requiring repayment of a proportion of fuel duty rebate) and to cancel registrations, on evidence of failure to operate services as registered. Such evidence is presented by bus compliance officers employed by the Vehicle Inspectorate or local authorities.

5. Under the Transport Act 2000 Traffic Commissioners are statutory consultees for proposed bus quality partnerships and quality contracts, for joint ticketing schemes and for local bus information to be available to the public. We have to be notified of schemes made. In respect of quality partnerships, operators are required to give written undertakings to provide services to the specified standard.

6. Public Inquiries, driver conduct and other hearings held by me or my Deputies normally take place at locations in Wales as convenient as possible for those participating. I am available (subject only to prior commitments) for meetings anywhere in Wales whenever those concerned with improving public transport seek my involvement – the National Assembly, unitary local authorities, the Confederation of Passenger Transport and others.
7. Administration of operator licensing and other matters for The Welsh Traffic Area currently takes place in Birmingham, largely by staff dedicated solely to Welsh matters, in an office shared with the West Midland Traffic Area. Location of the administrative base is for the DTLR to decide. As most matters are dealt with by post, telephone, fax and (increasingly) by electronic means, location of the administrative staff is less significant for operators and others than it used to be. I recognise that some operators and others would like to see an office in Wales, and I would support this. However, because of the probable extra cost to taxpayers, the benefits which would justify such a move need to be clearly established.
8. In the various ways described above I seek to play my part towards improving public passenger transport. I fully support moves by the National Assembly in this direction, and I would be pleased to discuss with the committee the ways in which closer contact between the Traffic Commissioner and the National Assembly could help to improve the safety and quality of bus services in Wales.

David Dixon  
Traffic Commissioner  
The Welsh Traffic Area  
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