

THIS IS A TRANSLATION AND ANY REPLY MUST BE IN WELSH

WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD

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Environment, Planning and Transport Committee
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POLICY REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN WALES

Thank you for the opportunity to consider this document, and to express our views. This is our perspective as a body with statutory duties in relation to the Welsh Language.

As far as the sustainability of the countryside and the more remote areas of Wales is concerned, the Board believes that a transport scheme linking all means of public transport is essential. We support the action already taken to attempt to integrate the timetables of different providers to facilitate the journeys of those who have to transfer from one bus to another or from bus to train. Innovative ideas, such as using post vans as local mini buses, also have an important contribution to make.

With regard to the Welsh Language in particular, the link between society and language sustainability is evident, and public transport can determine the fate of local schools, shops or workshops. It also plays a key role in tourism and job creation. We should not forget that the Welsh Language is also a crosscutting priority for the Assembly – the Assembly has already accepted that creating a bilingual Wales is an attainable national goal and is committed to adopting policies which will support Welsh communities and ensure that the Welsh language thrives within those communities. The transport scheme therefore is an excellent way of integrating many of the Assembly's priorities in a holistic manner.

With regard to a Welsh language service by transport providers, we are pleased to see that good practice has emerged during the review. So far, the Board has endeavoured to increase the use of Welsh in the transport sector in three ways:

1. By encouraging transport companies (trains and buses) to develop a bilingual service, and by providing advice. Many companies have responded creatively by introducing timetables, signs and other information for passengers. Bilingual electronic messages are to be found in some stations and bus stops. But not all companies have been so supportive.

2. Railway regulators agreed to include expectations in relation to Welsh language services in the charter guidelines issued to railway companies. Compliance is voluntary, and some companies have responded better than others.
3. Some County Councils have agreed to use their influence, in awarding contracts and overseeing services, to increase the use of Welsh by public transport providers. In many counties, for example, taxis and buses have bilingual livery. But this is not consistent.

To make the most of the provisions available, we support the creation of a Passenger Transport Authority for Wales. As part of its role in overseeing the quality and continuation of services, we would wish to see the Authority offering guidance to the sector on Welsh language services. The quality of the bilingual service provided should be an issue for the good practice kitemark referred to in the document, whilst bearing in mind that providing bilingual services of a high standard is considered good practice in Wales. These expectations could be set out in charter form, which would be linked to the process of licensing and contracting services. This would result in consistency and good practice. We as a Board would be very willing to assist with this work.

Yours sincerely

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Head

Public and Private Sectors Team