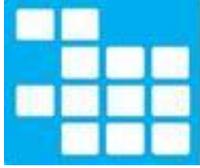


Complete Agenda



north wales economic ambition board
bwrdd uchelgais economaidd gogledd cymru

Meeting

TRANSPORT DELIVERY SUB-BOARD

Date and Time

10.00 am, FRIDAY, 30TH JULY, 2021

Location

**Virtual Meeting – For public access please contact:
NatalieLloydJones@Gwynedd.Llyw.Cymru**

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(DISTRIBUTED 24/07/21)

TRANSPORT DELIVERY SUB-BOARD

MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

Voting Members

Councillors

Robert G Parry	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Greg Robbins	Conwy County Borough Council
Gareth Wyn Griffith	Gwynedd Council
Brian Jones	Denbighshire County Council
David Bithell	Wrexham County Borough Council

Link Member of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board

Councillor Ian Roberts	Flintshire County Council
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Officers in Attendance

Annes Sion	
Emlyn Jones	Denbighshire County Council
Huw Percy	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Geraint Edwards	Conwy County Borough Council
Darren Williams	Wrexham County Borough Council
Stephen Jones	Flintshire County Council
Dafydd Wyn Williams	Gwynedd Council
Iwan Prys Jones	North Wales Economic Ambition Board
Iwan G. Evans	Monitoring Officer
Dafydd L. Edwards	Section 151 Officer

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT MATTERS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chair for consideration.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4 - 7

To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 May 2021.

5. UPDATE ON REGIONAL BUS WORK

8 - 12

Report from technical officers' group.

6. PUBLIC TRANSPORT RECOVERY POST COVID

Presentation by TfW.

Agenda Item 4

TRANSPORT DELIVERY SUB-GROUP 14 May, 2021

Present:

Voting Members - Councillors - David Bithell (Wrexham County Borough Council), Robert G. Parry (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Greg Robbins (Conwy County Borough Council), Gareth Wyn Griffith (Gwynedd Council), Brian Jones (Denbighshire County Council) and Carolyn Thomas (Flintshire County Council).

Officers Present – Darren Williams (Wrexham County Borough Council), Huw Percy (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Stephen Jones (Flintshire County Council), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Gwynedd Council), Iwan G D Evans (Monitoring Officer – Lead Authority), Peter Daniels (Denbighshire County Council) and Natalie Jones (Democracy Services Officer – Lead Authority).

Others invited: - Iwan Prys Jones (North Wales Economic Ambition Board), Lee Robinson (Transport for Wales)

1. APOLOGIES

Geraint Edwards (Conwy County Borough Council), Emlyn Jones (Denbighshire County Council), Dafydd Edwards (Finance Officer - Lead Authority), Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor David Bithell declared a personal interest in Item 3 as he worked for Network Rail.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 7 December 2020, were accepted as a true record subject to:

- Amend the English version of the minutes to note that Peter Daniels works for Denbighshire Council and not Flintshire Council.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD AND TRANSPORTATION GROUP

COMMITTEE

A report was submitted by the Chair, updating the Sub-group on the work streams and their progress over the past two months.

The main points were discussed, including the following;

- That the Sub-group presents a report to the Economic Ambition Board twice a year, to provide an update on the work.
- An overview was provided on the situation with the Corporate Sub-groups, noting that they would discuss more restricted matters than those discussed at this Sub-committee.
- It was noted that they were expecting further guidance following the recent parliamentary elections

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

No further observations were received.

6. UPDATE - REGIONAL BUSES AND NORTH WALES METRO

Presentation by Lee Robinson, TfW.

North Wales Metro

A presentation was shared with the Sub-group, explaining the national picture and then focusing on North Wales and the projects in progress. The context of the North Wales Metro programme was explained and the Sub-group was guided through the proposed timetable and the zones in question.

The main objectives of the North Wales Metro were discussed, including:

- A few of the current timetables needed to be amended as they were restricted
- A number of sections had dated signage
- On the whole, the line speed was low
- That the current condition of the assets relating to the Metro needed to be evaluated
- That some stations continued to be inaccessible
- Railway crossings disrupted the ability to maintain the trains running quicker and more frequent.

The next steps were highlighted as follows:

- Ongoing work with Network Rail in order to evaluate railway crossings and address the needs in the hope of reaching a permanent solution to the situation.
- Improvements to come, e.g. in Shotton and Deeside in order to increase inclusion.
- Understanding the use made of cars as a mode of transport when travelling between North Wales and cities such as Manchester. Look into the connection with HS2.
- Look into places that could adapt the provision without needing a substantial change to the infrastructure, e.g. around Chester and Llandudno.
- Look into extending the service in places such as Caernarfon and the Amlwch Line.

Regional Buses

A discussion was held on matters relating to regional buses, drawing attention to the main principles as follows:

- Local authorities had agreed that the main objective was to increase use on the bus network.

- Attention was drawn to a number of areas in North Wales where users did not have an alternative option and that is why high proportions of users could be seen.
- The finding was to introduce the networks in a way that allows for better connectivity as the network was so complex.
- Ticket contracts had been arranged to facilitate ticket purchases, to access user data and to improve efficiency.
- Reference was made to projects across North Wales in areas such as Bangor, Prestatyn and Holyhead.
- It was noted that work was being done with Local Authorities to identify potential Park and Ride sites, such as Bangor, Rhyl and Llandudno Junction, which would also have a positive impact on the National Park and reduce parking problems.
- It was explained that a pilot scheme was in progress to restrict ticket prices
- Traws Cymru bus company was looking at ways to allow integration with trains in order to facilitate travel.

The following comments were raised during the discussion:

- The Chair requested more information regarding the likely timescale for the next steps.
- One member expressed that work was needed on the North Wales Metro branding in order to promote it.
- It was agreed that the timetabling service was very important when there was a high number of users, in order to retain confidence in the service
- It was asked whether there were any plans to adapt the vision as the new transport minister undertook his post.
A member asked about finance and whether long-term finance had been confirmed in order to fund the projects that were underway.
- It was noted that connections from the Bangor railway would improve the travel network for a number of residents, including facilitating the journey to the workplace or School/College.
- This was reiterated to note for certain that it was not just a matter of satisfying the needs of visitors; the importance of satisfying local needs was emphasised.
- An interest was expressed in collaborating with the National Park to monitor the transportation situation in Snowdonia. The importance that members of the Sub-board had input to discussions was emphasised.
- Lee Robinson was thanked for the report, which highlighted how much work was happening within the transport fields.

In response to the above observations, the following was noted:-

- That consistency with the marketing element could be ensured to highlight the concept of a North Wales Metro.
- It was expressed that there was no intention to change the direction of the proposed work or the current theory after Ken Skates stood down as the minister for the Economy, Transport and North Wales
- With regards to finance, it was noted that there was no definitive assurance to fund the projects in question; however, a five year plan in principle suggested that finance would be available.
- Reference was made to the Labour Party's manifesto on Transport, particularly regarding improving transport in the North.

- Active travel was very important and there was a need to look at ways to allow for access to stations and trains by bicycle or on foot.

It was suggested that another meeting was needed in the Summer before the next proposed meeting in the Autumn, in order to discuss the Sub-group's priorities.

7. ITEM FOR INFORMATION - TRANSPORT DECARBONISATION AND AN UPDATE ON THE HYDROGEN HUB

This item was presented for information only.

The report was welcomed, noting the opportunities and jobs that would emanate due to the development of Hydrogen filling stations.

It was reiterated that hydrogen vehicles for the purposes of refuse collection, etc. would be available by the end of the year.

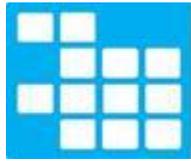
The following observations were made in relation to the report:

- It was noted that members of the Sub-group were not aware of the steps in the pipeline with Hydrogen. It was reiterated that there was an opportunity to establish whether there was a regional need for green hydrogen, so that it could be reported to Welsh Government.

The former member of the Sub-group, Carolyn Thomas MS, asked whether it would be possible for her to attend the meetings as an observer in the future.

It was agreed that there was no objection, and it was reiterated that it would be useful for a Member of the Senedd to attend.

The meeting commenced at 11.00am and concluded at 12.25pm.



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REPORT TO TRANSPORT DELIVERY SUB-GROUP

JULY 30th 2021

Title: REGIONAL BUS ISSUES
Author: PETER DANIELS – DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

1. Purpose of the Report

To consider the impact of the health emergency on bus services over the previous 18 months and the extent to which the region may continue to work more closely in the future.

2. Decision Sought

The Transport Delivery Sub-group is asked to consider what additional steps the Sub-group may wish to take, potentially for its September 2021 meeting.

3. Background and Relevant Considerations

LOCAL BUS SERVICES

- 3.1. Members will be familiar with the issues faced by bus operators during the pandemic and the response. In summary, there have been periods when bus operators were required to carry those travelling for essential purposes only, during which time passenger numbers fell to about 10 per cent of those who otherwise travel. Recovery in August 2020 was weak and thwarted first by local measures before a national lockdown from December. These were exacerbated by driver shortages, at Arriva in Rhyl and especially Wrexham, where service levels were such that Arriva carried about five per cent of the usual number of passengers.
 - 3.2. From April 2021, bus services have been available more generally and passengers along the urban coast and Deeside have returned to about 40 per cent of pre-virus numbers, reaching an average peak of about 70 per cent over the Whitsun holidays and falling to about 60 per cent thereafter. Rural services are generally recovering more slowly and those reliant most on free travellers have been particularly slow. Mileage operated by Arriva is about 80 to 85 per cent and the main constraint preventing improvement will be driver availability, which will cause continued problems throughout the summer. Mileage operated by SMEs tends to
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be closer to 100 per cent, owing to a greater impact of school transport which then results in buses being available between the school peaks and the use of tour drivers in reserve.

NATIONAL & REGIONAL WORKING

3.3. Practitioners have always worked closely but have done so particular throughout the pandemic. The changes required and their immediacy have made seeking full political support difficult, though officers have consulted with their respective lead members. Financial support under the Welsh Government's Bus Emergency Scheme via Transport for Wales has ensured that operators have been able to continue offering acceptable levels of service. Providing this support and managing the funding has placed a significant burden on the lead authority (Flintshire). In addition, during the lengthy discussions on the BES scheme and the network review, Denbighshire officers have been attending national meetings and supporting the coordination of the response to BES and other issues on behalf of the region.

3.4. With that funding and the Welsh Government's desire to assert more control over bus services has come a number of work streams surrounding bus reform and financial management. Against the background of the demands on officers' time in keeping the network going and agreeing service levels within the BES framework, national and regional issues have added pressures that require addressing:

3.5. Llwybr Newydd/Decarbonisation Agenda

These over-arching strategies set the wider position as regards the role of bus services in the longer term. Significant remodelling of bus services, as part of an integrated transport solution will be needed. Developing a compelling vision supported by a delivery plan will be required in the future.

3.6. The Establishment of a 'Reference Network'

The BES scheme proposes moving towards the establishment of a reference network. This is the network being supported by emergency funding and which is designed to be similar to that before the emergency. In essence, it is a step towards developing a proposal for network reform. It does, however, reflect changes planned before the emergency, medium-term sustainability and the availability of drivers. This is likely to prove less controversial.

3.7. North Wales Bus Network Review

Across Wales, TfW has funded a wide-ranging and somewhat radical review by consultants Arup and this is most advanced in the North. Currently, as these remain draft, TfW has asked these not be shared widely. Plans both positive and negative will have some wide-ranging implications for local services and could prove challenging for members in some areas. Within, is the potential for further Fflecsi services. The stakeholder consultation phase and

development of detailed implementation plans will require significant input from members and officers.

3.8. Governance

Allied to the TfW review above is an expectation of change to governance structures across the sector, with implications for operators and not least local authorities. It appears likely that decisions over network design will be undertaken on a regional or sub-regional basis, contributing to a wider network design approach.

3.9. Metro

Though much wider (to include the railway), the Metro project is inexorably linked to bus network review & reform and the governance surrounding the way in which buses operate. Bus networks will need to fully integrate with other modes, provide opportunities for interchange and be geared towards a single ticket/multi-mode approach.

3.10. CJC

The above needs to be seen in the context of the requirement to regionalise under the Local Government & Election Act 2021. Transport will be one of the early service areas to be included in the emerging CJC and consideration of the implications of this on local authority resources will be needed.

3.11. Role of TfW

It is increasingly apparent that it is with TfW rather than local authorities where resources are available. TfW has increased capacity significantly to develop emerging Metro projects and to support the development of a national approach to bus networks. Some of that capacity has been recruited from local authorities, increasing some local pressures at councils.

IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL WORKING

3.12. The individual issues in 3.5 to 3.11 above are in themselves significant. None of them should be seen in isolation and a stronger regional response in terms of how we respond to these issues is now required. Capacity to achieve this is currently limited, but the appointment of a regional transport resource within the NWEAB will provide some improvement.

3.13. TfW has indicated that it wishes to operate in partnership with local authorities. During the emergency, because of the way in which local authorities have had to be reactive to immediate pressures, TfW has been able to drive that agenda. In future, developing priorities for the region should be on the basis of an equal partnership, so that elected members retain their say in local bus networks. This will be even more important as

governance changes take place and as theoretically commercial services remain subject to Welsh Government funding. Increasingly funding and legislation will likely be used to acquire more control over commercial routes.

- 3.14. To do this, the region needs to consider carefully how it structures itself, in order to deliver bus-based public transport. The role of the member group will be vital and may need more frequent meetings to achieve adequate over-sight. Developing the approach will take some time to consider and a report with some detailed proposals will be prepared for the September meeting of the group.
- 3.15. In the meantime, members are asked to support the current approach, where the financial lead authority continues to be Flintshire but where some of the pressing and key operational decisions, while taken in consultation with colleagues, are being supported by another authority (currently Denbighshire).

4. Recommendation

- 4.1. That Members consider the challenging agenda for bus network in the region, and having considered the urgent need for a greater degree of regional working and the pressures the region faces, members be presented with options for capacity and delivery, for their September 2021 meeting; and
- 4.2. That, in the meantime, members authorise officers to continue to work in such a way that they can combat the operational pressures facing authorities.

STATUTORY OFFICERS' RESPONSES:

i. Monitoring Officer – responsible body:

The report highlights the challenges which currently face public Transport and the issues which need to be addressed. It's appropriate therefore that the Sub-Board takes a regional over view in order to form possible recommendations to the appropriate decision bodies in the Councils. It is also timely to note that the creation of Regional Transport Strategy will fall into the remit of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee as of June 2022. The response to this will form part of wider regional work on establishment of the body.

ii. Head of Finance – responsible body:

Budgetary issues are the responsibility of each individual authority. Currently, TfW BES funding covers additional operational costs. Any additional costs

associated with any changes of structure will need be presented to members at the appropriate time – i.e. September 2021 regional Sub-Board for direction, then to the relevant decision making forum in each individual authority.