



**September 2021**

### **About Transform Cymru**

Transform Cymru is a coalition of organisations that provides advice and support for policy makers on transport issues. A diverse membership represents transport, equalities and sustainability with a focus on user experience. Our vision is for a sustainable and inclusive transport network for Wales.

We welcome the opportunity to participate in this inquiry and set out our priorities for the sixth Senedd term below.

Find out more about Transform Cymru and read our vision in full by visiting our website: [www.transformcymru.org](http://www.transformcymru.org)

### **Key points**

- 1) Transport is one of the top 3 highest emitting sectors in Wales which makes modal shift a priority. As energy is also in the top 3, a switch to electric cannot be the whole answer.**
- 2) Covid-19 has led to the demonization of public transport and action must be taken to avoid a car-led recovery.**
- 3) Ensuring transport is sustainable and inclusive through the effective delivery of the Wales Transport Strategy - Llwybr Newydd - is a key priority for this Senedd term.**

### **Introduction**

Having access to transport is essential for experiencing and enjoying everyday life and yet many people across Wales face barriers to accessing transport which makes them socially excluded. We also know that addressing transport emissions is a key priority in tackling climate change and improving air quality.

We must remember that transport is a key enabler and has a critical role to play in supporting other policy areas such as economy and health. The key message here is that transport is a social justice issue and an essential public service and we must ensure a high quality, affordable and accessible service that delivers for everyone, particularly those who need it most.

Urgent action is needed to reduce the number of car journeys made by individuals and support people to travel sustainably. This cannot be achieved through a mass switch to electric cars; this may be part of the answer but ultimately, the key message has to be 'fewer cars, not newer cars'.

In the last 18 months, the Welsh Government has taken positive steps in tackling transport emissions. We fully support their actions to realise the potential of community transport; develop community car clubs; and increase access to electric bikes. We also commend the Welsh Government's commitment to seize the opportunity provided by the Covid-19 pandemic and promote flexible and remote working to reduce the need for people to travel.

In terms of public policy, the recently published transport strategy 'Llwybr Newydd', sets a target for 45% modal shift and makes a commitment for Wales to become an active travel nation by 2030. We now need to turn this policy into reality and ensure all partners are focused on the delivery of sustainable and inclusive transport that leaves no-one behind.

This committee will have a key role to play in ensuring the Welsh Government delivers on their transport strategy and that transport remains a high priority for the Minister and Deputy Minister for Climate Change.

## **Key priorities for transport:**

### **1) Funding and investment**

**Budgets** - we know that budgets are tight. However, we also know that 62% of the capital transport budget in Wales was being spent on building new roads. There have been some major decisions on road building in Wales which we fully commend such as the roads review and the scrapping of the new M4 corridor. We know that the view of the public is that the alternatives to car use are impractical and that we need to invest in alternative options. Public transport must become efficient, reliable, accessible and affordable in order for people to consider it a viable option. In the Deputy Minister's own words – 'we must make the right thing to do, the easy thing to do'. We suggest that the capital funding saved from major road schemes should be redirected into public transport,

community transport and active travel. Infrastructure alone, however, will not be enough; for investment into sustainable travel schemes to realise their potential, we also need to increase revenue funding for behaviour change projects to build confidence and develop skills for the general public to facilitate sustainable journeys.

**Services** - Throughout the pandemic, passenger numbers for bus, rail and community transport have plummeted. Despite keeping services open for those who rely on public transport, there has been a discouraging tone which continues to keep people away. In fact, the Welsh Government's current guidance for employers suggests that 'use of alternative transport to get to work' is one control measure for reducing the risk of Covid-19. It will be impossible to deliver modal shift if the messaging remains negative. It also puts services at risk and whilst the Welsh Government has supported operators throughout the pandemic, there are concerns this may not continue and with reduced farebox revenue, services will be impossible to sustain.

**Funding cycles** – the current annual funding cycle is too short and with late decisions, it becomes impossible for organisations to deliver effectively. The Welsh Government must find a way to provide longer term decisions so that the focus can move to delivering quality and standards rather than a constant focus on financial sustainability and for many, survival.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Protect public transport services and increase sustainable travel options by reallocating road building funds to public transport and active travel. This should ensure at least 10% for active travel and working with public transport operators to ensure sustainable services.**
- **Provide longer term funding agreements for the transport sector to enable longer term planning for sustainable services.**

## **2) Reducing car dependency**

**Covid-19** - Covid allowed us all to see what life could be like with fewer cars on the road. With extreme congestion creeping back and air quality reducing once more, we know we have to tackle car dependency. This doesn't mean that people need to live without a car but they could commit to making fewer car journeys or consider sharing a vehicle either with their own household or in the local community. Welsh Government is looking to progress community-based car clubs and are supporting demand responsive schemes which ensure alternatives are available.

The pandemic has led to passengers being actively told to avoid public transport where possible. As highlighted above, Welsh Government guidance for employers alludes to the use of private transport as a control measure in

reducing the risk. The danger of this is that we see a car-led recovery with the congestions and pollution that goes with that. It also means continued revenue losses for public transport which is likely to lead to a reduction or removal of services and a possible increase in fares for remaining services, making those who rely on public transport further excluded. This demonization of public transport must be addressed in order to ensure a sustainable and inclusive recovery.

**Public health** - It is also important to remember that cars are detrimental to public health. Further to the dangers of carbon emissions, road transport is responsible for 80% of roadside NO<sub>2</sub> pollution where legal limits are being broken. In London, 60% of particulate matter has been found to come from road transport: 45% from tyre and brake wear and 15% from exhaust emissions. This means that electric cars will still have a negative impact on air quality and are therefore not the whole answer to the challenge that we face. Air pollution is increasingly recognised as a threat to public health with the first death from poor air quality recorded last year. In Wales, it is estimated that 4 deaths per day are caused by air pollution and it is important to note that those most likely to suffer from the impacts of poor air quality are the most vulnerable in our society and those least likely to have contributed (i.e. deprived communities, older people, children, people with disabilities). Furthermore, cars represent a danger in our communities which particularly impacts vulnerable people.

**Removal of active travel schemes** - We know that Local Authorities have been removing active travel schemes and pedestrianised zones despite Welsh Government policy being clear that we should be encouraging people to walk and cycle. The argument for the removal of schemes has been either opposition from the business community or re-direction of traffic affecting air quality in residential areas. We suggest that the issue is exacerbated by a lack of behaviour change support that would encourage people to travel differently and enjoy the benefits of pedestrianised zones. Currently, the availability of capital funding and lack of revenue, means that we are schemes being introduced and then removed at public expense without any moves to maximise potential and give the schemes time to embed.

In Wales, there needs to be some serious discussion about how we can reduce car dependency and improve air quality.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Government investment in behaviour change programmes to maximise the potential of active travel infrastructure.**
- **A public health campaign to increase public awareness of the importance of behaviour change and the benefits of reduced car travel.**
- **An urgent inquiry into options for reducing car dependency to ensure change is delivered as quickly and effectively as possible.**

### 3) Leadership

**Responding to the crisis** - It is leadership that makes change happen. In Wales, many Authorities have declared a climate emergency and we know there is an urgent need for action. In the transport space, there are some authorities demonstrating a commitment by taking forward school streets projects or offering free bus travel. At the same time, however, we are also seeing Authorities taking green space to create more parking; offering free parking as an incentive for coming to the town centre; and situating EV charging points on public foot paths. Policy and practice needs to be more joined up at all levels and across departments. We need transport planning, highways delivery, regeneration, housing and more to align their approaches and ensure we can all work together to deliver modal shift.

As we approach the local elections, Welsh Government should consider how new administrations can be supported to develop knowledge and expertise to deliver interventions at a local level that will deliver climate targets. Furthermore, our members report a disconnect between Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and Local Authorities in the delivery of schemes and initiatives. Success will only be achieved if all organisations work together to deliver a shared goal.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **The Welsh Government should ensure a joined up approach across Authorities and Departments to ensure all organisations are working together to deliver shared goals.**
- **Leaders at all levels should demonstrate their commitment to change by setting an example to the public by actively using public transport and active travel, thereby demonstrating confidence and role modelling behaviour change.**

### 4) Diversity

**Accessible and inclusive transport** – Llwybr Newydd (the Wales Transport Strategy) has 4 pillars with one of these being access and inclusion. As such, there should be a strong emphasis on developing and delivering inclusive services. Transform Cymru has a wide reach through members that are working in the community and the expertise available in this group should be utilised in developing the National Transport Plan which will ensure delivery of national strategy.

**Diversifying the transport workforce** - Another extremely important action is to increase diversity in the transport workforce, including in management and senior roles. Figures from a survey of transport professionals showed that transport decision makers face fewer barriers to accessing transport than the general

public (32% compared with 75% of transport users)<sup>1</sup>. Evidence also tells us that organisations with a diverse workforce have a better understanding of their customers and therefore offer a better service for passengers.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Ensure engagement with representative bodies through Transform Cymru to ensure the delivery of equalities outcomes as defined in Llwybr Newydd.**
- **Increase diversity in the transport workforce to ensure better representation of the population in order to develop and deliver services that meet the needs of all passengers.**

### **5) Rural transport**

**Transport innovation** - It has to be recognised that 80% of Wales is classed as rural and the delivery of transport services in these communities requires a different model than urban areas. We believe, however, that there are many examples of transport innovation in rural areas which is pushing the boundaries of what is possible. For example, we are aware of organisations offering access to electric cars and e-bikes, some of which are linked to community energy. Examples of this include Partneriaeth Ogwen in Bethesda, offering free access to retro-fitted e-bikes; and a scheme in Montgomery that has refurbished 530 bicycles and passed them on free of charge to those returning to cycling. Furthermore, community transport organisations and the newly developed Fflecsi service offer demand responsive services for rural communities.

**Bus services** - A recent report published by the WI on rural bus services found that less than 1 in 5 survey respondents living in rural areas said they have access to a frequent, reliable bus service<sup>2</sup>. Of those respondents, 25% said that cuts to bus services have made them feel more isolated, and 19% said their mental health had been negatively affected<sup>3</sup>. This research found that cuts to bus services have led to a reduction in longer journeys by public transport because passengers can no longer connect to other services. 72% said that their dependency on using a car and reliance on family and friends had increased<sup>4</sup>.

Transform Cymru would like to see improved services for rural areas which make public transport a viable option. We understand that a timetabled service along a fixed route may not be the answer but the Welsh Government must continue with their efforts to connect rural communities through a range of means suitable for those communities. The fundamental travel requirements in each area must be

---

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2014) European's satisfaction with urban transport, report no. 382b.

<sup>2</sup> Women's Institute (2019) A New Route for Bus Services, available at: <https://www.thewi.org.uk/campaigns/news-and-events/national-federation-of-womens-institutes-nfwi-launches-new-report-into-local-bus-services>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

understood by a consultation process so as to ensure that the correct solutions are devised.

**Active travel** - Finally, there has previously been a challenge to active travel as a solution for everyday journeys in rural areas but the development of e-bikes has helped to break down barriers. The National Cycle Network provides many traffic free routes but there is also a need to make rural roads safer. Current figures show that a higher proportion of walkers and cyclists in rural areas are killed in road accidents than in urban areas<sup>5</sup>. We know that there is an increasing number of people in rural areas that want to travel actively, especially with the advent of e-bikes. In order to make active travel safer for rural journeys, we believe a 40 mile limit should be imposed on most rural roads to reduce serious accidents amongst those travelling on foot or by bike. Finally, it is crucial that active travel funding is extended to areas that are below the population criteria presently required as many rural populations desperately need to be able to access their service provision in towns using active travel.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Protect rural transport services and support innovative solutions to mobility in rural areas.**
- **Introduce a 40 mile speed limit for most rural roads.**
- **Understand local travel needs through local consultation and engagement.**
- **Extend the Active travel funding into rural areas so that the sizeable desire to travel can be enabled through suitable infrastructure.**

### **Conclusion**

Tackling transport emissions and modal shift is a key priority for the sixth Senedd term and the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure committee has a critical role to play in ensuring this remains high on the agenda. Earlier in the year, the Welsh Government adopted Llwybr Newydd as their new transport strategy for Wales and the focus needs to be on delivering the strategy, ensuring the target for modal shift is achieved, services become more accessible and inclusive and Wales becomes an active travel nation.

---

<sup>5</sup> DfT custom data accessed via: <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/custom-downloads>