**Fforwm Rhanbarthol Rhanddeiliaid Cymru a'r Gororau Wales and BordersRegional Stakeholder Forum**

**30 November 2021**



**Adroddiad o’r cyfarfod**

**Meeting report**

Wales and Borders Regional Stakeholder Forum

The forum met on the 30th November 2021, 10:00 – 12:30

**Attendees**

**Forum Members**

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| Ann Elias | Mid Wales Growth Forum |
| Andrew Callard | Rural Technologies Ltd (Gloucestershire) |
| Alex Woodall | Transport for Greater Manchester |
| Christian Schmidt | Monmouthshire County Council |
| Chris Purcell | Shropshire Council |
| Adam Graham | Warrington Borough Council |
| Gwyn Smith | Sustrans Cymru |
| Michelle Roles | Transport Focus |
| David Jones | Liverpool City Region |
| David Land | Gloucestershire County Council |
| Michele Mitchell | Torfaen County Borough Council |
| Simon Nicholls | Newport City Council |
| Peter Bethell | Birmingham City Council |
| Toby Rackliff | West Midlands Rail Executive |
| Richard Gibson | Crosscountry Trains |

**Speakers**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| James Price | Chief Executive, TfW | 10:05-10:20 |
| Andrew Sherrington | fflecsi Team, TfW | 10:20-11:00 |
| Jeremy Morgan | Head of Corporate Governance and Information Provision | 11:00 – 11:30 |
| Gareth Potter | Senior Project Manager, TfW | 11:30 – 11:45 |
| Geraint Stanley | Customer Experience Project Manager, TfW |  |
| Mike Dalton | Stakeholder Manager, TfW |  |
| Jamie Warner | Community Engagement Officer, TfW | 11:45 – 11:55 |

**Apologies**

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| --- | --- |
| David Beer | Transport Focus |
| Robert Niblett | Gloucestershire County Council |
| Paul Jones | Newport City Council |
| Matt Johnson | Shropshire County Council |
| Andy Moreton | Shropshire County Council |
| Gerard Rhodes | Chester and Cheshire West Council |
| Matt Powell | Telford and Wrekin Council |
| Richard Hibbert | Cheshire East Council |
| Adam Graham | Warrington Borough Council |
| Heather Bolton | Telford and Wrekin Council |
| Hannah McDonnell | Gloucestershire CRP |
| Jon Harris | Gloucestershire CRP |
| Sean Croshaw | Transport for Greater Manchester |
| Sarah Spink | Midlands Connect |
| Fay Easton | West Midlands Trains |
| Eddie Muraszko | Department for Transport |
| Peter West | Department for Transport |
| Mike Learmond | Federation of Small Businesses |
| Mark Hooper | Visit Shropshire |
| Rachel Jones | Visit Herefordshire |
| Steve Gardner Collins | Visit Gloucestershire |
| Ridhi Kalaria | Sustrans |
| Seb Slater | Shrewsbury Bid |

**Note from the Chair, Mike Dalton, Stakeholder Manager, TfW**

*“This was our seventh Borders Regional stakeholder forum, and I’m really grateful to our stakeholders across the Borders who attended to share with us their insights. I’d like to give thanks to our presenters who provided updates on TfW fflecsi, the transparency agenda, the Burns Delivery Unit and the array of new engagement opportunities. I would like to give thanks to members who completed our interactive Mentimeter poll. Thank you for your time and invaluable contributions.”*

**Agenda**

1. **Introduction & Apologies**

Mike Dalton welcomed the forum members to the sixth meeting of the Wales and Borders regional Forum. Mike introduced the format of the meeting, including an update on the current Travel Safer messaging and Welsh Government rules still in place across Wales in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. **Question Time with the Chief Executive, Transport for Wales**

James Price invited questions from attendees.

Christian Schmidt, Monmouthshire County Council asked what Transport for Wales could do to enforce face mask wearing and noted that mask wearing seemed to be higher on East – West directions. James Price explained that TfW is looking at the issue in detail to identify and action available options. Enforcing mask wearing is difficult when there are so many reasons for exemption, and it is a morally complex situation to pass on to rail staff. Transport for Wales are continuing to push the face mask wearing message through on-board announcements, in the media, and is working with BTP to create examples that illustrate the importance of face mask wearing. The UK Government could also make face mask wearing a condition of carriage, but James noted that in an open network it creates a barrier to people using other operators.

Anne Elias, Growing Mid Wales, asked when customers could anticipate a full return to the pre-COVID timetable on the Cambrian line. James explained, in short, as soon as possible. Mike Dalton explained that in December 2021 there was one up lift, but by May 2022 Transport for Wales should expect to restore services to pre-pandemic level with a few exceptions.

Christian Schmidt noted that the fares between Cardiff and stations in Monmouthshire were more expensive than fares between Cardiff and the Valleys and asked for an update around how we were addressing this. James Price suggested it would be useful to for the organisation to give an update on this from region to region. Mike Dalton explained that we had recently written to a business group in Abergavenny on this issue, and would provide an update via email.

1. **fflecsi, Andrew Sherrington**

Andrew Sherrington introduced the Transport for Wales fflecsi pilots, explaining that there had been lessons learned in different areas of Wales. There were slight variations between pilots, Andrew explained, in terms of their features not only to see how they fared against each other, but to better suit local contexts. Giving an overview of the delivery, Andrew explained there were 2500 rides undertaken a week, with more than half of those in Newport and 4.7 / 5 was the average ride rating. Andrew talked about the flexibility of the service and the facility that the technology offers.

**What is the difference between IRT and DRT?**

IRT stands for integrated response transport, and refers to a service that you must prebook and can’t be requested on-demand. This means a service will normally have a buffer that would mean you can only book for example, for an hours time. This will vary from IRT to IRT, and may only be as long as 30 minutes. Whereas an on-demand service if you want a bus immediately, it will try and get you a bus immediately. DRT is beneficial to the customer because it means they can get a service quicker, but IRT services are better at meeting demand and aggregating routes.

**Is priority given for pre-booked services?**

Priority is given for pre-booked services to the extent that you will get a space on the bus, but if the fflecsi system thinks it can add an on-demand customer a space on that bus an not deviate the journey significantly, it will do.

**Will the booking platform expand to booking train tickets and shared bikes?**

The fflecsi app is a dedicated platform for making requests to the fflecsi service. However, Transport for Wales are investigating Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) service options to support the integration of transport services in the future.

**Are bus pass users still entitled to free travel on these services?**

If the operator of that bus service accepts concessionary passes, then yes. Some of the services in rural areas may be run by dial a ride schemes that don’t accept concessionary passes. However, where services are operated by commercial operators, such as Newport Bus or New Adventure Travel, their existing fares models will apply including concessionary passes.

**Why aren’t we using the Welsh Governments call centre for the service?**

The fflecsi service requires call centre staff to be trained on the technology, and to support customers to understand their booking and the service. For this reason, we use a dedicated fflecsi call centre to manage fflecsi bookings.

**What are the operating costs per bus-km per scheme, or the boardings per bus-km per scheme?**

Operating costs across the board will be reviewed as parts of the pilot, however it is difficult to draw direct comparisons for the operating cost of fflecsi versus a fixed line bus service. fflecsi operates in locations where a commercial bus service can’t afford to. Its aim is to expand journey opportunities for people in areas without an existing bus service. Therefore, whilst it might be more expensive than a conventional service, we believe the DRT has a core role to play in improving access to journeys and all the benefits that brings communities.

**Is this a service more targeted towards more rural communities and the elderly – is it quite difficult to get people to use the technology?**

Typically, DRT has been hailed as a response to rural transport issues however we’re exploring what role DRT has to play in semi-urban and urban sites, too. There are plenty of places in cities you can’t get a bus to, or to do so would require a convoluted trip into the centre and back out. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has seen footfall on commercial bus services fall significantly, the fflecsi service not only helps bus services to understand where the demand lies for services but allows us to continue to provide public transport opportunities in spite of reduced timetables and services.

Our intention is that fflecsi is for everyone, and not only elderly people. However, We’ve seen a good uptake on the app. We know a majority of our concessionary pass holders prefer to book their journeys on the app.

**Have you thought about having a semi-fflecsi system that always goes to a fixed location eventually?**

We have investigated this, and in some areas *forced* the buses to meet certain locations like train stations at specific times. However we’ve found that it severely limits the number of customers we can serve with the customers and have found a net greater benefit to letting customers influence the location of the bus through demand.

1. **TfW Transparency Agenda**

Jeremy Morgan introduced the transparency agenda with the Nolan principles, but noted the importance of striking a balance between confidentiality, commercial sensitivity and open disclosure and the public interest.

Jeremy explained that TfW was in the process of developing a transparency strategy, and would be putting together a register of information committed for regular publication and compliance with the FOI 'publication scheme.’ Jeremy also explained that some key performance indicators had been identified for publication for the rail services.

Ann Elias commented on the delay in publishing the TfW board minutes. Jeremy suggested there had been some delay because the approval and translation process was lengthy. Ann suggested that as part of the strategy TfW could look into improving translation times. Christian Schmidt suggested that draft minutes could be approved, as they had done as the South East Wales Transport Alliance.

Christian also commented, that TfW was creating additional work for itself by not publishing data because it was increasing the workload for the FOI team. Christian commented on the importance of also sharing bus data, such as the kilometres operated by fflecsi bus services.

1. **Burns Delivery Unit update**

Gareth Potter, Senior Project Manager, introduced the conclusions of the South East Wales Transport Commission, including the key recommendations and the network of alternatives.

Gareth emphasised that rail has the greatest potential to move M4 traffic. He explained that there was opportunity to double passenger capacity on the South Wales Mainline between Cardiff Central and Severn Tunnel Junction (STJ) and deliver additional capacity to Bristol. Gareth explained that there are plans to deliver 6 new stations between STJ and Cardiff Central, including *Newport Road, Cardiff Parkway, Newport West, Newport East, Llanwern and Magor*.

Three improvement projects are due to be initiated this year between Cardiff and STJ, including accessibility improvements to STJ station, Cardiff to Newport Corridor Improvements along the A48 and NCN88 corridor which would include bus priority improvements and cycling infrastructure improvements. The final project would include key infrastructure improvements to central Newport.

Ann Elias questioned whether any work on WelTAG would need to completed again given that WelTAG was under review.

1. **Sgwrs – Customer Panels**

Geraint Stanley introduced the new Sgwrs platform to stakeholders, explaining how it would allow TfW to capture quantitative and qualitative feedback on TfWs projects from a set panel of customers who will be incentivised with rewards. Geraint asked if stakeholders would support the communications of Sgwrs where possible. Geraint clarified that the only people unable to partake in Sgwrs would be TfW Staff.

1. **Taffs Well Mock up Site**

Jamie Warner, Community Engagement Officer, walked stakeholders through the Taffs Well site which houses life-size mock ups that represent the new trains, and invited them for visits.

1. **AOB**

None

**Actions**

The actions below were raised during the forum and will be addressed prior to the next Regional Forum where possible.

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| --- | --- |
| **Action** | **What will be done?** |
| To share with CS a response issued regarding fares in Abergavenny | Response issued |

## Forum digital chat highlights

Highlights of the conversation within the chat function of the Forum were:

* Re apps - you always need both - one all signing all dancing TfW app - one TfW rail just for that, one TfW flexi just for that, one TfW PT info just for that (aka Traveline)
* open source statistics would be really useful or at a minimum share them with selected partners on a regular basis
* the inclusion of connecting modes on the agenda is very helpful thanks
* Great conference Mike, very informative. Many thanks

## Next Regional Stakeholder Forum

The next Borders Regional Stakeholder Forum is scheduled for March 2021