**Fforwm Rhanbarthol TrC – Rhanddeiliaid De Ddwyrain Cymru**

**TfW Regional Forum – South-East Wales**

**08 December 2021**



**Adroddiad o’r cyfarfod**

**Meeting report**

South-East Wales Regional Stakeholder Forum

The forum met on the 08 December 2021, 10:00 – 12:00

**Attendees**

**Forum Members**

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| Clare Cameron | Cardiff City Council |
| Clive Campbell | Transportation Engineering Manager, Caerphilly County Borough Council |
| Geraint Roberts  | Caerphilly County Borough Council |
| Jason Dixon | Team Leader for Transport Policy, Cardiff City Council |
| John Gibson | Project Development Officer, Cardiff City Council |
| Kevin Sales | Public Transport Officer, Bridgend County Borough Council |
| Kwaku Opoku-Addo | Transportation department, Bridgend County Borough Council |
| Leanne Waring  | Business Development Manager, Cardiff and Vale College |
| Marcus Lloyd | Head of Infrastructure, Caerphilly County Borough Council |
| Michelle Roles | Stakeholder Manager Wales, Transport Focus |
| Phil Anslow  | Phil Anslow Coaches  |
| Rebecca Smith | Transport Planner, Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council |
| Richard Cope | Passenger Transport Manager, Monmouthshire County Council & Newport City Council |
| Richard Davies | Adventure travel |
| Simon Nicholls | Bus Coordinator at Newport Council |

**Transport for Wales -** Other members of the TfW team were present to facilitate

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| Helen Dale | Regional Stakeholder Manager, South-East Wales, Transport for Wales | 10:00 – 12:00 |
| Jessica Clement (Clerk) | Community Engagement Officer, South-East Wales, Transport for Wales | 10:00 – 12:00 |
| James Price  | Chief Executive Officer, Transport for Wales | 10.05 - 10.20 |
| Louis Mertens | Community Engagement Officer, Wales & Borders, on behalf of the Fflecsi Team, Transport for Wales | 10.20 - 10.40 |
| Victoria Madelin | Governance Advisor, Transport for Wales | 10:40 – 11:00 |
| Gareth Potter | Senior Project Manager, Transport for Wales | 11.00 - 11.20 |
| Geraint Stanley | Customer Experience Project Manager, Transport for Wales | 11.20 - 11.45 |
| Jamie Warner | Community Engagement Officer, Transport for Wales  | 11.45 - 11:55 |
| Lowri Joyce | Head of Community and Stakeholder Engagement, Transport for Wales | 11:55 – 12:00 |

**Apologies**

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| Abryantevans | abryantevans@googlemail.com  |
| Adam Keen | NAT Travel |
| Adrian Field  | Executive Director, FOR Cardiff |
| Alex Clarke | Passenger Transport Information Officer, Caerphilly County Borough Council |
| Alun Evans | Bridgend County Borough Council |
| Alyn Owen | Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council |
| Andy Johns | Vice Principal, Coleg Y Cymoedd |
| Carol Willgoose | Welsh Government  |
| Ceri Stephens  | South Wales Chamber of Commerce |
| Charlie E Nelson | Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council |
| Christian Schmidt | Transport Projects & Programmes Manager, Monmouthshire County Council |
| Corinna James | Welsh Government  |
| Daniel Bowden | Stagecoach |
| David Beer | Senior Manager for Wales, Transport Focus |
| David Dawkins | Transport Policy Planner, The Community Transport Association Wales |
| Debbie Hudd | Welsh Government |
| Derek Jones | Welsh Government  |
| Emma Bingham | The Community Transport Association |
| Enfys Griffiths  | Transport Services, Vale of Glamorgan Council |
| Gemma Hayne | Bridgend County Borough Council |
| Gemma Lelliott | The Community Transport Association |
| Gwyn Smith | Welsh Government Active Travel Advisor and Network Development Manager, Sustrans |
| Heather Anstey-Myers | South Wales Chamber of Commerce |
| Helen Boyle | First Bus |
| Jane Reakes Davies | First Cymru |
| Jason Coleman | Welsh Government |
| Jonathan Parsons | Bridgend County Borough Council |
| Julie Twells | Samaritans  |
| Kevin Mulcahy | Group Manager, Bridgend County Borough Council |
| Kyle Phillips | Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council |
| Leanne Waring | Business Development Manager, Cardiff and Vale College |
| Michele Mitchell | Torfaen County Borough Council |
| Morgan Stevens  | Newport Transport  |
| Natalie Curtis | Bridgend County Borough Council |
| Nicola Somerville | Valleys Taskforce |
| Nigel winter | Managing Director for South Wales, Stagecoach |
| Nina Slevin | South Wales Chamber of Commerce |
| Owen Williams  | First Bus |
| Paul Carter | Cardiff City Council |
| Paul Jones | Newport City Council |
| Paul Selvin | South Wales Chamber of Commerce |
| pdyer@cardiffbus.com  | Cardiff Bus |
| roberrh@cymoedd.ac.uk  | Cymoedd |
| Roger Waters | Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council |
| Russell Owens | Welsh Government |
| Sam Palmer | NAT Travel |
| Samuel Hadley | Network Rail |
| Scott Pearson | Newport Transport  |
| Sharon Adams | South Wales Chamber of Commerce |
| Sian Rees | Cardiff Metropolitan University |
| Simon Livsey | British Transport Police |
| Stuart Ingram | Welsh Government |
| Tracey Messner | Public Affairs Manager, Network Rail |

**Note from the Chair, Helen Dale, Stakeholder Manager, TfW**

1. “I would like to thank all of our members for attending our sixth South East Wales regional Forum. Within today’s forum, I’d like to give thanks to our presenters who provided updates on the Fflecsi Bus schemes across Wales, transparency and governance within Transport for Wales, recommendations from the Burns report, Sgwrs and the new train mock-up visitor centre in Taff’s Well. Alongside these insightful presentations from our partners, members had the opportunity to participate in a Q&A session with James Price, Chief Executive Officer at Transport for Wales. I would like to give thanks to members who further contributed to this Q&A session. Thank you for your time and invaluable contributions to our forum.”

**Agenda**

1. **Introduction & Apologies**

Helen Dale, Stakeholder Manager TfW, welcomed the forum members to the sixth meeting of the South-East Wales regional Forum. Helen introduced the agenda for the session and thanked attendees for joining. Helen addressed current travel restrictions due to Storm Barra and Welsh Government guidance still in place across Wales in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. **Question Time with James Price, Chief Executive Officer, Transport for Wales**

Helen Dale introduced James Price, Chief Executive Officer at Transport for Wales, who opened the question-and-answer session. Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure at Caerphilly County Borough Council, asked whether the South Wales Metro project will be delivered to the timeframes that were stipulated at the beginning of the project, as there are indicators that there is some slippage in timeframes. James Price responded that there is likely to be slippage however, TfW are confident that this slippage is likely to be in terms of months rather than years. He added that aspects of the project may move forward, for example the early introduction of rolling stock if sections of the CVL (core valley lines) can be energised earlier than planned, this is particularly possible on the Rhymney line. Aspects of the project are also likely to be take longer than expected, for example introducing the final timetable changes, including the plan for 4 trains per hour on CVL services. James Price also mentioned that there is uncertainty due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the issues that the pandemic has brought in difficulty of obtaining certain pieces of equipment, causing delays.

Michelle Roles, Stakeholder Manager for Wales at Transport Focus, commented on the intense pressures that TfW and other rail operators are under due to the current pandemic. She added that aside from recent weather issues, TfW has seen a large amount of cancellations due to crew and driver shortages, driver training, and fleet reliability. She asked whether the current and future timetable are too ambitious for the resources that TfW have in order to provide passengers with good reliability. James Price answered that in the absence of some impacts due to COVID-19, the timetable TfW is currently running is not too ambitious. He added that we have enough rolling stock, and based on industry norms and pre-covid levels, TfW has enough staff. The majority of issues have been occurring at weekends and are mostly due to staffing issues rather than being rolling stock based. Previously, there were some reliability issues with the Class 769’s on the Rhymney line, however their reliability is improving, and they are now twice as reliable compared to when they were first introduced into service. James Price added that the majority of issues are around driver and guard availability which is impacting weekend services. There is a plan in place to address this and the December timetable change should provide an improvement due to diagrams being more efficient and increased staff efficiency.

Dafydd Williams, Rail Performance Manager TfW, added that since the new timetable was introduced in September there have been many days where it has been delivered in full. However, there have been impacts, for example due to storm and weather impacts, the Caerphilly tunnel closure which impacted travel from the Wales vs New Zealand Rugby game and absences due to booster jabs. Network Rail and other operators have experienced similar issues. TfW do not want to step-down the timetable, and they have demonstrated many days where it has been delivered successfully.

James Price concluded that if there are large events taking place on weekends, it would be best to step back the timetable slightly in advance to ensure TfW can run longer trains and distribute services evenly throughout the day. James Price also commented on the Omicron variant and the current self-isolation requirements, and the impact that this may have on drivers and train crew.

Kwaku Opoku-Addo, from the Transportation department in Bridgend County Borough Council, asked what is the level of annual subsidy that TfW receives for train services in Wales and how does this compare with buses. James Price answered that the rail franchise in Wales and Borders has always been roughly half subsidy and half fare paying. Although, through the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, around 95% of paying passengers did not use the services and so the level of subsidy changed, however, TfW are moving closer to the pre-covid figure of 50/50. The annual cost of this is around £140,000,000. James added that buses are not funded directly by the Welsh Government and is around £100,000,000 per year. The subsidy for train passengers per mile is higher than that for bus across the UK, and this is why bus has an important role in transport.

Kwaku Opoku-Addo added that these figures are useful for policy formulation within Bridgend County Borough Council to see how transport is funded. He asked if more accurate figures could be shared with him. James Price confirmed that he will liaise with colleagues in TfW and with the Welsh Government to find this information.

Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager at Caerphilly County Borough Council, asked how TfW is settling down since its change from a procurement body to a delivery body, and how TfW are dealing with requests from the Welsh Government. James Price responded that there has been peaks in workload to bring areas, such as TfW Rail Limited, into the business. However, after this move there are aspects of the business that TfW do not need to do anymore as they can operate differently. TfW now have full visibility into Rail Limited, therefore they can work together efficiently. James added that as long as there is a good strategic plan and notice of what TfW is asked to deliver by Welsh Government, then it is entirely possible to do this well.

1. **Fflecsi/Demand Response Transport pilots**

**Louis Mertens, Community Engagement Officer, Transport for Wales**

Louis Mertens, Community Engagement Officer for Wales & Borders TfW, introduced the fflecsi pilot programme <https://www.fflecsi.wales> on behave of Andrew Sherrington, fflecsi Team at TfW. He stated there were currently 11 pilots, including Blaenau Gwent and Newport, with 29 vehicles across Wales. He stated that it was a point-to-point service with virtual stops as well as standard stops and that each fflecsi works differently to support local needs. The fflecsi service is a demand led responsive service with passengers able to pre book or on demand. Louis outlined the lessons learnt during the fflecsi pilot projects across Wales in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. These include the benefits of providing bus links to areas without services, improved flexibility on service times and supporting local tourism, and the challenges associated with last minute cancellations, duplication with fixed line services and technological barriers.

Phil Anslow, Phil Anslow Coaches, asked what the current subsidy per passenger journey on Flecsi is. Jane Purdie, Communications Business Partner TfW, responded that she will ask Andrew Sherrington to get this information following the forum.

Kwaku Opoku-Addo, from the Transportation department in Bridgend County Borough Council, expressed that Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) face different problems to that of traditional bus transport, and DRT often fails due to a lack of funding and lower passenger numbers. Kwaku asked where the subsidy for this service is coming from and if it is sustainable in the long term. He also asked what marketing is being done to promote the service and whether any partnerships had been made with rural organisations, using the example of UPS now using local corner shops as depots for their deliveries. Kwaku also mentioned that Bridgend Community Transport will be a key partner should a flecsi service be introduced to the area. Jane Purdie noted Kwaku Opoku-Addo’s questions and assured that she would relay these to Andrew Sherrington to respond after the forum.

1. **Transparency, Governance and information provision changes**

**Jeremy Morgan, Head of Corporate Governance, and Victoria Madelin, Governance Advisor at Transport for Wales**

Jeremy Morgan introduced TfW’s transparency agenda. He stated that as a publicly funded body, TfW is committed to demonstrating openness and transparency in the way we operate our business and how we communicate with our customers and stakeholders. Transparency is vital to public sector organisations, making them accountable, fair, and inclusive. TfW committed to the 7 principles of public life and being open and transparent. TfW are looking to develop a Transparency Plan. It has a website outlining how we work and how we operate and have a publication scheme outlining its business plan, annual report, KPIs and other documents in the public’s interest. Victoria and Jeremy outlined the KPI’s and how they are measured and reported.

Further information on our transparency agenda can be found here: <https://tfw.wales/transparency>

A forum member asked whether stakeholders and members of the public can request additional information that is not published on TfW’s website. Jeremy Morgan responded that anyone can request information through the Freedom of Information Act and TfW has a duty to respond to information requests within a 20 working day period. There are exemptions where information cannot be shared, however anyone from the public can ask for information.

A second question posted in the chat asked how TfW decide what range of information will be made available to the public and how this information can help passengers. Jeremy answered that they frequently monitor their Freedom of Information requests, and if there is a significant amount of information being requested in a particular area, then the team would discuss whether to put this into the public domain. Jeremy added that it is important that the public receive information so they can hold TfW to account, so that TfW can be shown to be trusted and to be operating with integrity.

1. **Burns Delivery Unit Update**

**Gareth Potter, Senior Project Manager, Transport for Wales**

Gareth Potter, Senior Project Manager at Transport for Wales provided forum members with an update on the Burns report recommendations for improving travel between South-East Wales and England. The Burns unit published a final recommendations report in November 2020, which made 58 final recommendations, spread across 5 packages. In January 2021, the Welsh Government indorsed all the Burns recommendations, creating a clear remit to deliver all five packages from the report. Gareth presented the ‘network of alternatives’, created by Burns, which includes the following:

* Five new stations between Cardiff and the Severn Tunnel Junction
* Investment in the South Wales main line
* Endorsing the work of Cardiff Cross Rail
* Providing better connectivity between Cardiff and Newport through better active travel and bus links
* Improved access to Severn Tunnel Junction Station in Monmouthshire

Gareth then went into detail about the three studies that are currently in the first stage of WELTAG, including improvements between Cardiff and Newport, improvements within Newport central and improving access to Severn Tunnel Junction Station.

Kwaku Opoku-Addo, from the transportation department at Bridgend County Borough Council, asked in executing the Burns recommendations, what is the TfW relationship to the Wales Transport Strategy? Gareth responded that WELTAG is currently going through an update to incorporate the Wales transport strategy. If any of the projects based on the Burns recommendations want to receive funding, they will need to be aligned with the Wales transport strategy.

Clare Cameron, from Cardiff City Council, asked that whilst the proposals are designed to address specific issues, how will the proposals impact the rest of the line and the ability to deliver new stations further west? Gareth responded that whilst his presentation only shows a small section from Cardiff to the Severn Tunnel Junction, all of this work is being delivered as part of the South Wales Metro programme. The Metro programme aims for full connectivity from West Wales to Bristol. They are currently waiting on funding from a connectivity review, the results of which are expected to be released shortly.

Clare Cameron also asked if the vision to deliver the six new stations is realistic and affordable, and whether bus would be a more preferred option given the relatively short distances travelled. Gareth responded that the proposals need to go through due process to evidence what the best transport solution is between Cardiff and Newport. They are also looking into parallel routes for bus and rail through the new stations, and that bus provisions are important as they can serve the parts of the network that are harder to reach by rail. Gareth also mentioned that they are looking into a local stopping service between Cardiff and the Severn Tunnel Junction, which is also complimented by Cross Rail.

1. **Virtual Customer Panel**

**Geraint Stanley, Customer Experience Project Manager (TfW)**

Geraint Stanley introduced on a new virtual customer panel, Sgwrs, which draws out qualitative feedback on TfW Services from customers to improve and deliver TfW services. This was a new recently launched initiative will be a representative panel involving 1000 participants involving customers and non-customers in Wales and the borders. The aim of Sgwrs is to test new ideas, shape campaigns and products and identify new areas where TfW should be involved in. Participants in Sgwrs would be able to enter free prize draws for participating as a reward for their time, and 200 people have signed up so far. Sgwrs will be used to gather quantitative and qualitative data through the use of surveys and discussions which will be tailored to the participants based on their demographics, age etc. so we can understand customer needs and views.

For more information on Sgwrs, please visit: <https://tfw.wales/info-for/communities/sgwrs-customer-panel>

Michelle Roles, Stakeholder Manager Wales at Transport Focus asked how information and feedback gathered from Sgwrs would be shared more widely, outside of the customer panel. Geraint responses that the feedback and any outcomes from the feedback will be shared with the panel members initially, so that panel members feel engaged in the feedback process. Following this, information will be shared with the wider public through our forums and our wider communication networks.

Michelle Roles also asked how the team will make sure that the panel members are not overburdened with too many tasks, which may make them fatigued. Michelle added that she has experience with a similar panel which Transport Focus uses regularly to gather information. Geraint replied that the panel members will be doing one to two activities per month, such as surveys, polls, and discussions. For individual projects that require more in-depth feedback, they will work closely with whoever is doing the research and would see where their research can best fit in amongst other tasks that are assigned to the panel. Geraint also reiterated that these panel members will be volunteers, and although they are being rewarded for their participation in the panel, we must be mindful that their time is precious.

A forum member asked a question in the chat which asked how the team will ensure that the membership of the panel will reflect the demographics of passengers. Geraint responded that they have done a lot of work to ensure that they have the right representation of passengers and will set quotas based around the protected characteristics as part of their demographic mapping to help ensure they have the right level of representation. He also mentioned that there may be activities where they may want to engage with individuals who are part of a specific protected characteristic or demographic to gain information on how they can improve their journeys.

1. **New rolling stock ‘mock-up’ visits at Taff’s Well**

**Jamie Warner, Community Engagement Officer (TfW)**

Jamie Warner introduced and gave an overview of the Taff’s Well train mock-ups visitor centre which have recently opened to show the new life sized TfW trains that will be operating throughout Wales in the coming year. He stated that the mock-ups and trains will be available to be viewed by members of the public from early 2022. Visitors will be able to view and familiarise themselves with the new trains, for example, the new Tram-Train vehicles which will service the Merthyr, Aberdare, Treherbert and City Lines in South Wales. He stated that TfW are developing written and visual materials for the visitor centre and welcome visits from groups from the start of 2022. The train mock-up visitor centre will be open for the next 18 months, until Autumn 2022 and meet all current Covid 19 regulations.

1. **AOB**

Helen Dale, Stakeholder Manager at Transport for Wales, highlighted various Transport for Wales updates, consultations and campaigns.

TfW have introduced a new TfW app which replaced the previous TfW Rail app. Tickets that are currently stored on the TfW Rail app will continue to be valid for the next 3 months, however all new tickets should be purchased on the new app. He also updated the forum of the new TfW App <https://tfw.wales/ways-to-travel/rail/buy-tickets/app>

Helen provided an update on upcoming Metro transformation works, such as the upcoming works over the Christmas period. Helen reminded forum members that there will be no rail services or rail replacement buses on Christmas day, boxing day or new years day. There are Metro works planned between the 24th December 2021 and 7th January 2022. Between the 27th December 2021 and the 7th January 2022, the railway lines between Pontypridd to Aberdare and Abercynon to Merthyr Tydfil will close to allow for significant Metro preparation works. During this period, there will be bus replacement services in operation for passengers, except for those on Christmas day, boxing day and new years day. The prenotification letter that was sent to all lineside neighbours within 200m of the railway lines affected by this work was shared with members of the forum.

Lowri Joyce, Head of Community and Stakeholder Engagement at Transport for Wales mentioned the engagement ongoing around the Cardiff Central Station Enhancement programme. Lowri mentioned that TfW are currently gathering broad views on the station and surrounding area, with the aim to deliver improvements to Cardiff Central to make it fit for purpose for the future, which enabling it to form part of an integrated transport hub. A feedback platform has been launched on Common Place which allows members of the public to pin-point their feedback on a map of the area. Lowri mentioned that TfW will also welcome feedback via the engagement email (engagement@TfW.Wales) or via writing to 3 Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf, CF37 4TH.

Helen Dale stated that as this is the last forum of the year, and 12 months on from the last such survey; TfW were keen to hear forum member’s views on these forums, the format and approach etc. A link to the feedback survey was posted in the chat (<https://www.menti.com/mkm45sqdwr/0>).

## Next Regional Stakeholder Forum

The next South-East Wales Regional Stakeholder Forum is scheduled for 29th March 2022. The meeting will be held virtually over the Microsoft Teams platform between 10:00 – 12:00.