

**CAMPAIGNER'S  
GUIDE TO:**

# Saving your Bus Service in Wales



## Campaigners Guide to Saving Your Bus Service

This is a guide for people in Wales who want to campaign to save their bus service but do not know where to start. It will give you an overview of who makes decisions about bus cuts and how to campaign effectively.

It should help you understand the context for cuts in funding for buses, the people making the decisions and ways to campaign against cuts to services.

### Why is funding for buses being cut?

Transport is one of the areas devolved to the Welsh Government. The total amount of money available to the Welsh Government is decided by the Westminster Government. However, ministers at the Welsh Government make the decisions about how the money is spent, for example, how much is spent on bus funding.

All public funding is currently difficult but we believe that buses are an essential resource that need to be maintained for the health and welfare of individuals, communities, the economy, and the environment.

### What is happening to bus funding?

Up until April 2013 local authorities received money from the Welsh Government to subsidise bus routes that are not commercially viable, but that are seen as socially necessary, Local Transport Services Grant – LTSG. This was cut by 20% in October 2012, for the last six months of that financial year.

Additionally, until April 2013, bus companies received Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG, which used to be known as fuel tax rebate). BSOG was cut by 20% in October 2012, for the last six months of that financial year.

From April 2013 these two funding streams have been replaced by a single grant, the Regional Transport Services Grant (RTSG) paid to and administered by the four Regional Transport Consortia in Wales. This will be approximately 25% lower than the combined LTSG and BSOG for 2011-12. Operators and local authorities are now having to make some difficult decisions.

Additionally, the amount that bus operators are reimbursed for concessionary bus pass holders has changed, with a change in the formula used, meaning that bus operators are losing additional money, which is likely to put more services at risk.

There is also the free concessionary bus pass provided for all people over sixty years of age and all people with disabilities, and their carers, in Wales.

### How will this affect bus users in Wales?

We do not yet know what the actual effects of cuts will be but we have already seen cuts in commercial services and price increases after the initial statement from the Minister at the beginning of 2012, even though those particular cuts were ultimately postponed until October 2012. Further changes to commercial services have been seen since the cuts in October 2012. However, from April 2013 local authorities and bus companies have had at least 25% less funding than in 2011-12 and we fear that the effects will be significant.

### What you need to know

This section covers who is responsible for bus services and the difference between commercial services and those services provided by local authorities.

### Who runs buses in Wales?

There are a range of bodies involved in running bus services in Wales.

1. **Bus Companies:** in Wales approximately 70% of bus miles travelled are on commercially run services. On most commercial routes it is the bus companies who decide what services to run and where to run them and what the fares should be. Such services are likely to be in areas and on routes where there are enough passengers for a company to make a profit. All the bus companies need to do is to register with the Traffic Commissioner and inform the local authority fifty-six days before commencing the new or revised service. Most bus companies in Wales are privately owned, however, there are two exceptions: Cardiff Bus, wholly owned by Cardiff Council, and Newport Transport, that runs Newport Bus, which is wholly owned by Newport Council.
2. **Local Authorities:** much of the remaining 30% of bus miles travelled are on services operated by bus companies but subsidised by local authorities who decide which services should be provided in this way. The proportion of subsidised services varies around the country, with rural areas needing more subsidised services than urban areas, as services are less likely to be commercially viable. So, if a local authority thinks that there is a public transport need in an area it can decide to pay a bus company to run a service. In such cases bus companies are asked to submit a bid to run a service (a process called tendering). Sometimes a service may be partly commercial and partly subsidised, for example, where the local authority sees the need for additions to a timetable, like a late bus, for example. Bus infrastructure, like bus shelters and bus lanes, are also the responsibility of the local authorities.
3. **Regional Transport Consortia:** there are now four Regional Transport Consortia in Wales and from 1st April 2013 they are responsible for administering the new Regional Transport Services Grant. The four transport consortia are: Taith in North Wales, TraCC in mid and West Wales, Sewta, in South East Wales and SWITCH in South West Wales. You can find out which area you are in and details of how to contact officials there on-line (follow links from <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/transport2>), or call your local council, who will be able to tell you. It appears that the local council will remain responsible for the same transport related issues: highways construction and maintenance, maintenance of bridges and structures, road safety, public transport, active transport (walking and cycling), community transport, transport planning, traffic management, managing congestion and coordination of utilities works etc. but that the consortia will be responsible for policy work and administering funding to the local authorities and bus operators.
4. **The Welsh Government:** oversees transport policy in Wales and decides how much funding the regional transport consortia will receive to support bus services, they also set the guidelines for the concessionary bus pass in Wales. Funding for the concessionary pass helps to subsidise routes as bus operators are reimbursed for a proportion of the cost of all journeys taken by a concessionary pass holder. The Welsh Government also part-funds the TrawsCymru long distance bus routes and the Bwcabus demand responsive bus project in Carmarthen and South Ceredigion.
5. **The UK Government:** the Welsh Government receives its budget from the UK government. Some of this budget is spent directly by the Welsh Government, but a significant proportion is allocated to the public bodies that it sponsors and funds, for example local authorities and the NHS in Wales.

To campaign effectively, you will first need to find out which local authority has responsibility for public transport in your area and whether the route that you want to protect is a commercial or a subsidised route. You can ask your local authority how your route is funded. Your local authority is most likely to be one of the unitary councils (either a county or county borough council and not a community or town council). Contact details can be found online (for instance at <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>) or in your local telephone directory.

#### Commercial routes

If the route that you are wanting to protect is run on a commercial basis, the first thing to do is ask the bus company why they are withdrawing or changing the service. It is the case that bus companies may change the route or timetable of a commercial service as often as they like, as long as they give the Traffic Commissioner 56 days notice and provide a copy of this notice to the local transport authority. There is no need for bus companies to run a public consultation on changes to purely commercial routes. Changes are likely to be made due to services no longer making enough money, this may be due to funding cuts that affect the bus companies or low passenger numbers, for example. They may not give you a reason for the changes. You may be able to persuade the bus company to reverse their decision by running a 'use it or lose' campaign. If this is not successful, you would need to go to your local authority and persuade them, with numbers and short case histories, perhaps, of why you think that they should subsidise the service.

#### Subsidised routes

If the route is subsidised by your local authority, firstly you should ask your local authority why they are withdrawing it. Before withdrawing funding from a subsidised service your local authority should run a public consultation and conduct a full equalities impact assessment. Consultation should be done well ahead of making a decision, asking appropriate questions, and listening to the results (see Passenger Focus' best practice toolkit listed in the Further Resources section on how to consult well). Equality impact assessments should look at the way the proposed changes may affect different groups in society: young people, elderly people, people with disabilities, women and people from minority ethnic groups. If a local authority does not fulfil its responsibilities, the decision could be unlawful (see our later section on influencing decision makers).

### How to take Action to save your local bus service

This section covers planning your campaign, backing up your campaign with research, building alliances, communicating your message and influencing decision makers.

The first step is to make contact with other users of your service: there may already be a local campaign group, or you may like to start up your own. Speak to fellow passengers on the bus, do an internet search, there may be a group out there that you do not know about, if not, it is very likely that you will find others who also feel strongly about your service.

## Plan your campaign

Planning is important, but so is timing, don't miss out on an opportunity to be heard by taking too long to make your point. Things will be continually changing and you will be most effective if you are able to be responsive and constructive.

A plan will help you to remain focused and you should initially identify the following:

1. The overall **aim and the objectives** of your campaign: your aim may be to save your bus route, an objective may be to gather case histories and evidence of who the route is important to, and why.
2. Your potential **allies**, the people you would like to support your campaign: these may be key individuals, community groups, organisations, businesses, councillors, anyone who may be affected by the loss of your service, or represent people who may be affected.
3. Who the **decision makers** are – for instance who in a bus company or which councillor or officer in a local authority has the power to make a difference.
4. The **key messages** that may persuade others to support the campaign: keep them short and to the point, tell them what you are asking for and why.
5. How you will **tell others** about you campaign: word of mouth, flyers, internet sites, local press, street stall, public meetings.
6. **Opportunities to influence** decision makers: such as consultation exercises, AM's surgeries, council meetings.
7. A **time frame** to work within: when you plan to carry out your activities and what your deadlines are.

## The importance of research

From our experience with groups who have already faced bus cuts in England, we are aware that information gathering is really important. You could conduct a survey on your bus route, showing the numbers and types of people affected, where they are needing to go, and what they are needing to do. It's useful to find out how people are actually affected, for example: their access to work, healthcare, shops etc. not just how they feel generally about cuts. This kind of detailed and thorough information will most likely mean that you are better informed than the decision-makers, armed with hard evidence and not assumptions. You could also do some research on other services in your area, so that you are well informed of all of the transport options locally.

It's important to ensure that supporting evidence is accurate and from a reliable source. Since the Freedom of Information Act 2005 any member of the public can make a request to any publicly funded body in the UK. However, it this should be used with discretion, as every request has a financial impact and you should ensure that the information is not already publicly available and is necessary for your argument.



Remember that overall funding from the UK Government has been cut, therefore the funding from the Welsh Government to the local authorities via the regional transport consortia, has been cut, everyone is feeling squeezed financially. See if you can suggest ways in which savings can be made in less damaging ways. Try to come up with some creative solutions, such as suggesting your local authority find ways to integrate home to school transport with regular bus services or that bus routes take in particular areas, such as shopping centres or hospitals, that are likely to result in increased passenger numbers. Bus routes need passengers to survive, try advertising yours by word-of mouth, leaflets, posters, Facebook. See if you can get your local bus company to promote their service more widely, after all, it is to their advantage to have more passengers.

### Building alliances

Think about who else might be interested in your campaign and who else might be affected by bus cuts. For example, colleges and universities have students who travel by bus, hospitals and health centres have patients who travel by bus, environmental groups are generally interested in public transport issues, bus drivers and their unions will be concerned for their jobs. Think creatively, it very much depends on your local community as to who will give you most support.

Different groups may bring valuable contributions to a campaign. For example, students may help to conduct surveys, support from health-related organisations can carry a strong appeal to the wider public, environmental organisations may have campaigning expertise, drivers and unions should have valuable industry knowledge

Local shops and businesses, small or large may be affected, or may benefit from better bus services. Large stores are known to subsidise bus services in some parts of Wales, if you can see the potential for a

new or re-routed service that may benefit passengers too, why not make the suggestion to a large store or housing developer, for example. Alternatively, smaller outlets may be interested in promoting your campaign by displaying posters, leaflets or a petition.

Local voluntary organisations may represent particular groups of people who may be affected, for example older people, people with young children, sight-impaired people. They may be able to provide evidence of the impact of cuts. Citizens Advice Bureaux and other advice agencies may have evidence about problems of people needing to travel to work or unable to afford a car.

Talking to other bus passengers is invaluable, a questionnaire may be a good way to start this conversation and an excellent way to gather information and case histories, to back up your argument.

### Communicating your message

A public meeting may be a good way to get your campaign really noticed, agree a date, find a venue and invite your allies and potential allies, bus users and local residents, local councillors and your A.M.s.

Make sure that you send a press release to your local newspapers, radio and television, these media can really get your campaign noticed. Exposure of this kind can give your campaign an increased momentum. Follow up press releases with a phone call and try to establish relationships with journalists, good relationships with local journalists and researchers can make a difference to the coverage that you are able to get.

Check out what their deadlines are, this can be especially important with weekly papers or programmes. Find out, if you can, which journalists are interested in the topic. Remember that in a press

release or interview, it's generally better to focus on about three key points than a long and detailed presentation. The media like a good story, such as the human impact of a particular cut or some eye-catching statistic. They also want stories that are current, so link what you are getting across to an event of your own or a decision that the local council is about to make.

Alternatively you could hold a stall, in a prominent place, with a petition or letters of support to sign. Some materials can be provided by Campaign for Better Transport, stickers and badges and other visual aids can give a sense of purpose and of working together, posters in local shop windows can help to motivate and boost morale.

Don't miss an opportunity to engage the media. If you are going to a council meeting, for example, why not have a demonstration with placards and campaign t-shirts. Help journalists find a good photo opportunity and a quote and find someone who is directly affected for journalists to speak to. Alternatively you could organize a publicity stunt, walking part of your bus route, for example or organising a mass bus ride, with campaigners in campaign t-shirts, handing out leaflets and talking to passengers. Letters to the editor of your local newspaper are also an ideal opportunity to let others know about your campaign and to gather more support. In all these cases ensure that all the positive aspects of bus travel are promoted, encouraging more people to do it, as well as arguing against cuts that have been made.

### Influencing decision-makers

Take every opportunity to present your arguments to decision-makers. You will have a local councillor for the electoral ward that you live in, find out who they are, they should know your area well and may have a particular interest in your campaign. Find out when your local council meets and whether you can get points onto the agenda and are allowed to attend.



Councillors for opposition parties may be more likely to be sympathetic to you and more willing to speak out against the Welsh Government but all councillors should have an interest in issues that are directly affecting local people. Find out how decisions are made in your council, which councillors are interested in transport and what influence they have. The relationship between councillors and council officers (civil servants working for the council) tends to be different in each council, it is good to get a feel for how things operate in your council. It may be useful to contact others who have led campaigns in your area, whether or not they are transport related, as they may have useful local advice. You can find out who your local councillor is at your council's website, or by telephoning your council. The Welsh Local Government Association website <http://www.wlga.gov.uk> has useful information explaining the role of the 22 unitary authorities (local authorities) in Wales as well as the 735 town and community councils.

If there are any consultation exercises in your area, make sure you respond and encourage others to do the same. Passenger Focus has written a “Best Practice Toolkit” for Local Authorities planning to undertake consultation for bus service changes (see Further Resources section below). In it they highlight both the costs and benefits of an effective consultation process and highlight the ways that a consultation can be done well, providing better final outcomes for both local authorities and passengers. Good consultation can lead to more accurate data gathering, especially on the likely impact of service changes, it can help to identify alternatives or other ways to save money and possibly make improvements to the bus network. Finally, they suggest, consultation can help to identify ways to deal with the consequences of changes to bus services. These are all things that you as a campaigner and bus user can help your local transport authority with, as you are well placed to assess the impact of proposed cuts and to offer suggestions of alternatives.

It is also vitally important that your local authority has acted legally in deciding how bus services are changed. If the council ran a consultation only after the decision was made or if they ignored the findings it is worth taking a closer look. If they did not take seriously their duty to provide appropriate public transport to meet the needs of communities it is possible that the decision could be legally challenged. To compare what they should have done, with what they actually did, you will need to find and collect all the papers that relate to the local transport authority decision. These might be on the council website or you might have to ask the council for them.

For more information please follow the links from [http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/legal\\_advice](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/legal_advice)

Petitions can be a useful way of illustrating the depth of concern locally, either in response to a consultation process or as a campaigning exercise. Make sure that your request is clear and, if a written response

is required as part of the consultation exercise, ensure that you meet the deadline. You could draft a template for others to use or print postcards for people to sign and send. Try to be helpful and constructive and refer to the local authority’s Local Transport Plan, which you will find on their website, or you can ask for a copy to be sent to you. There is a Petitions Committee at the National Assembly for Wales that can be used by Welsh citizens to ensure that the National Assembly knows about issues affecting them. There are clear guidelines available online about what kind of petitions are admissible and how to submit. It is a process that can only be used for devolved subject areas, which includes transport. A petition needs to have a title or subject and a statement including what action the petitioner wishes the National Assembly for Wales to take. Once a petition is accepted the Committee will consider what actions to take next. More guidance can be found on the Assembly website:

<http://www.assemblywales.org/gethome/e-petitions/get-petitions-guidance-2.htm> or you can call 029 2089 8998 or email [petition@wales.gov.uk](mailto:petition@wales.gov.uk)

Visit or write to your A.M.s (Assembly Members). You will have one constituency A.M. and four regional A.M.s so you will have a cross-section of politicians from different political parties to contact. Depending on the time that you have available it would be useful to visit as many of them as you can, or be more strategic and visit those that you think will be most useful. Your constituency A.M. is likely to have greater local knowledge. Your regional A.M.s cover a wider area and so their local knowledge may be more limited. However, they may have a transport brief or sit on a transport committee, or know your area particularly well. Opposition A.M.s are more likely to be sympathetic to you and critical of the government, Labour A.M.s may be in a better position to influence the Welsh Government. It may be useful to visit your A.M., initially, in a surgery or by appointment and

follow this meeting up with a letter, once you know where they stand on the issue and you can bolster your argument. You can find out who your A.M.s are at the website <http://www.assemblywales.org/memhome.htm> or call 0845 010 5500.

You can also write to your M.P. (Member of Parliament) or see them in one of their surgeries, with transport this is likely to be of limited value (depending on who your M.P. is and what their responsibilities are) as transport is devolved to the Welsh Government, but it will help to raise the profile of the issue more broadly with those in Westminster and they might directly raise concerns themselves with Welsh ministers or local councils.

### Making the case - key arguments

There are three main arguments that you can use to back up your argument when you approach your A.M. or other political representative:



### The Economy

Bus cuts risk damaging economic recovery and adding to unemployment levels:

- There is strong evidence that many job seekers are unable to take jobs due to lack of buses or their excessive cost.
- Young people need bus services to access education and job opportunities.
- A third of job seekers say that poor transport options are the biggest barrier to finding work.
- Cuts to evening and weekend services, or to out-of-town business areas, can be particularly damaging as many jobs in retail and services don't fit a nine-to-five pattern.
- Local businesses need customers and customers need transport to reach shops and cafes and other services on the high street.
- High streets throughout the country will suffer through lack of buses, leading to failing businesses and further unemployment.
- Bus cuts are likely to lead to redundancies in the bus industry itself and those that service it.
- Wales has a huge potential for tourism, we have increasing numbers of visitors coming from overseas and they should have sustainable transport options, seven days a week.

### Social Exclusion

Bus cuts are likely to lead to increased social exclusion and poorer health:

- Bus cuts affect the poor, older people, the young and most vulnerable more than other groups in society.
- Cutting bus services can mean the loss of people's only independent access to transport.
- People who live in rural areas are already marginalised and cuts to services will only increase isolation and difficulties for many.
- A quarter of all households in Wales do not have a car and the poorer you are, the less likely you are to have a car.

- Older and disabled people are more likely to use buses and are less likely to have access to a car and many, such as those who are sight-impaired, cannot use cars.
- Women are less likely to drive than men and so are more likely to be adversely affected by bus cuts.
- Public transport is essential for many people to access healthcare.
- The health benefits of increased exercise are well documented as is the importance of a shift away from car use to other forms of transport that promote or incorporate physical activity such as walking.
- Passenger Focus commissioned some research in four local authorities in England in 2012, following the Comprehensive Spending Review there, which led to bus funding cuts throughout the country, their research found that the effects on passengers were varied but common to most was a reduction in their quality of life

### The Environment

Bus cuts risk increased damage to the environment:

- Bus cuts can be expected to result in more car journeys and therefore increased carbon emissions.
- Support for bus services is one area where the Welsh Government can play an immediate role in reducing carbon emissions and fulfilling their commitment to tackling the causes and consequences of climate change. A shift to more sustainable forms of transport is an essential component of tackling climate change and buses are an essential part of a sustainable transport network.
- Increased car use leads to increased local air pollution, noise, congestion and more dangerous roads for all road users and pedestrians and a generally more alienating environment for anyone not in a car.

### How can Campaign for Better Transport help?

On our website you will find practical advice on how to run a campaign group and how to prepare resources. You can contact us for advice, for example, if you need help with writing a press release or writing to your Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. Contact us via the website [www.bettertransport.org.uk](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk) or call us on 020 7566 6480.

If you would like a new group listed in our directory, please let us know via the website. You can subscribe to our local group e-bulletin, packed full of information about campaigning by emailing us at [communications@bettertransport.org.uk](mailto:communications@bettertransport.org.uk)

You can keep touch with our bus campaigning through our buses blog

[http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/public\\_transport/buses/blog](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/public_transport/buses/blog)

We can also help you to find research materials (in addition to those listed below) to help you to make the case for the social, economic and environmental value of buses.

This is such an important issue that we urge you to take pen to paper, finger to keyboard and get out on your local buses in order to save them.

Feedback on this short campaign guide is welcomed and please let us know how your campaign goes. Good luck.

### Other sources of advice

Bus Users UK Cymru Wales is an organisation that exists to “strengthen the voice of bus users in the discussion of public transport issues, to increase the influence of bus passengers on local and national decisions affecting bus services and to develop good communication between bus companies and their passengers.” They do this in different ways in different areas, by helping set up local groups, running bus surgeries, arranging meetings with bus companies and local authorities, helping with local problems, promoting good practice in the bus industry and are represented on the Bus Appeals Body. They may be a good place to start, if you have local bus issues that you would like to discuss with a third party before taking further action. You can contact them on 029 2022 1370 or by emailing [wales@bususers.org](mailto:wales@bususers.org).

### Further resources

Passenger Focus’ “Bus service reviews: consulting on changes to local services - a best practice toolkit” is a useful source of advice on how councils should consult on changes to services <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/bus-service-reviews-consulting-on-changes-to-local-services-a-best-practice-toolkit>

The Passenger Transport Executive runs a useful website on the evidence for good transport policy at [www.transportworks.org](http://www.transportworks.org).

Greener Journeys, an organisation that promotes travel by bus, also has a useful factsheet summarising the business case for buses - <http://www.greenerjourneys.com/2012/12/a5-summary-of-killer-stats-on-bus-business-case/>.

Campaign for Better Transport has produced Buses Matter, which details the value of buses to many groups in society - <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/system/files/11.02.23.buses-matter.pdf>.

### Appendix: the regional transport consortia

#### TraCC

Canolfan Rheidol, Rhodfa Padarn,  
Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth,  
Ceredigion SY23 3UE  
01970 633900  
[enquiries@tracc.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tracc.gov.uk)

#### Taith

Taith Office, Flint Station,  
Market Square, Flint CH6 5NW  
01352 704561  
[enquiries@taith.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@taith.gov.uk)

#### South East Wales Transport Alliance

Maindy Centre, Crown Way,  
Cardiff CF10 3AJ  
029 2078 8569  
or email via the website [www.sewta.gov.uk](http://www.sewta.gov.uk)

#### SWITCH Office

c/o Pengllergaer Offices,  
City and County of Swansea,  
Penllergaer, Swansea SA4 9GJ  
01792 637760 or 637761

Cover photo: Stuart Herbert on Flickr

Campaign for Better Transport's vision is a country where communities have affordable transport that improves quality of life and protects the environment. Achieving our vision requires substantial changes to UK transport policy which we aim to achieve by providing well-researched, practical solutions that gain support from both decision-makers and the public.

[info@bettertransport.org.uk](mailto:info@bettertransport.org.uk)

Phone: 020 7566 6480

Fax: 020 7566 6493

[www.bettertransport.org.uk](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/bettertransport](https://www.facebook.com/bettertransport)

[www.twitter.com/fairfaresnow](https://www.twitter.com/fairfaresnow)

[www.twitter.com/saveourbuses\\_uk](https://www.twitter.com/saveourbuses_uk)

16 Waterside, 44-48 Wharf Road, London N1 7UX

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