

## Transport Focus Board Meeting

<b>Date</b>	Wednesday 23 November 2022
<b>Time</b>	0930-1245
<b>Venue</b>	Clayton Hotel, Cardiff
<b>Classification</b>	Not protectively marked

### Attended

#### **Board members**

Nigel Stevens	NS	Chair
Cllr William Powell	WP	Board member for Wales
Kate Denham	KD	Board member
Keith Richards OBE	KR	Board member
Theo de Pencier	TdP	Board member
Rob Wilson	RW	Board member
Arthur Leathley	AL	Board member for London
Trisha McAuley OBE	TM	Board member for Scotland

#### **Management and other staff in attendance**

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief Executive
Jon Carter	JC	Head of Board and Governance
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Head of Strategy
David Beer	DB	Senior Manager Wales
Michelle Roles	MR	Stakeholder Manager Wales
Misha MccGwire	MM	Senior Communications Officer
Keith Bailey	KB	Senior Insight Advisor

#### **Guests and speakers**

Lee Waters MS	LW	Deputy Minister for Climate Change
Colin Lea	CL	Transport for Wales
Jan Chaudhry van der Velde	JV	Transport for Wales
Nick Millington	NM	Network Rail

#### **Event production team**

Luke Bodin	LB	Director, BA Events
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**Members of the public:** 10 stakeholders /members of the public attended in person, and 632 logged into the proceedings live streamed, of which 372 watched most of the meeting.

#### **Apologies**

David Sidebottom	DS	Director, Transport Focus
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## Part A Public Affairs

### 1 **Chair's welcome and opening remarks; apologies and introductions; declarations of conflicts of interest.**

Nigel Stevens (NS) opened the meeting and thanked those present and viewing online for joining. He noted that this was his first meeting as Chair and thanked his predecessor, Jeff Halliwell, for 6 years of service. He reflected on the challenges he faces with the role, and that Transport Focus will continue to ensure that the voice of the user is heard.

He noted that the meeting is being held in Cardiff and would cover a wide range of issues regarding transport provision in Wales. He welcomed Deputy Minister Lee Waters MS as the keynote speaker and encouraged the audience to ask questions throughout the session.

The meeting was a formal Board meeting, and as such some formal Board business was to be discussed at the end of proceedings.

No declarations of conflicts of interest were made.

### 2 **Overview of current work at Transport Focus to represent the interests of transport users in Wales**

David Beer (DB) and Michelle Roles (MR) summarised Transport Focus's strategic and operational work in Wales and the Borders. The work uses the evidence base from the research that Transport Focus conducts, understanding the barriers that users and non-users of public transport face.

Transport Focus holds board-level positions on a range of influential panels, including the Welsh Government's Transport Performance Board, Network Rail's Wales Route Supervisory Board, the Transport for Wales (TfW) advisory panel, and the Service Design panel. This enables Transport Focus to hold key stakeholders to account on behalf of transport users by being an independent voice. Using robust measurement from insight work such as weekly tracking surveys, Transport Focus challenges providers by directly feeding back to key stakeholders what people want from public transport.

Key barriers to travel are cost, convenience, and complexity. To drive modal shift, users (and non-users) need a network with better connectivity, better punctuality and reliability, and better value for money, with flexible, innovative ticketing.

According to Transport Focus's Monthly Rail User Survey (8<sup>th</sup> April to 18<sup>th</sup> September), overall satisfaction for TfW was 82% (vs 84% including Scotland and England). It highlighted deeper issues in several areas including value for money (56% satisfaction), the information provided during the journey (69%), and punctuality/reliability (71%, vs 76% including Scotland and England).

Transport Focus has been working with TfW on improvements to services by visiting several stations on the network such as Bridgend, Barry and Shrewsbury. Work carried out includes testing station audits, talking to staff and managers, seeing whether new facilities improve accessibility, and observing information provided to passengers in real time.

### **Q&A with David Beer (DB) and Michelle Roles (MR)**

**Q:** Arthur Leathley (AL) asked for examples of things that TfW measures that may not need to be measured.

**A:** MR gave an example on litter – only litter over a certain size was taken into account, rather than the type of litter (e.g. paper vs drug paraphernalia) which was less useful information. Several factors need to be added to their measures, such as handrails. MR found one station to have dirty handrails which are both a cleanliness and accessibility issue.

**Q:** Anthony Smith (AS) noted that the regulator of Network Rail is looking closely at performance in Wales. He asked if the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) look at TfW infrastructure issues.

**A:** DB confirmed that the ORR does look at TfW's infrastructure. The ORR also attend Network Rail's Wales Route Supervisory Board, which allows all to share good practice and scrutinise improvement plans.

**Q:** William Powell (WP) asked what work Transport Focus is doing with TfW and other stakeholders to improve transport services during large events.

**A:** DB stated that event providers such as stadium owners and Cardiff City Council have been brought onto the advisory panel to consider managing large events with more connective thinking. MR also added that there was a pilot which added some shuttle bus services to supplement the network during a trial event, which was well-received and added more capacity, but this is still in its early stages.

**Q:** Nigel Stevens asked what Transport Focus Wales's work priorities are for the coming months.

**A:** MR stated that she will be looking at rail replacement services, particularly in the Valleys with ongoing infrastructure work. She also noted that much of her work has been Cardiff and South Wales focussed due to challenges with Covid, so she will be visiting stations in North Wales in the near future.

**Q:** Rob Wilson (RB) highlighted that satisfaction and performance levels are dropping over time. He asked for further explanation of the data that these conclusions are drawn from, and which areas of the network are the worst performing.

**A:** DB explained that there is considerable pressure from trains not working properly, both from old trains that have been taken out of service and newer trains that have not met expectations. He recalled a recent train journey from Manchester to West Wales with only a small, 2-car train which was overcrowded and uncomfortable standing. Writing to senior

leadership at TfW on the journey, they were keen to escalate the issues with the depot and maintenance concerned. Key pressures are also felt on the Valleys and Marches Lines.

NS introduced and thanked Deputy Minister Lee Waters for joining remotely to give the keynote address.

### **3 Keynote address (by video link): Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Climate Change**

Lee Waters (LW) opened by recognising the importance of the Transport team at the Climate Change department, as transport plays a vital role in achieving the country's net-zero targets. At present, 17% of carbon emissions come from transport. This is a reduction of only 6% since 1990, in contrast to other areas such as waste (64% reduction) and agriculture (10%). Drastic action needs to take place in order to prevent catastrophic climate change, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

LW stated that the bus system has a pivotal role to play, but has been long neglected in policy circles. A new Bus Bill will be introduced into the Welsh Parliament in autumn to introduce franchising. A White Paper – One Network, One Timetable, One Ticket – highlights the Welsh Government's desire to achieve integration across transport modes, not just the most profitable ones. He also expressed his desire to integrate school transport into the system.

A governance system has been designed based on the European Supervisory Board Model to foster collaboration between local authorities, TfW and the Welsh Government. Recognising the impact that cost has on passengers, he explained that a fairer fare system would be put in place, though he noted the difficulty in executing this in the current economic climate. Social justice is a fundamental part of the plan.

20mph default speed limits will be in place by next September. This has not been well received by some bus companies, but LW emphasised that bus journey times should be improved by road space reallocation, not higher speed limits. He highlighted the need to make buses more attractive to the car and noted a pipeline of schemes addressing pinch points and bus priority measures to be developed.

All road schemes have been frozen. The approach to road recommendations elsewhere in Wales will now follow the recommendations of the South East Wales Burns Commission, (the alternative to the M4): joint working with local authorities, Welsh Government and TfW for a modal shift to schemes that prioritise buses and active travel.

LW accepts that progress is not being made at the speed at which he would like but believes that with the skills, capacity, mindset and funding needed, the plans should be a success.

## Q&A with Lee Waters MS (LW)

**Q:** RW commended LW on his net zero ambitions. He asked if a costed net zero delivery plan has been worked out, and how much cost would be passed onto the passenger.

**A:** LW recognised the difficulties with cost at present but expressed his desire to shift resources from building roads to making public transport cheaper. With the Roads Review, investment has been made into driving this modal shift.

**Q:** AL asked what level of fare reduction the government are aiming for, as reduced fares will require higher capacity.

**A:** LW noted that modelling is being carried out to observe the effect of different price points in different scenarios. This work alongside the Welsh Local Government Association and TfW will be published to give further detail.

**Q:** WP noted that Professor Mark Barry and others have written about the implications of HS2 being dubbed an “England and Wales” project, particularly in terms of investment. He asked what the shortfall is in this area. He also asked for an update on the Global Centre for Rail Excellence.

**A:** LW explained that as Wales has ~5% of the UK’s population, it normally gets around 5% of the budget. However, in the case of HS2, it is below this due to the way the Barnett formula is applied to England-only schemes. Despite recommendations by the cross-party committee on Welsh Affairs to address this underfunding, Wales has ~12% of the rail track but only ~3% of the funding.

Regarding the Global Centre for Rail Excellence, he noted that the long-term scheme has a lot of academic and industrial interest in it. An opportunity has arisen on the rail franchise, and the Government has to spend £100s of millions on new trains coming into service, one on the Conwy Valley line and the rest coming in next year. These trains have increased capacity and are more comfortable. The UK and Welsh Governments have also invested in a track site.

**Q:** Trisha McAuley (TM) noted that Scotland is also going down the road of public ownership of the railway. What has and hasn’t worked on integrated journey planning and modal shift? She noted the desire for accountability, to hold the rail body much more accountable to its customers.

**A:** LW stated that with rising costs due to inflation and difficulties in control measures, public ownership can become increasingly expensive. There are pinch points when old trains are phased out and new trains come in. He also noted the asymmetry in accountability between the Welsh Government and TfW, as there are more TfW staff than government staff. Balancing operational freedom and information flow can be a challenge.

**Q:** Theo de Pencier (TdP) asked if there is a strategy for road users, particularly involving EV charging points.

**A:** LW highlighted the Roads Review, stating that its purpose was to review existing schemes to make sure they are consistent with modal shift and planning policy, and to set

up new transport policy to build roads that meet climate legal requirements. 2 reviews have been carried out, and 2 schemes have been stopped, as they did not meet these requirements. While road reallocation is a priority, climate adaptation and mitigation must be considered in parallel to target climate impacts such as coastal erosion (and subsequent road loss).

LW questioned the link of economic growth with higher road traffic for the distribution of goods, citing sustainable economic growth but considering climate impacts. TdP suggested that rail freight could be a useful tool in solving this challenge.

**Q:** Kate Denham (KD) stated that the modal shift that LW discusses is ambitious in scale. There was no reference to passenger consultation in the Bus Reform Package, could Transport Focus help with this?

**A:** LW welcomed Transport Focus's help with this. The bus network design process currently involves two North Wales local authorities, looking at where passenger flows are likely to go. While the flows have been taken into account, passenger satisfaction data is where Transport Focus could lend support.

**Q:** Keith Richards (KR) asked whether there is an ambition to make sure that the growing cohort of disabled and ageing people in Wales (particularly in rural areas) are satisfied with the new bus system.

**A:** LW stated that there are other places (such as Switzerland, Sweden and Germany) which are rural that run efficient bus systems. One of the systems is funded by local business taxation. He stressed that accessibility is an important part of the social justice aspect of the policy.

**Q:** AS questioned how reliant the transport network is against the extreme weather events that will increase due to climate change over the next few decades.

He also asked what is next for the M4 corridor, as traffic continues to rise.

**A:** LW recognised the difficulty that transport provision faces in this respect, in particular rail. Flood projection maps show the potentially devastating effects of climate change in 30-40 years' time. LW emphasised how important it is to not just focus funding on adaptation, but on mitigation. The Roads Review looked at road flooding in Pembrokeshire, with roads potentially being washed away in the not-too-distant future. He recognised the need for new infrastructure to mitigate this.

Regarding the M4, alongside the Roads Review LW noted the Burns Report which reviewed alternatives to easing congestion around the M4. Following this, a delivery unit has been created which is a tripartite arrangement with Cardiff council, TfW and the Welsh Government. An independent delivery board will hold the unit to account. So far, results are promising, with Terry Burns stating that he was encouraged by the progress made.

Q: RW asked what more can be done to improve customer experience on both trains and buses at present. He also noted that many places have tried and failed to deliver integrated transport. He asked why Wales in particular will be a success.

A: LW stated that pragmatic communication is key – while steps are being taken, it will take time to implement the delivery, meaning that expectations need to be managed about what can be expected in the short term. Regarding integrated transport, he recognised that cultural and institutional attachment to the status quo has been a problem in many instances but he is hopeful that this can be overcome in Wales's case. The cost of not trying to do it is too high.

Q: referring to the previous question on integrated transport, NS asked whether big tech groups have been involved in any of the plans.

A: LW stated that while digital is substantially useful, digital is really just about technology – it's about dealing with the user need.

NS thanked LW once again for a powerful address. LW encouraged Transport Focus to be a challenging, critical friend. He welcomed Transport Focus's support in future regarding his ambitions and was keen to follow up on any queries via email.

## **5 Performance of the passenger railway in Wales**

### **Nick Millington (NM), Network Rail**

NM gave an overview of Network Rail's plans to improve performance and deliver the timetables that customers deserve and desire. The majority of the time lost across the Wales Route for Network Rail is due to Network Management issues. Signalling resourcing issues are being addressed with the recruitment of 35 interns, however, it will take 4-5 months for them to be fully trained and deployed where needed. Level crossings are also a large issue, alongside temporary speed restrictions. Where possible, alternative controls such as miniature stop lights or bridges are being used instead of speed restrictions to keep trains on time.

Work has been conducted with local communities through Performance Risk Prevention to spot potential high-risk areas for trespassing and on-board anti-social behaviour.

Overall, the warm summer weather was handled relatively well by Network Rail Wales. However, the extremely wet and windy weather in October caused multiple trees to fall. Over 40,000 trees are suffering from ash dieback, an incurable disease. Over time, these trees become increasingly unstable, and so require removal to reduce the risk of falling and causing disruption. Network Rail is working with Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government to clear diseased trees quicker while offsetting and planting new ones.



The “Value Map” in Wales which scores how Network Rail performs and delivers its milestones has been updated. Moreover, the tripartite agreement between Network Rail, TfW and Amey was agreed in September with a 10 Point Plan and targets for incidents, minutes delay and cancellations. A new measure, ‘On Time to 3’ (OTT3), has been adopted to measure delays across a journey from station to station, not just from start to end station.

#### **Jan Chaudhry van der Velde (JV), Transport for Wales**

JV summarised TfW’s work on ramping up training and development of transport staff post-Covid, with TfW investing in new training and simulator centres in Cardiff and Chester. Rolling stock is an ongoing, but progressing, issue – new fleets will be rolled out over the coming months, with the overall capacity to be increased by 50%, but there are still significant issues with the current fleets. Depots are being built or remodelled (e.g. Canton and Barry) to accommodate new trains. Balance in this transition period is something that TfW is trying to improve.

#### **Colin Lea (CL), Transport for Wales**

CL outlined TfW’s Performance Update, explaining ‘Passenger Time Lost’ (PTL) further. A percentage score includes all passengers from all locations across the network (including trains in England that travel to/from Wales), with locations weighted to heaviest footfall. It enables real-time analysis from station to station so that stations which are consistently below the target OTT3 level can be focussed on (example given of Prestalyn). Real-time amendments can also be made by the control teams. Another measure (Percentage of Stations Stops Missed, or PSSM) is used to avoid TfW cancelling the same services or stations. A Lost Time Delay manager has been hired to dig deeper into lines and stations with particularly high disruption.

CL echoed the aforementioned issues with depot storage, highlighting the criminal incident at Craven Arms where two trains hit a mini digger which was being stolen from a nearby site. New class 197 units are to be introduced next Spring, but with many disruptions expected from March-May 2023 due to the rollout. TfW are hopeful that the new rolling stock will improve reliability and timetabling resilience.

#### **Q&A**

**Q:** KD outlined that while the rollout of the new rolling stock looks promising, this alone will not improve customer satisfaction. Moreover, she asked what is being done to improve customer satisfaction at present.

**A:** JV emphasised that track and fleet improvements have been made to improve the reliability of services, which is a key factor for customer satisfaction. He also explained that TfW’s operational structure has been reorganised to make the organisation more customer-facing. He stated that in the meantime, replacement coach and bus services and information about closures need to be of a high standard.



**Q:** TM noted Transport Focus's research that shows that customer satisfaction with information provision in Wales is 69%, which is not good enough as it underpins the other performance statistics. She asked what is being done about that now, and to what extent is the cultural change in the organisation being driven by the customer's voice.

**A:** JV admitted that the information provided is not good enough. TfW is working with the rest of the industry to improve real-time systems, with a control centre in Cardiff. The control centre is currently undergoing structural changes to incorporate different information sources from passengers via Twitter and other social media channels. While there is an app in development to improve customer information, it needs improving. In terms of customer culture, there is a director with a specific customer remit. However, JV stated that he would like the whole organisation to have a more customer-focused culture.

**Q:** AL noted that customer care as a concept has been around for decades and noted that progress in this area is very slow. He offered Transport Focus's support to help improve satisfaction at pace.

**A:** JV welcomed Transport Focus's support. He recognised the need to improve services both in the long and short term.

**Q:** AS complemented TfW and Network Rail's approach to data. However, he noted that really rich passenger insight data, beyond service reliability, was missing from their measures. He promoted Transport Focus's omnibus surveys as having the potential to provide that missing information. He also asked about what is being done about extreme weather.

**A:** CL welcomed the support of Transport Focus, highlighting MR's work with TfW as a critical friend.

Regarding extreme weather, decisions are taken jointly between TfW, Amey and Network Rail to prioritise safety while minimising disruption where possible, for example putting on replacement buses. He pointed to recent work along the Severn Estuary, where the cliffs are particularly susceptible to collapse, and so train speeds were restricted. Engineering work has taken place to reduce the risk of cliff collapse.

**Q:** GD asked how the customer's voice is being considered in incident reviews, outlined in the 10 Point Plan.

**A:** CL noted that the reviews are not just operational, they involve every area of the business and will include any social media contact or complaints received, as well as feedback from those on the ground in customer-facing roles that day.

**Q:** Carolyn Thomas asked for more information about the extra service in North Wales in December.

**A:** JV outlined that as well as the increased frequency planned for the Wrexham – Bidston route, which will be implemented when rolling stock is available, there will be more loco hauled Mark 4 sets on the Marches Line north of Shrewsbury. The new Class 197 trains are being deployed in North Wales, and in the future, the Liverpool, Halton Curve, Chester service will be extended to Llandudno.

Q: WP asked for reassurance that the most vulnerable passengers are at the forefront of thinking at a time when we can expect higher-than-normal disruption.

A: CL assured that the newer fleet will improve people's ability to access services, jobs and opportunities for core services. He admitted that this needs work for the rest of Wales and acknowledged continued problems such as the difference between the height of the train and the height of the platform.

NS thanked NM, JV and CL for their contributions, stressed the need to ensure the 'here and now' was as important as the longer term, and reminded all that Transport Focus was here to help.

## 6 **Insight presentation on TfW's fflecsi (Demand Responsive Transport) project**

Keith Bailey (KB) gave an overview of TfW's collaboration with Transport Focus Wales on fflecsi (Demand Responsive Transport). Following the introduction of pilot schemes in mostly rural areas of Wales in 2020, the second phase in early 2022 looked at Newport. The scheme was compared to similar schemes in England: Tees Flex in Tees Valley and go2 around Sevenoaks.

Stakeholder interviews across the fflecsi network were carried out, with 84 existing and potential passenger responders across four participating areas. Initial fieldwork was carried out in March 2021 and June-August 2021, reflecting the experiences at lockdown levels. Newport fieldwork took place in January-February 2022.

While services were very alike in rural areas, the most recognisable differences from the public perspective were hours of operation and the existence (or lack of) internal zones. Across all areas, there was a lack of awareness from potential users about what fflecsi services were, and who they were for.

Stakeholders generally aligned in their views, desiring demand responsive transport to better use budgets and widen access to service provision. No fflecsi area was likely to have gone ahead without TfW's support. Similarly in England, local authorities have been crucial in implementing services.

Overall, findings suggest a good case for flexible bus services from users and potential users. Four types of customers appeared to be quicker "wins" to attract to demand responsive transport: leisure travel, the retired, the less able and the unemployed. Students in rural areas and workers/commuters were harder groups, as they were less flexible in their plans. Newport saw more commuter usage than other fflecsi areas.

Comments from users praised the "genuine flexibility" and "competitive price" of the service. However, reliability and additional hassle in making bookings were seen as weaker points in the service.

Flexible bus route services were found to be most useful on routes in remote areas, to feed remote settlements into transport hubs and for connections between spokes.

## 7 Wrap up and forward look

WP thanked those who have attended in person and virtually, praising the richness of discussions held during the meeting. He praised the range of customer experiences shared during the day. Highlighting the tension between long term ambitions and short term needs, he reflected upon CL describing how MR and Transport Focus have supported TfW in meeting their customer satisfaction targets. He also thanked the production team for the technical support during the session.

## Part B Updates

### 1 Rail reform

AS outlined the UK government's plans to reform the rail industry through the creation of Great British Railways, the legislation of which is unlikely to come through until 2023. However, the transition team continues to grow, with Transport Focus providing lots of insight, keeping them customer-focused. Transport Focus also continues to work with the Rail Delivery Group and the Department for Transport to get an interim replacement for the rail passenger survey

### 2 Transport Focus Reset

NS stated that Transport Focus has conflicting demands from differing parts of its stakeholder grouping. With a new Chair in place, now is the right time to challenge the organisation to ensure it is really focused on what it delivers and that it adds value to stakeholders. Work is currently being carried out that should be completed by the end of the year, which will enact a process of organisational changes. This will make sure that Transport Focus continues to be a powerful transport user voice, at a time when it has never been so important.

## Part C Corporate affairs

### 1 Board meeting minutes: May 2022

The Board **approved** these minutes.

### 2 Committee meeting minutes:

#### 2.1 Passenger Contact Group (October 2022)

The minutes were **noted**.

#### 2.2 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (June, July and October 2022)

The minutes were **noted**.

2.3 ARAC Annual report to Board 2021-22

The report was **noted**.

2.4 Statistics Governance Group (June and September 2022)

The minutes were **noted**.

**3 Reports from subsidiaries:**

3.1 Transport Focus Wales (October 2022)

The minutes were **noted**.

3.2 Transport Focus Scotland (October 2022)

The minutes were **noted**.

**4 For noting by the Board**

The Board formally ratified the following projects or proposals previously approved out of meeting:

4.1 BRD2223-005: Your Bus Journey (refining survey approach) (RfC)

4.2 BRD2223-006: MSUS 2022

4.3 BRD2223-007: Transport Focus Wales Limited: parent company guarantee in respect of audit exemption required under section 479C of the Companies Act 2006

4.4 BRD2223-008: Transport Focus Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22

4.5 BRD2223-009: Passengers expectations of the future railway

4.6 BRD2223-010: Porterbrook East Midlands Turbostar Interiors research

4.7 BRD2223-011: Bus and Rail Weekly Survey (RfC)

4.8 BRD2223-012: Rail strikes 2022: monitoring and insight

4.9 BRD2223-013: MSUS 2023

4.10 BRD2223-014: Call centre contract extension

**5 Any other (public) business**

No other business was discussed.

**6 Closing remarks**

Nigel Stevens thanked everyone for attending, expressing his gratitude to all the speakers and organisers for a very useful event.

Signed as an accurate record of the meeting

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Nigel Stevens, Chair

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Date