# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Welcome Ticket** |
| **DATE** | **07 March 2024** |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip** |

The Welsh Government was proud to establish the Welcome Ticket free public transport scheme in March 2022 as part of a package of support measures to help Ukrainians, Afghans and other refugees to integrate more effectively in Welsh life. Over the last 2 years, we estimate that around 1 million journeys have been undertaken through this scheme.

The Welcome Ticket was a condition of the £200m Bus Emergency Scheme and then theBus Transition Fund, which was put in place to help support the post-pandemic recovery of the bus and rail industry. This fund will end on 31 March 2024 and, as a result, the current Welcome Ticket scheme will also end on that date.

We recognise the benefits of and ongoing need for a Welcome Ticket-type scheme to support the integration of newly arrived sanctuary seekers. However, while the current Welcome Ticket has been hugely welcomed and beneficial, there have been some delivery challenges which have led to some disappointing and distressing incidents. Therefore, we are reviewing the learning obtained from the scheme as we consider how an improved scheme could be launched in future.

Our intention is to establish a new phase of the Welcome Ticket scheme in 2024 which is sustainable and fit-for-purpose, ensuring our resources can be focused on those most in need. The new scheme would be designed to prevent discrimination and the other unintended situations we have encountered with the current phase of the scheme.

I would like to thank our transport operators and staff across Wales who have worked in partnership with the Welsh Government over the last 2 years to provide a warm welcome to families and individuals during challenging times.

We will work closely with travel operators, local authorities, the third sector and sanctuary seekers, during the development of this new phase of the scheme. I expect to be able to provide a further update during the summer.

Information on the Welsh Government concessionary travel tickets is available at <www.traveline.cymru>