

# Policy Review of Public Transport Consultation Document

Response by  
FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN WALES  
October 2001

The *Federation of Small Businesses in Wales* welcome the opportunity to respond to the *Environment, Planning and Transport Committee's* Consultation Report into their *Policy Review of Public Transport*.

With over 6,500 members in Wales the FSB welcome the recognition given by the Committee, to the importance that public transport issues have on the small business sector.

The Federation recently commissioned an in depth study into what our members perceive as being the main barriers to growth and survival of their businesses. The survey in Wales demonstrated that **63%** of respondents said that they were dissatisfied with public transport – 31% saying that they were very dissatisfied. Only 10% of respondents said that they were satisfied. Respondents in Wales expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction in comparison with other regions of the UK.

Because of different circumstances faced by the various sectors of small businesses, together with the different public transport structures in different areas of Wales, we cannot appropriate the dissatisfaction to a single issue. For example small town retailers' dissatisfaction may be linked to the lack of, and irregularity of the public transport services, which a proportion of their customers rely upon.

The times of bus and train services are often not convenient for people who have to rely on them to reach their basic services in towns or cities. It is not convenient for example, if customers are stranded for hours on end in the town because there isn't a regular service for them to return home.

Another potential problem for peripheral consumers is the accessibility to train and bus stations; it is not much use for those who rely on public transport if they are located miles away from operational stations.

For the tourism sector in Wales, small business often suffer because there is a lack of public transport services available to bring visitors into their area. Usually it is relatively easy to reach cities and the larger towns of Wales by rail or coach services. However, there are few direct services from one major location to the other. As there is a lack of reliable train services connecting the different areas of Wales together, tourists often have to endure a long, detoured and indirect coach journey that unnecessarily takes them round a large part of the country.

It is even harder for tourist who relies on public transport to reach more isolated locations. As well as affecting the more traditional seaside holiday destinations in Wales, the lack of

services limits the potential for small businesses in Wales to take advantage of the growth in rural, activity based and sustainable tourism.

The FSB in Wales has called on the following measures as a means to improve the public transport issues.

- There is a need for constant and regular means of public transport that consumers can rely upon to reach the services provided by local businesses. For example, a return services every couple of hours to the nearest town or city center.
- The accessibility to public transport should be improved by ensuring that a local rail and/or bus station services peripheral communities.
- We would welcome the introduction of an integrated services and a joint-up timetable that would provide regular and reliable means of transport to the major locations in Wales.
- There is a need to relate the development of an integrated public transport infrastructure with the tourism sector.