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Gweinidog yr Economi, Trafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref NR1349
Ein cyf/Our ref KS/05968/20

Nick Ramsay MS
Member of the Senedd for Monmouth

Nicholas.Ramsay@senedd.wales

19 October 2020

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your correspondence of 30 September, 2 October and your correspondence of 28 September to the First Minister. I am also writing in regards to the commitment made in Plenary on 7 September, during questions, to write to yourself to provide details of the rationale for the measures taken by Transport for Wales for arrangements for students travelling from Torfaen and Monmouthshire to and from Hereford.

I recognise the situation is difficult at the moment and that buses are not an ideal way to travel for all. One of the main priorities is that no child or young traveller is left behind.

Transport for Wales have assured me that although the trains appear to have space on board, when applying Government Guidance on social distancing measures for train loads, they are at the allowed capacity.

Although train services are not restricted to workers or essential travellers, at busy times, students will be encouraged to board the buses put on especially for them, to ensure they get to and from college within their bubble and to limit the number of other people with whom they come into contact. This is in line with Welsh Government and UK Government Guidance.

Transport for Wales have been able to source an additional unit (Train) leaving Cardiff Central at 06:55 arriving at Hereford at 08:14 from the 12th October as well as bolster an additional carriage on the morning service arriving into Hereford at 8:53 and this has been in place since 29 September.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Transport for Wales have been meeting with the college and are also continuing to explore all options to help with social distancing.

Transport for Wales have been investing an additional c. £40k per day in running additional school-focused bus provision alongside train services, supporting all schools across the Wales & Borders that rely on the network as they deal with the social distancing challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

Transport for Wales have assured the colleges in a meeting on 8th September that they are doing everything to ensure no student or young person is left behind and they are absolutely committed to providing safe transport to students.

As the college is based in England, Transport for Wales are also specifically following DfE guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020> that highlights dedicated school transport do not mix with the general public on those journeys.

Although still under Covid-19 restrictions, rail provision is now in place in the morning for three services from the south with seven trains traveling south in the afternoon.

Additional capacity has been provided by Transport for Wales on the key morning train from Abergavenny to Hereford. This is now a 3-car train rather than 2-car. Transport for Wales continue to review and improve all options where possible given that all their available trains are being used.

Transport for Wales further bolstered services by supplying additional road transport from the south that can accommodate up to 300 students as follows:

AM peak to Hereford from the south

3x Road Transport on standby at Cwmbran from 07:00
1x Road Transport on standby at Pontypool from 07:00
4x Road Transport on standby at Abergavenny from 07:00

PM peak from Hereford to travel both North and South (remaining flexible on capacity so staff on ground can manage discharge in each direction)

4x Road Transport on standby at Hereford from 13:00
4x Road Transport on standby at Hereford from 14:00
4x Road Transport on standby at Hereford from 15:00
4x Road Transport on standby at Hereford from 16:00

Transport for Wales staff are working hard to ensure that all students safely board transport to and from college at stations. To facilitate this operation, two additional stewards will be on hand at Cwmbrân, Pontypool & New Inn and Abergavenny in the northbound direction to help with students getting on to the road transport. This will be in addition to any stewards operating a Social Distanced Station Plan.

Because of the complexity of the afternoon peak operation, a rail replacement co-ordinator will be on site at Hereford Railway Station to manage the bus operation along with five stewards and a supervisor to support the operation

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

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