

DRAFT TRANSPORT (WALES) BILL**1. Introduction**

The Authority is grateful for being consulted on this Bill. It is active in the transport field by reason of its concern for both the transport needs of residents within the Park and those of its visitors. Car-based transport is one of the major impacts on the Park's environment, particularly by the 3.2 million visitors per year that we receive. These impacts are felt strongly at a local level in terms of seasonal congestion problems but also the significant contribution that both visitors and local people make to the global environmental problems associated with car-based transport.

2. Transport Policy

As a body charged with protecting and enhancing the environmental quality of our Park, we see it as an important part of our strategy to work in partnership with other key players to overcome some of the barriers to sustainable transport in our area. This is a key issue in the National Park Management Plan, the current Local Plan and Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan, our emerging strategic document entitled Future Directions and in particular in our Sustainable Tourism Strategy. We aim to use the support that visitors can give to local transport services to increase income and support for those services. This is an additional benefit that tourism can bring to the area.

3. Partnership Working

As transport is primarily a Local Authority function, we see partnership working as key to delivery in our area. We are active on the Mid Wales Partnership's Transport subgroup, input into SE and SW Wales Regional Transport groups and see the regional route for policy development as being critically important.

4. NPA Transport Activity

We have been able to take a lead in partnership work in two major areas:

- **Beacons Bus Partnership** - Beacons Bus is a recreational network that operates on high summer Sundays and Bank Holidays taking day visitors from towns and cities in South Wales and the Marches into the National Park. Existing services are particularly poor at these times and visitors do have differing priorities from local people. That said, local people find the additional services provided of significant value. This has meant working with Authorities from SE Wales, SW Wales, Mid Wales and Herefordshire.

- **Sustainable Transport Promotion** We have been able to publish information aimed at visitors but also of value to local people. The Discover Guide promotes the idea of using public transport and gives details of attractions, walks etc that people can enjoy. The sister publication gives timetable information for services covering the entire Park which is otherwise unavailable to locals or visitors because the Park boundary crosses so many Local Authority and regional boundaries. Again the 3 Welsh regions and Herefordshire have been involved.

5. Implications of the Draft Bill

The Authority greatly welcomes the draft Bill's general intent. To have a more closely coordinated Wales Transport Policy fitting into the outcomes of the Spatial Strategy and Sustainable Development Strategy makes considerable sense in policy terms. We particularly welcome the powers to secure services and those in relation to the SRA. Transport requires a coordinated set of solutions and the concentration of powers to implement that coordination in one body should enable the integration of thinking and real world outcomes to be achieved.

6. Joint Transport Authorities

In principle we also welcome the powers to establish these Authorities. We support the argument that these are necessary to ensure cross-boundary planning. However our experience of working across regions leads us to the conclusion that these proposals alone will not resolve all issues. There needs to be additional work put into how cross-regional thinking can be developed and how the needs of areas like the National Park can be catered for. Our problems are different from many rural areas in terms of the number of visitors we receive but also in terms of the number of Regions to which we relate. These can cause very considerable barriers in terms of policy and financial priorities, as our problems are peripheral to all regions thinking.

We would argue for a duty to be created within the clauses enabling the JTAs establishment whereby the Assembly would be required to ensure that cross-regional issues were identified within regional transport planning and that they then were adequately provided for in terms of financial and implementation priorities. Thus the Assembly would be the gatekeeper of cross-regional issues and would perhaps have to use its powers to secure services to achieve action on the ground.

7. Conclusions

The Authority repeats its support for the principles of the draft Bill but would urge the specific inclusion of cross-regional working mechanisms to ensure areas such as this National Park do not fall between stools.

RJT
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