



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal
The Committee on Equality of Opportunity**

**Mawrth, 7 Rhagfyr 2010
Tuesday, 7 December 2010**

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mohammad Asghar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Veronica German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Janet Ryder	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

John Forsey	Cyngor Sir Powys Powys County Council
Michael Morton	Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr, Arriva Buses Wales Managing Director, Arriva Buses Wales

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Catherine Hunt	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Claire Morris	Clerc Clerk
Robin Wilkinson	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.30 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.30 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. This is our last session before the Christmas recess. We have not received any apologies, but Veronica German is running late today, so she will join us at some point. I ask Members around the table to switch off their mobile phones and pagers. We operate in both Welsh and English. If you need to hear the translation, it is on channel 1 on the headsets. Channel 0 is the floor language.

[2] Does anybody need to declare an interest? I see that no-one does.

9.31 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad i Effaith Polisi Llywodraeth Cymru ar Hygyrchedd Gwasanaethau
Trafnidiaeth i Bobl Anabl yng Nghymru—Tystiolaeth Lafar gan Gwmni Bysiau
Arriva Cymru**

Inquiry into the Impact of Welsh Government Policy on the Accessibility of

Transport Services for Disabled People in Wales—Oral Evidence from Arriva Buses Wales

[3] **Ann Jones:** I welcome Michael Morton, who is the managing director of Arriva Buses Wales. We were due to also have representatives from Newport Transport with us today, but I believe that Chris Blyth, its managing director, is unwell and has therefore sent his apologies. If the committee is in agreement, we will send him a copy of the questions—they will probably be the same questions as those that we will ask you, Michael—and ask for his answers. We can lay his response as a paper to note and we will look at it at our next meeting. I see that the committee is in agreement.

[4] As I say, it is a pleasure to welcome Michael here today. We have questions, Michael, so if it is all right with you, we will go straight to those questions.

[5] **Mr Morton:** That would be fine.

[6] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much. We have received your paper and thank you for that. In that paper, you have outlined a number of steps that you have taken to improve the access to transport services for disabled customers. How do you monitor the uptake of the service by disabled customers?

[7] **Mr Morton:** We have a key on the ticket machine. When a person with a wheelchair travels by bus, the driver hits the key so that we know how many are travelling so that, in the event that we find that we get regular wheelchair users along a route, we do not end up having to leave one behind. That is monitored and each general manager reports on that each week.

[8] **Ann Jones:** What about people who are not in wheelchairs who have other disabilities? How do you monitor and gauge whether they are using your services?

[9] **Mr Morton:** Obviously, they have disabled passes that they use. The drivers again have a separate key to use on the machines. We also have a couple of disability fora in the north Wales area where we have been very successful at getting people to come to meet us.

[10] **Ann Jones:** So, that is how you measure it. You count the number of disabled passes used and the number of wheelchair users who use your buses and then you monitor that. Did you say that you have used passenger fora?

[11] **Mr Morton:** Yes.

[12] **Ann Jones:** How do you think that that is working? Have disabled people come up with any suggestions that you have been able to implement?

[13] **Mr Morton:** It works extremely well where we can get people with disabilities to engage with us. On our background, a number of us have relatives who are disabled, so we fit in pretty well with those people. They have come up with a number of suggestions, one of which we are about to implement on our new buses that arrive in 2011: there will be an audible announcement of the stops because, at the moment, the stops are only displayed. Obviously, if you are travelling on the trains, you hear the stations announced. We have a global positioning system facility on all the buses, so we can announce the stops. There are 10 new buses arriving in the middle of 2011 that will have stop enunciations and two new buses, which are being part funded by Denbighshire, will be arriving in February and will also have stop enunciation.

[14] **Ann Jones:** Why do you feel that the engagement work that your general managers

have undertaken has only had limited success? Is that down to individuals? Some individuals will embrace what you are doing, but others will just accept—

[15] **Mr Morton:** We have written out to disability groups from all our depots and we found that they have responded very well indeed in the north Wales coastal strip. Just recently, I have intervened personally in our Aberystwyth operations and we have got the people to engage with us there. However, around Wrexham and Chester—I know that Chester is over the border, but our depot is in north Wales—we have found it very difficult to get people to show any interest at all.

[16] **Ann Jones:** Are you saying that people in north Wales have a real need to engage with you and are keen to engage with you?

[17] **Mr Morton:** They are keen to engage with us. What we have to remember is that, from our point of view, a lady with a pushchair, two children and four Tesco carry bags may be more disabled than my mother-in-law who is in a wheelchair. What we have found is that where we can engage with people and where they have shown an interest, they want to be treated exactly the same as our other passengers, not as special cases.

[18] **Ann Jones:** Yes. So, you subscribe to the statement that if it is right for anybody with a disability then it is right for everybody else and it is easier for everybody else.

[19] **Mr Morton:** Yes.

[20] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thank you. Joyce, do you want to take the next set of questions?

[21] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. Good morning. You note in your evidence that local authorities do not always provide up-to-date information regarding the accessibility of services at bus stops. What do you think that you could do to improve the availability of what is critical information for some people?

[22] **Mr Morton:** All that we can do as an operating company is to keep lobbying them and saying that the information is not up to date. In fact, in Ceredigion, around Aberystwyth, where we have just put our new Ar Hyd Aber network in, we have put the information up at the stops ourselves, with the local authority's permission. Obviously, it is short of staff. We could do with a lot more staff to do it, but we had the staff to do it and the authority has let us do it. There is no longer an issue in Wales about telling people whether the bus is easy access or not, because we have gone to 100 per cent easy access from March 2010, but we still believe that the timetable at the stop, whether you are disabled or not, needs to be fact rather than fiction. In parts of Wales, it truly is fiction. Going around parts of Aberystwyth, we found bus stops that still said 'Crosville' on them, which goes back to the 1970s.

[23] **Ann Jones:** I was going to say that perhaps you could explain that for those of us who do not want to say that we are old enough to remember Crosville.

[24] **Mr Morton:** Crosville was the operation under the National Bus Company, which operated until Arriva acquired Crosville in the late 1990s.

[25] **Ann Jones:** Whose fault is it that certain areas still have Crosville bus stops?

[26] **Mr Morton:** The local authorities are responsible for the information at the bus stops.

[27] **Ann Jones:** So, it is the local authorities. Sorry, Joyce.

[28] **Joyce Watson:** No, that is fine. We have talked about people with disabilities and, of course, there are different levels of disability. Do you do anything to help to ensure that the information that you provide is accessible to people with learning disabilities?

[29] **Mr Morton:** We are currently working with a group in Chester. We have done very little in this area so far, but we have been approached by a group in Chester. We are putting together a package. It is very basic; it is how to get on a bus. One of our training inspectors at Chester is engaging with this group of people. They are so fantastic in showing us how we need to do it because it is so easy to just group everybody together. Most of us, even if we do not know how to get on a bus, would just get on and ask the driver, 'Do I pay you? Do I put the money in a fare box?' We just assume that we could get on with it. You have to take a step back. These people have never used a bus before and they have probably been ferried to and from school in taxis. It is a big learning curve for us, but if this works in Chester, we are certainly going to try to roll it out in the other areas. However, we have very little experience at the moment.

[30] **Janet Ryder:** To follow on from that, how much has that experience influenced the driver training programmes?

9.40 a.m.

[31] **Mr Morton:** Everything that we learn from our disability fora, and from what is going on in Chester at the moment, is rolled into a section of the training. All our drivers are doing certificates of professional competence in NVQ at various levels, and part of the CPC includes disability awareness. So, the section in there is gradually expanding as we do more. Of course, our drivers come back; on top of CPC, there is continuing professional development, and, when we have anything new, we run those courses for the drivers as well.

[32] **Janet Ryder:** It is driver training that has been highlighted to us by disability groups as being crucial. The reception or the reaction that they get from the driver on the bus can either, if it is their first attempt, encourage them to use it or put them off using public transport forever. So, is there anything else that you could tell us about how you specifically train your drivers in that aspect?

[33] **Mr Morton:** One thing that we have learned from a group of people with hearing difficulties that we engage with is that there are so few people who have total hearing loss that it just would not work to teach our drivers to use sign language. It is like any other language—if you do not use it, you forget it—and the last thing that we want is a driver making the wrong signs at people getting on the bus.

[34] What we came up with, with the group's help, was what we call a 'touch card' on one of the routes in Llandudno. It is a laminated sheet of A3 paper. There is a little sticker on the bus next to the ticket machine that has the touch card logo on it. If people with hearing difficulties get on, they know to touch that sticker and the driver gets the touch card out of his bag. It lists every stop along the route or, if they know the fare, they can turn it over and enter the fare as if it was a calculator—they put £1.46 and the driver will issue a £1.46 ticket. It is as simple as that.

[35] **Janet Ryder:** Have you developed that in conjunction with groups?

[36] **Mr Morton:** Yes, the group in Llandudno had been to have a look at a similar operation in north-east England and we have tailor-made it to what they want.

[37] **Janet Ryder:** Will that be rolled out across Wales, across your whole operation? Or is that knowledge just retained in north Wales?

[38] **Mr Morton:** No, we approached Go North East and it came up with—

[39] **Janet Ryder:** You said that information at bus stops is the responsibility of local authorities. How much do you work with other public bodies to ensure that we have a public transport system that is accessible to disabled people?

[40] **Mr Morton:** We work with our colleagues in Arriva Trains Wales to try to make sure that our buses, where they are not frequent or where train services are not frequent, meet the train services. That is not always easy, as I found yesterday coming down—a freight train broke down in front of my train and I spent two hours sitting in Hereford station. Nine times out of 10, where we have rural services—we have a lot of rural services in mid Wales—the bus services meet the trains. Wherever possible, we are talking to Network Rail to get the stations more easily accessible as well. Not a lot of Welsh stations have easy access, and it seems daft to turn up with a low-floor bus when the person getting off the train in a wheelchair has to come down seven or eight steps.

[41] Generally, again, in rural areas, our drivers are trained to a much higher level for dealing with people with disabilities. Drivers in rural areas are less conscious about leaving cash in the tray, so the driver will get out of the cab and help, whereas in the town centres they do not like getting out and leaving the cash in the tray.

[42] **Janet Ryder:** What have you been doing in urban areas to develop integrated transport systems, so that you bring the buses much closer to the train stations? That does not always happen in all places.

[43] **Mr Morton:** No, it certainly does not. Even though it is a separate company to Arriva Buses Wales, Arriva Trains Wales having the franchise for the Welsh area means that we can work together to lobby to get things done much more quickly. For instance, Llandudno station is now a shadow of its former self: it is a big, Victorian, multi-platform station that now requires only one platform and the local council is converting the station to eventually take buses. The buses will drive down the platform on the right-hand side, trains will come in and the buses will be waiting.

[44] Wrexham is difficult because it has two stations, but the local council has put in a new bus bay at Wrexham General railway station and we have diverted our buses straight away to serve that station. All of our services in Wrexham are of a higher frequency—10 to 15-minute services—so we do not specifically have to tailor the bus service to meet the train service, because there is a bus in there every few minutes anyway.

[45] **Mohammad Asghar:** What would help you provide better integrated transport services in Wales?

[46] **Mr Morton:** To totally integrate services, we have to look at all aspects of social inclusion. One of the biggest problems in Wales recently is that less and less money has been given to Wales by the Westminster Government for the local transport supplementary grant. That has led to local authorities having less money for tendered services, which means that, inevitably, evening and Sunday services start to disappear—there is no money to provide them and they are not profitable. That leads to a spiral where people go out, perhaps, to buy a second car to get around at weekends, to get the kids to football and to go shopping. When they come to use the bus on a Monday, they think, ‘Well, I may as well use the second car’. So, we have a lack of funding coming in to Wales from the UK Government that is, at the end of the day, affecting everybody.

[47] As an operator, we are trying to look at the evening and Sunday services that are on

the margin for which we could say, 'Let us gamble on that and put that service back in'. At the end of the day, it is absolutely fantastic providing low-floor, easy-access buses for people with disabilities during the day, but they want to get out at night as well—they want to go to the theatre, just like everybody else. So, it is about getting the funding right or getting the parameters right so that operators have a little bit more leeway to provide the service.

[48] One suggestion that we made was that, if the Welsh Assembly Government looked at using the same parameters for fuel duty as for trains, and if we went to using agricultural diesel or the equivalent—which trains now use—rather than getting a fuel duty rebate, my company would be able to put on about 20 per cent more evening and Sunday services that it currently operates. That is a substantial increase in services, and that would affect everybody.

[49] **Mohammad Asghar:** You mentioned the lack of funding from Westminster—we all understand it and we are all going through it—but if you charged half-price on Sunday, just wait and see how many people would use your buses. Anyway, my question is on concessionary bus passes. What assessment do you make of the current concessionary bus pass scheme?

[50] **Mr Morton:** We obviously record everything that is used. We have seen a growth over the period since it was introduced, which accelerated into the early part of 2009, but there is now an element of the novelty wearing off; there has been a decline over the last 18 months in the number of people using the scheme. It works very well in Wales. We have a good rapport, through the Confederation of Passenger Transport, with our colleagues in the integrated transport unit here. The level of funding is about right, because we all sat down together and were extremely candid with Colin Eaketts and his group. We seem to have achieved the 'no better, no worse off' rule, and it works well. If you talk to senior citizens, they will tell you that they love the idea of being able to get around by bus.

[51] **Mohammad Asghar:** Great. How do you make sure that your drivers are well informed about how the scheme operates?

[52] **Mr Morton:** Obviously, we have regular meetings with all our drivers. At our depots we have a monthly road show. Basically, after work, at about 7 p.m., we find a local hotel that will do curry and a pint, we keep them up to date with what is going on and we get feedback from them as well. Since we have started using smart cards, we can monitor the use of concessionary fares in a much better way.

9.50 a.m.

[53] The use of smart cards also stops what has been going on in bus companies all over Wales, namely that the same person travels seven times on the bus because they get funded for it. Now, you can only travel once per journey. It is a very good scheme. It works well, and we hope that it will continue to work well.

[54] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much.

[55] **Ann Jones:** I want to ask you about the companion bus pass for those who need a companion. We have heard about the value of people being able to use the bus freely, and I think that you have alluded to that as well, but we have heard from Mencap of some really nasty experiences of people whose companions were told by bus drivers that they were not allowed to travel for free. So, they have got off the bus rather than accompany that person. What is your experience of the companion bus pass?

[56] **Mr Morton:** I have not seen a lot of it being used in Wales—I have been in this post now for two years—but I had lots of experience of it in Blackburn, where I worked before. To

be honest, I was not aware that we had it in Wales, so if I am not aware, then possibly quite a few of the drivers are not. Certainly, our policy is, if somebody gets on with a pass and we do not know what it is, we do not turn them away. The driver should allow them to travel and then go back to the depot and say, 'I've seen one of these passes'.

[57] **Ann Jones:** So, really, now that we have made you aware of the companion bus pass, you will go back and look at the issue, will you?

[58] **Mr Morton:** A mental note has just been made that I really could do with speaking to Mencap to find out what it is, because we are more than happy to help.

[59] **Ann Jones:** Yes, and I am sure it would be more than happy to assist. When its representatives came in to see us—I met them as well—they took a journey around Wales by bus just to experience some of the difficulties. They had a nasty experience on a couple of occasions. In terms of people wanting to use the bus further, it does put them off if they have not been greeted with the same position. So, I think that Mencap would be quite happy to talk to you about that situation.

[60] **Mr Morton:** Rest assured that a note has been made, and we will approach it.

[61] **Ann Jones:** Fine, thanks. Does anybody else have any more questions? I see that there are none. Michael, thanks very much for giving us evidence today. You will get a copy of the transcript just to check for accuracy, and you will get a copy of the report as well. So, thanks very much for your time today.

[62] **Mr Morton:** Okay.

[63] **Ann Jones:** We will break for a couple of minutes.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 9.53 a.m. a 9.57 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 9.53 a.m. and 9.57 a.m.*

**Ymchwiliad i Effaith Polisi Llywodraeth Cymru ar Hygyrchedd Gwasanaethau
Trafnidiaeth i Bobl Anabl yng Nghymru—Tystiolaeth Lafar gan Gymdeithas
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Welsh Local Government Association**

[64] **Ann Jones:** I welcome John Forsey. He is the passenger transport manager from Powys County Council, but he is here to represent the Association of Transport Coordinating Officers. You are very welcome; thanks very much for joining us.

[65] **Mr Forsey:** That is quite all right.

[66] **Ann Jones:** Thanks for submitting your paper. I do not know whether you have anything to add to that, otherwise we can go straight into questions.

[67] **Mr Forsey:** Yes, go into questions.

[68] **Ann Jones:** Is that fine? Okay. Thanks very much. I will start then. Your paper outlines a number of steps that local authorities take to improve access to transport services for disabled people. How do you monitor the number of disabled people using transport systems?

[69] **Mr Forsey:** In the past, it was quite difficult, but now, through the Welsh Assembly Government initiative with the smart cards, by virtue of the fact that the majority of the people who qualify for a disabled pass will have one, we will be able to get better ticket information from the ITSO-compliant machines that have been made available to bus operators. Coming from a rural area, we did a quality impact assessment on our local bus services and found that the number of our users who are disabled is traditionally quite low. We are taking steps to improve that through raising bus-stop kerbs and things like that, but, traditionally, we have seen relatively low numbers. We do not know whether that low use is because users find the services inaccessible or whether there is any other reason, so we welcome any feedback on this.

[70] **Ann Jones:** A number of witnesses have told us that, if you get a bad experience once on public transport, it tends to put you off. You will rely on a network of friends to transport you back and forth. Local authorities are attempting to get the passengers sorted out on transport, so how do you monitor whether any intervention of yours has had an effect on disabled people travelling?

[71] **Mr Forsey:** A number of local authorities are now citing that the vehicles that are contracted are 100 per cent low-floor and compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Traditionally, you will see numbers rise. When you stick a low-floor vehicle on to a service, numbers traditionally rise by about 14 or 15 per cent. Evidence suggests that that is perhaps more to do with the almost unintended consequence of accessibility, in that these services are used by mums with buggies rather than by disabled users. Speaking again from personal experience, we do not have a huge amount of data on the increase in the number of disabled users accessing our local bus services. Coming from a rural authority, I do not know whether that is because we have quite a well-developed community transport network and whether, because it is much more of a user friendly, door-to-door service, that encourages more people to use an alternative provision rather than the local bus services.

[72] **Ann Jones:** How will local authorities seek to minimise the impact of the budget cuts on the provision of transport for disabled people in Wales? Is that going to have an effect?

10.00 a.m.

[73] **Mr Forsey:** I could not sit here comfortably and say that it is not going to have an effect. There will obviously be an effect on local bus services. We are talking of fairly significant reductions in revenue funding. Certainly, in terms of capital funding, we are embarking on a programme to improve access to bus stops. My local authority is making £150,000 a year available to improve bus stops. If we roll that programme out at current capital levels, I think that we will complete our programme in 25 years' time. So we will try to retain low-floor bus services and so on. The Disability Discrimination Act provisions are coming into force soon, and we are mindful of that and that should help mitigate against it. However, I would not like to say that there will be no impact due to the reduction in revenue funding.

[74] **Ann Jones:** Have you spoken to any of your other colleagues in local authorities? What are they saying to you?

[75] **Mr Forsey:** I have not. The budget settlement was announced only last week, and I have not had any dialogue with them since then. In fact, our Association of Transport Coordinating Officers meeting is today, and it is on the agenda. So, that is just a bit of unfortunate timing, but my feeling is that the unofficial 'round the table' will be that there will be some significant changes in the local bus network.

[76] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, John. Could you tell us more about how you engage with disabled passengers and their representative groups and whether there is any room for that relationship to be improved?

[77] **Mr Forsey:** There is always room for improvement. Bus Users UK sits on ATCO, and is a regular attendee. No other specific disabled user group attends, but there is absolutely no reason why there should not be somebody from Mencap, for example, attending to provide feedback. Most local authorities fund a community transport adviser through their local transport services grant, for example. That would be the link between what the local authority transport units are providing and getting feedback from the less abled of our service users. You are right; it probably could be improved significantly.

[78] **Joyce Watson:** How do you ensure that the regional transport plans provide a framework for improving access to transport for disabled people? Can you give any instances where improvements have been driven as a consequence of regional transport plans?

[79] **Mr Forsey:** Yes. I can refer to what is happening in TraCC with the roll-out of the Harrington humps around various railway stations. That is enabling users to get on to trains. What it is not sorting out, unfortunately, is the access into the railway station itself. I think that there is still a fair way to go there. The regional transport plans have an element of—I do not want to keep going back to community transport, but, in our local authority, that is where we tend to see the main users, who, for one reason or another, say that they cannot use public transport. They will go back and use community transport. The regional transport plan has just made £100,000 available in the TraCC region, that is, mid Wales, for accessible vehicles. I think that we provided six accessible vehicles across the region. They are for all users of community transport, but they will all be accessible vehicles.

[80] **Joyce Watson:** You note in your response that the Welsh Government guidance issued in relation to the development of the regional transport plan refers to the legal requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and you have mentioned that this morning. Does the guidance go any further than simply reminding you of the need for legal compliance within the RTPs?

[81] **Mr Forsey:** Perhaps it could be stronger, but the DDA provision is for users to have accessible vehicles by 2016. I am not aware that it says that prior to that time you must provide low-floor vehicles, although the vehicles constructed since 2000, I believe, are now all low floor. It is very difficult now to buy a stepped-entry service bus, for example. So, by virtue of the fact that the DDA has taken care of a lot of these issues prior to the RTP, we have been able to roll out this programme of accessible buses.

[82] **Veronica German:** On that issue, I have had examples within some local authorities where subsidised bus routes have been put out to tender and the type of buses has not been stipulated. In the past, the route might have had low-floor buses, and the authority has put it out to tender and has not specified that it wants that access. Consequently, you end up with buses that, when you look at them, you would think that they were from circa 1930—I do not think that they are quite that old—with steps, for which anyone would want some kind of mountaineering certificate in order to climb, let alone anybody with any serious disability issues. Elderly people cannot get onto the buses, and these buses tend to be on the routes that are subsidised because there are people who need to access them who tend to be elderly or have mobility problems. So, is there no national guidance coming out of these transport plans on this sort of issue? I can see that accessible buses will have to be provided by 2016, but, meanwhile, we still have a number of years without accessible buses.

[83] **Mr Forsey:** I accept what you are saying and it must be incredibly frustrating for the end user. When it comes down to the hard and fast of it, it is probably down to cost,

unfortunately. We have gone through this transition where we have had DiPTAC vehicles, which have one or two steps into them, through to the fully accessible with the roll-out ramp, and kneeling buses. There used to be a significant increase in cost to provide a low-floor vehicle rather than your circa 1930-type buses. That was due to a number of reasons, including purchase price, and the fuel economy on a lot of the newer buses is not quite as good as it is on the older buses.

[84] **Veronica German:** Really?

[85] **Mr Forsey:** Yes. There is a whole raft of issues. Due to the technology improving and the fact that the vehicles are becoming available second hand, and so are more affordable for the smaller operator, we are finding that that situation is occurring less and less, although we are aware that it still happens. I know that, in my authority, for example, we specify low-floor vehicles, but what we are unable to do at this moment in time, because of the cost, is to specify that a low-floor spare vehicle is kept available in the event of a breakdown of the main vehicles. So, it would happen sometimes that if a low-floor vehicle breaks down, a non-low-floor vehicle would be deployed. That is not ideal and we hope to resolve that before 2015, by virtue of the fact that there are more low-floor vehicles available on the market now.

[86] **Joyce Watson:** You note in your evidence that there currently is no mechanism for addressing whether consortia met or exceeded what was expected of them in their development of the regional transport plans. In other words, if everything hinges on the regional transport plan, we need to know that we have a system of addressing those expectations. So, what are your views on the need for a mechanism that does address whether the consortia meet or exceed expectations?

[87] **Mr Forsey:** Well, we certainly need to meet the desires and the expectations, and it would be nice to exceed them. On how we monitor that, it is quite difficult to capture what people's expectations are, because I suppose that you could ask 20 people what they want and those 20 people may give you 20 different answers. The regional transport consortia talk to each other. I sit within the TraCC establishment and we have regular passenger transport working group meetings where we share ideas and best practice on a whole range of issues.

10.10 a.m.

[88] So, we need to make sure that the monitoring takes place better than it already does. I am not saying that it does not happen; I am just not aware of how we capture everybody's desire at this moment in time. I do not have a huge involvement with the strategic overview within the transport consortia. We are just one authority that sits within them. I would like to think that any strategic-level monitoring will be rolled out through the local authorities to gather and capture that information.

[89] Again, I refer to the fact that we have conducted an equality impact assessment of our local bus services in Powys. I would imagine that most other local authorities are doing the same thing. I alluded to the fact that we have established that our disabled users were not a huge part of our service clientele.

[90] **Joyce Watson:** Just following up on what was a fair statement by you, that you are one authority in a much wider group, Powys also neighbours other authorities. Is there any engagement with them? There must be cases in any border county, which I know yours is, of people travelling into the next county and thereafter perhaps using a different operator, although their needs will transfer with them. Is there any engagement at that border?

[91] **Mr Forsey:** Yes. We have quite a few cross-boundary arrangements with Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire. Ironically, our biggest border is with

England, which creates some problems sometimes when trying to plan, because we have slightly different transport strategies in England and Wales. As I said, we have regular dialogue through the transport consortia with my colleagues in Ceredigion and through the shared services arrangement that we are currently pursuing, and likewise with Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire. We procure contracts together. One authority will take the lead, and then we have a recharge across the authorities. Again, where we can afford it, we will specify low-floor vehicles and accessible vehicles where people travel across boundaries.

[92] **Janet Ryder:** You said that you were not aware of a monitoring body. Who should perform that role?

[93] **Mr Forsey:** Some local authorities are better equipped to monitor services through their own local arrangements than perhaps others are. I have two members of staff who patrol the county monitoring bus services, for example, but they perhaps do not capture information about the types of service users. I get the Bus Users UK report annually, we read it, and the contents are noted. In terms of the service users, if we are talking about disabled access, it makes sense for us to engage with that community on a more proactive basis rather than a reactive one, to try to get its views and take them on board at the procurement stage when we are looking at services.

[94] There is a very fine line between what we can physically afford to procure and people's expectations of what a bus service should be. For example, people's expectations in a city such as Cardiff would be far higher, perhaps, than those in a rural area. From my point of view, we can just about afford a two-hourly bus service that finishes at about 6.00 p.m. Monday to Saturday. That does not give people a huge opportunity if they want to travel to social events in the evening and things like that, whereas in Cardiff, they would perhaps have that opportunity.

[95] **Janet Ryder:** I can accept that you are talking from your own county's perspective, but on top of that, you have the local transport consortia and then you have the Assembly Government. Where, in your opinion, should a monitoring responsibility sit to ensure that disabled passengers' needs are being met in every consortium?

[96] **Mr Forsey:** It would make sense to have a group within the four consortia, as long as they were able to feed down into the respective authorities. I think that it becomes a highly localised issue.

[97] **Janet Ryder:** At the moment, are you satisfied that such a group does not exist?

[98] **Mr Forsey:** Again, speaking personally, other than our community transport officers, there is not a huge amount of feedback. We used to engage with a group called Disability Powys. That no longer happens as often as I would like. So, yes, there has to be a better system.

[99] **Ann Jones:** I can see where Janet is coming from.

[100] **Janet Ryder:** I am just looking to recommendations that we may want to make, and I think that this is an important aspect. Looking again at the national transport plan, ATCO notes that

[101] 'At this early stage, there appears to be no obvious impact'.

[102] The national transport plan was only published in March 2010, but do you think that it provides a good framework for increasing the accessibility of transport services for disabled

people?

[103] **Mr Forsey:** Yes. In the longer term, through forthcoming Acts of Parliament, there will be a more accessible service for all. It is about targeting the right user group. I think that people fall into a trap—perhaps we in the local authorities do this—of seeing those who need a low-floor bus as being restricted to people in wheelchairs, but, as I think that you mentioned, there are the less mobile, such as the elderly, and, of course, the needs of those who are blind or hard of hearing should be accommodated, too. I would like to see this rolled out more, although I appreciate that these audio-visual systems, which tell people what stop they are approaching and what stop they are getting off at, drive drivers berserk. To roll that out would, again, bring a fairly high cost.

[104] Making services more accessible to one particular user group may also reassure others on the bus and perhaps create better modal shift. For example, I have mentioned the fact that when we have brought low-floor buses into service in the past, we have seen greater use by mums with buggies. So, where they may have used a taxi to travel to and from town before, they are now using a low-floor bus, because they do not have to worry about folding up their buggies and things like that. Also, if you roll out these audio-visual announcement systems, people on the bus feel more confident about using it, because somebody is telling them where they are and where to get off. There will be longer-term benefits, but, because of the time that it has taken to implement these changes, they are very difficult to measure at the moment.

[105] **Janet Ryder:** You have noted in the national transport plan that there are big challenges that are difficult to address. You have outlined some concerns; are there any other big challenges that you can see would need to be addressed, and how could they be addressed?

[106] **Mr Forsey:** Where do you want me to start? [*Laughter.*]

[107] **Ann Jones:** That is the \$64,000 question.

[108] **Mr Forsey:** We have been speaking quite a lot about bus services, but trains are going to be a huge area to address. The Assembly Government is currently tied in to a deal with its current train operator until 2018, I believe. So, improving accessibility to railway stations will present a problem, because you have this joint ownership issue. Who owns the railway station? Who owns the line? Who is operating the trains? Trains are one area, and it is not my area of expertise by any stretch of the imagination.

10.20 a.m.

[109] It is about increasing accessibility, as I mentioned, not just for wheelchair users, but for those with other types of disabilities and mental health problems. The introduction of travel training is a great idea, but finding the people to help to roll that out, possibly from the voluntary sector or the third sector, is a challenge. We are struggling a little bit to engage with volunteers in our communities anyway at the moment. I do not know whether that is just a rural issue or whether it is an issue across Wales.

[110] I could carry on, but we have climbed a large part of the hill. We are nearly at the top, but the brow of the hill just keeps on disappearing over the horizon when we come to what we want to achieve. As I said, low-floor buses, raised kerbs and the improvement in the accessibility of trains are all great developments. We have taken care of a fairly big chunk of the work there, but the next bit is to try to encompass everybody, not just the traditional wheelchair user or less mobile people; let us try to capture the next group of service users. I was watching the evidence given by the gentleman from north Wales who had an issue with

his companion bus pass. He felt able to travel on the route that he knew, but was sometimes challenged by the drivers who would ask him where his companion was. It sounds insignificant, but that gentleman had a real problem, and that is a challenge for us as local authorities and for the bus companies to address in terms of driver training and driver awareness. That is another fairly big challenge. So, there are all these less obvious problems that we need to start addressing in the next phase. It is almost like the softer measures, perhaps.

[111] **Janet Ryder:** So, we have made some improvement, but there is still a long way to go. You have talked a lot about integrating transport, and we have heard a lot about how essential it is to have that. How do you ensure the provision of integrated transport services in Wales? I appreciate that you might only be able to speak for your own county, but are there any quality schemes that you could tell us about? Are there any quality partnerships or contracts in place that we could look at as examples of good practice that really encourage disabled people to move from one mode of transport to the other? What barriers do you face when you are seeking to provide integrated transport schemes?

[112] **Mr Forsey:** I do not know whether it is a barrier or whether it is quite handy. Train timetables generally change twice a year, in December and May, and because they operate on a completely different network—although I am not saying that they disregard it—the train operating companies never seem to have the integration of bus services high on their agenda when looking at their timetables. So, it is then down to us as local authorities to start amending bus services to try to meet the train timetables. That, in itself, presents certain challenges because any network is a series of cogs and you twiddle one cog and it may throw out connections at another location. So, we try to integrate wherever possible and try to get buses in to meet trains and so on. That can present a few challenges in itself, in terms of physical access to the train station. I am thinking of Abergavenny, for example; it is a complete nightmare to try to get a bus into that railway station, yet it is probably one of the more popular railway stations for people to gain access to London and that neck of the woods.

[113] On quality partnerships, Neath Port Talbot has a quality partnership with First—I am assuming that it is still in existence—from Ystradgynlais and running down the Swansea valley. First has improved the frequency of the bus service and Neath Port Talbot improved the infrastructure to make things a little bit more attractive to service users.

[114] I am going to use this opportunity to blow Powys's trumpet a little. We introduced a network of bus services in 2007 and we have seen passenger growth from about 650,000 passenger journeys in 2007 to just short of 1 million journeys last year. A large percentage of that growth consists of older people making use of their bus passes, but it is equally important to keep that group of people active, mobile and running around, to keep them out of our healthcare system, for example, because there must be benefits to that.

[115] **Janet Ryder:** The essence of what you are saying seems to be that there needs to be more integrated discussion between train companies, local councils and bus providers when the services are drawn up. Would that overcome the difficulty mentioned in your initial point about times being changed and you having to re-jig your entire bus service? There also needs to be greater discussion when it comes to physical planning and the layout of areas.

[116] **Mr Forsey:** There has been a lot of debate around the local transport services grant, for example, and car parking. The revenue generated from car parking could perhaps be used to improve bus priority measures, for example. That is great if we have the space in the towns and the cities to physically create these priority measures.

[117] Engagement with operators, train companies and the local authorities is important. I do not think that it does not happen, but it is very difficult. With a procurement hat on, to

work with a large bus company to draw up a network that may become commercial or may require subsidy from local authorities and to then go to the market and say, ‘This bit is going to be commercial, but this bit is tendered, so put a bid in on that’, when one operator may have an unfair advantage, does not always work well. It is very difficult to achieve an appropriate balance between consulting our operators, trying to get the best out of them in terms of a commercial network, and being able to provide the journeys that are socially necessary to the local authority.

[118] I believe that my colleagues in south-east Wales have a fairly good relationship and a good rapport with their bus operating companies because there is quite a vibrant commercial market. There are a lot of chimney pots in south-east Wales. You go north to Merthyr, into my territory, and we have an almost 100 per cent tendered network of bus services. So, I may have a slightly different stance from my colleagues in the more urban areas on being able to provide these quality measures. Yet, at the end of the day, our bus companies are providing, they are the front line and they need to have a say in planning services and the layout of towns and so on.

[119] **Mohammad Asghar:** John, how do you make sure that sufficient information is available to help disabled passengers to plan their journeys in your area?

[120] **Mr Forsey:** I mentioned that, through the rural development plan funding, we have purchased a package called OmniTIMES, which is an all-singing all-dancing timetable production software programme. We are aiming to produce standardised timetable information across central Wales, mid Wales and north Wales. They use the same programme. We will try to create a template that provides only relevant information so that you do not get these reams of numbers and words across a timetable that, quite frankly, I struggle to read sometimes. We want to try to take out the irrelevant bits and put the most relevant bits into it. That will be produced at the roadside. What we do in the local authorities is to produce a travel guide booklet that gets distributed across the authority areas, and we also have a dedicated website.

10.30 a.m.

[121] What I do not think that that website is able to do is ‘touch talk’—I cannot think of the correct expression but it is something like that. You click on it and it talks to you, or reads out information to you. I do not think that it is that intelligent at this time. However, we are working on the electronic roadside publicity and the paper copies at the moment. We give all our timetable information to relevant community transport services as well, so they are able to help people to plan their journey if they need transport from a rural locality where there is no bus service. They can bring them in to Rhayader, for example, to catch a bus to Llandrindod or wherever they need to go.

[122] **Mohammad Asghar:** Are you confident that the information that you provide is accessible to people who have learning disabilities and visual impairments?

[123] **Mr Forsey:** As I said in my response, we try to make the information as large scale as we can, but by virtue of the fact that there is a lot of information in these timetables, we cannot always make them as large as we would like. PTI Cymru offers a service whereby people can phone it to get timetable information, but I do not know whether it has any other service for the hard of hearing and so on. It comes down to travel training, and if we could get travel companions or bus buddies and so on, that would help the situation a lot.

[124] Am I confident that we are doing as much as we can? We are doing what we can within our current resources. We do not have the facility to produce Braille timetables, for example. I do not know whether this committee will find that that needs to happen, but that is

just an example of what we do not do.

[125] **Mohammad Asghar:** At least you are very open.

[126] **Veronica German:** What about engaging with different groups such as Mencap and asking them what would help to make the timetables more accessible? I know that you cannot please everybody, but surely you could get some people together and ask them. The impression seems to be that that it will be more accessible if the same thing is just a bit bigger, but that is not right.

[127] **Mr Forsey:** In ATCO, we have special interest groups on procurement, education and transport, for example. I am beginning to form the opinion that perhaps, as a result of this, there is a need for a special interest group on disabled users. That could get an all-Wales view and that would be quite a good way, I would imagine, of engaging and of getting all these issues addressed where we can.

[128] **Mohammad Asghar:** John, what is your assessment of the concessionary bus pass scheme for disabled people?

[129] **Mr Forsey:** I would like to think that it has given disabled people a new lease of freedom, in some respects. I do not think that it is the be-all and end-all because we are sat here discussing how we can improve the services. However, when people qualify on disability grounds and they can use a bus pass, I imagine that it must be more of a benefit to them than a disbenefit. I refer again to the gentleman who gave evidence a number of weeks ago, as we need to ensure that service providers are assisting people who need assistance. I am not saying that they need to be treated differently, just that there needs to be a greater awareness of individuals' needs. How we create that awareness is what will take us on to the next step. It is great to say, 'Have a bus pass because you qualify on this ground', but that is just one side of it. The next bit is to make sure that the product that they are receiving is the right product, if that makes sense. Do you want me to clarify, or do you understand what I am trying to say?

[130] **Mohammad Asghar:** I know what you are trying to say, yes.

[131] **Veronica German:** You have already mentioned the problems with the companion bus pass, so I will not delve into that, apart from asking whether it is incumbent on your group, local authorities and transport providers to ensure that the criteria are interpreted in the same way across the country. In some areas, people are not having a problem but, in others, they are. The criteria are the criteria, and they are not different in different parts of Wales. Either you can go on your own without your companion or you cannot.

[132] **Mr Forsey:** Unfortunately, there is a lot of local interpretation here. Perhaps there needs to be stronger guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government, from the officers within the Government. It needs to be made absolutely crystal clear that, if you have a companion pass and you feel able to use the bus one day without a companion, that is fine.

[133] **Veronica German:** You were talking about possibly needing a group to look at these issues, but another issue is that people who have learning difficulties found it particularly difficult to complete the form for concessionary bus passes, and there were different forms. For instance, Mencap could not even tell them which was the right form or what they had to do, because there was a different form everywhere. So, do you think that it would be worth while having a form that would be used throughout Wales?

[134] **Mr Forsey:** On the basis that there should be one eligibility criterion for one concessionary travel scheme, it would make logical sense to the end user. My colleagues in local government say that it is one scheme but there are 22 local authorities administering it,

so that is the nut to crack.

[135] **Veronica German:** However, they all want the same information, presumably.

[136] **Mr Forsey:** You would think so.

[137] **Veronica German:** There would not be any harm in having a form, whether it be the same form or a different form, for people who have learning disabilities. I do not know, but you need to engage with those organisations, because those people do not want to be treated differently.

[138] **Mr Forsey:** With the roll-out of the new smart cards that the Assembly Government has been involved in, the back-office function of administering that is standard across Wales. Powys sits on that group through TraCC. We have been trying to get mandatory fields inserted into the system so that consistent information is entered onto the computer, such as national insurance number and that sort of information. What gets included seems to vary.

[139] **Veronica German:** That guidance really should come from the Assembly Government, because that is national.

[140] **Mr Forsey:** Yes, absolutely.

[141] **Veronica German:** Okay. Another issue that came up—and you are probably familiar with it in Powys, because it arose in Monmouthshire—was that of people using taxi companies because of the shortage of public transport, with even community transport being limited. Do you see that there is any scope for local authorities to encourage taxi companies to provide more accessible services? They were suggesting that perhaps the taxis could advertise themselves as being disability friendly, but that might come down to a licensing issue to be awarded the status of being disability friendly. What can you do to encourage that? They are saying that, in some cases, they did not really have a choice. You are in a certain area and there is only John the taxi, so they did not have much choice about it. So, what can you do as local authorities to ensure that they understand the needs of disabled people?

10.40 a.m.

[142] **Mr Forsey:** That could be done by a specific licensing requirement: it could be that, by signing up to the local authority hackney licence or private hire licence, you have to undertake a half a day's disability awareness training or some such.

[143] On vehicle types, while we have firm guidelines for local bus service vehicles and public transport vehicles, in the taxi industry, there seems to be a whole other raft of issues in trying to get them DDA compliant, as it were.

[144] If we are trying to integrate services from a local authority point of view, we have a fairly large number of children attending special needs schools, for example, who may or may not be in a wheelchair, but who would have some mobility problems, and who may use a taxi. Now, that taxi could be an accessible vehicle that is used in the morning and the afternoon to convey these children, but, for the rest of the day, is available to convey other members of the community.

[145] We use taxi companies in Powys, for example, to operate demand-responsive type services. There are a number of those that are accessible, although they are not low-floor vehicles, because of the nature of the terrain in which they are operating. Some will have a tail lift or a wheelchair ramp at the back to get those users into the vehicle and to provide them with a service. So, it does happen, albeit in small pockets perhaps.

[146] **Veronica German:** Do you think that there is scope to use the licensing system to be able to kind of credit, I suppose—

[147] **Mr Forsey:** Credit, yes.

[148] **Veronica German:** Okay. We will move on to something that you are particularly familiar with, which is community transport. Can you talk perhaps a little bit more generally than just about Powys about what local authorities are doing to improve the provision of community transport? Again, we have had witnesses who have said there is sometimes a lack of qualified drivers and difficulty accessing suitable vehicles. From what I recall, witnesses from Monmouthshire said that there were some vehicles that could be used but they are locked away somewhere in the night-time. People could use them in the evening, but they are locked away and nobody has the key so they cannot be accessed. Again, are there discussions going on pan-Wales about improving community transport?

[149] **Mr Forsey:** It is probably one of the most frustrating things that you come across as a local government officer. We are telling everybody that we have less and less money and yet, sometimes, we have these accessible buses sat in social services garages all evening, for example. It is incredibly frustrating.

[150] Yes, there is a bit of work going on. We are doing some work now with the Community Transport Association Wales. We have just recently, through ATCO, resubmitted some information to CTA Wales, which basically states the amount of money that each local authority puts in, and whether it funds a community transport officer. The guidance on the local transport services grant is that 10 per cent of that should be made available for community transport. Some authorities top that up. In fact, I suspect that the majority of local authorities top up that 10 per cent. However, by virtue of the fact that the local transport services grant is—what is the word? I do not want to say that it is inconsistent; it is formula based.

[151] **Veronica German:** Variable.

[152] **Mr Forsey:** It is variable. It is formula based, and so there are, obviously, different amounts going into different authority areas. In my authority area £73,500 comes from the local transport services grant into the community transport fund. We top that up by another £60,000. Other authorities perhaps do not have that luxury, and their local transport services grant funding just funds the community transport officer.

[153] It would be nice, I suppose, to have all that money going into the sector rather than funding a post, but, unfortunately, the local authorities are going through a headcount management process at the moment, where adding members of staff would not really be an option. So that is the only viable option that they have to keep that engagement with the community transport sector, but, unfortunately, by virtue of the fact that they are funding posts out of the local transport services grant, that means that they are not putting all that cash into the system.

[154] **Veronica German:** So, they are funding an officer.

[155] **Mr Forsey:** According to the guidance, that is fine.

[156] **Veronica German:** You think that is not necessarily the best use of the money, do you? Be frank.

[157] **Mr Forsey:** I will be. I am mindful that this is minuted, and it may not quite what my

colleagues—. I come back to the Powys point of view, because that is where I come from. We fund the community transport officer post from my establishment costs, my salary budget, so all the local transport services grant goes into the community transport sector. Other authorities have not been able to fund that officer, so they use their local transport services grant.

[158] **Veronica German:** Is the officer essential?

[159] **Mr Forsey:** Oh, absolutely.

[160] **Veronica German:** It is just about where the budget comes from to fund it.

[161] **Mr Forsey:** Yes, those officers are often the link between the third sector and the public sector.

[162] **Veronica German:** All right, thank you.

[163] **Ann Jones:** Can you talk briefly about shared spaces? Local authorities are responsible for planning, so a new bus station or a new taxi rank or whatever else has to go through the planning department of a local authority. What involvement would you have then for or against shared spaces in terms of disabled travellers?

[164] **Mr Forsey:** When you refer to shared spaces, are you talking about these flat roads where—

[165] **Ann Jones:** Flat roads and pedestrianised areas that allow bus routes through them and cycle tracks and all sorts of other stuff. What is your view on that? Does that put people off from going to the bus station to travel?

[166] **Mr Forsey:** I do not have any direct experience of shared spaces in Powys, but I understand that they are not favoured by the disabled community.

[167] **Ann Jones:** So, if you want to get more disabled people using your public transport, what do you do at the planning stage? If a planning application comes in for a brand new bus station in Newtown and it is going to have this wonderful pedestrianised area, and it is going to allow the buses to go across this pedestrianised shared space, what would you do as the transport officer? Would you put in an objection to that? Are you allowed to do that on behalf of your disabled passengers?

[168] **Mr Forsey:** You have mentioned Newtown bus station. We are doing some preparatory—

[169] **Ann Jones:** I used that example only because it is in Powys. I am not saying that Newtown is going to get a new bus station.

[170] **Mr Forsey:** It is a very good example, Chair, because we are doing some preparatory works now on Newtown bus station.

[171] **Ann Jones:** I must be psychic. [*Laughter.*]

[172] **Mr Forsey:** We are doing that with a view to, if we can afford it, doing something with it, if we can make it accessible by segregation—we cannot legislate for people who want to jump over the barriers and walk into oncoming buses. It is about getting the balance right between keeping the bus station accessible and light, airy, well-lit, secure, safe, within the confines of the space available, and bearing in mind the fact that we have potentially six,

seven, eight vehicles all coming in at certain times of the day, connecting, and keeping those vehicles safe.

[173] It is difficult. We built the bus station in Brecon recently. I had an involvement in that. We came up with the idea of where to locate it, and then we passed it on to our engineering guys. They do all the research into the best practice in terms of bus station design. The interchange point in Brecon—I would not like to call it a bus station, as such—has been well received. I am not aware of any complaints with regards to it.

[174] **Ann Jones:** So you do get involved, and can get involved on behalf of disabled passengers.

[175] **Mr Forsey:** Yes. We have quite a good relationship with the access group in Brecon, for example.

[176] **Ann Jones:** It is about engagement, is it not? As long as that engagement is there then shared surfaces should be able to be managed.

[177] **Mr Forsey:** They should be.

[178] **Ann Jones:** There is a difficulty as well with shared surfaces for people who are hard of hearing, because if you are hard of hearing and you are walking on the shared surface and a cycle is coming along behind you, you cannot hear the bell. However much the bell is rung for you to move, you do not hear that. That disability is invisible to a lot of people, and the same is true for those with sight problems.

10.50 a.m.

[179] **Mr Forsey:** The same could be said for electric vehicles.

[180] **Ann Jones:** Absolutely. I have some views about mobility scooters, but we will not go into that. That might be another issue for another day.

[181] I see that no-one else has any questions. John, thank you very much for your evidence this morning. You will get a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy, just so that you can check that we have not put any words into your mouth that might get you into any sort of difficulties. Thank you very much for coming today.

[182] The next meeting is on 18 January. We will have the Deputy First Minister in on this issue and then we will look at other issues as well. Thank you very much. The meeting is closed.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.51 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.51 a.m.*