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**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**  
Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes

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**National Assembly for Wales**  
Enterprise and Business Committee

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Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes	Enterprise and Business Committee
Gwasanaethau Bysiau a Thrafnidiaeth Gymunedol yng Nghymru	Bus and Community Transport Services in Wales
BCT 18	BCT 18
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## Consultation questions

**Question 1** – how would you describe the current condition of the bus and community transport sectors in Wales?

I can only comment on my area of the far south east of Wales but in this area the bus service is in what appears terminal decline. This is in stark contrast to the parallel rail services that are showing the greatest growth of any of the suburban lines radiating out from Cardiff.

**Question 2** – why do you think the number of bus services and the number of bus passengers is declining in Wales?

The reduction in bus subsidies triggered an acceleration in the changes (and subsequent reduction) in service levels.

The changes in the bus times have resulted in the loss of onward connections and also there has been a loss of through services. Where through services remain there has been a 25% increase in journey time. In combination these have resulted in a decline in patronage.

This applies not to just bus to bus connections but for the first time in thirty years there are now no bus services that you can use to connect to the local rail services because all the times are now wrong.

The number of changes disrupts regular users and you lose passengers at each change. It takes years to attract new patronage to replace those who have been lost and forced to find alternatives when a change is introduced.

The appalling lack of information is a real problem with Traveline Cymru struggling to get and update the Planning information to the revised times and repeatedly it is only after the change that it finally reflects what is happening.

The bus company (Newport Transport) for journey planning simply redirects from their site to Traveline so even if you try via the bus company itself you still get the wrong information and the Bus company responds by simply saying they are not responsible for what appears on the Traveline site.

With no up to date timetable information at any of the bus stops in this area the problem is only further compounded. What information that is at the bus stops is out of date giving the wrong times, destinations and information.

I have this year alone downloaded from the Newport Transport company the timetable for the local service No.74 from Newport to Chepstow. I have versions downloaded on the 1st January, 5th February, 10th February, 22nd June, 15th July, 14th August and 18th August. Everyone is different. This reflects not just the repeated changes to the service itself but also the inability even of the Operator

to publish the correct information first time and has to keep putting out changes that are never highlighted. You have to study deeply to see what changes or corrections they have made.

As the Council and Traveline rely on the information from the Bus Company and presumably are not advised of the corrections their systems continue to give the wrong information.

It is not possible to correctly identify which route and stops the bus will call at. For example the service 74 has for all the years that I have caught it missed out the Woodstock Way, Caldicot By Pass and cut across the short cut route along the Chepstow Road for the evening services.

As all the timetables only show the major timing points there is no way to identify which route and stops it serves in between. The drivers say that all the buses after 18:00 and not just the late evening go via this shorter route but this does not appear to be reflected on the information available either from the Bus company site or Traveline.

The council do not go into this level of detail and so where there was a bus timetable at a stop along the longer route you cannot tell which of the services listed (only shows the timing points either side where the routes diverge and re combine) that actually use that route and stop.

In the Caldicot area there were this year as many bus stops (some even with a shelter and even one displaying a bus timetable) that actually have no services as there are scheduled stops where there is no roadside infrastructure to show that it is a bus stop. No Bus Stop Flag, no road markings no raised kerb etc. to give any indication that there are scheduled bus services that actually call there.

The lack of shelters is another deterrent to potential bus users especially with the unreliability of the services so you do not know how long you will have to stand in the wind and rain.

The users of the Newport direction stop on the Chepstow Road in Caldicot near the site of the old Tippling Philosopher Pub asked for a shelter. At the local County Council meeting to consider it the resident outside whose house the stop is situated objected on the grounds that he did not want to "encourage the sort of people who would use it to be 'loitering' outside his house".

The County Council agreed and also I believe at his request pulled up and removed the Bus Stop Flag and tarmaced over the resultant hole. The stop still has the raised pavement and road marking but nothing else to indicate the three bus companies whose busses officially call at this point.

While this remains the general public and its elected representatives attitude towards the users of buses, their use will continue to decline.

**Question 3 – what do you think is the social, economic and environmental impact of recent changes in bus and community transport service levels?**

There is a noticeable increase in social exclusion particularly with the elderly in that they do not travel out as often as they used to.

My daughter's step son who unusually for a young man in his early twenties has never learnt to drive has recently given up his full time job. The lack of public transport meant he was relying on car sharing and even taxis to get to work. A change of shift times meant he lost the car sharing option and the cost of taxis every day made the job no longer financially viable.

The lack of public transport means there is little alternative but to opt for using the car. While second hand cars are relatively cheap, for younger people the cost of insurance is an important factor and no doubt led, until the cuts, in seeing increasing use of buses by younger fare paying passengers.

**Question 4 – what do you think the Welsh Government should do to support bus and community transport in Wales?**

The Welsh government needs to address the attitude towards the use of buses.

As detailed above the elected representatives attitude to not encouraging bus use by supporting the opposition to the provision of bus shelters reflects the ingrained attitude It is reminiscent of the infamous quote by Margaret Thatcher – "A man who, beyond the age of 26, finds himself on a bus can count himself as a failure". Hansard <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/vo030702/debtext/30702-10.htm>

While that attitude prevails the situation will not change.

As an example the Welsh Transport Appraisal WelTAG (6.2.37) follows the English WebTAG (Table A1.3.1) and puts the Market Price of a car passenger higher than a bus passenger. Is this the message that is intended to be put across?

The guidance on reimbursing Bus Operators for Concessionary travel states that it should be cost neutral with operators being 'no worse off or better off' from concessionary fares. This is looking at the Bus operation in a silo as purely a standalone business.

This should instead be looked at in the wider picture of where this fits in the whole social, economic framework of the country.

The Welsh government needs to determine a method of cross subsidising the bus services from the savings to the state of getting people out of unemployment into full time employment that would not otherwise happen without the integrated bus services.

Based on the Department for Works and Pensions Report (Freud Report) if ten people manage to obtain full employment as a result of the availability of bus services then at today's prices this would deliver a saving to the state of £34m.

**Question 5** – what do you think Welsh local authorities should do to support bus and community transport services?

Based on the survey undertaken by SEWTA the response from Bus users put Bus Stop information in the top three priorities after Reliability and Frequency.

Local Authorities should put in place the arrangements for Bus Stop timetable information to always be up to date at every bus stop in their area.

They should also publish at the stops and on their websites details of any changes at least four weeks before the changes are implemented.

Where the authorities can come to an agreement with the bus operators for the operator to update the bus stop information, they should monitor compliance.

Where necessary if any shortcomings are identified they should recover sufficient costs to undertake the work themselves in accordance with the recovery arrangements in the Transport Act.

If more than one company's services use the Bus Stop they need to ensure the arrangements cover the provision of all company's timetable information.

The authorities should set up a registration arrangement whereby e-mail notification etc is sent to every registered user that there are changes. This does not need to detail the information but simply advise that there are changes or updates posted in its website.

The authority should provide details and times of all nearby bus services at every railway station and in the centre of any town with a population greater than 5,000.

**Question 6** – what do you think about proposals to devolve bus registration powers to Wales? How should these be used?

The most important thing is having sufficient powers to be able to simply and economically direct when where and at what price bus services should operate. This needs to be able to respond to changes without cumbersome legal or administrative procedures.

The ability to maximise passenger usage by integrating services and where necessary cross subsidising to maximise usage is the only foolproof way of having proper integrated transport to grow the patronage on public transport.

**Question 7** – please tell us whether you think further powers to regulate the bus industry in Wales are required and why?

The question is answered above. Without it usage will continue to decline, except in minor pockets where individuals in control are prepared to work to the wider advantages. If you compare different areas of the same bus company in the UK such as Brighton, Oxford and Newcastle you can see very different approaches within the same company based on the local individuals in charge. The good from a passenger point of view are far outnumbered by the bad. So trying to import from the good may make minor improvements but at the end of the day there is a need to be able to direct that the good practices are universally applied.

**Question 8** - what other action can be taken to ensure that bus and community transport services meet the needs of people in Wales?

There is a greater need to publicise, promote and market what is available. There is a local bus stop not too far from many peoples' door. There is a need to make use of these to attract those passing by, especially those who at present do not use the buses. This is not just timetables for those who use the services, but on the side people walk by to catch the attention promoting the use of buses. Those who do not use buses at the moment will not be looking at 'Bus sites' on the Web. The first point of attracting them if there is no public advertising like some of the rail companies' commercials and sponsorship of programmes could be the local bus stops.

Please tell us anything else you would like to mention this topic, thank you for contributing to our inquiry.

Please see the two attached papers

Personal Observation of Newport Bus services - 3rd September.

This gives a one day passengers eye view on the reality of trying to use the bus services.

The second paper is CHEPSTOW /CALDICOT Corridor - Buses in terminal decline but Rail growth highest in Wales - Have you asked why?

This is a long research paper comparing the fates of both modes along the same basic route and the reasons for the differences.

# BUS & RAIL COMPARISON

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## CHEPSTOW / CALDICOT Corridor – Buses in terminal decline but Rail growth highest in Wales – Have you asked why?

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# BUS & RAIL COMPARISON

## 1. Overview of the difference in Growth / Decline of Rail and Bus along the parallel route

The fortunes of the bus and rail operation along the Caldicot – Chepstow corridor in south east Wales could not show a more opposite pattern regarding growth and usage.

The rail service is delivering the highest rate of patronage growth of all the suburban rail services radiating out from Cardiff since the present rail franchise was let, outstripping all of the Valley Lines.

By contrast the bus service is well on the way down the spiral of decline into total oblivion.

The bus operation is showing all the fatal signs of repeated and frequent reactions to try and stem the haemorrhaging of passengers and revenue.

Every few months there is another change which appears to repeatedly fail and the number using the buses declines further with each change.

## 2. A source of information on what determines passenger growth

The DfT has developed models to determine growth of usage on passenger transport.

These have been incorporated into the Guidelines (WebTAG<sup>i</sup>) that puts financial values to all aspects of costs and benefits of proposed transport interventions to aid decision making on what represents the best value for money. The process includes the determination of the potential increase in usage, and hence revenue, that proposed changes will make.

(The Welsh government uses WelTAG<sup>ii</sup> - Welsh Transport Planning and Appraisal Guidance which refers to and uses many parts of the original English based DfT WebTAG.)

Network Rail has extracted and summarised the five key factors or drivers of passenger growth in their recent Market Studies<sup>iii</sup>. This has then been used in the more localised Regional Route Studies in order to identify future growth and plan where interventions will need to be considered.

The Welsh Route Study<sup>iv</sup> has been the subject of full consultation and the final version is due to be issued in the near future.

## 3. Listed in order from the Market Studies - Five key factors / drivers of passenger growth

- Macro economic factors, such as distribution of employment, income and homes
- Micro economic factors, such as the cost of travel by car and public transport, car ownership, and competition between modes
- Demographics, such as population, age of population and household composition



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- Consumer tastes, such as the use of travel time and travelling alternatives
- The supply of travel opportunities, such as generalised journey times and punctuality.

## 4. Comparing the effect of the key drivers on the two modes – Bus & Rail.

The purpose of this paper is to take each of the five key drivers and consider them and compare the application of them to the local rail and bus operation. In this way it is hoped that it may help identify the issues resulting in the very different effects on patronage of the two modes of transport along the same route in the same geographical area.

It is also the intention to consider any other factors that might not be adequately addressed by these five key drivers.

While I might have been a lone voice in actually challenging the overall validity of the five key drivers in the Welsh Route Study, the examination will I believe reveal some additional items that are relevant and should be evaluated when considering patronage opportunities.

## 5. Comparing Chalk and Cheese, the risk of comparing Rail and Bus modes of transport

Caution has to be exercised when comparing why people choose the modal shift from using the car to using the train while for others the modal shift is away from using the buses and in many cases to using the car.

In comparing bus and rail travel it is often quoted that more journeys are made by bus in the UK than are made by train. This is true as in the UK 63% of passenger journeys are made by bus while only 19% are made by National Rail<sup>v</sup>

What is often not mentioned is that despite only accounting for a third of the number of journeys compared with the bus the total passenger kilometres by rail at 59% is twice that of buses at 29%.

The two statistics highlight an important difference between the two modes of public transport. This is the bus is more attractive and serves more places for the shorter distance journeys.

Rail on the other hand has stations far less accessible to the walking public and hence tends to be used more for the longer journeys and is less attractive for the shorter journeys.

Despite the differences it is still worth examining the factors that determine growth as identified in the five key drivers.

Caldicot has no long distance Inter-Urban or InterCity rail services and is only served by the local suburban services from Cardiff. As such the differences will be less marked.

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Chepstow has an hourly bus service that takes just 25 minutes to get to Newport with only one intermediate stop at Larkfield.

By comparison the franchised rail service from Chepstow to Newport is only alternate hourly and two hourly and takes 23 minutes only two minutes quicker and has two intermediate stops at Caldicot and Severn Tunnel Junction.

So there are aspects of the two different modes that may actually be more similar than might have first been thought before looking at the detailed facts.

Part of the high level thinking of the City Region Metro is consideration of the use of 'high speed' bus services such as actually already exists between Chepstow and Newport.

Why this bus service appears to significantly fail to attract anywhere near the level of patronage of the competing rail service is an important point that needs consideration and resolving if this aspect of the Metro concept is going to deliver.

## 6. Growth in Rail usage

The growth of rail patronage on the Chepstow line in the ten years of the Arriva Trains Wales franchise has been the most significant in South Wales at 131.31%.

Colin James & Phil Inskip were asked and prepared an article for the Institute of Welsh Affairs titled "*The Cinderella Line – The Cardiff Suburban Railway Line that has been overlooked*". It compared the suburban lines into Cardiff and analysed the growth and other statistics such as improvements in train service, average footfall per station, price of tickets etc. A copy of the summary table of the results is included as an appendix to this document

The greater than 130% growth compares with the other lines with the next greatest growth such as the Maesteg line at around 50% and Rhymney and Merthyr lines at just under 40%.

From the official ORR (Office of Rail & Road) station statistics<sup>vi</sup> the individual footfall of Caldicot station grew by 88% and Chepstow by 136% over the ten years of the franchise.

Based on the latest available statistics Caldicot has grown by another 6.07% and Chepstow by 4.81% in the last year.

## 7. Decline in Bus usage and resultant reduction in service levels

Unfortunately the statistics on bus usage are not as transparent as that for rail travel. No similar comparable information is available in the public domain.

However the bus companies say the level and reduction in service level directly reflects the level and reduction in patronage and revenue.

In a few years the commercial services between Chepstow and Caldicot / Newport have come down from two an hour throughout the day.

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This first reduced to just one service an hour before dropping to two hourly through the middle part of the day.

Finally the commercial operator withdrew all services from between eight and nine in the morning until the school services between three and four in the afternoon.

The Council have stepped in to provide four financially supported linking services in the eight hour gap. These provide a fifteen minute connection into an onward service from Caldicot to Newport. In the other direction they provide a three minute onward connection from the return service from Newport.

## 8. Key Driver - Macro economic factors.

Looking at the five key drivers the first are the Macro economic factors. These are the factors which influence the demand for the use of public transport as a result of economic incentives and pressures that occur outside of the transport sector. As identified and listed by Network rail they primarily comprise the following:

- **National and regional employment levels by type of employment.** Total employment levels affect the aggregate number of trips by all modes of transport including for commuting. The type of employment affects the proportion of these trips for which public transport is a viable option. For example office based employees are more likely to travel by bus or rail than construction workers who may be required to transport heavy apparatus to and from their workplaces. The level and type of employment is driven by the performance and composition of the national and regional economies.
- **The distribution of employment between principal regional centres and other areas.** In particular this affects the number of people for whom commuting or travelling on employers' business by public transport is more attractive than by car. A factor affecting this is urban traffic congestion or limitations on the availability of city centre car parking. The distribution of employment between urban and other areas is driven by a number of factors, including the structure of the economy discussed above, the cost and supply of an appropriately skilled labour force, and public and private investment decisions.
- **National and regional income levels.** Personal (disposable) income levels affect the number of people who are willing to travel by all modes of transport, especially as longer distance travel is more expensive. Income levels are driven by factors such as the performance of the domestic economy, and wage inflation versus increases in the cost of living.
- **The distribution of income across the population of Great Britain.** Similarly to the above, the level of domestic income equality affects the number of trips, as only the higher income groups in society tend to have the financial means to travel regularly over longer distances. The level of income inequality can be influenced by a combination of taxation policy, and the ability of supply side innovations to reduce the cost of consumables in Great Britain.
- **The distribution of residences across Great Britain and between urban and other areas.** The distribution of homes and in particular the relationships between where people live, work, and spend leisure time affects the demand for

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travel for all purposes and by all modes. For example large numbers of homes on the outskirts of urban areas leads to significant inward commuting and leisure trips, and a dominant regional centre of population leads to large levels of business and leisure travel between the centre and elsewhere. The distribution of homes is driven by a number of factors including the attractiveness of urban areas as places to live, the distribution of employment opportunities, the availability and prices of residential property, the stability of employment markets and national employment practices, immigration and migration trends, and demographics

- **The coverage of individuals' social networks.** The geographical coverage of people's social network affects the number of people who travel to visit friends and relatives. A number of factors influence the coverage of the typical social network, including migration patterns (e.g. driven by university admissions), immigration trends, and the extent to which mobile technology, social networking, and internet opportunities help people to maintain long distance relationships.

As will be seen from the items above extracted by Network Rail there are few items that would impact differently between buses and trains on the Caldicot Chepstow corridor. There is no urban congestion in Caldicot. There is some going into Chepstow in the morning peak as there is into Newport.

No extra time is put in the service 74 bus journey times into and out of Chepstow but an extra five minutes is allocated to just one service into Newport in the morning peak presumably to reflect possible urban congestion delays and greater stop dwell times because of the higher patronage in the peak. So urban congestion delaying buses is not considered a significant factor determining the choice between the two modes of public transport. (It may of course effect the choice between using the car and opting for public transport.)

The rail service does offer longer journey opportunities but the majority of rail journeys are still relatively local in nature with the predominant destinations of Newport and Cardiff off the Caldicot - Chepstow line.

The longer journeys require connections into onward services but there is nothing stopping the bus providing the same initial link into the longer rail journeys as happens in London and other European countries such as Switzerland where services are integrated. This is therefore covered in the last of the five drivers 'The Supply of Travel Opportunities' as the Macro Economic considerations are effectively the same for both modes.

Bristol in mileage is closer from here than Cardiff and the Greater Bristol Area as a destination has a growing significance in the Macro Economic considerations.

Two years ago there was an hourly through bus service from Caldicot and Chepstow to Bristol while there is still no direct rail service. This and the changes are dealt with under the last item of "Supply of Travel Opportunities".

In conclusion the top driver of 'Macro Economic Factors' on its own does not explain a significant difference in growth between the two modes.

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## 9. Key Driver - Micro economic factors

These are the factors which influence the demand for travel through economic incentives and pressures that occur within the transport sector, principally via the cost of travel by the various modes of transport:

- **Cost of travel by car and car ownership.** Car has a dominant mode share in most markets for travel and in most parts of Great Britain, and a change in the cost of car travel can therefore have a significant proportional impact on the demand for travel by public transport. There can often be a time delay before this impact occurs as the decision to travel by car or not can be associated with choices around car ownership. Several factors influence the cost of travel by car including the price of crude oil, vehicle efficiency, the availability, cost and suitability of cleaner or non-fossil fuels, the cost of car parking, Government taxation policy, the price of new and used cars, the cost of insurance, and the cost and availability of company cars. These factors in turn influence the level of car ownership and usage.
- **Competition between modes.** The cost, and ultimately the commercial viability of service on a route by a given mode will depend on the strength of the competition from other modes.
- **Cost of travel by rail and bus.** The cost of travel by rail<sup>vii</sup> for example from Chepstow to Newport is almost three times the cost of the bus fare<sup>viii</sup>, Caldicot to Newport is more than twice the bus fare.

The cost of car travel and car ownership impacts equally on both modes.

The bus fare from Chepstow to Newport is £2.50 compared with the rail fare of £7.10. The cost of the bus fare from Caldicot to Newport is £2.40 while the rail fare is £5.50. Between Caldicot and Chepstow the bus is £1.70 while the rail fare is £3.80

Based on the elasticity of demand of cash fares then the Micro Economic Factors taken in isolation would predict bus travel should be significantly in excess of rail travel.

So far from explaining the difference between the two modes it would predict the complete opposite with a strong growth of bus patronage at the expense of decreased rail usage. This is the complete opposite of what is actually happening.

The situation that should drive up bus patronage is even stronger because of the availability of concessionary passes that are not available for rail travel in this part of Wales.

Concessionary travel represents some 45% of all bus journeys in Wales<sup>ix</sup>. With zero fares for these concessionary pass users the bus patronage should be far in excess of those using rail.

## 10. Key Driver - Demographics

These are the elements of the composition of Great Britain's population which affect the demand for travel. Namely:

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- **The population of Great Britain and its regions.** Population affects the demand for travel by all modes. The factors which drive the size of the population are life expectancy, birth rates, immigration, emigration, and domestic migration, and regional/local differences in the cost of living.
- **Age of the population.** The age of the population affects the number of people who travel regularly such as commuters both directly and indirectly through its impact on the state retirement age and the ability to travel by car. The factors which determine the age of the population are largely the same as for the size of the population.
- **Household composition.** The structure of a household affects the number of people who travel, particularly for the purposes of commuting. For example, households with multiple occupants in employment generate more travel per person for these purposes than households where one or fewer people are employed. This is partly a result of the proportion of the household which is in employment, and partly as it is more difficult for households with multiple workers to locate in an area close to the employer of all the workers within it. A number of inter-dependant factors influence household composition including the cost of living versus incomes, the age of parents when their first child is born and social preferences.

There appears nothing under the 'Demographics' driver that is different for the two modes and as such should not play a significant part in explaining the difference in growth between the two modes.

'Demographics' may affect the 'Macro Economic Factors' that is dealt with above. 'Supply of Travel Opportunities' may affect the resultant travel choices for the travel needs generated from the regional differences in the cost of living. Again 'Demographics' does not in itself favour one mode of public transport over the other.

## 11. Key Driver - Consumer tastes

These are the factors that influence the demand for the mode of travel as a result of the attitudes, preferences, and choices of consumers. Namely:

- **Use of travel time.** The facilities for people to use time spent travelling in the way they choose can influence the demand for travel by public transport, particularly as it is not currently possible to use time spent on driving a car for other purposes. Factors which influence this are journey purpose (passengers are more likely to work during transit if they are commuting or on employers' business), on-board facilities, and the availability of enabling mobile technology.
- **The match between consumer tastes, consumer perceptions and travel products.** The ability of the industry to tailor its products to meet the requirements, tastes and expectations of customers will influence the number of people who travel. Passengers perceptions of the overall journey experience compared to the experience of using competitor modes of transport will also affect mode choice. These factors include the provision of information around fares and journey opportunities, ticket booking facilities, ticketing technology, real time journey and product information, and journey comfort. Individuals' expectations around these factors are partly driven by how well

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products in other transport and non-transport sectors are tailored to their requirements, and their willingness to accept these elements will vary accordingly.

- **Alternatives to travelling.** Continuous improvements in information technology have long been cited as influencing the demand for travel by any mode, for example the advent of facilities such as internet shopping and video conferencing. There is a general absence of consensus on the likely impact of better information technology, with some citing it as a threat to individuals' desire to travel, and others arguing that it strengthens links between people, hence increasing their desire to meet each other. Travel industry research is weak in this area compared to most of the other factors discussed above, and several organisations are working to address this.

## 12. On board facilities and comfort

The twenty five to thirty year old trains operating on this corridor do not have modern on board facilities such as Wi-Fi that now seem to be appearing on the newer buses. So if anything this aspect would tend to favour bus usage rather than rail, which the numbers do not show that this is the case.

With regards comfort while the 'Bus Body on Rail' Class 140/142 Pacers still operate over this line, all of the original British Leyland bus seats have been replaced by more comfortable rail designed seats with head rests. So there is a minor comfort advantage to the rail service. At present all these services still have toilet facilities which is another plus in favour of using rail.

## 13. Ticket buying and associated travel information

Ticket booking and ticketing technology are not significantly different between the two modes. There is no Booking Office at Caldicot station so like the buses you buy your ticket from the on board staff.

There is a Booking Office at Chepstow Railway Station and it is noticeable the number of travel queries that are dealt with. Drivers are occasionally asked questions at the Bus Station in Chepstow but this often lacks the ability to answer questions about the other operators' services. There is therefore a small advantage for rail in providing cross company information on a personal face to face basis in Chepstow

## 14. Incorrect and lack of pre journey information resulting in bus usage decline

The general availability of information is probably one of the most important factors within this 'Driver' of Consumer Tastes.

The research report into the best practice of public transport information<sup>x</sup> identified the use of six information options – Council Website, Operator Website, Traveline, At Bus Stop, Bus Timetable, Smartphone App., Other.

Of these in every case from Derby to Brighton to Cardiff the research showed the 'At Bus Stop' was the highest ranked for the use of information by bus passengers.

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To the best of my knowledge at the time of writing there is not a single 'At Bus Stop' information between Chepstow and Caldicot that actually shows the correct comprehensive bus time information.

The industry seems hell bent on concentrating all its efforts on the electronic options as the only answer. Those with the electronic capability the research showed were only used by less than half compared with those relying on the Bus Stop information.

This inward looking approach rather than what the customer at present wants has been highlighted in the 'Provision of Public Transport Information Report – April 2012<sup>xi</sup> that states – *“No evidence was seen of a consistent approach to seeking users' views on the provision of public transport information and designing and delivering it accordingly”*

Without good Bus Stop information the ability to attract new customers is also limited. Local bus stops provide the potential for advertising the bus options to people passing by who might not otherwise have considered finding out what the possibilities were.

There is a need to attract new patronage to counter the effect of those that are lost, for example as a result in changes to times / routes etc. Poor or wrong local information will hinder this.

Poor information at the Bus Stop is not the only problem. Even the Bus Operator has struggled to provide the correct timetable information.

The June 2015 change indicated that you could no longer use the bus to commute to work in Newport from the corridor between Caldicot and Chepstow. The Operator's published timetable showed there was not a regular service to get you there before nine o'clock in the morning. The only service into Newport before nine only ran on schooldays<sup>xii</sup>

This was corrected some twenty days after the service had been introduced but by then it was too late. Those who had previously used the bus to get to work had been forced to look for alternatives as they needed to be able to get to Newport on both schooldays and school holidays.

One person from my village to get to Newport by nine o'clock said that if she wanted to retain her job she had no option but to leave almost an hour earlier at 07:08 going the other way on the First Somerset X7 service. The change at Larkfield at the top of Hardwick Hill in Chepstow gave her just two minutes to get across the busy road and catch the First Somerset X7 service to Newport.

This year alone I have downloaded the local service No.74 from Newport / Caldicot to Chepstow timetable seven times from the Newport Transport company. (Downloaded on the 1st January, 5th February, 10th February, 22nd June, 15th July, 14th August and 18th August.)

Every downloaded timetable is different reflecting as much wrong information that had to be corrected as actual real changes to the service.

As the County Council simply used the information from the Operator without checking for accuracy, it also reflected the wrong information provided.



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The Traveline website information only managed to first publish the revised times some twelve days after the changes had been introduced. Prior to that any enquiries would only show the previous and by then incorrect timetable information.

The Traveline site had been struggling to introduce a new computer system. It was just unfortunate the teething problems of the new system coincided with a peak of service changes as a result of the implications of the subsidy cuts.

As with the County Council when the information first appeared on Traveline it followed the initial Newport Bus information only showing a Schooldays only service to get to Newport before Nine o'clock.<sup>xiii</sup>

The paucity of information even goes as far as the inability to identify where busses actually stop.

## **15. Bus Stops with no services and scheduled stops with no physical Bus Stop**

From a quick check in January / February this year in the Caldicot area there were as many bus stops (some even with a shelter and even one displaying a timetable, albeit out of date) that actually had no scheduled services to stop at them as there were scheduled stops where there is no roadside infrastructure to show that it is a bus stop.

No Bus Stop Flag, no road markings no raised kerb etc. to give any indication that there are scheduled bus services that actually call there.

Using the unique bus stop SMS code on the bus stop flag to provide electronic information of services becomes even more farcical when there is not even a bus stop flag to show that that part of the pavement is actually a bus stop with a timetabled service.

The devastating and ongoing lack of information is therefore a significant item as a 'driver' for the reduction of bus passengers on this particular corridor.

The lack of shelters is another deterrent to potential bus users especially with the unreliability of the services so you do not know how long you will have to stand in the wind and rain.

The users of the Newport direction stop on the Chepstow Road in Caldicot near the site of the old Tippling Philosopher Pub requested the provision of a bus shelter on this exposed road. There are only Bungalows set back in spacious gardens that provide little weather protection from the prevailing wind and rain.

I was sitting in at the local County Council meeting to consider the request. The resident outside whose bungalow the stop is situated objected on the grounds that he did not want to "encourage the sort of people who would use it to be 'loitering' outside his house".

The County Council agreed with the views of the resident and rejected the idea of considering putting a bus shelter there.

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I also believe it was at this individual's request that the Council actually pulled up and removed the Bus Stop Flag and tarmaced over the resultant hole. A council officer told me that the Bus Stop flag was making it difficult for him to reverse his car into his drive. The Flag was on the raised part of the pavement away from the lowered kerb for the drive access. The stop still has the raised pavement and road marking but nothing else to indicate that there are in fact three bus companies that officially call at this stop.

## 16. Personal attitude, preference and opinion

I have heard several people who use the train to openly say that they would never use the bus.

While the above remains the general public and its elected representatives' attitude towards the users of buses, bus usage will continue to decline and car usage and congestion increase.

This attitude is reminiscent of the (in)famous quote by Margaret Thatcher in 1986<sup>xiv</sup>: - "*A man who, beyond the age of 26, finds himself on a bus can count himself as a failure*".

The totally negative attitude to bus and bus travel is not reflected by Train and Tram passengers, and must be a significant reason for the ongoing decline in bus patronage compared with the growth of rail usage.

## 17. Key Driver - Supply of travel opportunities

These factors relate to the supply and quality of opportunities to travel by public transport. The impact of these factors on the demand for travel is similar to the micro economic factors described above. The supply and quality of travel opportunities have been categorised as follows:

- **Capacity of the system.** This is influenced by demand for travel at peak times, the level of service at peak times and investment in additional capacity to keep pace with this demand
- **Generalised journey times and punctuality.** This is influenced by investment to reduce journey times or increase the frequency of direct services between locations and by the ability of the system to operate punctually
- **Capacity of the highway network.** This is driven by demand for travel at peak times and investment in additional capacity to keep pace with this demand

The capacity of the highway network at peak times has already been addressed in the discussion of urban congestion above. As was seen only one bus service on the corridor in question has an additional five minutes included in its planned journey time into Newport.

However the capacity of the highway network through the day becomes a more significant issue as general traffic levels increase. The bus services in question have to travel along roads with parked cars, increased general traffic levels results in extended journey times waiting for oncoming vehicles to pass etc.

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As long as the reality of this is built into journey times the extra few minutes in the timetable is not a significant issue for users. However reliability as far as punctuality is concerned would tend to indicate that this may not have been given adequate consideration.

## **18. Investment in the Highway network decreasing Bus usage and increasing Rail usage**

Investment in the Highway network has actually tended to drive down bus patronage.

This is because road works tend to significantly increase journey times for all road vehicles while they are being undertaken.

As margins become tighter there has been a desire and a move to maximise available mileage per vehicle in an effort to reduce operating costs. One of the ways of doing this is to reduce the 'contingency' of turnaround times.

Combining reduced turnaround times with delays due to roadworks results in incoming delays cascading into the return service and the whole process can then escalate.

This effects reliability which from the survey of bus passengers undertaken by SEWTA it is reliability that is the highest priority issue for users. The impact on reliability has resulted in loss of patronage.

There are less options to get around engineering works on the railway so it developed and uses the 'Rules of the Route'. This takes an overview and prevents for example delays due to planned engineering work taking place at the same time on the same line in say Monmouthshire, Newport, Cardiff and Bridgend areas.

I am not aware that there are similar considerations in the planning of roadworks even within the same Authority area let alone across boundaries. Some of the worst delays I have seen to the buses have been where there have been three sets of roadworks, all with their own temporary traffic lights between Caldicot and Chepstow.

I am not aware that the council in planning its work have specifically considered the impact on the operation of the buses; or the bus operator has retained sufficient contingency to cope with inevitable future roadwork delays.

While outside Wales and this immediate area the major highways investment work on the A40 / A48 on the approach to Gloucester provides an example of significant modal shift from car usage to rail.

The roadworks for three months resulted in severe delays to all road users.

This resulted in an unprecedented flood of people trying to use the railway to get to Gloucester and beyond avoiding the temporary congestion.

The Council temporarily leased land close to the station to more than double the parking facilities.

Initially the Train Operating Company was overwhelmed and half the passengers travelled free (and their numbers therefore not recorded) as the train guard could not get

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through the train selling tickets before it arrived at Gloucester. Gloucester being an 'open' station operated by a different Train Operating Company had no barriers allowing free exit. Even with the doubling of the on train staff and extra coaches on the peak service some passenger still managed to make the journey without paying.

From the official ORR station footfall statistics based on ticket sales the average increase per year at Lydney was around 9,000 or around 10% of the total footfall of 90,000. In the year where there was the three months of road work the number grew for that year by 70,000 to 168,000. While in the following year the number dropped back to 136,000 this was at least 25,000 more than the previous annual growth rate would have predicted.

In other words having been pressured into changing to use the train it meant that the individuals that made up the increased 25,000 journeys a year decided to continue to use the train. Despite the vastly improved and less congested road compared with when they previously used it, they have made a permanent modal shift from road to rail.

This also demonstrates the basic principle that once a change is introduced a significant proportion of those affected will not revert back to their previous method of transport.

## 19. The Rule of Five

Years ago the railway had a simple Rule of Five that said if you remove a service or significantly change the time of the service and then reinstate it at the next timetable change six months later you will only get one in **five** of the customers back. This is because by then the others will have found alternative means.

It also said that if you do nothing else it would take **five** years to re-grow the trade back to the original level by attracting new customers to replace those lost.

If you want to bring the level of trade back up to what it was before the service was cut or altered you need to undertake **five** positive actions. Reinstating is one, an advertising campaign could be a second, Special offers could be a third etc. etc.

## 20. The need for Stability not included in Five Key Drivers.

The need for stability of services was not included in the five key drivers, probably because the rail industry is fully aware of the destructive effect on patronage that changes can bring (The Rule of Five).

With the local bus services in this area there have been three significant changes of service in nine months.

The changes will have had a disruptive affect on the numbers that use the service. Each change will have resulted in a permanent loss of some customers. With three changes in a short period of time the cumulative effect certainly appears to have been significant.

This need for stability has previously been identified in the research paper – *Factors affecting the decline of bus use in metropolitan areas*.<sup>xv</sup> In considering the lessons that could be learnt from London one of the top items was greater stability of service, avoiding frequent network and timetable changes.

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## 21. Extended bus journey times and their implications

What does appear to have become an issue is where the Bus Operators have combined the separate very local 'round the houses' services into a single end to end service. This has significantly increased the overall journey time to a point that it has become noticed and remarked on in a negative way.

Looking back a couple of years I could catch the 07:49 off Portskewett and be in Newport for 08:35. Today I would have to leave twelve minutes earlier at 07:37 only to arrive in Newport ten minutes later at 08:45. This is a 48% increase in overall journey time and this is significant.

The bus service from Caldicot now takes an hour compared with forty minutes previously; the train does the journey in fifteen minutes.

With the station being on the very edge of the town some fifteen to twenty minutes walk away from the town centre the difference in journey time from there using the two modes was only slightly in favour of the train. Now that difference is significant and more people seem prepared to make the walk out of the town to catch the train instead.

For those living in the southern part of the town the difference of the slowed down bus services is even more noticeable. From the bus stop in Longfellow Road closest to the station you could do the bus journey to Newport in 27 minutes compared with the train's 15 minutes. The bus journey time for the 07:50 off Longfellow is now 55 minutes, double the time it was a few years ago and almost four times the rail journey time..

Minor increases in journey time tend to have little or no effect on patronage but when it becomes significant it can explain a lot of the reduction in usage.

## 22. Punctuality / Reliability

While one of the reasons for revised bus times was stated by the Operators to be to improve reliability, the impression is that punctuality still remains poor on the buses along this corridor.

I have produced a separate paper "Personal Observation of Newport Bus Services on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015". This identifies several punctuality issues and their effects and why I personally will in future transfer from using the bus where I have important medical appointments to attend.

Punctuality of a single journey for many retired people is not so much of an issue as time is not such a constraint. As concessionary passes account for 45% of patronage on Welsh buses the effect on users of poor punctuality is less significant.

What this does mean is that poor punctuality is more likely to deter Fare paying passengers, the very people that need to be encouraged to use the services to make them more commercially viable.

For concessionary pass users there are two main exceptions where punctuality is an issue and these are where appointments or meetings are scheduled or where there are onward connections to be made.

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## 23. Connections - effect on Generalised Journey Time not included in Five Key Drivers

While the Supply of Travel Opportunities mentioned 'Generalised' Journey times the effect of connections was not specifically covered.

Generalised journey times can refer to not just the journey time itself but also the interval or wait due to the frequency of the services. In simple terms if you just miss a service how long it will take to get to your destination is a combination of the waiting time for the next service and its journey time.

If you have to connect into another service the waiting connection time has to be added to the overall journey time and frequencies of the services can become very significant.

For example if you walk into Chepstow station at twenty past seven, or twenty past eight or twenty past nine to catch the rail service to Bristol you will need to change at Severn Tunnel Junction but you would still be in Bristol within an hour. If you walked in at twenty past ten it would take two and a half hours. Such is the effect of service frequencies. The actual time sitting in the train remains unchanged; it is the increased waiting time as service frequencies expand outside the peaks on both lines.

This is the point that was missed in the Network Rail studies and can have a significant impact on passenger growth or conversely on losing trade.

Since the Greater Western Franchise was let the local rail campaigning group (STAG) has been successful in getting First Great Western to add additional stops on their through services at the Junction. Amongst these are the services that specifically connect with the twenty past seven, eight and nine off Chepstow mentioned above. The effect on overall journey time has been demonstrated as one hour instead of two and half hours.

So while the number and times of trains calling at stations like Caldicot on the Chepstow line have not changed the effect on the interchanges at the Junction has been dramatic.

Based on the official ORR statistics the growth in passengers transferring off and onto the Chepstow corridor services at Severn Tunnel Junction has in the seven years of the Greater Western Franchise grown by 213%. For comparison the footfall numbers for those coming through the gate into the station at Seven Tunnel Junction as compared with transferring across platforms is just under 60% over the same period.

Where there are no through services the impact of good connections must not be underestimated on its effect on the growth of passengers.

On rail the improved connections and integration has been a significant factor in increased patronage.

## 24. Loss of through services and breaking of connections

Considering the trains with the letting of the Greater Western Franchise the services were reorganised and several stations lost their through service from Severn Tunnel Junction.

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The first year after the change showed a decline in ticket sales to all the stations that no longer had a through service. This varied between 20% in the worst case to 3% for the least affected. Most were between 5% and 10%.

Considering the bus services three years ago in addition to the hourly Newport - Caldicot - Chepstow service there was an additional hourly through service from Newport through Caldicot and Chepstow to Bristol

The bus journey time from Chepstow Bus station to Bristol Bus station was fifty minutes in both directions about five minutes quicker than the rail journey from Chepstow Railway station to Bristol Temple Meads railway station with the change at Severn Tunnel Junction.

The through bus service was withdrawn and while the overall journey time from Bristol to Caldicot remained the same at about an hour and a quarter the opposite direction suffered with a twenty minute connection at Chepstow , extending the journey time.

Today there is now only a two hourly service instead of hourly. The service now takes an hour and a half to an hour and forty minutes between Bristol and Caldicot.

An alternative retail outlet service was the direct hourly bus service from Chepstow through Caldicot to the Spyttly Retail Park outside Newport taking around fifty five minutes.

This has now gone down to a two hourly service involving a change of bus at Caldicot. The journey time has extended from under an hour to an hour and forty minutes.

The loss of through bus services to principle retail outlet destinations and the extended journey times as connections worsened along with the general service frequencies down from half hourly to two hourly plus requiring a change would, if the railway is anything to go by, explain a significant loss in Bus patronage.

## **25. Connections instead of through service compounded by poor service reliability**

From the few bus services that I have travelled on recently the late running of the services would mean onward connections are being missed.

Missing the onward connection resulting in a further two hour wait on services that a couple of years ago of were under one hour in total journey time will have had a substantial impact on patronage.

## **26. Opportunity of Connections between Bus and Rail missed**

A significant omission in the Report of the Bus Policy Advisory Group<sup>xvi</sup> is that it failed to make any reference to the significant advantages that can be achieved from cross modal integration and connections.

While the case study for Lloyds coaches makes reference to integration with other modes of transport at key locations, this was not picked up and developed by the group in its report.

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This 'silo' thinking on bus services means it is missing significant opportunities of picking up the fare paying rail passengers. As has been shown rail in this corridor is one of the fastest growing businesses and buses could cash in on this growing market.

Amongst the reasons buses in London remain on a steady growth is the fact that they integrate and connect with rail underground and overground services.

Part of my presentation to cross party MPs in Portcullis House in Westminster included my 'Integrated transport' journey to London. I would leave my house at 2 pm for the five minute walk to the local bus stop. Bus to Severn Tunnel Junction with three minute connection into the Bristol train. Change platforms at Filton Abbey Wood with a six minute connection to Bristol Parkway. Nine minute connection into the London train. Paddington down to the Bakerloo line for underground to Baker Street. Change to the Jubilee line and out at Westminster just as Big Ben chimed five o'clock.

From my house in a village in Wales to Westminster in three hours. It was a regular journey that I made many times for evening meetings in Westminster over the years and only three times was I delayed and these were all on the main line rail. In three to four years the local bus operated by the Classic Chepstow Bus company was never more than one minute late and I never missed the connection into the train.

This bus service was a Council supported local service so there was the ability to control the integration between modes. Historically the commercial service along the main road would deliberately not integrate with the Newport rail services.

A bus manager told me years ago that it was not in their interest to integrate with the Newport trains. By deliberately not doing so there was more chance of the passenger staying on the bus all the way to Newport and hence pay their higher fare and increase revenue. He was happy if the busses integrated with the Bristol trains as they were not in direct competition on that route.

The change in the last year is that the services now no longer provide a connection with the Bristol direction rail services so this bus traffic has also now been lost.

## **27. Comparison of integration of regulated private Bus & Rail companies.**

It is worth comparing how bus and rail services integrate in a country like Switzerland. The following extract from the book Transport for Suburbia<sup>xvii</sup> examines transport at Hinwil which has a population that is smaller than Magor with Undy and half that of Caldicot

*"An illustration of the system in operation can be had by travelling to Hinwil, a town of around 5000 residents in the Zurich Oberland, the mountainous region in the far east of the canton. S-Bahn line 14 leaves Hinwil station at 8 and 38 minutes past the hour, from 5:38 am to 11:38 pm every day of the year; longer trains run at busy times. Five minutes down the line, each train arrives at the regional junction of Wetzikon, which has two 'island' platforms. A minute later, the S5 express service from Rapperswil pulls in on the opposite side of the platform. After passengers are exchanged, the express departs for Zurich, followed by the stopping-all-stations S14. A minute later, a third service departs: the S3, which uses the platform vacated by the express but follows a different route to*



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*Zurich, via the sub-regional centre of Pfaffikon. On the opposite island platform, the same procedure occurs in reverse, allowing transfers in all directions.*

*In the station forecourt, half a dozen bus routes perform a similar manoeuvre. Some of these service the town of Wetzikon, while others fan out across the countryside to neighbouring rail corridors. Connections are possible between all three train lines and all six bus routes, in all directions. Once the last bus has left, Wetzikon station is quiet until the cycle begins again.”*

This is the same concept as used by Transport for London for the unregulated London buses. This not only has increased patronage but is generally accepted as having increased Productivity<sup>xviii</sup> with the ‘Passenger numbers per bus Km’ some five times higher in London than in the ‘Shires and Wales’ that has the lowest productivity in the UK

## **28. Lack of transparency of information in Wales & Buses compared to England & Trains**

One of the difficulties in putting a paper like this together is the general lack of transparency of information in Wales preventing the ability to put a factual based argument forward or to challenge possible ‘spin’ put out by interested parties.

Before its abolition you could as a member of the public sit in to listen to the SEWTA (South East Wales Transport Alliance) Board meetings though there were inevitable commercially confident parts for which the public were excluded.

Its nearest equivalent was the Cardiff City Region Board that had subsequently been set up. The request to sit in and listen was passed all the way up to the Minister and rejected. Some weeks later sets of ‘bland’ minutes were published but they lack any detail to enable any effective scrutiny.

Similarly with factual bus information the availability can be limited unlike the raft of information on train operation published by the DfT and the ORR (Regulator). (Passenger numbers at Caldicot and Chepstow, transfers between services of the Chepstow line to Bristol etc.)

I appreciate equivalent information might be available by a request under the Freedom of Information Act to Newport Transport.

While a private company and hence not normally subject to this Act I am aware a previous request on a different matter was initially rejected by the company on the grounds of being a Private Company. It was pointed out that even though they received no funding from Newport City Council, as it is its sole shareholder it does make the (private) company subject to the Act. As such they are required to provide the same level of information as any purely public body would have to under a request under the FOI Act.

However the same would not apply to the other two bus companies that operate along this corridor so even if the information was forthcoming from one the comprehensive factual information would still not be available.

As an example of this transparency the effect and detail of the reduced subsidy for bus operation In Wales compared with England.

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For England I can quote the average reimbursement per passenger journey in 2014/15 for Durham was 110 pence, for Lancashire 117, for Derby 105, for Warwickshire 112, for Surrey 110, for Torbay 112 etc, etc.

I can find nothing for Wales apart from the global figure from the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) the Trade Association for the Bus Industry in their campaigning Manifesto; but nothing from independent sources such as the DfT, Welsh Government or the Bus Regulator.

So again there needs to be caution in taking anything I am saying when looking at the Micro Economic implications of Subsidy between the two modes as only partial information is available.

## 29. The effect of Subsidy on the bus and rail services provided

It is often verbally said that if the Bus Companies had the same level of subsidy that Arriva Trains Wales has they would be providing a far superior service, far more frequent service and carry far more passengers.

The CPT states<sup>xix</sup> “*Support from public bodies amounts to just 24p for each passenger journey. This compares with 25p in London and 31p in the rest of England and with £5.10 on Arriva Trains Wales*”.

Would this explain why the rail traffic has grown by more than 130% along this corridor while the bus operator has withdrawn all commercial services between eight and four during the week and provides no services on Sunday?

## 30. Bus Subsidy per Passenger Journey

I have some difficulty in relating to the CPT figure of 24p for each passenger journey, and this is where the lack of independent statistics in Wales is a problem.

If you take the average of all the “Average reimbursement per journey (Pence)” for all the English Authorities<sup>xx</sup> for which information is available (a total of 54 Authorities) the figure is £1.06

The TAS partnership for the House of Commons<sup>xxi</sup> have identified what in practice the reimbursement rates are in England. Averaging the range this comes to 57.5%

In Wales the reimbursement rate at 70.5%<sup>xxii</sup> for the final quarter to 31<sup>st</sup> March when the existing three year scheme ended was reduced down to 56.3%<sup>xxiii</sup> by the Minister Edwina Hart as part of the cuts to Bus subsidies in Wales.

This reduced Welsh rate of 56.3% is close to the average English rate of 57.5%. If you convert the English £1.06 down from 57.75 to 56.3 this would be an average reimbursement of £1.03 for each passenger journey.

These of course simply relate to just the journeys for which concessionary reimbursement is made whereas the figure quoted by CPT relates to all journeys.

This 24p therefore has to be converted up to the value for Concessionary journeys.

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As 44% - 45% of all bus journeys in Wales are Concessionary journeys<sup>xxiv</sup> this would lift the reimbursement figure from CPT to 55pence for just the Concessionary Journeys.

This should compare with the English figure so using the same reimbursement rate I cannot understand why the Welsh information from CPT is only half the value that would be expected from the factual information for the rest of the UK?

Without a logical explanation as to why using the same adjustment rate of 56.3% the actual value of £1.03 as the reimbursement subsidy per passenger journey should not be the one to compare with the rail subsidy.

It should also be remembered that when considering total state support that the fuel subsidy would also need to be added to the figure above as all of the above calculations only relate to the concessionary subsidy.

The rate of subsidy was 13.75 pence per Kilometre for 2013/14.<sup>xxv</sup>

The distance between Chepstow and Caldicot is around 6.75 miles equivalent to 10.87 Kilometres. The fuel subsidy for this journey would therefore be 149 pence. To add to the concessionary figure this needs to be divided by the number of passengers.

While from observation through the day the bus loadings appear to have dropped to around four. Even if this is effectively doubled it would bring the total subsidy for the journey to about £1.25 per passenger.

## 31. Rail Subsidy per Passenger Journey

The DfT provides the UK government with the statistical data on the payments made to the Train Operating companies and the annual passenger mileage.

This latest published information issued in September this year shows that a subsidy of £101.9m was paid to Arriva Trains Wales in 2014-15 this is equivalent to a subsidy of 8.5 pppkm (Pence per Passenger Kilometre)<sup>xxvi</sup>

For the journey from Chepstow to Caldicot of 10.87 Kilometres this means Arriva Trains Wales receives a subsidy of 92.37 pence per passenger. This compares with the 125 pence calculated above for the same bus journey.

Even if for some reason the CPT figure of 24p is right then lifted to 55p to reflect concessionary journey only plus say 20pence for fuel this would still result in an equivalent subsidy of 75pence.

When considering the subsidy for the specific journeys along this corridor there would appear to not be a real significant difference.

Subsidies add to the Micro economic factors in the same way the level of fares. There does not however appear to be such an impact on the differences of growth / decline between the two modes as the headline figures issued by CPT might otherwise have implied.

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## **32. Applicability of Rail cross subsidisation as compared to State subsidisation**

Rail cross subsidisation does not apply to this particular corridor or exercise as the details, apart from reference to transfers, have excluded the facts and figures, footfall etc. associated with Severn Tunnel Junction.

This is relevant because if considering journeys towards Newport that only start at Severn Tunnel Junction then cross subsidisation would have to be taken into consideration when comparing modes.

While the Arriva Trains Wales services along the line between Caldicot and Chepstow are subject to state subsidisation the local GWR (Great Western Railway) services from Bristol receive no state subsidisation. In fact GWR pays a Premium to government and not the other way round.

Part of the profit from the long distance GWR services effectively internally subsidise any financial shortfall on the local stopping services.

## **33. Effect of the way reduced subsidies to Rail and Bus were applied**

While the absolute values of subsidisation do not explain the differences in change of patronage between the two modes; the way the cuts were implemented are believed to have had an impact.

The initial annual Subsidy to Arriva Trains Wales was more than £180m and as detailed in the "Rail Subsidy per Passenger Journey" above for the same level of service it is now around £100m.

However the annual decrease in subsidy to operate the same level of service was known before the contract was let ten years ago. This meant that Arriva entered the contract knowing this was the situation and has time to be able to plan accordingly.

By contrast the bus subsidy was set for a three year period so a change was to be expected, and in the present economic climate a reduction would have been expected.

However there was not much notice to deal with the 70+% factor dropping to 56%, especially as the size of the cut was almost certainly far greater than had been anticipated.

This resulted in rapid changes to react to the reduced profit margins that in retrospect as far as effect on Passenger usage and requirements were probably over hastily implemented.

Arriva had had time to adjust to reducing profit margins for the shareholders. By comparison based on a factor of 70% the bus companies had arguably been accustomed to a profit level higher than perhaps should have been the case if purely considering the 'Rules' on concessionary reimbursement.

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That is not to say the previous higher level was in any way wrong. The guidance on reimbursement of concessionary travel<sup>xxvii</sup> is intended that the factor will leave the bus companies “no better off or no worse off” compared with if the scheme did not exist.

The Welsh government has deliberately suppressed fare levels on the rail services to places in the Valleys with high levels of unemployment to encourage people to get to places of work. See the Appendix to compare the fare levels.

This can be explained by the research by the Department of Work and Pensions<sup>xxviii</sup> that has identified the magnitude of the extent of the savings to the state of taking people out of unemployment. Considering the wider economic picture the savings exceed the cost of the higher transport subsidies.

So in the same way the government has supported rail because of the wider social economic advantages there is no reason why it should not do the same for buses. The easiest financial mechanism for doing so is at present to set the concessionary factor at a higher percentage than is legally necessary to meet the minimum requirements of “no better off and no worse off”.

Whether this is the right mechanism to use for this is another argument; but under the present deregulated bus regime it looks the most pragmatic and administratively the most cost effective approach.

The CPT information<sup>xxix</sup> shows that the typical profit margins of the Welsh Bus companies of between 6% and 8% are above the level of the Train Company's Profit level.<sup>xxx</sup> As explained above Arriva has had more time to adjust to this and has of course benefited in the “Good years” at the start of the franchise compared with the “Lean years” nearer the end.

The significant drop in subsidy prompted Stagecoach to threaten to go to Judicial Review. In the event it allowed the time frame for this to lapse and did not proceed. It is pure speculation but having found the average factor in England was not far removed from the reduced Welsh factor it is conjectured that there was not enough of a case to be confident of winning in court.

The withdrawal of services, closure of a garage and making staff redundant might have been as much of a political gesture of defiance as this is exactly what this same company threatened to do in Newcastle.

They were faced with the Council wanting to pay the company under a Quality Contract in order for the council to be able to direct when and where services ran to boost the employment and economic prosperity of the area.

The bus company violently opposed any interference in their ability to decide where their services were run.<sup>xxxi</sup> With regard to Quality Contracts as will be seen from reading the article referenced in the End notes the Stagecoach chief said “*Put people who are pushing for Quality Contracts in a Tardis. It is not the way forward.*”

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## 34. Lessons from the different financial models for the provision of bus and rail services

There is a significant difference in the way the bus and rail operators can react to change in external circumstances.

The Train Operators are effectively contractors working for a client who provides the subsidy (in the case of Arriva Trains Wales) and as such there is a two way contractual agreement.

The Bus Operators while also in receipt of subsidies are not contracted in the same way and can subject to giving 56 days notice to the Traffic Commissioner simply walk away ignoring any social, environmental and economic impacts on the wider community of as a result of its actions. The existing deregulated legal arrangements preclude the rail model being used for buses at present.

The tighter contractual or regulated Train Operators cannot just simply walk away leaving the communities and economic implications without suffering significant financial penalties.

This has not always worked. Initially the private company Connex had to be removed for severe poor performance resulting in the state having to step in and activating its 'Operator of last resort' to maintain services as a state run operation and bring the operation back to a condition that it could be re-privatised again.

In the event the re-privatisation had to be accelerated as the job was delivering too well. The state run operation had lifted the operation from the worst performing and the rate of climb led to concerns of the political implications if, as it looked, it would reach the best performing operator in the UK, weakening the political argument for re-privatising.

The second was the Nat-Ex on the East Coast who having operated the franchise for less than two years took the penalty and simply walked away before the declining support / increasing premium was to become too difficult for the company.

Again the State run operation had to step in and ended running the operation for five years at the end of which it was delivering the second highest rate of premium back to the government of the 17 UK franchises at -5.1 pppkm (Pence per Passenger Kilometre)<sup>xxxii</sup>. It has now been re-privatised but resulting in a reduced premium of -3.9 pppkm as obviously there are initial setting up costs and also a percentage has to be put aside for shareholder profits. Under the state run operation the 'shareholder' was the government so the 'shareholder profit' is in accounting terms all included in the money it hands back to the Treasury.

The point is even if revised bus arrangements are introduced to limit the impacts of being able to simply walk away at short notice there still needs to be a backup mechanism. This could simply be a ring fenced emergency fund and alteration to the legislation to enable immediate purchase of replacement services ahead of any formal tendering arrangements.

Annually declining subsidies / increasing premiums have revealed another aspect that should have actually reduced the growth of rail usage in the Chepstow - Caldicot

# BUS & RAIL COMPARISON

corridor. As can be seen from the Appendix the Chepstow line indicates it should be the most remunerative of all the Valley Lines.

It has not only the highest growth but also the highest fares. Unlike all the other lines it can be seen that all the others have had additional services contracted by the Welsh government that would have incorporated and formalised any services above any 'safeguard minimum'. The 'safeguard minimum' was based on the concern of a return to a falling patronage and was set at about 10% below the existing service level.

This would allow the Operator to reduce services to save some costs but safeguarded a minimum level of service for passengers. The intention was that this would only be activated in the case of significant falling patronage.

Despite the highest growth this was the only line that Arriva could 'legally' reduce the service level to reduce costs. This was to help maintain profit margins caused by the declining subsidy. As will be seen from the Appendix the actual number of rail services has been reduced by two. As it was the safeguard level that was contractually written in there was nothing the governments could do to prevent the reductions without expensive variations

Despite this, the line still has the highest growth which implies there are other factors that were able to more than compensate for this reduction in service frequency.

## 35. An outside view of the decline of bus usage in the UK

The following extract from the book *Transport for Suburbia*<sup>xxxiii</sup> by Paul Mees summarises the situation in the UK. As a non resident of the UK and analyst of transport around the world he has no local or UK political axe to grind but says things how he sees them.

*British bus deregulation has not produced free-enterprise public transport at all; nor has it produced innovative services that respond to contemporary needs. Instead, it has produced a new version of the 1970s 'British disease' that Thatcherism was supposed to have cured: a mendicant, declining industry that relies increasingly on carrying 'captive' passengers at concession rates or even for free, and charging the government at full-fare rates*

*Similarly disastrous results in New Zealand prompted the repeal of deregulation, which was replaced by the 'London model' from 1 January 2009. Even the leader of New Zealand's ultra-dry ACT party supported the change, pointing out that following deregulation 'Auckland moved from being the second-highest user of bus transport in the Australia and New Zealand region to the second-lowest on a population—patronage ratio.'*

*Britain is now the only part of the developed world where the policy persists.*

*Every independent inquiry into urban bus deregulation in Britain has concluded that it has been a failure — from the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's (RCEP) transport report in 1994 to the House of Commons Transport Committee's report on deregulation in 1995, to the 2006 Eddington Transport Study. But Whitehall remains unmoved, and the policy remains in force despite the defeat of the Conservative government in 1997. The only change permitted has been the introduction, in the*

# BUS & RAIL COMPARISON

*Transport Act of 2000, of 'quality bus partnerships', an impressive-sounding concept which has produced little real change.*

*In 2006, the UK Department for Transport released a report with the equally impressive title Putting Passengers First. The report was said to be the result of a 'long hard look' at problems with buses, which confirmed the contrast between success in London and failure elsewhere. 'We need to learn the lessons of the London experience', the authors piously intoned, then proceeded to ignore them.*

*The capital's success was attributed to the congestion charge despite London having outperformed the deregulated systems for 16 years before charging came in.*

*The report recommended giving other cities the power to introduce road pricing, together with 'tweaking' of the failed quality partnerships scheme.*

## 36. Conclusions

The reduction in patronage of bus services on the Caldicot – Chepstow corridor had started before the general Budget cuts triggered the significant reduction in the bus subsidies. This is a general pattern across the UK outside London.

The loss of all accurate bus stop travel information is considered a significant reason why Bus patronage could not be maintained. As other factors occurred the total lack of information magnified the negative effects of these other factors.

The Bristol area is growing in economic significance for the area. The local action group successfully winning Bristol rail services that connect into and out of the Chepstow corridor trains has undoubtedly resulted in significant rail growth.

The loss of through bus services to Bristol has had the opposite effect on bus patronage.

The loss of through bus services to other retail outlets has further reduced bus users.

The lack of co-ordination between operators resulting in the loss of connections had the opposite effect to what was happening on the railway where connections were actively being made.

In basic terms the railway was improving providing what passengers wanted and where they wanted to go while the bus service was doing the opposite and in looking how to save money they were looking at their own services in isolation.

There remains a significant personal 'attitude' and perception against the use of buses that does not exist to anywhere near the same extent against the use of trains.

The speed and depth of the cuts in bus subsidies resulted in an initial deliberate reaction to withdraw all commercial services.

The multiple subsequent changes coincided with problems introducing the new computer system at Traveline Cymru. The loss of accurate up to date information on top of the total lack of Bus Stop information together drove more bus passengers away. At the time of change the most important thing is information on what is happening, and this was totally missing.



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The lack of stability (three changes in nine months) during a period of almost no information as well as significant service frequency reductions compounded the dramatic decline of bus passengers.

The difference in subsidy between Rail and Bus is not as great as the headlines might imply when looking at this particular corridor. Part of this is because rail fares on this line are double those of the Valley lines as this area despite the pockets of multiple deprivation in Caldicot, has not benefited from the subsidised low fare policy of the Valley Lines.

## 37. The question that should have been asked

There have been many reviews and reports on why bus services have declined outside London and this paper just looks at the local reasons in this one small area.

The question should not be why bus services have declined; there is plenty of evidence of that from throughout the whole of the UK.

The question that should have been asked is:-

- Do we **really** want to do something significant about the decline in bus usage?

If the answer is yes and not just keep tweaking at it with Voluntary Partnerships, Quality Partnerships, Quality Contracts and the like then there is the need to reverse one of the key cornerstones of the original Deregulation

One of the ideological concepts was to remove any cross subsidisation so the buses could all operate in a free market in competition with other buses and other forms of transport.

If you look at what this would mean for rail in its absolute form for Wales then the Serpell Report<sup>xxxiv</sup> on a fully privatised Railway with no cross subsidisation shows what you need to do.

### **You need to scrap all commuting services.**

The Report shows that you need to close all the commuting services into the likes of Cardiff and Bristol as they are uneconomical if you simply look at them as a standalone free market business.

If you accept that considering the wider economic implications is the right thing to do then the second and difficult question is:

- How do you devise an efficient, pragmatic mechanism that would be publically and politically acceptable to allow the benefits a fully integrated transport system would bring to be cross subsidised from the wider economic gains?

Year by year the longer the decline is allowed to continue the harder it will be to reverse what has happened if this is what is really wanted.

Phil Inskip

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## Appendix – Statistics of Cardiff rail suburban services since start of ATW Franchise

### Extract from ‘The Cinderella Line’ by Colin James & Phil Inskip

#### Changes in the Arriva Trains Wales Franchise outer suburban services to Cardiff in the 10 years since start of Franchise

..	Merthyr Tydfil	Aberdare	Treherbert	Rhymney	Maesteg	Ebbw Vale Parkway	Chepstow (Cinderella Line)
Distance to Cardiff	23¼ miles	23¼ miles	23 miles	23¼ miles	23½ miles	28¾ miles	29¼ miles
Journey less 50 min	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓
Av. journey time	1Hr 5m	1Hr 5m	1Hr 5m	1Hr 3m	54m	57m	39m
Fare Single	£5.50	£5.50	£5.50	£5.50	£5.50	£5.50	£9.30
Anytime Day Return	£7.70	£7.70	£7.70	£7.70	£7.70	£7.70	£12.40
Annual Season	£1052	£1052	£1052	£1052	£1052	£1052	£2176
Change in number ATW Trains over 10 yrs.	<b>+27</b>	<b>+15</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+5</b>	N/A – opened after Franchise	<b>-2</b>
Trains per Weekday	59	57	61	36	32	34	24
No. arrive by 08:30	3	3	4	4 + 2*2	1	1	1
Last Return Service	22:30	22:45	22:50	22:35	22:35	23:05	23:20
Sunday Service	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Hourly or better	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Half Hourly or better	✓	✓	✓	✓*1	X	X	X
Quarter Hourly	X	X	X	✓*2	X	X	X
Line Description – Stations From -To	Merthyr to Quakers Yard	Aberdare to Penrhiwceiber	Treherbert to Terhafod	Rhymney to Heath H L	Maesteg to Wild Mill	Ebbw Vale Pky to Rogerstone	Lydney to Caldicot
Average footfall per station on the line	131,355	149,034	127,029	204,882	49,534	130,592	151,589
Line growth based on station footfall figures for stations on the line	+39.04%	+31.27%	+12.96%	+39.73%	+49.63%	N/A	<b>+131.31%.</b>
Inc in Electrification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Inc in Metro proposals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

✓\*1 = Peak service    ✓\*2= From Bargoed

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- <sup>xi</sup> Public Transport Users Committee for Wales – Provision of Public Transport Information – April 2012 - <http://gov.wales/docs/det/report/120531provisionptien.pdf>
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## Chepstow - Newport via Caldicot & Langstone

Monday – Friday (Excluding BH Mondays)

Service:	Sch					
	74	74	74	74	74	74
Chepstow Bus Station	--	0720	--	0840	1010	--
Portskewett Church	--	0735	--	0852	1022	--
Caldicott, Deepweir	--	0736	--	0857	1027	--
Caldicott Cross	0706	0738	0830	0901	1031	1131
Caldicot, Green Lane	0708	0739	0832	0903	1033	1133
Caldicot, Longfellow Court	0712	0741	0836	0907	1037	1137
Rogiet Pool	0716	0745	0840	0911	1041	1141
Magor, Withy Walk	0719	0752	0847	0918	1048	1148
Llanmartin Church	0721	0756	0852	0923	1053	1153
Underwood Shops	--	--	--	--	--	--
Llanmartin Church	--	--	--	--	--	--
Langstone, New Inn	0723	0806	0854	0925	1055	1155
Nash College	--	0816	--	--	--	--
Royal Oak	0730	--	0901	0932	1102	1202
Queensway	0743	0826	0914	0945	1115	1215

**CC** – On School day service commences at Chepstow School 1525

**CA** – On School day service continues to Chepstow School arriving at 0835

**Sch** – Operates on Schooldays Only

**B** - Operates via Bulwark

**MF** – Operates Monday – Friday only

Revised version issued 15<sup>th</sup> July

## Chepstow - Newport via Caldicot & Langstone

Monday – Friday (Excluding BH Mondays)

Service:	*					
	74	74	74	74	74	74
Chepstow Bus Station	--	0720	--	0840	1010	--
Portskewett Church	--	0735	--	0852	1022	--
Caldicott, Deepweir	--	0736	--	0857	1027	--
Caldicott Cross	0706	0738	0830	0901	1031	1131
Caldicot, Green Lane	0708	0739	0832	0903	1033	1133
Caldicot, Longfellow Court	0712	0741	0836	0907	1037	1137
Rogiet Pool	0716	0745	0840	0911	1041	1141
Magor, Withy Walk	0719	0752	0847	0918	1048	1148
Llanmartin Church	0721	0756	0852	0923	1053	1153
Underwood Shops	--	--	--	--	--	--
Llanmartin Church	--	--	--	--	--	--
Langstone, New Inn	0723	0806	0854	0925	1055	1155
Nash College	--	0816	--	--	--	--
Royal Oak	0730	--	0901	0932	1102	1202
Queensway	0743	0826	0914	0945	1115	1215

**CC** – On School day service commences at Chepstow School 1525

**CA** – On School day service continues to Chepstow School arriving at 0835

\* – On School days Operates to Nash College via SDR

**B** - Operates via Bulwark

# BUS & RAIL COMPARISON

<sup>xiii</sup> Traveline Cymru only managed to publish the revised bus times some twelve days after the revised service was introduced and as it followed the initial information from Newport Bus it equally did not show any service other than on schooldays that could be used for commuting to work into Newport by Nine o'clock in the morning.



## Chepstow - Newport via Caldicot

Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) (Inbound)

	Days:	SD				
	Notes:					
Chepstow Bus Station	--	0720	--	0840	1010	--
Portskewett, Church	--	0735	--	0852	1022	--
Caldicot, Deepweir	--	0736	--	0857	1027	--
Caldicot Cross		0706	0738	0830	0901	1031
Caldicot, Green Lane		0708	0739	0832	0903	1033
Caldicot, Longfellow Court		0712	0741	0836	0907	1037
Rogiet Pool		0716	0745	0840	0911	1041
Magor, Withy Walk		0719	0752	0847	0918	1048
Llanmartin Church		0721	0756	0852	0923	1053
Underwood Shops						
Llanmartin Church						
Langstone, New Inn		0723	0806	0854	0925	1055
Nash College			0816			
Newport, Royal Oak		0730		0901	0932	1102
Newport Queensway		0743	0826	0914	0945	1115

### Notes:

- CC** On School day service commences at Chepstow School 1525
- SD** Schooldays Only
- BC** Operates via Bulwark, Chepstow

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# Service 74 Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015



Date 05/09/15  
Updated 05/10/15  
Ref. TR892

## Personal Observation of Newport Bus services - 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015

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## 1. Observation / Impression

This is a personal observation of the journey planning, information, timetables, reliability, routing, time keeping, loading, cash revenue and general aspects of using the Newport Bus services on 3rd September 2015.

As with an audit it reflects just a sample that might not be replicated every day but it does provide a real customer's eye view of the service on that particular day.

Where it states that it is an 'impression' then this means it was not specifically recorded at the time. As such it is subject to memory and also bias (selective memory) and should not be given the same degree of accuracy / importance as the observations on the day.

## 2. Purpose and detail of the journey

The journey was from and to Portskewett to the Royal Gwent Hospital Newport for a booked appointment with a Hospital Consultant.



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## 3. Problems with Journey Planning – wrong information

A week before the appointment I went onto the Traveline Cymru website as the only place that I am aware of that you can undertake a full end to end Journey Planning inquiry.

Having set the date to Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September I noticed that the details did not reflect the change of Timetable that I was aware was due to be introduced on the 1<sup>st</sup> September.

There was nothing on the Traveline Cymru site to indicate that there was to be a significant change of timetables.

Most people unaware of the proposed change having entered a date after the 1<sup>st</sup> would have taken the incorrect information as factual to plan their journey.

I downloaded a series of Timetables from Newport Bus in order to work out how to make the journey.

I contacted Traveline Cymru and received thanks for advising them of the situation.

I was told that a late notification was the reason the up to date details were not available. The change was being worked on and a note would be posted as an interim warning to people using the site.

They hoped the correct information would be available on Friday (the last working day before of the change).

I checked on the Friday morning and while the warning was in place the detail was still to be updated. The updated information was in place when I looked the following week (after the changes had been implemented).

## 4. Planned Journey – implications of closed Bus Station

I proposed to take the last through bus of the morning from Portskewett to Newport, that is now the 08:30 service 74 in the morning from Chepstow (08:42 Portskewett). There are now no through services after the 08:30 until the one in the late afternoon arriving in Newport just before five.

Because the Newport Bus Station has been closed down and buses arrive at various locations around the City it would be necessary on arrival in Newport (Queensway) to walk to the Market bus stops. The time I allowed for this walk was ten minutes.

I allowed another fifteen minutes in case of just missing the four services an hour Service 35 or 36 for the three minute journey to the Royal Gwent Hospital giving a total journey time of one and a half hours.

This would still give me thirty minutes to walk from the nearest bus stop and to find the Hospital reception etc and where I needed to go within the Hospital. This would also cover any late running of the Newport Bus services into Newport.

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While I might have just been unlucky my 'impression' is I can only recall two occasions since Newport Bus took over the services in this area that I have actually arrived within five minutes of the scheduled time, so leaving time for late running seemed prudent.

## 5. Lack of Bus Stop Timetable information in Portskewett

At the timing point of St Mary's Church in Portskewett the large timetable holder instead of bus times still has the two faded and now starting to rot yellow A4 sheets lying on their side proclaiming Monmouthshire County Council is "Improving its Information".

Several local residents refer to these as the butt of the joke about the efficacy of the County Council to deliver services and information to the public.

These sheets were put in to replace the badly out of date Monmouthshire County Council bus timetable a year or two ago; so no timetable information is available.

At the Bus Stop in the other direction a Newport Bus timetable has been provided that is headed "Your Local Bus Service". It is up to date showing the correctly timed services.

Unfortunately it only shows a third of the weekday buses that actually call at this stop and no information on the Sunday services at all.

There are ten Bus Stops (five pairs) approximately a quarter of a mile apart along the length of Portskewett village.

Of these three have no bus information in the holders, one has no information but the 'we are improving' notices mentioned above.

Four have up to date times but only covering a third of the weekday services.

One has a complete Monmouthshire County Council Monday to Friday, Saturday and Sunday service apart from missing out completely the one through service to and from Bristol every weekday. Unfortunately this full timetable is dated June 2015 and hence shows services no longer running as a result of the September 2015 changes.

The last has an up to date timetable showing all the weekday services, again apart from the one through service to and from Bristol. Unfortunately it does not indicate that this only covers Monday to Friday and that the Saturday service is in fact different about which it provides no information.

No details of any of the Sunday services are shown at any of the stops apart from the out of date June 2015 timetable that ironically while now wrong for Monday to Friday and Saturday is in fact still correct for the Sunday services.

This prompts speculation that if someone has come all the way out to install up to date timetables in one holder; then why were not all the others including the one just across the road not dealt with at the same time?

## 6. Service Reliability Problems on Journey to Newport

I left my house at around 08:30 to walk the five minute walk to the Bus Stop so I would be there in plenty of time in case the bus was running early.

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To be fair the bus arriving more than two minutes ahead of schedule is not something I have encountered in the last five years but having been caught by this before old habits die hard.

After waiting twenty five minutes with no sign of the bus (more than twenty minutes after it was scheduled to leave) I gave up and managed to arrange a lift in a car. As the appointment with the consultant had taken nine months since my GP first referred me I had no wish to miss the appointment and further delay treatment.

Passing the bus stop by the old Undy Halt there were two Newport Buses nose to tail stopped at the bus stop. It looked as if some passengers were possibly transferring. Presumably both buses were service 74s, but what was happening and why both had stopped there I do not know.

## **7. Timetables up to date at Newport (Queensway) Bus Stop**

After the appointment at the Hospital I ended up in the separate Block at the high (St Woolos) end. I decided to walk back down Stow Hill to Queensway for the bus home rather than walking all the way to the front of the Hospital for the bus to the Market and then walk across town to Queensway.

The Bus Stop at Queensway had the full set of up to date timetables for all the services leaving from that stop, assuming that the Sunday service leaves from somewhere else in Newport, which I am aware it does, and not the same stop as the Monday to Saturday services.

My next bus was the 11 o'clock to Caldicot which according to my downloaded timetables meant there would be a wait of just over an hour before there would be any onward connecting service from Caldicot to Portskewett.

## **8. Bus Bays occupied at Queensway Newport – called to bus in road**

Five to ten minutes before my bus was due a service 73 for Chepstow via Caerwent arrived in the Bay opposite the shelter and Bus Stop. According to the posted timetable this bus was due to leave five minutes after mine so I kept a good look out in case my bus used another Bay further along the road as there was now no space at the allocated bay or the next ones to it.

I have seen this happen on two occasions at Chepstow where a (late running) bus was occupying the scheduled bay. Using a spare bay (The one usually used by the Nat Ex coaches) the incoming bus arrived and then departed leaving passengers behind waiting at the proper bay unaware that their service was that day using a bay three places further up obscured by the other buses in intervening bays.

A couple of minutes before the departure time a bus "double parked" in the road mid way between the buses occupying two bays.

After the passengers had got off the driver came out and announced the bus was for 'Underwood & Magor'. The seven of us waiting moved out into the road to join the bus.

The bus left as soon as we were all loaded to minimise blocking the carriageway.

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While we left early it was only a minute or so early and it was clear by looking either way along Queensway that there were no other passengers for it.

## 9. Bus Stop at Kingsway – passenger almost left behind

We stopped at Kingsway where there were three people waiting at the bus stop.

There was some discussion between the driver and one of the waiting passengers.

I only heard the last exchange when the driver called back “we do actually call at Spytty”. On hearing this the passenger who had been on the way back to the queue in the shelter, returned and joined the bus.

What the confusion was and whether the others waiting also wanted a bus going to Spytty is not known.

## 10. Spytty – passengers trying to board the wrong bus

On arrival at Spytty four passengers alighted and ten joined. The last two had to get back off again as they wanted the service to Newport and not the one going the other way. (All buses for all the destinations use the same single stop).

## 11. The Ringland Route– should the bus have gone that way or more wrong information?

To my surprise having started along the Southern Distributor Road we turned off into Ringland.

A slow journey getting past parked cars followed through Ringland past the Health Centre before rejoining the Distributor Road at the last roundabout before the Coldra.

No one hailed the bus and no one got on or off in Ringland, and by the time we reached Langstone we were running five minutes late.

The timetable only shows Spytty and Langstone so there is no indication that it goes via Ringland.

By expanding all the stops on the Traveline site for this service it shows that this service does not go via Ringland but goes direct between Spytty and Taylor’s Cafe Langstone. According to Traveline only the 15:00 service 74 bus goes via Ringland.

So either the driver got it wrong or Traveline does not show the correct service route and stops.

## 12. Langstone

Two passengers got off at the first Langstone stop and two more at Langstone New Inn. No passengers joined.

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## **13. Underwood - Passengers trying to board the wrong bus at every stop**

Two passengers got off at the first stop in Underwood.

The bus was hailed down at four of the five stops in Underwood.

On each occasion all the passengers were wanting the Newport Bus, a total of nine passengers in all. After the second occasion the driver got out and rechecked that the bus was showing the correct 'Caldicot' destination.

As it is a one way system and prior to the latest change every bus went to Newport it would appear that the residents have still to adapt to the fact that every alternate bus now goes the other way and the service to Newport has been cut by half.

Two more passengers got off before we left Underwood leaving four on board for the onward journey.

## **14. Magor**

No one got on or off through Magor and Undy.

## **15. Caldicot Cross – Passenger trying to board unaware bus was terminating**

One person got off in Longfellow Road Caldicot leaving three of us to alight at the end of the journey at The Cross, Sandy Lane Caldicot.

We were running some seven minutes late and about the time for the departure of the return journey. If it had been on the alternate hour when there would be an onward connecting service and if the connecting service was running to time it would have left before we arrived resulting in a further two hour wait.

There were about six people waiting at the stop on the other side of the road for the return journey to Newport.

As we got off a man tried to board as he was unaware that the service no longer continued through to Chepstow.

He was advised that he would have to wait an hour for the next service.

I looked at the timetable at the Bus Stop but unfortunately it was the old Monmouthshire County Council timetable and is out of date and still showing the bus at that time was a through service.

## **16. Turning the bus around in Caldicot – where did it go?**

As the weather was fine I decided to walk rather than wait an hour or more for the onward service. This would also give me a chance to see where the bus would turn around.

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Initially the bus used the dangerous manoeuvre of reversing into Castle Lea. I have been advised by a colleague that the official procedure is that the bus should continue along the Chepstow Road past the next two bus stops without calling and turn around using the 'Mitel' roundabout opposite the entrance to Caldicot Castle.

As I walked along the Chepstow Road the bus passed me and to my surprise turned off along Woodstock Way.

There is nowhere along those roads for a bus to turn so I wondered if the driver's intention was to do the longer circuit around the By-Pass and re-enter the Chepstow Road from the far end rather than using the roundabout.

I never saw it come back or re-appear along the Chepstow Road. I wondered if the driver decided to go to the end of Woodstock Way and turn right then left to rejoin the return route along Longfellow Road and hence put the service back on time.

If that was the case the passengers waiting at The Cross and any along Green Lane would just find their bus did not turn up.

## 17. Loading – Summary

There were basically eight passengers from Newport to Spytty and no more joined after Spytty for the rest of the journey.

Four off and eight on put the loading to twelve between Spytty and Langstone.

Eight from Langstone to Underwood and then four from Underwood to Caldicot.

The 'impression' of the services passing the front of my house and those I have travelled on is that the loading on each bus has actually decreased since the frequency has been reduced.

With the services going from half hourly to two hourly this means that more than 75% - 80% of passengers appear to have been lost as a result of the reductions in service frequency and loss of connections.

## 18. Cash receipts

Of all the passengers I only saw two paying cash, all the rest were using passes.

One of the two paying cash was unaware of the cost and that it was exact fare with no change given.

There was a slight delay at Spytty where the woman sought to change her note for smaller change from other passengers on the bus in order to buy a ticket.

My 'impression' as the services moved from half hourly to hourly and then two hourly is that the proportion of fare paying passengers compared with those using free passes has decreased.

The 'impression' is of a significant decrease of fare paying women shoppers.

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## 19. Late running of other connecting buses in the area and loss of connections.

Half way along the Chepstow Road I saw the small Service 75 bus crossing the end of the Chepstow Road between the Mitel Roundabout on the way to Mill Lane.

It must have been running half an hour late. As there is a fourteen minute connection at Caldicot into the onward Spytty and Newport service it would have failed to make the connection putting another hour's wait into the onward journey.

## 20. Personal change of use of the Bus, Car and Train

Since the bus service frequency has reduced from the original half hourly between Chepstow and Caldicot to hourly then two hourly my usage of the bus has fallen to less than a fifth of what it was when there was a half hourly service. This has been replaced by using the car and train instead.

From my diary I have used Caldicot railway station fifteen times in the last three months, Severn Tunnel Junction twice and Chepstow station once in the last three months.

The use of Caldicot Railway Station at fifteen in three months is three times the previous annual usage in the years when there was a half hourly bus service which was more convenient to use as the station is some three quarters of an hour walk from my house.

## 21. Future use of the Bus for Hospital Appointments

I am still waiting details of an appointment with the Cardiology Unit at the Heath Hospital Cardiff and so as yet I do not know the times.

I have used the buses including the X30 from Newport to the Heath Hospital many times.

I note that in 2011 I left my house at ten to three to catch the 14:55 into Newport and was at the Heath Hospital at four o'clock.

Using the Traveline enquiry I see that in order to reach the Heath today by four o'clock I would have to leave my house just after half past eleven, more than three hours earlier than I had to four years ago.

Depart: 11:00 Arrival: 13:08		2 changes	2 Hr(s) 8 Min(s)
Depart: 11:34 Arrival: 13:38		2 changes	2 Hr(s) 4 Min(s)
Depart: 14:35 Arrival: 16:38		2 changes	2 Hr(s) 3 Min(s)

Such is the effect of the reduced service levels, longer journey times, abolition of the bus station for quick and easy interchanges etc.

I doubt that I will risk using the bus to get to Cardiff, though if I use the train there is the similar problem of the abolished bus station at the front of the railway station. I would have to find out where I would have to walk to across Cardiff City in order to find the onward hospital bus services.