

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes	Enterprise and Business Committee
Gwasanaethau Bysiau a Thrafnidiaeth Gymunedol yng Nghymru	Bus and Community Transport Services in Wales
BCT 37a	BCT 37a
Cymdeithas Cludiant Cymunedol - Tystiolaeth bellach am Bwcabus	Community Transport Association - Further evidence on Bwcabus

Whilst providing evidence to the inquiry CTA Wales was asked to comment on the difference between Bwcabus and Community Transport (CT). As time was limited CTA Wales provided further written submissions as outlined below.

Bwcabus is not CT as it is run on a commercial basis. CT is regulated differently from the commercial sector. CT operates under a permit regime, a section 19 permit and a section 22 permit. Permits can only be used by organisations who are operating on a ‘not for profit’ basis; these organisations are not required to hold an operator’s licence. Bwcabus is run on a purely commercial service, run by commercial operators. In terms of the Bwcabus model, it operates a mix of fixed and demand-responsive routes run by commercial operators.

CT organisations use fully accessible mini-buses and Bwcabus use larger buses. Whilst the Bwcabus buses have low floors they are still inaccessible for some passengers. CT is able to offer a door to door service, passenger assistance (Bwcabus drivers are not trained or insured to provide this assistance), ability to take more than one wheelchair user and restraints for wheelchairs. One of the challenges to consider when a feeder route model is considered is that disabled and older people find it difficult to manage the connection between the feeder and the main bus service, or face difficulties on arrival in towns. It is worth noting that in the Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Operators (PACTO) are currently seeking funding for a “Bus Buddies” service to provide extra support and assistance to passengers who currently find it difficult to travel on community and public transport services.

One of the key differences between Bwcabus and CT demand responsive services is that CT offers a door to door service. In rural areas a door to door service requires smaller vehicles such as minibuses, MPV’s or cars. Smaller vehicles are not only more appropriate but also cost effective, especially for demand responsive services in deep rural areas. In some rural areas even minibuses struggle, it is therefore important to highlight the role of community car schemes as they often provide a lifeline in these areas.

CTA Wales maintains that Bwcabus is an attractive and helpful option for many people living in rural areas but, particularly for younger and more able bodied people. Bwcabus is a 7am to 7pm bus service and operates in rural West/Mid Wales and as such requires subsidies. However, Bwcabws should not be regarded as a panacea for all rural transport issues, or a total replacement for CT in the areas in which it operates. Additionally, CTA Wales believes there is potential and scope for

CT to play a role in the delivery of Bwcabus. CTA has recently begun a dialogue with CT organisations and Carmarthenshire County Council to look at areas of operations to identify duplication and explore the potential for CT to support delivery of Bwcabus. Although CT organisations cannot be expected to support Bwcabus delivery without additional resources as they are currently working at full capacity. Also a full consideration of the integration of existing community transport services needs to be considered e.g. residential homes, GP surgeries, post office. CT organisations are best placed to identify the needs of the communities they serve and therefore must be involved in any planning at the outset. It is important to note that CT organisations do not want to compete with commercial bus operators. Our members in the Bwcabus areas of operation have commented that their operations are more suited to section 22 flexible routes e.g. demand responsive.

CTA Wales looks forward to working with Carmarthenshire County Council and CT organisations to ensure that we plan effectively to meet the needs of rural communities, especially the most vulnerable people living in those communities.