



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

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[The Petitions Committee](#)

21/03/2017

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w tystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Gareth Bennett Bywgraffiad Biography	UKIP Cymru UKIP Wales
Angela Burns Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (yn dirprwyo ar ran Janet Finch–Saunders) Welsh Conservatives (substitute for Janet Finch–Saunders)
Mike Hedges Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Neil McEvoy Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Simon Cursio	Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr Dros Dro, First Cymru Interim Managing Director, First Cymru
Joe Graham	Cyfarwyddwr Sicrwydd Busnes, Rheilffordd y Great Western Business Assurance Director, Great Western Railway
Margaret Hickish	Rheolwr Mynediad a Chynhwysiant, Network Rail Access and Inclusion Manager, Network Rail
Barry Lloyd	Pennaeth Profiad y Cwsmer, Trenau Arriva Cymru Head of Customer Experience, Arriva Trains Wales
Geraint Morgan	Rheolwr Materion Cymunedol, Trenau Arriva Cymru Community Affairs Manager, Arriva Trains Wales
Cynthia Ogonna	Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr, Bws Caerdydd Managing Director, Cardiff Bus
John Pockett	Cyfarwyddwr, Cydffederasiwn Cludiant Teithwyr Cymru

Director, Confederation of Passenger Transport
Cymru

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

Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Graeme Francis	Clerc Clerk
Sam Mason	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:00.
The meeting began at 09:00.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datganiadau o Fuddiant
Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

[1] **Mike Hedges:** Can I welcome everyone to this meeting? I remind participants that you are welcome to speak in Welsh or English. Headsets are available for translation of Welsh to English. There's no need to turn off mobile phones or other electronic devices, but please ensure that any devices are on silent mode. It's hugely embarrassing if they're not. We've had one apology, and Angela Burns is substituting for Janet Finch-Saunders.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[2] **Mike Hedges:** That takes us on to item 2, which is new petitions. We've had a petition on 'Increased Provision for Off Road Motorsports', submitted by Jonathan Barrett, having collected 318 signatures. We sent it to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs on 31 January and received a response on 15 February. We've had a research brief on the petition and related issues. The petitioner has been informed that the

petition would be considered by the committee but had not responded when papers for the committee were being finalised. The Cabinet Secretary has stated that officials will review the guidance on regulating off-road motoring and meet with the petitioners to discuss their concerns. A Welsh Government consultation on improving opportunities to access the outdoors for recreation is currently being prepared. We can either close the petition or await the result of the petitioner's meeting with the Cabinet Secretary. I suggest we await the petitioner's meeting with the Cabinet Secretary.

[3] **Neil McEvoy:** I'd like to meet him as well, if possible, because it's a massive issue for us in the west of Cardiff. So, I'd be interested to discuss what they're after, really.

[4] **Mike Hedges:** Well, I think it's a problem in lots of places. I'm sure that Angela Burns can tell us that there are problems in rural areas as well—

[5] **Angela Burns:** Yes, huge.

[6] **Mike Hedges:** —where people from my area and your area to drive down to off-road. So, we'll await the view of the petitioners to see if it's been resolved.

[7] 'Free School Transport for All Children in Wales'. A first-consideration letter was sent to the Cabinet Secretary on 1 February. A response was received on 14 February. We've got a research briefing on the petition and related issues. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered by the committee but had not responded when the papers for the committee were being finalised. We know the rules: two miles for under-11s and three miles for children over 11. Local authorities can offer discretion on free transport on wider areas, and they also have to do it if there's not a safe route. Shall we await the view of the petitioner before considering how to progress the petition?

[8] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[9] **Angela Burns:** Yes.

[10] **Mike Hedges:** 'TB Testing of Cattle'. A first-consideration letter was sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs on 14 February. A response was received on 23 February. We've had a research briefing. The petitioner was informed that the petition would be considered

by the committee but had not responded when the papers for the committee were being finalised. A consultation on a refreshed TB eradication programme, which included a proposal to move to six-month testing intervals for herds in high TB areas, closed on 10 January. The Cabinet Secretary has stated that a substantial number of responses are currently being considered. The Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee has recently undertaken an inquiry into bovine TB and is due to report in the summer. The committee heard evidence from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that six-monthly testing in high-risk areas has seen beneficial impacts in England. Shall we await the view of the petitioner in response to the letter, and then consider how we move on?

[11] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

09:03

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[12] **Mike Hedges:** Updates on previous petitions. ‘Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray & Minor Injuries Unit Petition’ from 14 May 2013. We’ve had a response from the health board, which outlines the background to the changes made and the arrangements for accessing minor injuries in Tywyn. The petitioners have expressed their satisfaction with the response and the commitment made to provision of services through GP practices and communicating the arrangements locally. They expressed their thanks to the committee and their satisfaction with the regeneration of Tywyn Memorial Hospital. So, we’ll close the petition—

[13] **Angela Burns:** That seems sensible.

[14] **Mike Hedges:** —and note the petitioner’s satisfaction and congratulate them on their success.

[15] ‘45000 Reasons Wales Needs a Dementia Strategy’. Last considered—when did it start its life? It was July last year. The committee last considered the petition on 13 September. We’ve had a response from the petitioners on 8 March, and it’s included in the papers. The petitioners have confirmed that they are working with the Welsh Government and people affected by dementia on the development of a dementia strategy. They have stated that they are content for the petition to be closed, given that the main objective is

now being met. So, we'll close the petition—another success.

[16] 'Unacceptable Waiting Times for NHS patients in A&E Wreccsam/Wrexham Maelor Hospital.' It was first considered on 17 January. The response from the health board acknowledges the need for improvements in waiting times at Wrexham Maelor Hospital's emergency department and sets out actions being taken to seek to achieve this. We will await the views of the petitioner on the correspondence from the Welsh Government and Betsi Cadwaladr before considering how we take it forward.

[17] **Angela Burns:** Yes.

[18] **Mike Hedges:** 'Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time'. This was first considered on 15 July 2014. The clerking team recently contacted the petitioners to seek an update on the latest position. A response was received from the petitioner on 9 March, which is included in the papers for the meeting. What action do you want to take? The previous Petitions Committee gave detailed consideration to the petition, including through correspondence from the Welsh Government, WLGA, the children's commissioner and the petitioner. Following an oral evidence session with the Committee in November 2015, the Minister for Education and Skills wrote to directors of education and regional education consortia to seek evidence that Welsh Government's guidance was being implemented fairly. The Minister also wrote to headteachers to ensure schools were clear about the arrangements. This included clarification that schools have a discretionary power to authorise up to 10 days absence during a school year for family holidays during term time. The letter also stated that blanket policies to refuse such absences are contrary to the regulations. The petitioner still believes that there is an issue with headteachers in some local authorities being required to record all absences in term time as 'unauthorised leave'. We could write to the Cabinet Secretary to ask whether any further steps have been taken in relation to this issue, which I think is probably the best thing we can do.

[19] **Angela Burns:** May I make a comment?

[20] **Mike Hedges:** Please do.

[21] **Angela Burns:** It's just interesting on this petition, I thought, because in a previous role when I spoke for education, I did a lot of liaising with this, because this was raised in a number of places, and there does appear to be a

gap, from the evidence that I've seen and from correspondence I've received from all over Wales, where the Minister has one view and has said, 'You have a 10-day discretion', but the regional consortia actually then put out their own statement. I've asked for clarification on this issue in the Chamber on a number of times, and I'd like to really press the education Secretary. It got to a point where the discussion was about whose word was writ—should it be the Cabinet Secretary whose final determination was top, or should it be the regional consortia? Because the regional consortia, Chair, are going out and saying, 'If you take your children out, it is an unauthorised absence', and they are instructing their heads to not allow holidays during term time. I do think this is an area where we could effectively try to get a definitive answer, and ensure that definitive answer is applied consistently throughout Wales.

[22] **Mike Hedges:** I would agree with you on consistency throughout Wales, especially as regional consortia, like with all boundaries, have people rubbing against the boundary one side or the other. So, I think it really is important that we get some consistency. Can we write to the Cabinet Secretary along those lines?

[23] **Mr Francis:** Of course,

[24] **Mike Hedges:** Everybody happy to do that?

[25] **Angela Burns:** Yes. Thank you.

[26] **Mike Hedges:** 'To improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language' was first considered on 24 March, having collected 1,162 signatures. It was last considered on 13 December and we agreed to write to the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language to request an update. A response was received on 22 February. Further comments have also been received from the petitioners and all responses are included in the papers. The Minister's letter recognised the importance of sign language and commits to an inclusive education system for all learners. It states that the responsibility rests with local authorities to ensure British Sign Language is available to children who need it. The Minister also refers to the additional learning needs Bill, which will replace existing legislation. The petitioners have outlined their main concerns that BSL should be compulsory in mainstream education from early years; for BSL to be added to the national curriculum; and for free provision of BSL classes for families of deaf children. I should at this stage state that my sister is profoundly deaf, and I've been involved with the organisation, though not with this petition. So, can I just

put that declaration on the record? We can either write again to the Minister for lifelong learning or we could meet with the petitioners, the Minister for lifelong learning and WLGA to discuss what people are doing. My preference would be the latter.

[27] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes.

[28] **Mike Hedges:** Okay. It would follow on from this current investigation. We won't be doing it until well after Easter, but it is something where I think we can add value by being involved.

[29] **Neil McEvoy:** Yes. I just think—can I just say, Chair, that it's a bit of a cop out from the Minister, really, to throw it back to local authorities? So I'd really welcome—

[30] **Mike Hedges:** What we don't want, I'm sure, is that local authorities say, 'We're waiting for ministerial advice', and the Minister says, 'It's the responsibility of local authorities', and nothing happens while we have this non-discussion. So, I think it would be useful to get all three—the petitioner and the other two—in the room so we can have that discussion.

[31] 'Funding for the Education Workforce Council Registration (EWC) Fee for Learning Support Workers in Schools'. This petition was submitted by UNISON Cymru, and considered first on 13 December. The committee last considered the petition on 14 February and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education seeking a response to the concerns and questions raised by the petitioners, and asking whether it is the Welsh Government's intention to continue to subsidise the registration fees of low-paid school staff in future years. We had a response from the Cabinet Secretary on 7 March. The petitioner has also submitted further comments, which are included in the paper.

[32] The fee structure was agreed by the Assembly on 31 January. Learning support workers will receive a Welsh Government subsidy of £31, resulting in a registration fee of £15. The Cabinet Secretary's letter provides detailed answers to the issues raised by the petitioners, including in relation to the value of registration in providing reassurance to parents and improving the status of the role. The petitioners have reiterated their concern that support staff do not receive value for money from the registration fee due to the absence of professional standards. The Cabinet Secretary has also confirmed that there are currently no plans to remove the subsidy in future years.

[33] The primary subject of the original petition, which was the subsidy level for 2017–18, has been resolved. Given this, and the fact that the value of registration is a longer-term issue, we could close the petition. I think we've gone as far as we can. Of the £46, £31 is being funded by the Welsh Government, and some local authorities are also funding £15. But that's a matter of local determination.

[34] **Angela Burns:** I would agree with you, Chair. I think this is a much bigger battle in terms of the Education Workforce Council really getting involved in continuous professional development for everybody in the education field. That's not what this petition is about.

[35] **Mike Hedges:** Okay. Is everybody happy with closing it? Yes.

[36] 'Road Safety Improvements Along the A487 Trunk Road between Cardigan and Aberystwyth, to Include Passing Places'. This was first considered on 13 September 2016. We agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure seeking a more specific timetable for the review that his officials are currently undertaking and asking that the committee is informed of the outcome; and asking for the petitioner's specific request for a study into the provision of safe overtaking lanes to be taken into consideration as part of the review. Due to an administrative error, the original letter from the committee was not received. A response from the Cabinet Secretary was received on 2 March. The petitioner has responded to thank the committee for their consideration but has not offered specific comments on the Government's response.

[37] We've had from the Cabinet Secretary the steps that are currently being taken in relation to the A487: a part-time speed limit outside Ysgol Llanfarian; discussions with the local authority over a series of potential improvements; and a Wales-wide speed limit review set to be carried out in the summer. The Cabinet Secretary has confirmed that the petitioner's comments will be considered as part of the ongoing work. We could contact the petitioner asking if they've got any further comments.

[38] I did my own site visit on the weekend on that road, and I can understand where the petitioners are coming from. I'm going to do another site visit this weekend on the bit from Aberaeron to Aberystwyth. There are problems there, and I think that I'd like to go back to the petitioner to see if there's anything they'd like to add so that it can be put into the Government

review.

[39] **Angela Burns:** I'd be content with that. I know, from a personal perspective, I get a lot of lobbying in my constituency on this issue, because of course for constituents in west Wales to go north, that is the logical route, and it's a nightmare, particularly in the summer months.

[40] **Mike Hedges:** It's the least bad route for going north.

[41] 'Penegoes Speed Limit Petition'. This was first considered on 13 December 2016 and last considered on 17 January, and we agreed to share the results of the petitioners' traffic monitoring scheme with the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, seeking his views and asking if this information could be taken into account as part of the ongoing work on the safety of this stretch of road. I received a letter from the Cabinet Secretary. The petitioners have confirmed their intention to take up the Cabinet Secretary's offer of a discussion with officials and to update the committee on their options.

09:15

[42] **Mr Francis:** Chair, there's been a subsequent update on this as well from the petitioner who says he has spoken to the Government official concerned on the matter, and that the official had said he would look into things. We haven't heard anything officially, so perhaps the route for this would be to ask the Cabinet Secretary for an update on the outcome of that conversation.

[43] **Mike Hedges:** Yes, I think that would be a sensible way of taking it forward.

[44] 'Ban Letting Agent Fees to Tenants'—first considered on 14 February. The committee considered the petition on 14 February and agreed to write to the Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee to ask if they intend to conduct work on this issue; and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children requesting further information on the timescale in which he intends to make a decision over whether legislation is required on the issue. A response from the Cabinet Secretary was received on 6 March. On 1 March, the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee noted the correspondence from the Petitions Committee, and also agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children before returning

to the issue at a future meeting. The petitioners were informed that the petition would be considered by the committee, but had not responded when the papers for the committee were being finalised.

[45] The Cabinet Secretary's letter states his intention to announce how the Government intends to respond to this matter shortly. It also states that Rent Smart Wales already provides stronger controls over landlords and letting agents than anywhere else in the UK. We could wait to see what the Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee are doing. A number of people—I think at least two people in this room—have put in for a private Members Bill on banning letting fees. It's one of the ones that I think is worth keeping on the table, and I think we could write to the Cabinet Secretary asking when he intends to make a statement.

[46] Thank you. We've gone through those in under time, so we'll move on.

09:17

**Sesiwn Dystiolaeth—P-05-710 Sicrhau y gall Pobl Anabl Ddefnyddio
Trafnidiaeth Gyhoeddus Pryd Bynnag y Bo'i Hangen Arnynt
Evidence Session—P-05-710 Ensure Disabled People can Access Public
Transport As and When They Need it**

[47] **Mike Hedges:** The main item of today is: 'Ensure Disabled People can Access Public Transport As and When They Need it'. Whizz-Kidz gave us a very interesting and very informative presentation a few weeks ago where they showed a video and explained all the difficulties that people with difficulties have, and the need for help getting on and off trains, buses and taxis. We were of the view that we wished to have an opportunity to discuss their concerns with public transport providers, who should be arriving shortly.

[48] Can I welcome the witnesses to the meeting, and thank you very much for coming today? You can speak in either English or Welsh. If you get a question in Welsh, we have a translation facility available for you to be able to translate into English if you need it. You have been provided with links to a video and PowerPoint presentation shown to this committee by Whizz-Kidz in advance of this session. Can you please introduce yourselves for the record?

[49] **Mr Graham:** My name's Joe Graham and I'm the business assurance

director for Great Western Railway.

[50] **Ms Hickish:** I'm Margaret Hickish. I'm the access and inclusion manager for Network Rail.

[51] **Mr Morgan:** I'm Geraint Morgan, a community affairs manager for Arriva Trains.

[52] **Mr Lloyd:** I'm Barry Lloyd, head of customer experience at Arriva Trains Wales.

[53] **Mike Hedges:** Again, thank you for coming. We have a number of questions and please don't feel that everyone has to add something to every question. If you have nothing you wish to add—. It's not an exam—you don't get marked on it.

[54] If I can kick off the questions: you've seen the list of problems identified by Whiz-Kids, from disabled passengers. I've also been contacted by people with sensory problems, both deaf and sight issues, who have also identified a series of problems. So, how are you addressing these problems?

[55] **Mr Morgan:** On behalf of Arriva, my personal role is to liaise with disabled support groups across the network. We're meeting with groups: we've done some with the Stroke Association in south Wales, with a visually impaired group in Aberystwyth and a group with learning disabilities in Cardiff. They travel with us on the train so that they can experience our assisted travel scheme, but they also provide valuable feedback so we can learn lessons on where we can improve.

[56] **Mr Graham:** On behalf of Great Western, we operate similar systems and we work closely with several charities and groups, including a group called KIDS, which is a leading disabled children's charity. As well as doing things that Geraint has pointed out, we've also got together with them to help our staff with training. So, they've actually gone out and made some training videos with us in order to help our staff serve better the needs of travellers of that nature.

[57] **Ms Hickish:** In Network Rail, we've been taking a rather two-pronged approach. We've basically been working a lot on the built environment and we have an inclusive design strategy. That is supported by something called our built environment accessibility panel, which is a group of disabled

volunteers who advise us on best practice and also innovations around the built environment. In addition to that, we changed our training for our customer-service staff and our customer-facing staff some four years ago, and that's now co-delivered by a disabled person in order to ensure that everybody has first-hand experience of speaking to a disabled person, but also gets to have a normal, day-to-day conversation with them.

[58] **Mike Hedges:** Have any of you talked to Whizz-Kids, who did come along with lots of problems that they had identified? Have you talked to people with sensory loss? Trains are very good at announcing where you are for people who have sight problems, but announcements don't always flash up for people who've got hearing problems.

[59] **Mr Morgan:** Yes, we engage with a range of people with a range of difficult disabilities. One of the things that we have for people who may find it difficult to communicate is the orange wallet, which you may be familiar with. This is available on buses as well across Wales. Essentially, how it works is, you would download from our website a list of questions—the 25 most commonly asked questions that you might use when you're travelling, such as, 'Could I have a single ticket to...?', and you write in the answer and the staff in ticket offices and on buses and trains are aware of that—they can see the brightness of this wallet and they know then that that person might require additional assistance with their journey.

[60] **Mr Lloyd:** We actually spoke to Whizz-Kids around four to six weeks or so ago. They came into the office in Cardiff and spoke with us for an hour or so, so we have an understanding of their needs, what we can do for them and, essentially, what they're looking for to make their travel easier with us. So, we started those conversations with the group directly as well and they went well at that time.

[61] **Mr Graham:** In addition to the areas that we've already talked about, we've also worked with guide dogs and our local deaf school and went to the deaf school. We've also tried to look at areas like dementia. So, there's a charity called Purple Angel—dementia friends—which we work with. So, we try to cover all the different areas to ensure that everybody gets a fair opportunity to travel on rail services.

[62] **Ms Hickish:** No, we haven't particularly spoken to Whizz-Kids recently, however I know Whizz-Kids and have been working with them over the period of the last four years.

[63] **Mike Hedges:** Thank you. Angela.

[64] **Angela Burns:** Thank you. I was quite interested to understand, on a more practical level, who would be responsible for station access, because I know in my particular area of Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, we have quite a lot of smaller stations that don't have much manning, and it's the devil's own job for somebody with a disability to be able to access the trains.

[65] **Mr Lloyd:** Well, staff in stations is the responsibility of us at Arriva Trains Wales and at Great Western. So, ensuring that the right staff are at the station to assist anybody who needs any help is the responsibility of the franchisee. Twenty per cent of our stations are staffed; for the unstaffed stations, we rely on the train crew to support anybody who needs any assistance getting on or off the train. So, all the conductors are trained in anything to do with accessibility. So, we enable them to assist people as they are waiting for the train if they wish to turn up and get on the service that way.

[66] In terms of accessibility, we work jointly with Network Rail to make sure that as many of our stations are accessible as possible. There is a long-standing scheme and we have a number of enhancements that have been made over the last few years, which Geraint's got there. But we continue to work with Network Rail to get as much funding as possible to provide as much accessibility as we possibly can.

[67] **Angela Burns:** Do all your trains have more than one person on them in order to aid somebody in trying to get on and off the train?

[68] **Mr Lloyd:** So, every train runs with a driver and a conductor, so there are always two people. Obviously, the driver is in the front cab driving the train, but the conductor is the person who is available to support and assist where needed.

[69] **Angela Burns:** And do all of your trains always have ramps available?

[70] **Mr Lloyd:** Yes, all of our trains have got ramps on them.

[71] **Mr Morgan:** Accessibility in west Wales is pretty good, and we have a map, which I can give you later. About 93 per cent of the stations are fully

accessible. And by that, that means that you can cross between the station platforms if there's more than one platform. There are not many that you can't access. Again, I can share that information with you.

[72] **Angela Burns:** I accept that point. However, I'm thinking of a constituent only a few months ago, before Christmas, struggling to get on a train in Pembrokeshire because there was no-one there who had a ramp and they wouldn't put the ramp out. They said they didn't have the ramp.

[73] **Mr Morgan:** There's a ramp. There should be a ramp on every train.

[74] **Mr Lloyd:** Yes.

[75] **Mr Morgan:** They're in the middle.

[76] **Angela Burns:** And that's the feedback she had. She was on her own and in a wheelchair.

[77] **Mr Morgan:** If you'd like to share that with us, we can investigate that.

[78] **Angela Burns:** Very happy to do that.

[79] **Mr Graham:** From a Great Western perspective, the majority of our services in Wales are high-speed. We do have the Cardiff-Portsmouth and the Taunton services that are smaller trains. All of our high-speed trains have disabled facilities. Some of our older fleet don't yet, but are in the middle of having disabled facilities put in. The same is true, which is that all of our services are double manned, so there's a driver and a conductor or a train manager on every service in Wales, and, again, we do have ramps either on the train or available on the platform in stations for the units that don't have ramps on board.

[80] So, the other thing I always point out is that, for those stations that aren't accessible, what we would always offer is the ability to take a particular person to the nearest accessible station for free. So, if for somebody their local station is not accessible, then we would pay every time to ensure that we provide them with—

[81] **Angela Burns:** Oh, would you?

[82] **Mr Graham:** Yes, absolutely.

[83] **Angela Burns:** Is that on your website?

[84] **Mr Graham:** Yes. It's in our disabled persons protection policy—

[85] **Angela Burns:** Oh, that's excellent.

[86] **Mr Graham:** —and it's probably true for Arriva.

[87] **Mr Lloyd:** Same for us, too.

[88] **Mr Graham:** So, if your local station is not accessible, we will always pay for a taxi or similar equipment to get you to the nearest location that is accessible.

[89] **Mr Morgan:** The purpose of these awareness visits is to help people understand the help that is available, because the perception is that the train or the bus isn't very accessible, whereas in most cases it is.

[90] **Angela Burns:** Okay. May I ask one more question, Chair?

[91] **Mike Hedges:** Please do.

[92] **Angela Burns:** That brings me on to—. So, we got on to the train, but how about the issues of actually trying to get the ticket? Because, again—and I can only speak for my particular area of west Wales—a lot of the stations don't have ticket machines either, so you have to go to, say, Haverfordwest or wherever to get a ticket, and, again, that's a real impediment to travel for somebody with a disability. So, are there ways around that, or—?

[93] **Mr Lloyd:** There are number of ways we've got of buying in advance. We've got a new mobile app, which will be accessible for anybody who's got smart phone. That's proving very popular at the moment and, ultimately, you've got a ticket in your hand that is inspectable for when you need it. Our website also retails tickets in advance. So, you can have them sent to your home address in advance of you travelling. On the day, if you haven't got a ticket in advance, it's trying to get it from the conductor on board, when you see them, when they're helping you on the train. That's generally the ways of buying it in advance of—

[94] **Angela Burns:** And you're allowed to buy it off the conductor, are you,

because you said 'try'?

[95] **Mr Lloyd:** When the conductor helps you on, certainly, you can ask to be collected there. But we do advise is to buy before you board. If there are no ticket facilities at the station you're boarding from, then certainly buy it from the conductor on board.

09:30

[96] **Angela Burns:** Yes, and of course if you have sight issues, it's not easy access that on the website.

[97] **Mr Lloyd:** Yes, and that's absolutely fine.

[98] **Angela Burns:** Thank you.

[99] **Mike Hedges:** Okay, thank you. Gareth, do you have some questions on training?

[100] **Gareth Bennett:** Yes. Thanks for your time. I was pleased to hear that you are involved with disabled groups when you do your staff training. Could you elaborate on that a little bit—on how that works?

[101] **Mr Morgan:** Personally, I meet with the disabled groups. For example, Pontypridd now is a dementia-friendly station, and that's something that we would like to expand further throughout the year, working with the Alzheimer's Society. When staff join the business, they have basic awareness training. It's not specific to any particular disability; it's how they can assist a person at a station: for example, if they have sight loss, how to correctly guide them through the station, how to use the ramp correctly. So that's the training that we have. But we're always keen to improve the awareness of every type of disability.

[102] **Gareth Bennett:** How often would they have refreshers on that kind of stuff?

[103] **Mr Lloyd:** They would have their refreshers whilst they are out with their manager, essentially—they would have an on-the-job assessment to make sure that they are still able to use the ramps with the right level skill of skill and ability.

[104] **Mr Graham:** From a Great Western perspective, every customer-facing colleague gets a full day of awareness training when they join the company. That's updated annually through the safety and business briefing process. So, each individual gets an update every year. We also have a manager whose responsibility is very similar to Gareth's—he's a mobility and inclusion manager. His job is to liaise with all the local groups, nationally in all different areas, to ensure that we offer the best service to people in the position.

[105] **Gareth Bennett:** And the disabled groups—I think you were saying that they have fed into your training procedures. They've contributed to this training.

[106] **Mr Morgan:** There's a group in Cardiff called Vision 21. They're based in Llanishen and they travel very regularly by train and by bus and they provide very helpful feedback to us on their journey experiences. I've travelled with them many times. I don't brief the crew that we're coming—they experience the journey as it is and it's been okay.

[107] **Gareth Bennett:** Okay. But sometimes things do go wrong. Angela mentioned ramps. Ramps were mentioned when we had the evidence session, which Angela wasn't here for. But ramps were mentioned, and lifts was another one. Sometimes it completely messes up somebody's journey if the lift isn't working. So who would have the responsibility for the lift? And what's supposed to happen?

[108] **Mr Morgan:** If the lift broke down at a station, that would be faulted through our control. And if a person was disadvantaged by not being able to access the correct platform, we would then make alternative travel arrangements to help them out to make sure they complete the journey.

[109] **Mr Graham:** And the same—as we mentioned earlier, if that was the case on Great Western, and probably Arriva as well, we would then give you a free taxi to the next accessible location. So what we would ask you to do, if the lift was out of order, is we would carry you to the next station, and then we'd provide an accessible vehicle to take you back to wherever you wanted to go—probably to your actual destination as opposed to the station.

[110] **Mr Lloyd:** And that is true for Arriva Trains Wales too.

[111] **Mike Hedges:** Do you advertise that? Sorry to interrupt, Gareth. Do you

advertise that at the station—‘The lift is out of order, please contact the station staff to make arrangements’?

[112] **Mr Morgan:** Quite often a lift will break down in service. That could happen now—say at Llandaf, for example—and the first we will know of it is the train crew will report it. So we will act on it immediately. There are help points at some stations, but not at all stations. Our advice to anybody affected by that would be to call our customer relations team, which Barry is responsible for, and we would make arrangements from there.

[113] **Mr Graham:** Every Great Western station has a help point. So there’s always the opportunity to summon assistance if you need it.

[114] **Gareth Bennet:** The other thing I was thinking of, carrying on from something Angela raised with ticketing: Arriva has had a little bit of publicity, not necessarily good publicity, over people being fined heavily for not buying tickets. It seems to be a more stringent policy—that customers are being told they have to buy a ticket before they get on the train now. And, of course, this has raised issues of the accessibility of the ticket machines on the stations. So I wondered if that might cause, in the future, problems for disabled people, and how you are dealing deal with that.

[115] **Mr Morgan:** There’s a clear policy: if you have a disabled person’s railcard, or even if you don’t, you do not have to buy a ticket before you board if you have a disability.

[116] **Mr Graham:** That’s true for Great Western as well—in fact, nationally, I believe.

[117] **Ms Hickish:** Absolutely.

[118] **Mike Hedges:** Neil.

[119] **Neil McEvoy:** You’ve mentioned the orange wallet. Do staff have those as well?

[120] **Mr Morgan:** No. These are available from Barry’s team. The reason that they’re available from Barry’s team is so that we can monitor how many people want them. Usage has been quite good. All the staff at ticket offices will be aware of them, and on the trains as well.

[121] **Neil McEvoy:** Do you think it would be a good idea for staff to have them, though?

[122] **Mr Morgan:** They could—

[123] **Neil McEvoy:** Because if the situation arises where somebody is unable to communicate, then that could be something—.

[124] **Mr Morgan:** The other useful tool that we have as well is this assistance dog card, which conductors carry, so if the customer was travelling with an assistance dog, our findings have proved that the dog, naturally, needs somewhere to sit on the floor next to the passenger, and this sits in the seat next to the customer so that people will know that this space is reserved for the dog. They might not be able to see the dog, but what we don't want is people saying, 'Why is that seat being kept free when I need to sit down?', so they can clearly see that that's being used for that purpose, and conductors do carry those.

[125] **Neil McEvoy:** Do you think that staff having an orange wallet is something you may want to look at?

[126] **Mr Morgan:** Potentially, yes. I think there's an element of pre-work needed to carry the wallet, to print off the sort of questions that you need, and to carry what questions you want to ask in advance. I think giving them out on the day is not really going to support the traveller there and then, but it may certainly support the next journey, certainly.

[127] **Neil McEvoy:** But if someone's unable to communicate, then if the person takes out the wallet and there's a selection of things to choose from, then they could choose the card.

[128] **Mr Lloyd:** Certainly. It's certainly something we'll look into, yes.

[129] **Neil McEvoy:** In terms of training, I'm interested in the depth of the training, really. Can you tell me a little bit more about what the training entails?

[130] **Mr Morgan:** Neither of us are in the training department. It's much like yours, really, in that they have awareness training when they begin, which covers boarding trains, helping people—

[131] **Mr Lloyd:** How to use the ramps.

[132] **Mr Morgan:** How to use the ramps properly.

[133] **Mr Graham:** We've also, through—. This is what I mentioned earlier, where we've worked with the charity KIDS to develop a training video. The idea there is that we scoped out a number of scenarios that might happen to a colleague, and so they can then see—and then we'll put them through a discussion in teams to understand what they could have done differently, or what could be done differently, to support the person and to make the whole experience better.

[134] **Neil McEvoy:** Do you know what they do, Margaret, in terms of training?

[135] **Ms Hickish:** Yes, absolutely. I wrote the training, so yes, I do. It's specifically around understanding the lives of disabled people when they travel. One of the things that we want people to understand is that when a disabled person turns up and they've actually got a big smile on their face, that the staff need to understand that means they've had a good journey up until now, and when they haven't, it doesn't mean that people have got a chip on their shoulder but, actually, they may have had a bad journey up until now, and it's not anything related to them. So, it is about them starting to understand the challenges that disabled people have in life, and that's one of the reasons why we use disabled people. We get them to talk about what their last journey was like, and how they feel, and how they would feel if they'd had that experience. And in doing that, it's about trying to immerse them in the experience without mocking up being a disabled person.

[136] So, we use videos and we use images so that they can understand what people see. We also give them a taster on sign language, and also a taster on lip reading and understanding how difficult that is. We use tapes that we've got from Cambridge university on tinnitus so that people can understand how challenging it can be to hear. But we're also explaining to them that just simply writing something down for someone who uses sign language doesn't work, because quite often people with sign language don't read language the same as the people who can speak do, and the people who can hear do. So, it's actually a different structure of language if you use BSL, so getting them to understand that. Sensory impairment is particularly important on that course. And we actually run refresher training as part of our station refreshers. So, last week I spent time with the team from Euston

station, talking to them about what their challenges are and what they might be able to do better, and actually, what they thought that we could do better. And also understanding what we could share with our top colleagues to actually deliver a better service, which is much more about involving them and making them more thoughtful about the process. And I think we've seen quite a lot of success in it.

[137] **Neil McEvoy:** Just one thing. You said 'without' mocking up to be either disabled or blind. I went to the blind institute, and what I found useful was to actually be blindfolded and be asked to walk around the building. It was amazing, really—

[138] **Mr Morgan:** We've done an exercise like that with Mark Williams in Aberystwyth a couple of weeks ago—

[139] **Neil McEvoy:** Did staff do it?

[140] **Mr Morgan:** It's an opportunity for us to do it, yes.

[141] **Neil McEvoy:** Just very quickly on the sign language, do staff have qualifications? Is there a structure for staff to—

[142] **Ms Hickish:** Actually, it's literally a taster of what we're trying to do—it's to get those people who are interested. And my next step is to actually start running sign language training for our station staff, but that's the next step. But what I need to do is have a body of people who are actually interested, because it's not an easy thing to learn. So, it has to be people who are enthusiastic to do it.

[143] **Mr Graham:** From a Great Western perspective, it's very, very similar. What we do have when someone does want to learn sign language—we will pay for that and put them through the course to do so. So, it's not something we force people to do, however, if they wish to do it, which a number of our colleagues do, the company is happy to pay for that.

[144] **Mr Lloyd:** Just if I could add, we've got a number of customer panels that we use in our business. A selection of customers that travel with us meet with us quarterly to give us feedback on how we're getting on, and we have a number of people—. We work with accessibility issues in our customer panels. We get some direct excellent feedback about what's working, what's not and what needs to change to help us improve our provision to the

community that we serve.

[145] **Neil McEvoy:** Can I just ask—?

[146] **Mike Hedges:** Keep going, yes.

[147] **Neil McEvoy:** Just with the sign language, I remember when I was a teacher that if there was the incentive of an extra point, then colleagues would undertake certain duties. Is there any move to include an extra salary implication for being qualified in sign language, or is that something you've not looked at?

[148] **Mr Graham:** Not currently. However, I'm sure it's something that we would consider and look at. Generally, in most of our training and development programmes, it's seen as a benefit for the member of staff or the colleague to have and, actually, they get an awful lot of fulfilment out of being able to deliver a better service and relate to people. That's often enough of an incentive.

[149] **Neil McEvoy:** Right. If there was a financial incentive, you might get more, though. Just very quickly on the upgrading of stock, I read that the Welsh stock is actually going to be old stock, but revamped, coming onto the rail. What are the implications there for people with disabilities if the new rolling stock is actually old stock in Wales?

[150] **Mr Graham:** From a Great Western perspective, the first thing to say is that the PRM TSI—without using too many acronyms for you; that is the modification of older stock to be able to be used in line with law—that needs to be completed by 2020, and so trains won't be able to run unless they have a specific derogation. So, we're all working towards moving our rolling stock forward in that regard. From a Great Western perspective, our high-speed trains all have disabled access at the moment. However, the new class 800 trains that will be coming in from October this year will also have new upgraded and modern disabled facilities and accessible facilities. The older stock that we have on the network, which tend to be the stock that's used on our Cardiff–Portsmouth services and the Cardiff–Taunton services—the 158 fleet is in the middle of being modified at the moment. The first three units have gone through. The fourth one is in the works at the moment, and that will all be completed by early 2019. The same for our 150s that do the Taunton services. And from an Arriva perspective—

[151] **Mr Lloyd:** Ours is a little bit different, unfortunately. So, regulations come into force on 1 January 2020. At that point, we are not currently going to be the franchisee, so it's not essentially a Wales and borders franchise issue. We've been advising Welsh Government on the matter for a number of years, really—I think from the Business and Enterprise Committee, maybe three to four years ago. Something needs to happen, but at this moment in time we can't instigate any change because we may not be that franchisee. Obviously, when that franchise matter gets resolved at Christmas time this year, we'll be in a position to maybe do something about it, but if it's not us, then ultimately, we're looking at Welsh Government for support and advice on how to move forwards.

[152] **Mike Hedges:** Angela.

[153] **Angela Burns:** I'm just curious to know why a train might have a derogation.

[154] **Mr Graham:** It's a very good question, and the Department for Transport would be the people—or the Welsh Government in Wales—would be the people who would grant that. A derogation could be for a number of reasons.

09:45

[155] For example, if a train was going to be around for another three to six months, say, after the deadline, and it would cost hundreds of thousands of pounds, you might allow that train to continue running so the service wasn't completely removed. But, again, it's something that the department and the different authorities would make a decision on. It's not something the operator can implement.

[156] **Mr Lloyd:** Potentially, a derogation could be in place for the units that we currently use in Wales and borders. Our understanding is that Transport for Wales are looking at the new franchise bid as being part of the accessibility and inclusion responsibilities for the new franchisee. It will be part of that bidding process.

[157] **Angela Burns:** May I ask just one more quick question?

[158] **Mike Hedges:** Keep going.

[159] **Angela Burns:** When a disabled person is on the train—again, I’ve had this issue some time ago, so things may have changed; I truly don’t know. I don’t go on trains very often, mainly because there aren’t that many in west Wales. But how easy is it for them to keep their family, friends, luggage et cetera with them? Because I remember a couple of cases, probably about a couple of years ago now, where people were saying, ‘Yes, but there’s nowhere for my pals to sit, so I’m sort of shoved at the back with the luggage.’

[160] **Mr Morgan:** Our advice there would be to book the seats in advance to ensure that you can all sit together. If you do it early enough, then the seats around the dedicated wheelchair area should still be free.

[161] **Angela Burns:** Do you know what? I think that’s not a great answer, though, if I’m honest, simply because, let’s say, again, if I take west Wales as an example, we have a real difficulty with public sector transport infrastructure. We also have our hospitals and our doctors and our specialists being sucked eastwards, so people are having to rely more and more on public transport, and if you think I’m being tough on you, trust me, when I get to the bus people, I’m going to be even tougher.

[162] So, a lot of these journeys aren’t able to be booked up, and people don’t know that they’re going to be making those journeys. Again, in my area, I have a lot of people with disabilities coming around into that sort of area because they’re just getting older. I’ve got a predominantly older constituent base. So, it’s great if you can plan things, but it’s a bit like—if you can plan and get your ticket, if you can plan and do this. But disabled people are no different to the rest of us—we do things on the spur of the moment.

[163] **Mr Morgan:** If you wanted to turn up and go—if you speak to the conductor, I’m sure they’d make every effort to find you seats together and ask other people to move to make room for that.

[164] **Ms Hickish:** It does actually require the co-operation of other passengers, and that’s part of the challenge. As somebody who travels on the railway, basically, for a living—as you can hear from my accent, I’m from Scotland, but additionally I live in Milton Keynes, and I travel all over the country. I use all of these services, and actually the challenge is quite generally that the rest of the public don’t understand the needs of disabled people. Quite often, they see disabled people they believe are getting a

benefit from being disabled. So, there is a challenge there, to be fair to my colleague.

[165] **Gareth Bennett:** You know when you do your training—

[166] **Ms Hickish:** Yes.

[167] **Gareth Bennett:** As this is an issue, how do you train the conductor, for instance, to deal with those issues when they have to interact with other passengers as well? Is there any training offered on that?

[168] **Ms Hickish:** We all do conflict training.

[169] **Angela Burns:** We need that. [*Laughter.*]

[170] **Mr Graham:** There's a fairly comprehensive conflict avoidance training programme that we put on.

[171] **Ms Hickish:** Yes, it's conflict avoidance rather than training in conflict.

[172] **Mike Hedges:** We'd pass the training on conflict one. [*Laughter.*]

[173] **Mr Graham:** So, all of our colleagues go through that, all of our customer-facing colleagues, and there is a section in that training session that deals with exactly what you're talking about. At the end of the day, you have to take a view of the individual situation that you're being faced with, as to whether or not it's the right thing to do for the disabled passenger as well, because sometimes it can be a very difficult situation for them as well.

[174] **Angela Burns:** Can I ask you: with your experience, do you think there is a case, then, for certain seats to be so designated? Are they so designated, or do you think that actually perpetuates the myth that there's a benefit given?

[175] **Ms Hickish:** The challenge is that with these seats, particularly on a busy train, people believe that, if you haven't booked it, and you want your family, or perhaps even your personal assistant, to sit beside you, they're seen as being a benefit, because, actually, that individual thinks that they got on the train first, so they deserve the seat. So, there is a perceived benefit, and, yes, I've had it happen. I've had to have someone with me sometimes when I've not been well in myself—I have a personal assistant with me. When

I do, then I'll find myself quite often finding that that's a challenging situation, particularly where I've used turn-up-and-go, which I do regularly. I travel a lot without being able to book because I don't always know when my meetings are.

[176] **Mike Hedges:** Yes. I think that Whizz-Kidz said that pre-planned was good, but responsive—just turning up—as many of us do, and as Angela has talked about, people travelling to the hospitals et cetera—. We don't know that somebody's going to have a car accident, so you don't know that you're going to want to go and visit them in hospital. That's where there is a problem. You have talked partly about dealing with it, but on buses, for example, they have seats that are disabled priority. Have you thought of that?

[177] **Ms Hickish:** Some trains already have that notice there.

[178] **Mr Lloyd:** All of ours do.

[179] **Mr Graham:** All of ours do.

[180] **Ms Hickish:** All of Arriva's do, and I think all of Great Western—. There are some of the train operating companies that don't. I can't say that nationally it's absolutely done, but regularly, I would say that probably about 80 per cent of the trains I'm on, it does actually say it's a priority.

[181] **Mr Graham:** I was going to say that I think it's quite important to know that while we think it's advisable to book in advance, it's not actually a requirement. The purpose of asking people to book is to ensure that things are in place prior to them travelling, to give them the best journey experience. Last year, Great Western did about 300,000 disabled assists, of which only 160,000 were booked. So, to give you some idea, it's about half and half. But it's more about turning up, having things available, having a colleague there to meet you, giving you the best possible journey experience, and actually, you don't have to wait—

[182] **Ms Hickish:** Absolutely.

[183] **Mr Graham:** —because there's someone there; whereas, if you don't book, you might.

[184] **Mike Hedges:** Can I ask a question? This is, I think, only to Arriva—unmanned stations. People going to unmanned stations: what support can

they expect to have at an unmanned station?

[185] **Mr Lloyd:** So, if they turn up and go at an unmanned station, if they can, obviously, get access to the platform, the conductor will support them in their journey from the point that that train turns up until the point they need to get off or change trains to another destination. The conductors are fully trained in supporting people with accessibility problems, whether they will be in a wheelchair or just need support on the train. They just need to make themselves known to the conductor when the train pulls into the platform. If they can't get access to that station, there's a helpline they can call, which goes through to our control team, which will then—. As Joe mentioned earlier, they will get accessible transport to a station that is accessible.

[186] **Mike Hedges:** Okay. Anyone else? Can I just squeeze one last question in there? This is on people who have autism, for example, who have to have somebody travelling with them. Are there any discounted tickets for people who are travelling because they're there to support people?

[187] **Mr Morgan:** Yes. If you have a disabled person's railcard, the person travelling with you has exactly the same discount. In mid Wales we've been working closely with Derwen College in Gobowen and Coleg Ceredigion in Aberystwyth—with people who have autism—and they've produced this very good video, which I can, again, share with you, that shows pupils who travel to Derwen College, for example. Some are travelling from London with Virgin Trains, changing at Birmingham, then at Shrewsbury to go to Gobowen. It's a very, very good video that shows people how relatively straightforward it is. It's about raising awareness, and it's our job to show people that we shouldn't take for granted that people know how to use a train. We have to tell people where to find the information so that they can make their own decisions.

[188] **Mr Graham:** I'd echo that from a Great Western perspective. We work with Autism Alliance and Parkinson's UK. As I said, there's a whole range of different bodies that we work with in order to just provide the rail to the widest possible community.

[189] **Angela Burns:** Can you take the film into evidence, Chair?

[190] **Mike Hedges:** Yes.

[191] **Mr Morgan:** You can have it, yes.

[192] **Angela Burns:** Thank you.

[193] **Mike Hedges:** I think that we took the other film into evidence. If there are no further questions, can I thank you for coming along this morning and for what you've told us? I think that what you saw was the challenge for both you and us of getting the good practice actually known by the people who want to be on the receiving end of it. I also know that the answer, 'It's on the website', which is far too often an answer from far too many organisations, does not necessarily mean that everyone knows about it. So, I think it's up to you to try and let those people with disabilities know more about what they can access, and it's about us also helping to try and publicise it as well. Thank you very much for coming.

[194] **Mr Lloyd:** Thank you.

[195] **Mr Graham:** Thank you.

[196] **Ms Hickish:** Thank you.

[197] **Mike Hedges:** Shall we move into private for five minutes?

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 09:55 a 10:06.
The meeting adjourned between 09:55 and 10:06.*

*Ailymgynullodd y pwyllgor am 10:06.
The committee reconvened at 10:06.*

[198] **Mike Hedges:** Can I welcome witnesses to the meeting, and inform them that they are welcome to contribute in English or Welsh? If we contribute in Welsh, you've got translation facilities in front of you. You've had provided to you links to the video and PowerPoint presented to the committee by Whizz-Kidz in advance of this meeting, and you've had the opportunity to see that. Can I ask the witnesses to introduce themselves for the record?

[199] **Mr Cursio:** Simon Cursio, interim managing director, First Cymru.

[200] **Ms Ogbonna:** Cynthia Ogbonna, managing director of Cardiff Bus.

[201] **Mr Pockett:** And I'm John Pockett. I'm the director for Wales for the

Confederation of Passenger Transport Cymru, the trade association of the bus and coach industry.

[202] **Mike Hedges:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much for coming along. If I can start the questions, you've seen the list of problems shown by Whizz-Kidz, and I've also been contacted by people with sensory problems, both sight and hearing, relating to difficulties with public transport. Having seen what Whizz-Kidz have identified, how do you think you're addressing them?

[203] **Mr Cursio:** A number of ways, I guess, in terms of sensory. Of course, all bus services for First Cymru comply with the public service vehicle accessibility regulations, which address both destination blinds, front, side and rear, along with contrasting handholds on the vehicle. In terms of notification to our drivers, we use 'safer journey cards' and 'better journey cards', which alert the driver to any, I guess, disability, sometimes hidden to the driver, so that it can be dealt with discreetly.

[204] **Ms Ogbonna:** In terms of Cardiff Bus, in terms of our buses, at least 40 per cent of our vehicles are fitted with screens. They also have next-stop destination on audio. All the buses we have acquired in the last four years have had those fitted—that's the standard for us now. So, if you're partially sighted or you're hard of hearing, you're able to understand where you are because this is visual and it's audio. In addition to that, all our vehicles are DDA-compliant. You have ramps, so I think we are well-equipped in that regard.

[205] But more importantly from our point of view is the interaction of our drivers with passengers. So, our drivers are trained. Disability awareness training is given to our drivers, and where we have issues such as customers reporting incidents, which does happen from time to time, we have a procedure about how we look at that to deal with that, and we refer the drivers back to the training school, because we have a training school. So, for us, the most important point of this is the way our drivers, who are our ambassadors, interact with and assist people who have all forms of disability.

[206] **Mr Pockett:** I can't really add because I think my colleagues do the real work; I'm the pen pusher. But I think it would be fair to say that the CPT does have codes of practice that we issue to members, and we encourage members—I mean, we can't force members to follow things—but we've got various codes of practice and good practice guides that we distribute and

encourage our members to follow.

[207] **Mike Hedges:** Could I say how very pleased I am with what I heard from Cardiff Bus about telling people where they are both visually and by sound? It's not something that's done by all buses. Is it something that First Cymru are considering?

[208] **Mr Cursio:** Very much so, and particularly with audio. We have worked for a number of years with associations on the audio—the Royal National Institute of Blind People, for example, and the Guide Dog Alliance—to provide audio on buses and work with partially sighted organisations, or organisations with an interest in partially sighted issues. Our fleet is not fully audio equipped. However, all of the new vehicles of course come with that functionality.

[209] **Mike Hedges:** I'm old enough to remember that bus drivers used to shout out where they were, so that, when they got to a bus stop, they'd say 'Bernard Street' or they'd say 'The Knoll' or they'd say 'Parry's shop'. They used to shout it out so that passengers knew where they were.

[210] **Mr Cursio:** And that still happens. Certainly, if a passenger alerts our driver, discreetly or otherwise, to let them know where they are, because, sometimes, they won't always be familiar with the area that they're headed to, but that still exists.

[211] **Mike Hedges:** Okay. Angela.

[212] **Angela Burns:** I wanted to talk about the results of the Paulley case, which although it says that the bus company, or the bus driver, is not obligated to remove a passenger who is in a disabled person's space, it does go on to say that you can, first of all, request, and then up the request to make it sound like more of a requirement. I just wondered how that works in practice, because I should think that must be a very difficult ask of a bus driver. And I also wondered if there was any way that it would ever leave you open for an action by the person who's basically been—. It's quite clear, isn't it? It says that he or she should consider some further steps to pressurise the non-wheelchair user to vacate the space depending on the circumstances. And, then, rephrasing the request as a requirement.

[213] I just wondered how exposed you might feel by that, because you could make the request sound like a requirement, but then you might end up

being sued or having action of some sort by the person who's being acted upon.

[214] **Ms Ogbonna:** I think, from our perspective, what we try and do is, hopefully, in most cases, the customers, the passengers on the buses, are usually quite amenable. And what we've instructed our drivers to do is that they need to leave their cab and physically go and make a request of the passenger, the occupier, that somebody needs to come in. All they can do is try. What tends to happen is that people around them will also help, so we are depending on society and goodwill to be able to enforce that. But if, ultimately, that doesn't happen, we say they have to radio the control room and explain to the wheelchair user why they can't allow them to board the bus because there's no space for them to come in.

[215] But what we do also say, in addition to that, is that if that is the last bus on that route, our driver has a responsibility to radio the control room, which is our office in the centre, and where possible—it hasn't happened, but these are the laid down instructions—we'll have to dispatch another vehicle to go and collect that person, because if it's the last bus on that route, and it's quite late at night, you know there's a likelihood there won't be any other bus coming that way. We have that additional follow-up to be able to do that, but like I say, it hasn't happened. We know that it is difficult, but through training and development, and showing some images, which we do, through our training programme, to see what it feels like to be on the other side, our drivers are—. They probably have a relative who is disabled, and they can empathise with the difficulties that would happen. But we depend on society, and people's attitude to us, and how they assist us to be able to enforce that, but it's difficult.

[216] **Mr Cursio:** I would just add to that that before the Paulley case came to the Supreme Court, the level of training for First Cymru drivers, and I'm quite certain Cardiff Bus, and other members of CPT, was such that they were trained to a reasonably high degree to work with customers who may be in that space and encourage them to move out for the wheelchair user. So, the judgment, of itself, hasn't necessarily altered the way that we would want our driving staff to interact with customers who are in the space and vacating it for a wheelchair user, but, in some ways, it does actually enable them to be a little bit more assertive, if you like, before having to resort to calling maybe a supervisor, or in a worst case situation, the police, to resolve the matter.

[217] **Angela Burns:** Can I just ask one further question on that? Cynthia, I

think you said that you haven't had that problem. Have you ever had that problem on any of your buses, where somebody simply refused to move for a disabled person? Does that happen often?

10:15

[218] **Mr Cursio:** It does happen, but not often, thankfully, and I couldn't agree more with the point that Cynthia made. What we tend to find in that situation is that other customers on the bus will actually come to the aid of both the driver and the wheelchair user. It resolves itself, usually without further incident.

[219] **Angela Burns:** Thank you.

[220] **Ms Ogbonna:** Can I comment on something there? Yes, we've had situations where people might have refused, but what has not happened is that we haven't left somebody very late at night. When we do have that situation, that hasn't happened because we run quite a frequent service, so there's always the issue that somebody will come and then that bus will come and pick that person up.

[221] **Mike Hedges:** Gareth.

[222] **Gareth Bennett:** Thanks for your answers so far. I'm not sure what the Paulley case was, but I thought there was an incident about four months ago on a Cardiff bus, where, wasn't there a problem between someone with a pram and a wheelchair user and the person with the pram wouldn't vacate?

[223] **Angela Burns:** Yes.

[224] **Gareth Bennett:** Oh, that is the Paulley case, I'm sorry. Right; that's what we were talking about.

[225] **Ms Ogbonna:** It was a First bus, not a Cardiff Bus.

[226] **Gareth Bennett:** Oh, sorry, it was a national story. Right, okay, that was the case. Right, you've spoken about that. But sometimes there is a problem, which that case illustrates, where generally the public do have goodwill, but that was a dispute between two people and the pram users tend to sometimes think that they've got priority, so, in that particular instance, it is a little bit difficult. So, I don't know what kind of guidance you would give to

drivers in that instance. Would there be any or just the general guidance of trying to resolve it? What happens if a pram user doesn't then move?

[227] **Ms Ogbonna:** You always say to them to give the wheelchair user the reason why they can't board the bus. You explain to them why, because if that person has flatly refused to vacate that space, there's nothing our driver can do really. Sometimes, they can decide not to carry on with the journey. In doing that, you are putting out all the other passengers, inconveniencing other passengers, and it's a difficult situation really. So, what we advise them to do is let us know in the control room, which is where we monitor the services on the network, and see whether there is anything we can do to alleviate that. But, generally, it is really a request, because the only person who can forcefully remove a passenger is the police. So, our drivers can't do that, and they know that—they know where the limitation is.

[228] **Gareth Bennett:** In general, with your training, how does that operate with the training of drivers regarding disability issues? Obviously, you've got training procedures because I think you mentioned those already. How does the training take place? Do disability groups also feed into your training programmes?

[229] **Ms Ogbonna:** Yes, they do, in our particular case. We draw up a programme or we get input from Cardiff council. What's his name now? Dr David Gravelle inputs into our training programme and there are usually standard processes around the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and compliance and equality legislation that they need to be able to comply with. So, we feed that through.

[230] The particular training that we are carrying out right now has the blind institute tactile image explaining to our drivers what it feels like to be blind and to not have an idea about where you are. The example of shouting out the bus stops was used and, sometimes, it was quite telling, when you tell a driver, 'Please can I stop at the next stop?' and the driver forgets about it because they've been very busy and you lose your total orientation when you stop by the stop that's not yours. So, our drivers listening to that powerful statement from the blind, reinforces the fact that they need to be mindful about the fact that there are people on their buses who are not totally able and to assist them. So, the training that we give to our drivers constantly reinforces that. That's not to say that some drivers might not be awkward because you have awkward people everywhere, but what we try and do is try and reinforce the training and try to ensure that, where possible, if they've

done wrong, we bring them back to the training school to reinforce the importance of what we're doing.

[231] **Mike Hedges:** Neil.

[232] **Neil McEvoy:** Perhaps I should declare an interest, having known Cynthia from my Cardiff council days, and I've met John as well previously. I declare an interest as a Cardiff Bus user as well. Every time I go on the bus, the drivers are really nice, actually. I tend not to come across awkward drivers, although they clearly exist sometimes.

[233] The train people talked about the orange wallets. I wondered whether that was something that you do and whether drivers had had them as well.

[234] **Ms Ogbonna:** Yes, I think so. First pioneered that.

[235] **Mr Cursio:** Yes, absolutely. We have two, in effect: a safer journey wallet and a better journeys wallet, so as much quality as accessibility.

[236] **Neil McEvoy:** Okay. In terms of the training and sign language, do drivers have any qualifications in sign language? Is there a career path for them to gain a qualification in that?

[237] **Mr Cursio:** Within First, we work with our trade union to offer that as a lifelong learning opportunity. So, that is available to drivers. It's not part of our core driver training, whereas, of course, disability awareness is. But that is available to us where we work in conjunction with Unite the Union.

[238] **Ms Ogbonna:** As far as we're concerned, I have to admit that it's not something that we have embraced yet, although we might get there. Like Simon, we've focused on customer care, disability discrimination, and all the other mandatory aspects of it, and we haven't got to the extent of looking at sign language, but it's something that we might begin to migrate into. More and more, it's beginning to become quite common in society and people are beginning to look at that as a form of disability. Previously, I don't think we did, but now we're beginning to see that, and since we are quite an inclusive service provider, we believe that everybody should be able to use our service, irrespective of what form of disability or ability they may have. So, it's something that we'll been looking into, but it hasn't formed part of our core training programme yet.

[239] **Neil McEvoy:** Okay, thanks. That's good news. Particularly Cardiff, the bus station, the disability groups have been very upset—especially the visually impaired community. They say that their issues have not been taken into account. I was just wondering what all your views were on that.

[240] **Ms Ogbonna:** I'm not sure, and the bus station is not ready yet. We are in-between; we haven't got a bus station right now.

[241] **Neil McEvoy:** But the plan is there though, isn't it? So, you've got the plan on the table, which may or may not have funding, and disability groups have big issues with it. I just wondered what your positions were.

[242] **Mr Pockett:** I think, obviously, the bus station is the responsibility of the local authority, and they plan it. Bus operators, all of them that use Cardiff bus station—or did use it and will use it—are obviously consulted, as are disabled groups. But I think—and this isn't passing the buck—the ultimate thing goes back to the local authority. But it's important to have a partnership with everybody to ensure that everybody is catered for, I think, and I think that's quite an important message.

[243] **Gareth Bennett:** There's an issue, also, with the coach station, because the coaches are currently accommodated at Sophia Gardens and it's not very accessible, itself, by public transport. There's not much in the way of services there, and as far as I'm aware, it's still uncertain as to whether there will be a National Express coach station included in the upgraded bus station when it's completed. So, I wondered what your thoughts on that were.

[244] **Mr Pockett:** I would obviously say, as the trade association, that we would hope that there is provision for National Express and Megabus and whoever else, but, again, I know National Express have lobbied, and whether the lobby will be successful, we have our fingers crossed. It is important, as you've highlighted. It is very important because it was a good asset when National Express went from that building—it was awful, I know, but it was there, and it had a waiting room, and it was well used, and it was pretty accessible as well, I think, generally.

[245] **Ms Ogbonna:** I can confirm from what I know—because we've done some demonstrations to ensure that the turning points of the bus station work—that there is provision, that National Express will be allocated some of the stands. So, based on the number of stands that are there, there is potentially an allocation, I understand, for National Express. Like John said, I

do not know what the political issues or what the issues are around that, but from the indications, we believe that National Express will be given some stands.

[246] **Gareth Bennett:** Okay, thanks.

[247] **Angela Burns:** I just wanted to actually talk about the infrastructure, very slightly, and about the buses themselves. Are all the buses now, in your fleets—do they all have drop-down access and hydraulic ups and downs, and are the drivers prepared and happy to deploy those aids?

[248] **Mr Cursio:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

[249] **Ms Ogbonna:** Ours have been DDA compliant for a very long time. We have ramps. As long as the infrastructure is there, so the kerb cuts are there, the kerbs by the bus stops are there, it is part of the duty that they have to deploy the ramp. It's been in legislation for a very long time.

[250] **Angela Burns:** Are they normally deployed, Cynthia?

[251] **Ms Ogbonna:** Very few of them are. Where you have to use the hook sometimes, it's easier to be able to pull that. Most of them now are not—a few of them are, except where drivers have medical reasons, which we will be informed about, and they have medical exemption because of back pain or whatever—. Otherwise they should—they are expected to deploy the ramp.

[252] **Mike Hedges:** We've also got the opposite, haven't we? I know in Swansea there are raised kerbs, so that people can go straight on without anything needing to be deployed. Do you think that's a better solution than having to lower or raise the ramp? Do you think we ought to have more of them? Do you think that more ought to be done to stop cars parking alongside them, which stops buses from picking people up?

[253] **Ms Ogbonna:** Yes.

[254] **Mr Cursio:** I think, Mike, that's the real issue—car parking and enforcement of infringements in bus stops. Whether the bus stop is built out into the road to enable the vehicle not to lower, and for wheelchair users and pram users to just roll on and roll off—. But that is the real challenge for every bus operator. I can safely say that for Cynthia's company and everybody else's.

[255] **Ms Ogbonna:** Yes.

[256] **Mr Cursio:** In terms of what's better or worse, I think there's a place for both, but enforcement is the key for us, because that enables more punctual journeys, and our customers get to where they need to be when they should be there.

[257] **Mr Pockett:** I think it's a nonsense, really, that bus companies have spent money on upgrading their fleet, local authorities have spent lots of money on raising kerbs, and it's all spoiled by selfish car owners. You tell them. I use the bus regularly between Cardiff and the centre of the universe, as I call it—Pontypridd. The number of times that, particularly now there are some difficulties, where car drivers pull in and sometimes I'll say, 'You're in a bus stop here'—usually you get a torrent of abuse or whatever, or 'So what?', but I feel it's my duty on behalf of my members to point out what they're doing. Even somebody with a bad gait, if I can say that, it makes it difficult for them. They've got to get off the kerb and then they've got to get up on the thing, just because of one—car drivers think they can park anywhere.

[258] **Mr Cursio:** I think that's the real-world problem, if you like—the accidents that that causes for people getting on or getting off buses, particularly if somebody has got shopping or is a little infirm, or has a walking stick or whatever it might be. That does lead to accidents as a result of indiscriminate parking and lack of enforcement—not enough enforcement.

[259] **Mike Hedges:** At one time, Swansea council put some of their parking enforcement people on the buses when people were parked there to book individuals who were parking there. Did that work?

[260] **Mr Cursio:** It's still available today. So, police officers, police community support officers and traffic wardens are able to travel free of charge on our services to help us and to help them go about their business within the community. Does it work? Yes, it can, particularly in terms of being able to, if you like, enforce a notice on parked cars. Does it happen often? Not particularly, I don't think, no.

[261] **Mike Hedges:** Angela.

[262] **Angela Burns:** Just two very quick questions from me. The first is: can you take more than one wheelchair user on a bus?

[263] **Mr Cursio:** No.

[264] **Ms Ogbonna:** No.

[265] **Angela Burns:** It's only one. So, they can't take a wheelchair friend along with them if they belong to a club or a group or anything.

[266] **Mr Cursio:** No.

[267] **Ms Ogbonna:** No.

[268] **Angela Burns:** My second question is: we've talked a lot about physical disability. Are your drivers trained in how to be understanding of people with mental health issues who also have a disability, such as autistic people, people with Down's syndrome, et cetera, because their ability to communicate with the world is very different? It's easy to spot someone in a wheelchair—it's less easy to spot that the person they're talking to is somewhere on the autistic spectrum.

[269] **Mr Cursio:** I think that's where the orange wallets and the journey cards really come into their own, because they provide a level of independence and a level of discretion for the disabled person who has, arguably, a hidden disability to highlight that to our drivers. Within the certificate of professional competence that each driver has to pass now, awareness of these issues is very much part of that training, which is reinforced every two years.

[270] **Mike Hedges:** I was very fortunate to attend dementia training with FirstGroup in Swansea a couple of years ago now. Have all of your drivers gone through such dementia training?

10:30

[271] **Mr Cursio:** Through the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence programme, Mike—yes.

[272] **Mike Hedges:** Has it helped?

[273] **Mr Cursio:** Unquestionably. When I review the level of my complaints or the type of complaint that comes through my business, the nature of

those types of complaints, sometimes from family members or friends, not necessarily the person themselves—they have reduced significantly.

[274] **Mike Hedges:** Has Cardiff Bus also undertaken dementia training for its drivers?

[275] **Ms Ogbonna:** The kind of training—. We have all sorts of training. Sorry, can you just—? What type of service?

[276] **Mike Hedges:** Dementia.

[277] **Ms Ogbonna:** Yes, dementia—we are getting into that, and that is wrapped up with mental health training and the point that I made earlier about the fact that our drivers are now trained to understand that disability is not just about physical disability. So, there is that awareness, and the orange wallet and different elements of that are looked at. So, they are going through the process now of trying to include a mental health training aspect in their training.

[278] **Mr Pockett:** Because my colleagues are at the coalface, as it were, I don't think I can give you any help on that.

[279] **Mike Hedges:** Do you think it's a good idea to give dementia training?

[280] **Mr Pockett:** Absolutely, yes—sorry. Yes, certainly, I think any extra training is helpful. I'm a little deaf on this side—this is why I'm here. I think we heard that earlier on—people can see if you've got a white stick or if you're in a wheelchair. If you're deaf—I'm not, I'm okay, but that's why I've got a lot of empathy with people who are deaf. People shout at you, and it's not about shouting, it's being aware. I think it's entirely for society, really, Mike—it is an attitude approach.

[281] **Mike Hedges:** Well, I gave a short debate in the Assembly four or five years ago now on hearing loss, which I called the hidden disability. You can't tell by looking at somebody whether they're deaf or whether they're not. You can see a guide dog, you can see the white stick, you can see the wheelchair, but you can't see if someone is deaf, and you cannot tell by just looking at somebody whether they're suffering from dementia. That's where the difficulties come in, isn't it?

[282] **Mr Pockett:** Absolutely. People very often think you're stupid, and

you're anything other than that.

[283] **Mike Hedges:** Yes.

[284] **Mr Cursio:** Within First Cymru, as well, I'd just like to add that we operate a series of customer panels, and sat on some of those panels are people with hidden disabilities, if you like, and some with visible disabilities. They help inform, at a management level, some of the challenges that our customers will face.

[285] **Mike Hedges:** A question for John now: are we talking to the wrong people? Are we talking to the good bus operators—the ones who do this disability training and those who do work for disabled people? Are there other operators out there who pay less attention to it? Are we getting what the good people are doing, but not necessarily what some of the less good people are doing?

[286] **Mr Pockett:** I think that's a very, very fair point. I'd like to think that any decent operator is a member of the Confederation of Passenger Transport. It's a voluntary organisation—you don't have to join, but anybody can apply for a licence. You're right: I think you can get operators. We don't want them—we expect our members to abide by the code of practice and to do things properly. But yes, certainly, and I think that that is a matter then for the regulatory authorities to look to, and maybe to become more involved.

[287] **Mr Cursio:** I would just also say, Mike, that, from 1 March 2018, all operating companies—all bus companies—are obliged to provide disability training as part of the DCPC programme. So, that, I think, will help raise the standards in the medium term.

[288] **Mike Hedges:** I think that is important. One of the weaknesses we have, as Assembly committees, is that we often get the good providers—the people who are doing everything that we're looking for—and there are some bad providers out there who we never get to talk to. Perhaps I ought to, like Neil did, declare an interest—I know Simon from FirstGroup in Swansea, and I know what a good job FirstGroup are doing in terms of training and support, and what a helpful bus company they can be. But I also know that there are other bus companies doing all sorts of things, which I will not name, that are not necessarily as good at providing support for people with disabilities.

[289] **Mr Pockett:** I think the difficulty you have then, Mike, is that those people don't want to come to things. They want to keep their heads below the parapet because of some of the poor practices that you've highlighted.

[290] **Mike Hedges:** I know that Simon talked about this training practice that has to be brought in. Do you know how that's going to be policed in order to ensure that people have done the half-day's training on dementia, that they have done a half day or day's training on dealing with people with sensory loss, and that they know about lowering and raising the means of getting on the bus? It's great, and we have to have this mandatory training, but do we know how it's going to be policed?

[291] **Mr Cursio:** Well, all of the training providers for the provision of DCPC— Driver Certificate of Professional Competence—cards have to be reviewed and they will be assessed. The cards themselves—each driver has to carry those cards and they're only issued once they have passed that level of training. So, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, for example, will typically check a driver's card when the enforcement officer boards the vehicle. So, I guess it's done in a couple of ways—both the training provision and also on the vehicle.

[292] **Mike Hedges:** Not that I intend to, but, if I bought a bus tomorrow and I employed somebody to drive that bus, how would people make sure that I'd employed somebody who had that level of competence?

[293] **Mr Cursio:** They would only have the driver CPC card had they passed that training, and, of course, their bus licence card as well.

[294] **Ms Ogbonna:** Can I just add that the models that you take are dependent on the company? There are no mandatory criteria that you must do certain models. All that is important is that you have a card that qualifies you to drive. So, the companies choose which models they want to deliver. But, having chosen the models you want to deliver, there's an assessment—an on-the-spot assessment—to make sure that the training that you've put in place is what you're actually delivering and the way you are delivering it in the classroom environment.

[295] **Mike Hedges:** Do you want to add anything, John?

[296] **Mr Pockett:** I would just say that I think that that is for whoever's going to take on the regulatory role, and they need to set the standard. We

want consistent standards for everybody so that everybody complies, and that that is properly enforced.

[297] **Mike Hedges:** I think that's a question we've got for the Minister when the Minister comes in. If there are no further questions, can I thank you for coming along? I've certainly found it enlightening. Can I just thank you for your attendance? A copy of the transcript will be sent to you to check for any factual inaccuracies, and I'll just, again, thank you very much for coming. Can we have a five minute wash-up again?

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10:37.

The meeting ended at 10:37.