

Home to School Transport Overview

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Highways, Transport & Recycling

Learning & Skills Scrutiny Committee
10th February 2023



Introduction

This aim of this Scrutiny session aims to update Members on the provision of all contracted transport services provided by Powys County Council

Large sums of public money goes into supporting bus services in Powys, but not all bus services are provided the local authority.

The impact the COVID 19 has had on the bus industry in Wales and the support and thinking about bus services in Welsh Government has been significant, rapid and opportune and this session will allow me to update members on where we are currently.

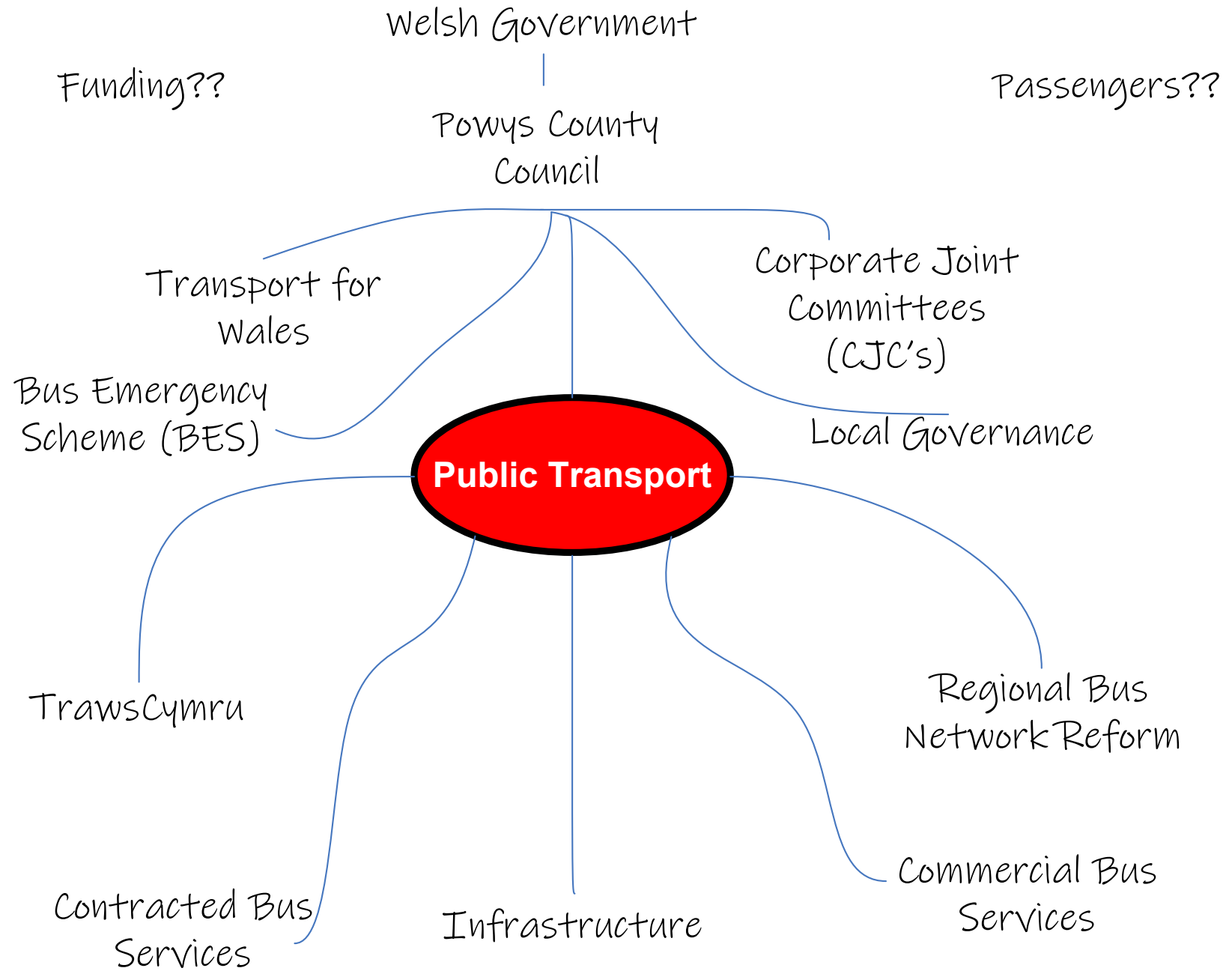


Background

Much has changed and continues to change around how and who will deliver transport since it was deregulated under the 1985 Transport Act:

- Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Llywbr Newydd - Wales Transport Strategy
- Corporate Joint Committees (CJC's)
- BES (Bus Emergency Support)





What Transport Services does PCC provide?

On a daily basis, Powys County Council 'buys in':

- I. 229 mainstream school vehicles
- II. 72 Special Educational Needs vehicles
- III. 40 local bus service vehicles

School vehicles 'costs' around £53.6k per school day - £10.2m per annum

Local Bus Services costs £6,505 per day - £1.99m per annum

£12.1m PER YEAR or around £1 every 3 seconds!



133000 population
5000 learners use school
transport daily
90 Schools
301 Routes
Nearly 60 operators



Key Differences between dedicated School Buses and a Local Service Bus

- School buses are required to have seat belts fitted
- There is no requirement to have seat belts on a local service bus
- There is no standing on a dedicated school bus
- Standing is permitted on a local service bus
- Powys spends one of the highest amounts on school transport in Wales
- Powys is unlike most local authorities in Wales (and indeed the UK) whereby we take the commercial risk on the local service buses we provide. This means that all on bus and concessionary fares revenue are returned to the council to offset the cost of the contract. This model is very similar to a franchised bus network that may be introduced across Wales under bus reforms being considered by Welsh Government



The Legislative Frameworks

1. The 1985 Transport Act –specifically section 88 which states

88 Expenditure on public passenger transport services. **E+W**

- (1) Any power conferred on any authority responsible for expenditure on public passenger transport services to enter into agreements providing for service subsidies (however framed, and whether arising under this Act or under any other enactment) shall be subject to sections 89 to 92 of this Act.
- (2) It shall be the duty—
 - (a) of all such authorities, in exercising and performing their functions with respect to securing the provision of public passenger transport services; and
 - [F1**(b) of all—
 - (i) local authorities in England and Wales, or,
 - (ii) education authorities in Scotland or local authorities exercising social work functions in Scotland,
 in relation to any expenditure on transport for the purposes of or in connection with the exercise and performance of any of the functions set out in subsection (2A);]

to co-operate with one another so as to secure, in the interests of the ratepayers of their areas, the best value for money from their expenditure on public passenger transport, taken as a whole.



The Legislative Frameworks

- **The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008**
- **The Learner Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014**

The basic principles for providing free home to school transport are:

- Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending primary school who live 2 miles or further from their nearest suitable school
- Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending secondary school who live 3 miles or further from their nearest suitable school



The Legislative Frameworks



PSVAR 2000 and Vacant Seats

Currently, the PSVAR2000 regulations requires bus operators to apply for an exemption and to demonstrate to the DfT that they are transitioning their fleet of buses to PSVAR2000 compliant vehicles.

Powys has taken the view that whilst this transition is taking place, we will not offer any new learners a spare seat to school because we cannot apply the scheme equitably across the county as some bus operators are at different positions in their transition arrangements therefore the easiest and most equitable position is to suspend the sale of new spare seats until we have operators with PSVAR2000 compliant vehicle fleets.

We need to carefully consider how or if we can continue to offer vacant seats for sale in light of the legislation and amend our Home to School Transport policy accordingly if necessary.

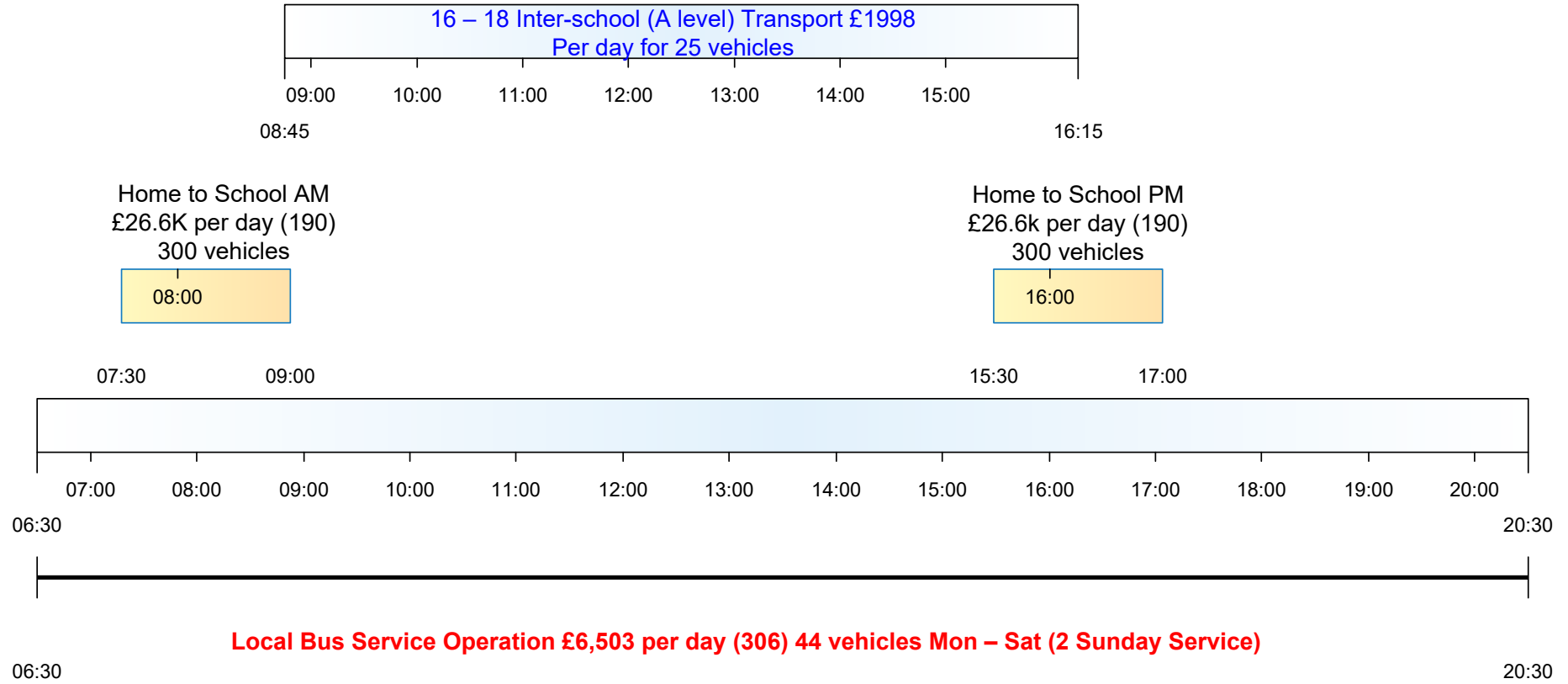


Headline Stats:

- Average cost per local bus - £192 per day
 - Average length of local bus 'shift' – 11 hours for 306 days
 - 1.1m passengers carried in 2019/20
 - Around 3.6m 'live' bus kilometres operated in Powys in 2019/20
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- Average cost of dedicated school bus - £178 per day
 - Average length of dedicated school bus 'shift' - 5 hours for 190 days
 - Around 7,500 journeys undertaken AM & PM made by 5,000 learners



Typical PCC provided transport – Time v Cost



Pressures

There are some significant financial challenges that the transport service is under. In addition to the £549k historic saving target there are the following budget pressures:

- £517k in year deficit and a further projected £540k inflationary pressure.
- Even with the work the PTU team have done to claw back £500k through the route optimisation project in January 2023 to contribute to the £549k saving target, it is likely that we won't have BES in 2024/25 for the remaining £1 million.
- We need to do some 'expectation management' and communicate to Members and our service users the financial pressures.

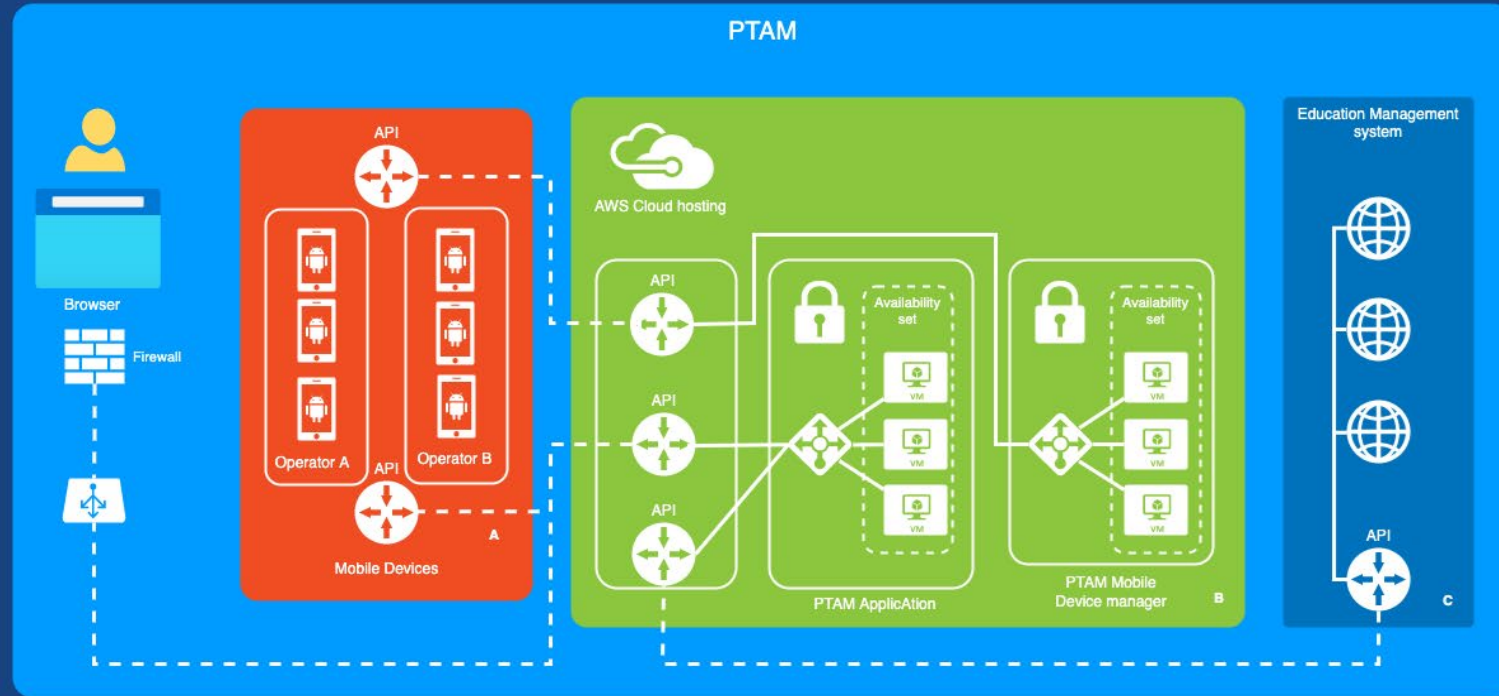


What Does the Passenger Transport Unit Do?

- In addition to making the transport arrangements for our 5,000 learners, the PTU team issue bus passes, manage 300 mainstream & ALN contracts and 60 contractors, monthly payments of around £500k and monitor services
- Safeguarding our learners on school transport is our Number 1 priority
- We try and visit each secondary school at least once a term to monitor school transport. We try to get to as many primary schools as we can too!
- We really try and work with schools to ensure that only those entitled to free school transport use it – especially during the Covid 19 era! **PTAM** has massively helped and we are continue to develop it.
- We welcome feedback from schools and parents where we can improve things – we need to get better at this!



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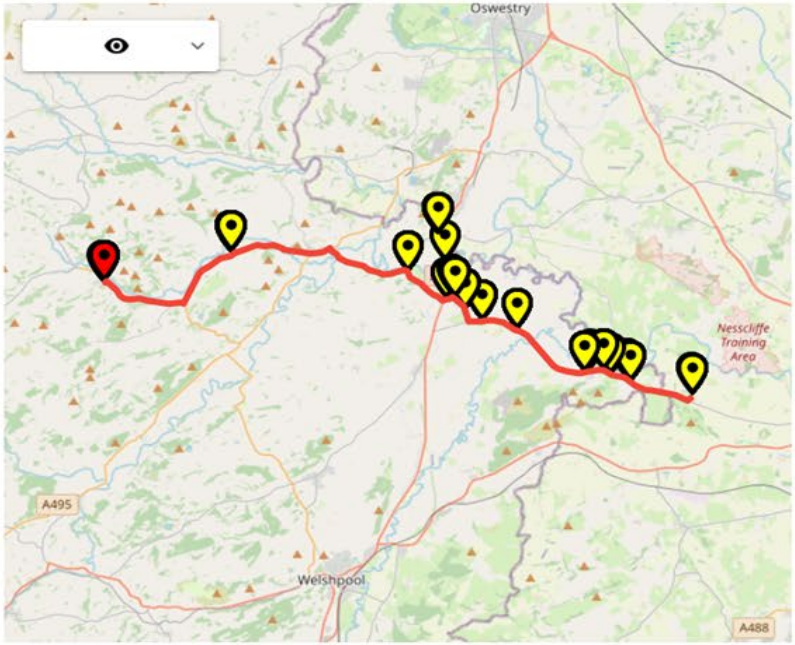


A	Crew Pupils	B	Passenger Transport Unit Operators Schools	C	Passenger Transport Unit Education Department Schools
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- Home
- Reports
- Contact
- Excess Scans
- Outdated Cards
- Services
 - Missing
 - Redundant
 - Routes**
 - Utilisation
- Learners
- Crew
- Cards
- Services
- Routes
- Establishments
- Operators

Service Routes Report



Included Routes

Ref	Service	Direction	Version	Start Date		
A	LF64	I	1	2022-10-28	Remove	Report

Summary (Route A)

Service Code	LF64
Operators	CGT
Start Time	07:50
End Time	08:35
Total Distance	25.69km
Total Stops	13
Total Learner Scans	1289
Total Journeys	40
Average Learner Scans Per Journey	32.23

Details (Route A)



PTAM Service user feedback



Learners from Ysgol Trefonnen



Jess Weale, Weales Wheels



Headteacher Testimonial



When the QR code system was described to us I must admit I thought we would have chaos with lots of pupils forgetting and losing their ID cards and scanning systems which didn't work on the buses etc.

However, the complete opposite has been true! The system has worked incredibly well – students have taken to it like ducks to water and have understood the importance of remembering their cards in a very mature way. The bus companies we work with have deployed the system in a professional and clear way with all drivers now scanning cards in an efficient and professional manner with no disruption or delays to travel time caused.

I would like to congratulate John and his team on implementing a fantastic initiative which has not only improved efficiency and tracking but also enhanced students safeguarding'.

Mr Dewi Owen

Pennaeth/Headteacher

Ysgol Llanfyllin



Diolch – Any Questions?

