

Sustainable Transport *for* Tourism Wales



STTW Response to Consultation Questions: Wales Transport Strategy–Connecting Wales

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Foreword

STTW (Sustainable Transport for Tourism Wales) is a group of tourism, travel and transport practitioners working to integrate travel by public transport into the Wales **visitor** experience.

Early in 2004, after delivering a series of successful marketing campaigns, members of the STTW management group volunteered to form a task and finish group to bring forward a Phase 3 Strategy.

Terms of reference were that the strategy had to demonstrate lessons learnt from Phases 1 & 2 – see Campaign Report Phase 2 1998 to 2001 at <http://www.sttw.wales.info/reports.asp> – and for this knowledge to be applied to long-term sustainable development in Wales resulting in hard economic outcomes, social and environmental benefits.

STTW's response to the Wales Transport Strategy consultation is based on the STTW Phase 3 Draft Strategy consultation completed in September this year, available at <http://sttw.wales.info/consultation.asp>

Questions on *Meeting the Challenge*

1. Do you broadly agree with the social outcomes identified? If not, what else needs to be included to ensure that this Transport Strategy supports the social priorities set out in our Wales Spatial Plan and inter-related strategy documents?

Yes but there is a danger of construing 'social outcomes' as relating solely to the resident population, with **visitors** thought of in terms of 'economic outcomes' only.

'(1) Improving access to shopping and leisure facilities by public transport' and '(4) Encouraging healthy lifestyles' are as relevant to **visitors** as they are to residents. It is important to recognise this market segment, revenue from which can support action taken to improve facilities for residents – particularly in rural areas – and help combat the negative social effects relating to car-borne tourism.

'(5) Improving the actual and perceived safety of travel to reduce injury accident rates' also has implications for **visitors**, not so much the safety of public transport itself but safety issues relating to congestion and the large number of car-borne visitors using roads – often narrow – that are unfamiliar to them, a propensity to admire the view whilst trying to negotiate these and other hazards, and distractions caused by passengers and excited, often fractious, children.

Targeted increases in UK domestic and overseas tourism to 2010 described in the Tourism Strategy for Wales – see <http://www.stayinginwales.com/b2b/docs/tourism%20strategy;%20transport.pdf> – will mean that local populations will swell even more as a result of the increased numbers of **visitors**. Many will

arrive from the European mainland in left-hand drive vehicles, which are known to bring increased risk of accidents, often fatal.

The following road-safety targets were included in the Transport Framework for Wales 2001 consultation:

- a 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents;
- a 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured;
- a 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate, expressed as the number of people slightly injured per 100 million vehicle kilometres.

In his response to the recent STTW Phase 3 Draft Strategy (2007–2011) consultation, Chief Superintendent Geraint Anwyl of the North Wales Police said:

“This (the STTW Phase 3 Strategy) is long overdue. The pressures placed on the highways of Wales by ever increasing numbers of vehicles represent a major challenge to strategic roads policing. That challenge cannot be dealt with effectively without significant departures from our current strategies being developed and more importantly, implemented.”

This can be addressed by selling the benefits to **visitors** of travel by alternative modes at their destinations: e.g. more time to admire the view from windows invariably higher up to see above stone walls rather than driving into them, reductions in stress – particularly for drivers of left-hand drive vehicles, better quality time spent with the family, and the ability to have a few drinks without becoming a danger to other road users. Travel to a visitor attraction by public transport therefore becomes an attraction in its own right, as would a ride on a scenic railway or along a scenic bus route.

A key message in the strategy is greater co-ordination and planning, with transport considerations being taken fully into account at an early stage of planning decisions across all disciplines. It is not clear whether these disciplines includes marketing. If so, it would cover usage by **visitors** to Wales as well as residents, demonstrate an understanding of the different needs of these markets, and segment them for product development and promotional purposes.

Another key message relates to public transport services themselves and calls for innovative schemes and co-ordination of community services in areas where access needs are greatest. The strategy should also take into account the access needs of **visitors** to ‘key centres’ such as honeypot towns and villages, popular walking routes and cycling routes where car-borne tourism can have a negative social and environmental impact.

To fully realise the benefits of tourism, whilst at the same time minimising the negative effects of increased levels of traffic, a better understanding is needed of the ‘tourism’ market for **visitors** as distinct from the ‘leisure’ market for residents.

Smarter choices *will* be made by **visitors** providing that the key tools of travel planning and publicity are targeted more accurately at this market.

2. Do you broadly agree with the economic outcomes identified? If not, what else needs to be included to ensure that this Transport Strategy supports the economic priorities set out in our Wales Spatial Plan and Wales A Vibrant Economy?

Yes but with the following reservation:

'(10) *Improving access to key **visitor** attractions*', whilst obviously well intentioned, appears a little muddled in its rationale.

Its aim is to '*...ensure people have the opportunity to experience and enjoy Wales' tourist attractions and appreciate its distinctiveness, thus helping to increase economic prosperity and the social and cultural well-being of Wales.*'

It is not clear how public transport can improve access by tourists to **visitor** attractions over the existing high level of access by private car, which already provides a substantial economic contribution. The number of **visitors** coming to Wales without private transport is relatively small. The provision of public transport for this minority to access **visitor** attractions meets a social need rather than having any real economic justification.

If the stated outcome is based more on shifting car-borne **visitors** onto alternative modes of transport then the economic outcomes will arise from additional revenue received by public transport operators rather than attractions.

Under these circumstances it would be inequitable to ask attractions operators to subsidise transport operators' income by offering discounted entry. But if they did so, they would need to be sure that they would gain additional **visitors** to those they would normally expect by car rather than have their profits suffer from abstraction. The 'Tourism Attractions Marketing Consortia' study commissioned by Mid Wales Tourism in 1996 and carried out by Kevin Jones, MSc Tourism Management at the Manchester Metropolitan University, found that 'operators seem wary of price promotions, believing that all that results is lost revenue since they are unlikely to draw in any new business.'

It would be better by far if trips by public transport were to be marketed as part of the total visit experience (selling the sizzle rather than the sausage) instead of discounting, which would result in a win-win position. The **visitor** market should be defined in terms of its potential economic contribution to public transport usage in Wales as opposed to attractions visits.

Development of an internationally-marketable 'Wales Travel Pass' combining the current range of Wales Flexi Pass and other rail/bus tickets with a much broader range of accommodation, restaurants, attractions, events and cultural tourism products, would represent a major step change in this direction.

In applying the Welsh Assembly Government's Integration Tool 'Wales – A Vibrant Economy' scores highly under 'Strengthening Wales' cultural identity' by having as its explanation 'The

strategy aims to promote a vibrant Welsh economy that addresses the needs of different groups across Wales. The recognition given to the tourism sector will help to support Wales' cultural identity.'

In applying the Integration Tool to the Wales Transport Strategy–Connecting Wales, STTW believes there is justification for adding the following to its explanation for its commitment to 'Promoting the Economy':

'In addition, the Strategy has the potential to promote a better understanding and recognition of the economic contribution of the tourism sector in the context of modal shift to Wales' public transport networks.'

In the Wales Spatial Plan, under the heading 'Promoting a Sustainable Economy', one of the objectives is to *'Build on our distinctive economic advantages and potential, from tourism to specialist high-tech industries.'* Another is to *'Enhance the natural and built environment, which is an economic asset, both as a source of direct activity in tourism and leisure and as part of a wider quality of life.'*

Realising the potential that tourism has for public transport usage will contribute to both these objectives.

Seamless interchanges, for example, are as important to **visitors** if not more so owing to **visitors'** lack of familiarity with their surroundings and the insecurity this precipitates. Overcome this and it is likely that increased numbers of **visitors** will be tempted to use public transport to and at their destinations.

Same with cross boundary working, where Regional Transport Consortia need to gain a better understanding of the needs of **visitors** as distinct from residents.

3. Do you broadly agree with the environmental outcomes identified? If not, what else needs to be included to ensure that this Transport Strategy supports the environmental priorities set out in our Wales Spatial Plan and Environment Strategy?

Yes but with the following observation:

Market segmentation is vital if the environmental message is to be delivered more accurately and in a more timely fashion to **visitors** to help them plan alternative modes of transport to their destinations and, more importantly, at their destinations where their impact is most felt.

In the Wales Spatial Plan, under the heading 'Valuing Our Environment', one of the objectives is to *'Adapt the land-based economy to focus on high value-added products, and links with tourism and recreation; this should support the enhancement of landscapes and biodiversity.'*

The need to minimise the negative impacts of car-borne tourism on the environment is well documented.

4. Do you broadly agree that the three themes (identified in Chapter 3) will provide the best means of addressing the outcomes?

Yes, but it would be helpful to see an additional theme relating entirely to **visitors**, whose economic contribution to Wales is high but whose needs in terms of public transport usage are different. There is a greater chance of **visitors** making a social, economic and environmental contribution to the Wales Transport Strategy once this is better appreciated.

5. Have we identified the most effective interventions, measures and initiatives for each of the themes to maximise the delivery of the outcomes?

Consultees should note that neither the transport themes or the 'tool-kit' of measures have been prioritised. Rather it is proposed that practitioners determine the emphasis on themes and measures dependent on local circumstances.

Yes, save that the issue of market segmentation remains an issue.

For example, any strategy that intends to harness the power of new technology to improve information available for transport users must take into account the different motives for travel so that users can be accurately targeted in the way that only new technology can make possible.

The issues that most clearly differentiate domestic users' (residents') and **visitors'** use of public transport are social needs and lifestyle, which require information to be packaged differently and delivered at different times. A paper entitled 'Information Needs of Visitors Concerning the Use of Public Transport' – see <http://www.stayinginwales.com/b2b/docs/visitor%20pt%20info%20needs.pdf> – provides justification for this approach. The paper was prompted by the 'Information Needs of the Independent Traveller on Public Transport' study report commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government's Transport Advisory Group and produced by Professor Stuart Cole of the Wales Transport Research Centre.

Raising awareness of the consequences of individual travel choices should be directed as much – and arguably more effectively – at the 95% of **visitors** that come to and travel around Wales by car, compared with the large percentage of the resident population that are already dedicated to public transport as a result of social needs (commuting, travel to school, domestic leisure etc).

Encouraging inbound tourism through a new intra-Wales air service would be a wholly lifestyle choice and would need packaging and targeting accordingly.

As regards environmental benefits, much can be done to encourage **visitors** to use alternative modes of transport at their destinations rather than try to stem the flow of car-borne tourism to Wales where the law of diminishing returns will prevail. It is not so much minimising the need to travel but making alternative transport modes more attractive for **visitors** when making day trips from their destinations, which are normally done by car.

6. Do you think this flexible approach is right or should we be emphasising any one of the themes to maximise the role that transport can play in the delivery of the outcomes?

The flexible approach is right, given that there is a need to make greater provision in the strategy for use of public transport by **visitors**.

Questions on *Delivering the Outcomes*

7. Is it helpful to include examples of best practice via case studies as detailed at the end of Chapters 5, 6 and 7?

Yes, providing these are effectively disseminated to parties involved in all market segments that can learn from them.

8. Are there any other examples of best practice that we should be highlighting in this Transport Strategy?

Yes. Many examples supported by the EU-funded Sustainable Transport for Tourism Wales campaign (Phases 1 & 2) have been overlooked, together with later examples of schemes following good practice demonstrated in the Phase 2 Report.

Creation of the strategic 'Any 3 Days in 8 Ticket', which led to the relaunch of the Freedom of Wales Flexi Pass, is a prime example of the former (see Campaign Report Phase 2 1998 to 2001 at <http://www.sttw.wales.info/reports.asp/>)

A tactical marketing campaign that made a significant contribution to recovery of the Conwy Valley Railway following strike action is a particularly good example of the latter. Passenger use increased by 54% even after allowing for the effects of the strike. The scheme demonstrated good practice in campaign preparation and outcome reporting. Details are available at:

- http://www.stayinginwales.com/b2b/docs/campaign_briefnw_events.pdf,
- http://www.stayinginwales.com/b2b/docs/journey_data.pdf, and
- http://www.stayinginwales.com/b2b/docs/press_release_031118.pdf

9. Do the transport tools set out for each of the outcomes represent the most effective interventions? Are there any other key measures or initiatives that we should be highlighting?

Yes, with the following observation:

Travel planning and publicity are acknowledged as the key tools for encouraging people to make smarter choices: *'If services are not publicised and marketed then it is often wrongly assumed that people are unable to travel from origin to destination by means other than the car.'*

Yet in citing technology as the means by which people can research, plan outings and book holidays in advance, the strategy wishes to encourage the increased visibility of the tourism industry when, in fact, there is a greater need to increase the visibility to tourists of public transport alternatives – at the right time, in the right place, and properly presented to avoid missed opportunities. The twin concepts of perishability and information decay in the supply of public transport needs to be better understood in this respect. This is discussed in a paper entitled IPSTAT at <http://www.stayinginwales.com/b2b/docs/infostructure%20pt%20tourism.pdf>

The Transport Framework for Wales 2001 consultation adopted STTW's observation that for an integrated transport strategy to work there must also be a strategy for integrated information supply relating to it.

A major factor in this will be the use of geographic information (GI) tools embedded in ICTs to give a spatial view of destinations combined with information on alternative travel means for attractions and other such visits.

Questions on *Delivery and Monitoring*

10. Will the set of indicators presented adequately capture progress in delivering the Transport Strategy? If not, please identify any additional or alternative indicators.

Sets of indicators relating to the **visitor** market and **visitors** use of public transport to and within Wales are required.

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