

APPG Meeting. 17th March 2025.

Minutes. Attlee Room HoL. 7pm.

Speaker : Simon Lightwood, MP. Minister for Local Transport.

1. Mike Wood, Chairman, introduced and welcomed the Minister, who outlined the reasons for and main focus of the Bus Services (No. 2) Bill.

He said: "These comprehensive reforms are designed to modernise bus services, improve safety and accessibility, and promote sustainable transport solutions ." It was introduced in December 2024 and aims to enhance local and school bus services across England by implementing several key reforms:

Franchising and Enhanced Partnerships: To empower all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to franchise their bus services without requiring the Secretary of State's consent. Streamlining the franchising process and strengthening Enhanced Partnership agreements between LTAs and bus operators.

Local Authority Bus Companies (LABCos): The legislation repeals the previous ban on establishing new LABCos, allowing local authorities to create and operate their own bus companies. It also introduces governance measures to ensure these companies remain at arm's length from local authority central operations.

Service Protection and Grants: LTAs are mandated to identify "socially necessary" local services and must consider alternative arrangements before approving any variations or cancellations of these services. Additionally, the Bill grants LTAs the authority to provide financial grants to bus operators, enabling funding decisions tailored to local needs.

Zero-Emission Buses: the Bill aims to accelerate the adoption of environmentally friendly transport and introduces restrictions on the use of new non-zero-emission buses on registered local services, with the prohibition set to take effect no earlier than January 1, 2030.

Safety, Accessibility, and Enforcement: The Bill enhances safety measures by requiring school bus drivers to undergo enhanced criminal record checks. It also mandates training for bus staff on tackling crime, anti-social behaviour, and disability awareness. Furthermore, LTAs are granted powers to enforce fare requirements and address anti-social behaviour through byelaws and fixed penalty notices.

The Minister also reported hosting the inaugural UK Bus Manufacturing Expert Panel in Sheffield. This event brought together bus manufacturers, metro mayors, and industry experts to discuss the advancement of zero-emission buses and the promotion of UK bus manufacturing. The panel focused on enhancing passenger experiences, boosting

regional economies, and supporting the government's Plan for Change to improve living standards nationwide.

In addition, he reported launching a series of regional roadshows to gather insights on transforming transport, including bus services. These roadshows are aimed to inform the development of a new Integrated National Transport Strategy, seeking to create seamless, well-connected transport networks tailored to local needs. The tour began in Manchester and included stops in cities such as Newcastle, Birmingham, Leicester, Ipswich, Bristol, Brighton, London, Cornwall, and Milton Keynes.

The Minister then took a variety of questions from the floor on the topics of the Independence of the Traffic Commissioners, 2025-26 funding, Zero Emissions, the importance of independent coach companies and community transport.

2.Second Speaker : Chris Nix from The London Transport Museum then delighted the audience with a speech all about the vast and unusual collection of artefacts that belong to the Museum and the Social History that they represent. He also took a variety of questions and it was suggested that a visit could be arranged for the members to attend at a future date.

A vote of thanks from co Chair, Lord Snape to the speakers.

Notice of Next Meeting 30th June.

Mtg Ends 9.30pm