



# North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

## News Briefing – October 2013

### Withdrawal of Bus Services in North and West Wales

Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, made a statement on the forthcoming withdrawal of Arriva Buses Wales' services in North and West Wales, in the National Assembly Plenary Session, on 15<sup>th</sup> October.

Key Points of Relevance to North Pembrokeshire Passengers

#### *Bus Services*

- An officials group, working with the three local authorities, has identified a mechanism for securing the provision of services, the majority of which are currently scheduled to end in December.
- To secure these services in the short term, they are discussing with local authorities the awarding of contracts under emergency procedures to local operators while they look at longer term solutions for a sustainable network of services.
- Bus services are essential to improving the quality of people's lives, and our priority in Wales has to be to ensure that we have a transport system that helps to improve the economic competitiveness of Wales, that provides good access to jobs and services, and reduces poverty for the people of Wales.
- Services in rural areas need to be more flexible to get people to things like hospital appointments.

#### *Community Transport*

- I have been very committed to community transport because I think that it is key to some of the areas that we are talking about—to protect routes and improve connectivity in remote rural communities and very remote urban communities.
- It is very important that we continue to support the Community Transport Association financially, and we need to look at innovative schemes like Dial-a-Ride.
- We are looking at how the community transport sector can play a greater role in the delivery of non-emergency patient transport services.

#### *Integration*

- We need an integrated public transport system that links up rail and the buses, so that people can get on with their daily lives in whichever area of Wales they choose to live in.

### National Assembly Enterprise & Business Committee Inquiry into the Future of the Wales & Borders Rail Franchise

*Meetings.* A Rail Group Stakeholder Engagement on 3<sup>rd</sup> October was followed by the Committee's Panel Evidence Sessions with: (1) Passenger Focus, RailFuture, Arriva Trains Wales, and the Association of Train Operating Companies; (2) Angel Trains, the Porterbrook Leasing Company, Professor Stuart Cole and the Association of Community Rail Partnerships; (3) Network Rail; and (4) the Department for Transport's General Rail Group, the Welsh Government Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, and Transport Scotland. Consult [www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IIId=1307](http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IIId=1307) for the session transcripts.

#### *Introductory Remarks*

- Concern about the uncertain future of the additional Fishguard train services is central to the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum's assessment of the evidence that has been presented to the Committee this month.
- When announcing funding for the additional Fishguard train services on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011, Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones AM stated that a review of the extra services would be carried out after the third year of the scheme to identify demand and passenger numbers, the nature of trips taken, and would at that time seek further community and user views.
- Passengers are now beginning to ask what is going to happen once the funding for the 3 year trial services comes to an end in September 2014. The Forum regrets that it is not yet possible

to provide the answers to their queries, although there is evidence about demand and passenger numbers (the Ministerial announcement of a significant increase in the first year) and the nature of trips taken (the Forum's 2012 analysis of its service evaluation survey).

#### Key points from the North Pembrokeshire Perspective

##### *Franchise specification*

- Service requirements should match passenger needs and aspirations.
- Provision of a service pattern that people are used to and expect to see continuing, albeit that we know where there is demand for additional services and we know where we have congestion points.
- Inclusion of incentives for output improvement and achieved target levels, and sanctions to be applied when they are not achieved.
- Performance monitoring/measurement and regular reviews to be integral to the new franchise and include the involvement of external stakeholders.
- To include flexibility to respond to changes in demand, growth and technological developments and cater for major events and incidents.
- Break points to be included, so that if everything goes completely wrong there is a point at which you can get out of the franchise.
- Specify involvement with community rail partnerships and the Association of Community Rail Partnerships.
- Coordination between operators regarding timetabling and service provision should be specified.
- A longer franchise to provide greater stability, encourage investment and provide staff with a sense of job security that would hopefully result in a higher quality of customer service.

##### *Rolling stock*

- The thing that passengers want above all else is a seat. Procurement of rolling stock needs to be planned far in advance so that when capacity is needed it can be provided.
- All trains to be accessible by 2020 to comply with disability discrimination legislation.
- Refurbishment should be high quality and designed appropriately for the routes on which the rolling stock will operate.
- Provision of clean toilets, adequate space for luggage and bikes, and Wi-Fi in order to adequately reflect the changing culture of railway use.
- The approach to rolling stock provision needs to be strategic and long-term. The need to cater for both electrified and diesel trains across the network must be properly addressed.

#### Passenger Involvement - Community Rail Partnerships

Encouraging remarks made in the evidence provided by Edwina Hart AM, Minister for the Economy, Science and Transport:

'I will make an announcement about the work that we are doing, because we have a very active community transport sector, and there are five different rail partnerships within it, and we engage with them on a regular basis. I think that it is valuable from the point of view of developing what customers want and, as I indicated in an earlier response, some of these people really know their business in terms of understanding the rail service, and we will look, when we look at the new franchise, as I indicated before, at strengthening relationships with them, so that they can help us in terms of policy development'.

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The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum is an independent voluntary group that works for the provision of an effective integrated transport system in the North Pembrokeshire area, promotes the benefits of public transport and works towards the greater use of public transport systems.

The Forum is a member of Bus Users UK Cymru, the Environmental Network for Pembrokeshire and the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association.

The Forum's work is supported by:

Individual Members (£5 p.a.), Family Members (£8 p.a.) & Corporate Members (£12 p.a.)

(Corporate members include town and community councils, transport operators, and groups, organisations and associations with a transport interest)

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