



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – March 2010

North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Annual General Meeting

The Forum's 10th AGM was held on Wednesday, 24th March in the Letterston Memorial Hall, at 7.00pm.

Alex Owen, Community Rail Officer, All Points West (the South West Wales Community Rail Partnership), gave the keynote speech, "Youth and the Railways: the Future for Young People and Trains." Key points from the presentation:

The All Points West works towards raising awareness of the railway in the area and increasing use. Its activities include:

- Station Adoption. There are a number of unstaffed stations across our region, and Station Adopters regularly check to see that these stations are clean and pleasant. In return for a monthly report, Arriva Trains Wales will give Adopters £75.00 of complimentary travel vouchers to use on any part of the National Rail Network.
- Enhanced Station Adoption. All Points West is currently talking to communities across the region about setting up an Enhanced Station Adoption programme to improve station environments.
- Train Training. Many school age children have never been on a train. A new "Train Training" programme will include work in the classroom, learning how to use timetables and maps, and a field trip either by train, or where this is not logistically possible, by train and bus. Stories from both teachers and pupils will be posted onto the Partnership's new website: www.allpointswest/info.
- Pembrokeshire Railcard. The Partnership will promote this railcard, available for journeys within Pembrokeshire and extending to Swansea via Carmarthen. The £5.00 card, valid for one year, is available to residents aged 16 or over, of selected postcodes in Pembrokeshire. Holders are entitled to a 34% discount on ticket fares. The card can be purchased from any manned railway station.

In the discussion period that followed the following points were made:

- The railway heritage of the area should be incorporated in the Travel Training programme. The Centenary of the London-Fishguard express service will be marked in 2012.
- Travel journeys can be planned using Traveline. Young people don't regard using computers or mobile phones to obtain information as work.
- Window gazers, describing what can be seen on train journeys, should be produced and provided to passengers.
- The re-opening of the station in Goodwick is practical, and is one of the capital projects in the SWWITCH Regional Transport Plan.
- There is a good bus/rail connection from Cardigan to Carmarthen which is very useful for residents in the St Dogmaels area. The Community Rail Partnerships are now working with Traws Cambria on coach/rail connections.

Executive Committee. Cllr Rod Bowen, Mike Field, Cllr Judi Hartland, Sophie Hurst, Cllr Byron James, Michael James, Caroline Wilson, and Hatti Woakes were elected to serve on the Executive Committee for the forthcoming year. Stephen Hale and Peter Harwood, who were co-opted to serve on the Committee during the past year, have agreed to continue serving as co-opted members for the forthcoming year.

Community Transport

Pembrokeshire County Council Award. As reported in last month's News Briefing, Pembrokeshire County Council has won the Community Transport Association UK Award for 'Best Local Authority 2010', praised for its innovative approach to coordinating public and community transport.

The Council's Integrated Transport Unit coordinates the various strands of transport - education, social services, public, community, and fleet management. Its community transport demand management centre acts as a 'one-stop shop' for community transport information and bookings. Booking coordinators man a free-phone number (0800 783 1584) and match customer requests to the most appropriate service for them.

Bws y Bobol. A Users Forum was held on 24th March in St Davids Memorial Hall and was attended by service users from groups in St Davids and the Fishguard Friendship Circle, as well as drivers and members of the Committee. Feedback revealed that most people found that the current booking arrangements worked well. Services provided in St Davids for elderly groups by the Day Centre, Evergreens and the Luncheon Club are invaluable for residents who are not very mobile and who would be socially isolated without the transport offered by Bws y Bobol. People are now planning to use the service to attend podiatry appointments in Fishguard.

Trains – Fishguard

Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales. The Enterprise and Learning Committee report on Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales was debated in the 17th March Assembly Plenary Session. As previously reported, the report includes a recommendation that the Welsh Assembly Government should agree to fund the additional services to Fishguard that are supported by SWWITCH and petitioners to the National Assembly.

In his response the Deputy First Minister stated that 'it would be inappropriate to agree to a committee proposal to support a particular Regional Transport Plan priority when there are many priorities across all four of the Regional Transport Plans, and where there is already an established process in place for responding to those priorities'.

During the debate Paul Davies, AM for Preseli Pembrokeshire, provided reasoned arguments in support of the Fishguard recommendation and urged the Deputy First Minister to reconsider his decision. AMs Nerys Evans and Alun Davies also spoke on the need to improve rail services to Fishguard. The Deputy First Minister responded that he was not rejecting the proposal to improve the services to Fishguard, but that he was unhappy that the committee wished him to place one of the SWWITCH recommendations above others. He will respond to the consortium's priorities in their entirety.

Fishguard Trains Petition. The Assembly Petitions Committee considered the petition for a third time on 23rd March, having received requested information from the Deputy First Minister and the Chair of the Enterprise and Learning Committee.

In contrast to the views that he expressed during the 17th March Plenary debate, the Deputy First Minister stated in his letter to the Committee of 28th February that he was aware that SWWITCH had identified 5 extra trains per day to Fishguard as a priority in their Regional Transport Plan, and his officials would discuss this further with the consortia for possible implementation at some later date. He added that due to intense pressure on budgets, he was unable to make an early commitment.

After its discussion of the matter, the minutes record that the Committee agreed to write to the Deputy First Minister to:

- Reiterate the Committee's request for further information on the blockages preventing funding for additional services to Fishguard
- Asking for some indication of when this decision is likely to be revisited, and whether the aims of the petition can be met in the medium to long term
- Asking why the Deputy First Minister's views have changed between his letter to the Committee dated 28 February 2010 and the Plenary debate on the Enterprise and Learning Committee's report into Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales on 17 March 2010
- Write to SWWITCH to seek their views on the responses the Committee has received from the Deputy First Minister and Enterprise and Learning Committee
- Following receipt of these responses, the Committee agreed to pass them on to the Enterprise and Learning Committee and ask for its views on how to progress the petition

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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 specialist advisor to the Pembrokeshire Community Transport Strategic Partnership and a member of Bus Users UK, 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).

For further information, contact the Secretary, 2 Hill Terrace, Fishguard SA65 9LU,
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