

# North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

## News Briefing – January 2014

### Buses

Richards Bros X50 Cardigan-Aberystwyth Service. The Cardigan - Aberystwyth service has been improved and through passengers no longer have to change at Synod Inn. The service now travels via New Quay which adds 17 minutes to the through journey. Some services also divert through Aberporth, the two diversions adding around 30 minutes to the through route. The Pembrokeshire Bus Users UK Cymru representative reports that she has tested the new service, but does not know yet how/if the slightly longer service affects connections with the trains at Aberystwyth.

### Community Transport

Scooter Scheme. The Green Dragon Scooter Scheme has been launched formally and has two additional candidates in the system, with only three mopeds left to allocate. However, the organisers have just received notification that they may be receiving 5 more scooters. English and Welsh Scooter Posters are included with this Briefing.

Town Rider Services. At present, the buses are under-utilized, often making similar journeys back and forth, when one trip would suffice. PACTO has secured funding to improve the booking and scheduling of the services. The process has started with training sessions for the administration and booking staff at Pembrokeshire County Council, and plans to tackle performance improvement are being drawn up.

Bus Buddies project. The Green Dragon Bus Buddies project (to provide work experience and work references for job seekers and assistance in using the Town Rider services for the less mobile/visually impaired, etc. users) is still in development. Links are being forged between Town Riders and more bespoke community transport (accessible cars) when passengers require a more personal service.

### Mobile Library Service Consultation

Pembrokeshire County Council is planning to introduce a personal library service to those who cannot access a library building. Instead of visiting mobile library vehicles, those eligible for the new service will be visited in their own homes by staff or volunteers. Those eligible to receive the service will include those who are unable to leave their homes for physical or health reasons, people unable to travel to a library either by car or public transport, those unable to carry materials, or people culturally isolated in their homes. Consultation on the new plans will run until 17<sup>th</sup> February. To have your say, complete the survey online at [www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay) or request a paper copy through the post from the County Council call centre on 01437 764551.

### National Assembly Plenary Debate on Ministerial Transport Plans

The 28<sup>th</sup> January Plenary debate followed an update on transport policy by Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Economy, Science and Transport. Key points of particular relevance to North Pembrokeshire:

- The new national transport plan will also reflect regional priorities. The city region boards will advise on priorities for inclusion in the plan from their areas and develop their role in co-ordinating transport delivery. The Minister is having direct discussions with the others outside those groupings regarding how they might wish to input into this discussion.
- It is very important to recognise what people require services for, to look very carefully at what good practice can emerge and how to deal with these issues in central and local government. Local authorities will receive grant funding directly from the Welsh Government, rather than working through an additional layer of bureaucracy with the regional transport consortia.
- Capital funding will be allocated on a competitive basis directly to local authorities, to ensure better value for money. Revenue support will no longer be provided for the transport consortia. If local authorities wish to maintain their organisational structures, that is a matter for them.
- Bus services are of significant importance to communities, particularly in rural areas. There is more to do to ensure that bus services are sustainable in the context of challenging budgets. A short-term bus advisory group will advise on the practical steps that can be taken to attract and retain fare-paying passengers and to remove barriers, enabling services to run efficiently.
- More work needs to be done on the links between bus and rail. We tend to talk about the large bus operators, but there are very successful small bus operators all across Wales that have done their best

in terms of delivery of service, have excellent local arrangements, and have a good understanding of what is required within the local economy. We will continue to work with them as well, as we review whatever can be done to maintain as many viable bus services as possible.

- There is also a role for community transport in delivering some services, a priority stemming from work commissioned jointly with the Minister for Health and Social Services.
- The process of agreeing arrangements for reimbursement of the concessionary fare scheme in the future is nearing completion. With a number of bus operators we are exploring the potential to pilot young persons' concessionary fare initiatives. We are also looking at a range of options for harnessing the benefits of smartcard technology for transport.
- In response to a request from Paul Davies AM for confirmation that dualling the A40 is now a Welsh-Government objective in the long term and that this will be included in the national transport plan, the Minister replied that the national transport plan will be about not just the priorities for transport but the affordability of what can be delivered. She will be clearer on the priorities when she knows what the cash is and how she will then have to stage the priorities.
- With regard to the Arriva franchise, the recommendations made by the Enterprise and Business Committee following its inquiry will be considered specifically when we look at the specification for the new franchise and its development. An improved devolution settlement with respect to rail services is also an objective for the Welsh Government, to ensure that we have the resources to deal with those particular issues. To date, no firm decisions have been made about rolling stock.

## **Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)**

The new TEN-T framework and the engagement of the European Union, the UK and Welsh Governments in the TEN-T review and development of the new framework continues to be a matter of great concern.

Information that has been provided in correspondence to all Assembly Members from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport:

- The Welsh Government has been in discussions about the new TEN-T framework since 2010, to ensure that key routes and hubs were included on the Core Network map if they satisfied the Commission criteria. In 2010 TEN-T maps reflected the previous arrangement that there was only one level of TEN-T, and routes were either on the network or not. The maps were valid for Wales.
- The new arrangements have introduced two network levels: the 'Comprehensive' Network and the 'Core' Network. All TEN-T routes are part of the Comprehensive Network (which reflects the maps under previous arrangements). Some of the routes are also part of the Core Network. The Core Network is the strategic priority under the new arrangements and the focus for funding.
- The 'Connecting Europe Facility' (CEF) sets out the financing proposals for the Trans-European Networks. In at least one draft of the CEF Regulations Holyhead was part of a 'Core Network Corridor' from Dublin to the Continent. The final version of the CEF draft regulation published in October 2011 did not include Holyhead as part of a 'Core Network Corridor'.
- The routing of the Corridors was proposed by the European Commission. Separately, the Welsh Government's understanding is that Holyhead never met the Commission's criteria for inclusion separately as a Core port.

On 16<sup>th</sup> January Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport and his officials provided evidence to the Enterprise and Business Committee.

Points made by Mr Goodwill:

- The Core Network Corridors (that were proposed by the Commission) will focus on cross-border infrastructure development between member states; technical standards and infrastructure development to be implemented by 2030 on the Core Network and by 2050 on the Comprehensive Network. The DfT estimates that this could cost the UK between £64 billion and £137 billion; payment would be required whether or not the member states receive any TEN-T funding.
- The UK's objective was to maximise its eligibility for TEN-T funding, while minimising additional financial or administrative burdens on the UK from the technical standards infrastructure developments.
- The advice that we had is that ports such as Holyhead would not be in a position to be seen as major ports to meet the qualifications. In terms of Milford Haven, without large amounts of EU subsidy, it handled 39.8 million tonnes of cargo in 2012, and handled 29% of Britain's sea-borne trade in oil and gas, and is well able to stand up for itself without the need for going cap in hand to the EU for funding. Milford Haven is a very successful port and one that will continue to be successful. I think it would be difficult to make the case that we need EU funding to secure its future and EU connectivity.

There are a number of inconsistencies between the evidence provided by Robert Goodwill (RG) and (on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013) by Herald Ruijters, Head of the TEN-T Networks Unit, European Commission's Directorate-General Mobility and Transport (MOVE) (HR), for example:

- RG: Working closely with the Welsh Government, the department pushed the Commission to include Milford Haven port, road and rail connections in south Wales to Milford Haven, and road and passenger rail routes in north Wales to Holyhead in the Core Network. HR: The United Kingdom Government decided to restrict the corridors as much as possible and this was a position taken by the UK alone.
- RG: The UK did not see that the Core Network Corridor would provide any additional benefits to the UK, as it is offshore to mainland Europe and has limited land borders with other member states, namely the Republic of Ireland and the channel tunnel, and has no contentious cross-border projects. The final decision on the points to be included or excluded from the Core Network Corridor was taken by the Commission. HR: The Commission, in its initial proposal, foresaw the inclusion of links across Wales towards Ireland and the motorways that link the United Kingdom and the island of Ireland, towards the continent. There was originally an intention to include Wales in the Core Network Corridors. In the negotiations in the Council, the United Kingdom was very clear that the instrument of the Core Network Corridors was not a priority for the UK. It was clearly seen by the UK—by London—to be as limited or reduced in its impact as possible.
- RG: The fact that, as part of the route to the Irish Republic, Holyhead does not meet the port criteria, would, I believe, rule it out from any projects that encourage traffic via Holyhead to the Irish Republic. HR: It would have been beneficial to have Holyhead in the corridor. In that way, we would have been capable of analysing the investments that are needed alongside that rail and road line in conjunction with the developments that will take place in Dublin...And would, thereby, also have enhanced, for the benefit of all of the member states, the EU added value.

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum wishes to draw particular attention to issues connected to TEN-T routes mentioned in the above discussions that are of significance to North Pembrokeshire, South West Wales and the Swansea Bay City Region: namely the port of Milford Haven and the rail links between Newport, via Cardiff and Swansea to Milford Haven.

The new EU infrastructure policy will put in place a European transport network across Member States to promote growth and competitiveness. It will connect East with West with a network that is genuinely European ([http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/index_en.htm)). The Forum notes that:

- Milford Haven has featured in the TEN-T discussions.
- The ports of Pembroke Dock and Fishguard Harbour (that provide the only southern road-rail-sea passenger connectivity between Ireland, the UK and the rest of Europe) have not been included in the discussions; and, regrettably, there has been no mention whatsoever of this omission.

The Forum therefore asks that appropriate measures be taken to sort out this unfortunate state of affairs and enable all three Pembrokeshire ports to play their full part in implementing EU policies within the new TEN-T framework.

## **Travel Pattern Survey**

Along with neighbouring councils across the Swansea Bay City Region, Pembrokeshire County Council has commissioned a survey by AECOM consultants to find out how people travel to various destinations or activities and what they think about the services. AECOM staff will be visiting random households across the county next month and selected households will be asked to complete a seven day travel diary and questionnaire. These will be collected the following week. The results of the anonymous information will help local authorities plan for improved transport provision. The first 20 completed questionnaires picked out of a hat will have the chance to win a £50 thank-you prize awarded by AECOM.

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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.)

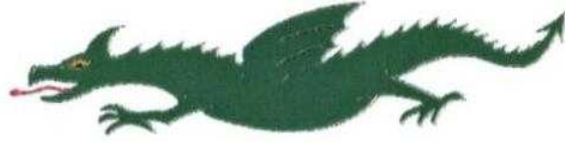
(Corporate members include town and community councils, transport operators, and groups, organisations and associations with a transport interest)

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