



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – June 2009

Buses

Concessionary Fares. Ceri Rees, Pembrokeshire County Council's Transport Strategy Officer, reports that Richards Brothers is the first operator in Pembrokeshire to receive the new electronic ticket machines from SWITCH as part of the new smartcard scheme. As of 31st July only the new Concessionary Travel Pass smartcards will be valid for free bus travel. All bus operators have been sent posters to display on their vehicles to make passengers aware of this change. All Pembrokeshire bus passes were replaced with the new type of smartcard last September/October. If passengers are unsure as to whether or not they have received the new pass they should ask the bus driver to check their pass or refer to the poster on the bus which displays a photograph of the new type of pass. Pembrokeshire bus pass holders who have not received the new type of pass should contact Pembrokeshire County Council on 01437 764551.

New Pembrokeshire Coastal Buses. The latest SWITCH newsletter reports on the fleet of new green coastal buses that are taking to the road, thanks to funding from the Welsh Assembly Government's Rural Development Plan. The wheelchair accessible buses are to be powered by recycled waste vegetable oil. After collection from civic amenity sites, local schools and catering establishments across the County, the oil will be recycled locally by a business at Pembroke Dock that specialises in waste oil conversion. It's estimated that using recycled vegetable oil will result in a reduction of over 80% in carbon emissions compared to conventional diesel powered buses. Last year over 70,000 people rode on Pembrokeshire's coastal bus network which was developed eight years ago to provide a valuable service for local communities as well as an important link for visitors and walkers.

Pembrokeshire Community Transport Forum, 8th June

Launch of the Minibus Match Scheme. This minibus sharing initiative for community groups and not-for-profit organisations was launched in Letterston at the most recent meeting of the Pembrokeshire Community Transport Forum. The project has been developed by the Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO). Funding has been received through the Big Lottery Fund and the Rural Development Plan for Wales (funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Union). The scheme is designed to meet the needs of groups who would like to borrow minibuses; minibus owners can also become scheme members by lending their minibuses to other members.

Borrowers benefit from cost effective minibus travel, access to a range of minibuses including wheelchair accessible vehicles, and a central one-call booking system. Lenders benefit from a contribution towards the running expenses and fuel costs of their minibus, and free publicity. Everyone benefits from MiDAS training, advice on minibus use and access to a pool of MiDAS trained drivers. Further information on Freephone 0800 783 1584.

Town Rider Services. Debbie Johnson reported that there are now over 570 registered users of these services in Pembrokeshire; 115 use the Fishguard/Goodwick service. Passenger journeys have grown significantly and are now around 1000 a month. In May there were 358 journeys in Fishguard/Goodwick, the busiest area.

Country Cars and the Accessible Car. In her update Margaret Vickery reported that while there is no age limit, 95% of users are over 65. Eligibility criteria are: those who cannot access public transport or do not have willing family or friends nearby who can transport them. The aim is to meet the needs of the person, such as visits to the GP, dentist, friends and relatives, day centres, shopping, etc. Hospital consultant journeys are not allowed unless, after special consideration, for those who are ineligible for hospital cars and who really have NO OTHER means of transport.

Preseli Rural Transport Association. The Association has been awarded the contract to run the Preseli Walkers bus this summer. The service will run on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 21st July until the end of September and will operate between Crymych and Bwlch-gwynt, including Llys Y Fran and Maenclochog by request, linking in with the service buses that go from Narberth to Cardigan and Haverfordwest (from Maenclochog) and Fishguard (also from Maenclochog).

Bws y Bobol

The inaugural run of a new dial-a-ride service to the Friday Friendship Circle in Fishguard commenced on 5th June. The trial service, run with funding from the Rural Development Fund, will operate for 6 months. If there is a reasonable uptake, the longer term aim is to develop the service into a dial-a-ride service open to anyone on the route between St Davids and Fishguard wanting to get into Fishguard on a Friday. It is important to note that the same Bws y Bobol concessionary eligibility rules will apply, and the service is intended to complement the Fishguard Town Rider, which does not run on Friday.

Haven Water Bus

News releases report that the service is to be repeated this year, linking beauty spots along the Milford Haven waterway and the Cleddau Estuary. Services started on 26th June, and will operate every Friday, Saturday and Sunday until 27th September. They will now operate two vessels. The first will start from Lawrenny, this year's additional port of call, and will stop at Burton Ferry, Hobbs Point, Neyland (Brunel Quay), Hazel Beach, Milford Haven (Mackerel Stage), Angle and Dale. The second vessel will make the return trip up river from Dale to Lawrenny taking in all the stops on the way. Timetables will be displayed on pontoons at ferry stops and will also be available from tourist information centres, plus on the Pembrokeshire Greenways website: www.pembrokeshiregreenways.co.uk.

Trains

South West Wales Community Rail Partnership: New Community Rail Officer. SWWITCH has announced the appointment of Alex Owen as the new Community Rail Partnership Officer. She will work part-time (20 hours per week) and be based in the SWWITCH Office. Prior to her appointment, Alex worked for 6 years for Tourism South and West Wales, where she had responsibility for liaison with the media, trade partners, local authority partners and sector groups as well as overseeing some large marketing campaigns. After that she moved to work for Leader Group in Pembrokeshire, heading up international marketing campaigns and managing 2 holiday companies.

South West Wales Regional Transport Plan

The final RTP was adopted by the SWWITCH Joint Committee on 5th June and will now have to be approved by each of the four Councils in SWWITCH. This individual adoption process is critical as the RTP is a bidding document which will provide a policy framework for the decisions of all four Councils, as well as securing funds on behalf of the Councils to improve transport and access. The deadline for delivering the RTP to the Assembly is 30th September. Pembrokeshire County Council's Cabinet approved the plan on 29th June.

The June SWWITCH newsletter notes that there remain a number of complex questions which are critical to the next steps for the consortium. SWWITCH still needs to be clear about: (1) the level of transport funding likely to be available across Wales for the period of the RTP; (2) how the funding is to be split between the four Welsh consortia; (3) whether funding will be for the RTP programme as a whole (thus allowing flexibility) or be directly related to specific projects; and (4) what the Assembly sees as the role of the consortia in future?

SWWITCH plans to launch the RTP officially in the autumn and wants to continue to work with stakeholders during the delivery of the RTP over the next few years.

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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, the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services 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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