



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

ANNUAL REPORT 2005 – 2006

Introduction

The Forum works for the provision of an effective integrated transport system in the North Pembrokeshire area, promotes the benefits of public transport and works towards greater use of public transport systems. Its activities involve conducting research and gathering data with regard to all aspects of transport; providing an advice and assistance service to the travelling public; actively promoting its aims to and through governmental, quasi-governmental and advisory bodies; and working with bodies with similar aims.

The Forum has been taking stock of the transport scene in North Pembrokeshire as it comes to the end of its three-year grant from the Sustainable Development Fund and its first six years of work.

With regard to the provision of transport we have seen many improvements in bus, cycle and community transport services and facilities in North Pembrokeshire during the past six years. In contrast, there have been no improvements in train services. The following report provides more detail with regard to transport developments and the work of the Forum during the past year.

Buses

Service improvements:

- Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) is subsidising extra services between Fishguard and Haverfordwest on Friday and Saturday evenings in response to a request from POINT, the Fishguard young people's drop-in centre.
- In consultation with the community, PCC has arranged improved bus services for Spittal, with the addition of a Wednesday service and a shorter journey added to the existing Friday service.
- Proposals similar to the new arrangements for Spittal have gone back to Hayscastle and Camrose Community Councils for consideration.
- Improvements to Goodwick bus services: the 411 services now go via the Dyffryn, and a new 410 service at 6.00 pm goes from Fishguard Square to Harbour Village, via the Dyffryn.
- The Welsh Assembly Government has funded the acquisition of state-of-the-art low floor coaches for Ceredigion County Council. Richards Brothers was given two of them to operate on the X50 Aberystwyth – Haverfordwest route.

Unresolved issues:

- Disruption of bus-rail links caused by the new Arriva Trains Timetable. PCC has forwarded draft timetables for improved connecting services to Richards Brothers asking for cost implications.

- Lack of Sunday Shuttle Bus Services during the winter. Pembrokeshire Greenways reported that funding is not available to operate these services.

Community Transport

Service Improvements / Information Requests:

- Request for St Dogmaels Country Cars services. Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO) responded that St Dogmaels is within the Newport area of the scheme. Contact: Cllr Byron James on 01239 820941.
- St Dogmaels request for information about booking the Preseli Green Dragon minibus. Contact: Preseli Rural Transport Association on 01239 698506. Additional information is available on the Association's web site: www.pрта.co.uk.
- The 2005 Country Cars Passenger and Volunteer Survey revealed that most people use the service for health-related journeys or to go shopping; no one thinks the fares are expensive; two thirds of passengers are unable to make use of local bus services; the majority of journeys are under 20 miles; half of passengers use the service weekly.

New Developments:

- PACTO has received funding to extend free travel to disabled and elderly people in the county. This will fund two pilot *TownRider* projects, one of which will be set up in Fishguard. *TownRider* is a 'dial-a-ride' service for bus pass holders who are unable to use their local bus services for journeys in and around town, operating within a designated town, within a 2-mile radius of the town. Passengers will register to use the service, book their journeys in advance and will be able to travel free of charge anywhere within the designated area. It is hoped that the service will take pressure off Country Cars services in the town and enable that service to help more people in the surrounding rural areas.

Ferries

- Stena Line has been looking at ways of promoting the rail line to Fishguard for ferry passengers. The number of passengers using the train has diminished in recent years and they are examining ways of increasing numbers. Stena is supportive of requests to increase train services, but in the meantime they would like to find ways of promoting the existing service.

Trains

Complaints about Rail Services:

- While Arriva Trains Wales services are more punctual and staff are usually friendly and helpful, the Forum continues to receive complaints about:
 - Delayed trains, missed connections and problems with alternative transport.
 - Limited and lengthy Sunday services.
 - Incorrect, inadequate or non-existent provision of information.
 - Difficulties in purchasing tickets.
 - Locked or inadequately cleaned toilets, dirty and scruffy interiors on trains.
 - Overcrowding and problems with reserved seats.

- The new Arriva timetable, introduced in December, brought no improvements to Fishguard rail services. The drastic reduction in the number of stops is also a matter of concern.

New Developments:

- The South West Wales Community Rail Partnership was set up by the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH) and Arriva Trains Wales in April. One of the Partnership's objectives is the promotion and development of the Fishguard Line.
- The National Assembly has set up a special Committee on Rail Infrastructure & Improved Passenger Services. The Forum has written to the committee calling for:
 - The removal of the capacity and infrastructure constraints caused by the 4 ½ mile single track section through Gowerton and across Loughor Viaduct;
 - An increase in the frequency of passenger services to Fishguard; and
 - The provision of improved rolling stock on West Wales passenger services.
- The SWWITCH Rail Addendum Study was adopted in December. It contained the following comments/recommendations about Fishguard rail services:
 - In terms of value for money and community benefit the limited service currently provided to Fishguard Harbour is questionable.
 - There was general consensus that the current services to Fishguard were unsustainable, not fulfilling any purpose. The issue of services to Fishguard needs to be subject to further debate.
 - An issue which needs serious consideration is the future of the Fishguard Harbour line be it via closure of the route and replacement by a high quality dedicated bus service from Haverfordwest or by recasting of the service to better meet the needs of the local catchment and including tourism from Ireland. A review of the role of the line is needed in the short term to assess which would be the most cost effective solution for this route.

Transport Development

During the year the Forum put forward the case for improved transport in North Pembrokeshire in the following consultation responses:

- Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO): Forward Plan: 2005 – 2010.
- Committee on Rail Infrastructure and Improved Passenger Services, National Assembly for Wales: Rail Infrastructure and Improved Passenger Services.

The Forum also provided Pembrokeshire County Council with a letter of support for its 2005-6 Safe Routes to School Bid, which included programmes for Maenclochog and Croesgoch.

The Forum represented the transport interests of North Pembrokeshire at the following meetings:

- PACTO Community Transport Forums, Haverfordwest, 19 May 2005 and 19 October 2005.
- Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association meetings, Herbrandston, 25 May 2005 and 26 October 2005.
- South West Wales Community Rail Partnership launch, Carmarthen and Haverfordwest, 11 July, 2005.

- Bus Users UK surgeries, Fishguard, 11 August 2005 and Haverfordwest, 27 September 2005.
- Association of Community Rail Partnerships conference on 'Marketing Community Rail Partnerships, Norwich, 23 September 2005.
- South West Wales Community Rail Partnership Forum, Carmarthen, 24 October 2005.
- Heart of Wales Line Management Board meeting, Llandrindod Wells, 20 January 2006.
- PACTO Fishguard/Goodwick TownRider project meeting, Fishguard, 6 February 2006.

The Way Forward for the Forum

The Executive Committee has been holding meetings with representatives of the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) with regard to developing a future work programme for the Forum and a fundraising strategy that will enable it to carry out future activities.

The committee has agreed to take up a suggestion from PACTO that the Forum considers carrying out a transport needs research project across North Pembrokeshire. This would involve working with key people from the various transport sectors to scope the research in order to ensure that it generates information that will be of use to them.

The Forum will continue to look for transport solutions in response to concerns and complaints it receives from individuals, groups and bodies in North Pembrokeshire and to actively stimulate public interest in and support for the provision of effective integrated transport in the area.

The Executive Committee

During the year the Executive Committee held 7 meetings. We wish express our appreciation to the members of the committee for their steadfast contribution to the work of the Forum throughout the year. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to Sybil Edwards McBrearty and Tony Care who are leaving the committee. They have both made valuable contributions to our work and will be missed. In December Mike James joined the committee as a co-opted member. Throughout the period Becci Johnson, then Michaela Hollyfield, attended the committee's meetings as Area Representatives of Bus Users UK, and we welcomed their useful contribution to our work.

Cllr Byron James
Chairman

Cllr Hatti Woakes
Secretary