



# North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

## ANNUAL REPORT 2009 - 2010

### Introduction

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum has now worked for ten years: (1) supporting the provision of an effective integrated transport system in the North Pembrokeshire area, (2) promoting the benefits of public transport, and (3) working towards greater use of public transport systems. Our activities involve conducting research and gathering data with regard to all aspects of transport; providing an advice and assistance service to the travelling public; and (4) actively promoting our aims to and through governmental, quasi-governmental and advisory bodies.

During the past ten years we have seen a remarkable development in the quality and range of our bus and community transport services, as well as a similar expansion in the excellent cycling and walking paths and routes that are spreading throughout North Pembrokeshire. In addition to our gratitude for the funding that has made these improvements possible, we wish to pay tribute to the innovative and energetic efforts displayed at all levels of government (by both elected representatives and officers); by transport operators and their employees; and by the many dedicated and hard-working volunteers who are an invaluable part of our transport scene. The missing part of jigsaw continues to be the need to put in place the additional rail services that have been backed by the Fishguard Rail Study and designated as a top priority in the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium's Regional Transport Plan.

The Forum continues to value the positive relationships that we have developed with our individual, family and corporate members, as well as with transport providers, a wide variety of groups with a transport interest, and elected representatives and officers in all levels of government. We extend our sincere thanks for their interest, encouragement and support.

### Buses

#### Service News

- *Bus-Rail Connections.* Although improvements have been made to 412 (Cardigan-Fishguard) bus connections with trains at Haverfordwest, it has not been possible to improve 411 (St Davids) bus connections with train services at the station. Regrettably, there hasn't been enough leeway (including other connections, driver breaks, etc.) to arrange for buses to arrive any earlier at the station. The 410 (Fishguard Town Service/Fishguard Harbour) bus that leaves Fishguard Square at 1.15 pm arrives at the Harbour at 1.20 pm, providing a very tight connection with the 1.27 pm train departure.
- *Service Cancellations.* National Express has discontinued its Sunday afternoon 2.30 pm coach from Haverfordwest. The only Sunday coach departure is at 9.20 am. Sunday is often overlooked as a very important and busy travelling day in the tourism trade, and there is now no way to travel to the area by public transport for a weekend break, other than travelling by train. The lack of a less expensive transport mode can be a significant disincentive for potential visitors on lower incomes.
- *Timetables.* Richards Brothers new timetables and holiday services were well publicised at stops with shelters. Full Monday-Saturday services now run on tendered routes, including on Bank Holiday Mondays. A strong case for starting the summer coastal services earlier in the year is being taken on board by Pembrokeshire County Council.

#### Community Evaluation of Services

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority held Community Panel meetings in Newport and St Davids in October. At both meetings the existing mainline bus services received

favourable comments, as did the coastal shuttle bus services and dial-a-ride community transport services. Suggested improvements included: better bus services back from Cardigan and Haverfordwest at night (for young people and those in employment), less expensive bus fares for young people, bus connections between Newport and facilities in Crymych, and better integration between bus and train services.

## **Community Transport**

### Service News

- *Bws y Bobol*. In the first year of operation (October 2008 to the end of October 2009) minibus services were provided for 2,085 clients (154 groups), including 30 affiliated organisations. There were 39 drivers on the group's list, with another 6 awaiting training. From November to the end of January services were provided for 496 passengers. A new dial-a-ride service runs to the Fishguard Friendship Circle on Friday mornings, complementing the Fishguard Town Rider, which does not run on Fridays. Two Users Fora are planned: a daytime coffee morning on 24<sup>th</sup> March and an evening forum on 20<sup>th</sup> April.
- *Fishguard Town Rider*. Future funding for the service has been assured, and its hours have been extended. The service now runs from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm 3 days a week in Fishguard and Goodwick. Throughout Pembrokeshire town rider services are getting busier, and there are now 630 regular users (100 more than in 2008); with 117 users in Fishguard and Goodwick. 11,600 passenger journeys were provided in 2009; with nearly 3,500 in Fishguard and Goodwick, which had the highest number of journeys in the county. Over 27,000 journeys have been made since the services started in 2006.
- *Preseli Green Dragon*. The Preseli Rural Transport Association operates many dial-a-ride services: through Mynachlogddu, Llangolman, Maenclochog and Clarbston Road to the doctors' surgery in Narberth; from Clydau and Mynachlogddu into Cardigan; a trial dial-a-ride service to the producers' market in St Dogmaels; and a Town Rider service that covers the villages of Llangoedmor, Llechryd, Blaenannerch and Cardigan. On Sundays an evening dial-a-ride operates between Tegryn, Newport and Theatre Mwldan in Cardigan, providing a service for members of the Film Club who cannot drive. The Association operated the Preseli Walkers Bus on Tuesdays and Sundays from 21st July to the end of September. In July the Association launched its new 15-seater minibus, Green Dragon II, converted from diesel to be powered by 100% vegetable oil. The new bus was part funded through the Welsh Assembly Government's Sustainable Development Fund which is administered by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

## **Cycling and Walking**

There are extensive cycling and walking networks in our area, and Newport has been designated as one of the 'cycle hubs' on the National Cycle Network's 'Celtic Trail'. Both activities continue to receive impressive support from Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Greenways and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

Further support is provided by the Welsh Assembly Government through funding for Safe Routes in Communities projects. The initiative promotes road safety and sustainability, working with community members and schools to design traffic calming measures, provide road safety education and encourage more cycling and walking to schools; addressing health, safety and environmental issues.

A Safe Routes grant of £465,000 has just been awarded to the scheme that has been developed for Goodwick, and Pembrokeshire County Council has agreed that Fishguard will be one of the subject communities for 2010. Work on its Safe Routes proposal is about to begin.

## **Trains**

### Services to Fishguard

- *SWITCH Regional Transport Plan*. The South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium's Regional Transport Plan was approved by the Deputy First Minister/Minister for the Economy and Transport in January. The proposal for 5 additional trains per day to Fishguard is one of the Plan's top rail priorities, and development of the Goodwick Rail Station site as a bus-rail interchange is also included in the Plan.

- *National Assembly. Enterprise and Learning Committee Report: Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales.* The report, tabled in January, includes a recommendation that the Welsh Assembly Government should agree to fund the proposal for additional trains to Fishguard.
- *Fishguard Trains Petition.* The petition, launched in September by 15-year-old Moylegrove residents Sam Faulkner and Joanne Griffiths, has secured more than 1,300 signatures. In October, with the assistance of Paul Davies, Assembly Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire, the petition was submitted to the National Assembly, calling for the Assembly to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to provide funding for the 5 additional trains per day to Fishguard.
- *National Assembly. Plenary Debate on the Railway Infrastructure report, 17<sup>th</sup> March.* In his written response to the report the Deputy First Minister rejected the Fishguard recommendation, stating 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 4 of the Regional Transport Plans, and where there is already an established process in place for responding to those priorities'. Following requests that he reconsider this decision by Paul Davies AM and support for the improved services by AMs Nerys Evans and Alun Davies, the Deputy First Minister stated that in rejecting the recommendation he was not rejecting the proposal to improve the services to Fishguard, just that he was unhappy that the committee wished him to place one of the recommendations of the South-West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium above some others. He will respond to the consortium's priorities in their entirety.
- *National Assembly. Petitions Committee Considerations of the Fishguard Trains Petition.* To date the committee has considered the petition twice, on 24<sup>th</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> February. It will receive further consideration on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. In response to requests for information, the committee has been informed:
  - a. While it would be possible to run extra trains to Fishguard before the redoubling scheme was completed, the majority of the SWWITCH proposals for service improvements do need it. It could be seen as premature to prioritise Fishguard's needs. Therefore there is no current commitment to provide these additional services, nor funding allocated to them within the revenue budget. The Deputy First Minister is aware that there is a good business case for them and he will keep them under consideration (Deputy First Minister, 11<sup>th</sup> January).
  - b. The Gower-Lougher track redoubling is scheduled for completion in 2013 (Deputy First Minister, 28<sup>th</sup> February).
  - c. The Deputy First Minister is aware that SWWITCH has identified five trains per day to Fishguard as a priority within their Regional Transport Plan. His officials will discuss this further with the consortia for possible implementation at some later date. Due to intense pressure in budgets, he is unable to make an early commitment (Deputy First Minister, 28<sup>th</sup> February).
  - d. The Enterprise and Learning Committee has recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should provide funding for the additional Fishguard trains. The Minister has rejected the recommendation on the grounds 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 4 of the Regional Transport Plans, and where there is already an established process in place for responding to those priorities'. In the Plenary debate on the report on 17<sup>th</sup> March the Committee Chairman will express his disappointment that the Minister has not accepted the recommendation (Gareth Jones AM, 16<sup>th</sup> March).

### Community Rail Partnership

In June the South West Wales Community Rail Partnership was relaunched and renamed All Points West, following the appointment of Alex Owen as the new Community Rail Officer. The Partnership objectives are: To assist in the promotion and development of the rail network in South West Wales between Swansea, Milford Haven, Pembroke Dock and Fishguard Harbour for the benefit of local residents, businesses and visitors through the development of local

community based partnership initiatives. The Forum Executive Committee held an extremely useful and informative meeting with Alex in September, and it looks forward to supporting her in her work.

## **Working with Others**

During the period under review the Forum represented the transport interests of North Pembrokeshire through its involvement with the following bodies and organisations:

- All Points West Community Rail Partnership
- Association of Community Rail Partnerships
- Bus Users UK Cymru
- Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations (CAVO)
- Community Transport Association Cymru
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Fishguard Town Rider
- National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Assembly Government
- Passenger Focus
- Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO)
- Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS)
- Pembrokeshire Community Transport Forums
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Pembrokeshire Greenways
- Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development (PLANED)
- Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association
- Pembrokeshire Voluntary Transport
- Preseli Rural Transport Association
- St Davids and Peninsula Community Bus Group
- South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH)

## **Consultation Responses**

During the period the Forum provided responses to the following consultations: (1) South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium, *Regional Transport Plan*, (2) The National Assembly for Wales. (*Legislative Competence*) (*Transport*) *Order 2010* relating to learner transport and concessionary travel. Remarks restricted to concessionary travel and community transport; and (3) Welsh Assembly Government, *National Transport Plan*.

## **The Executive Committee**

We wish express our appreciation to members of the committee for their steadfast contribution to the work of the Forum throughout the year. In particular, we wish to extend our sincere thanks to Ann Greaves and Owen Williams who left the committee during the period under review. Ann designed the Forum's logo, and Owen provided invaluable expertise with regard to railway matters. The committee accepted their resignations with deep regret. During the period Steve Hale and Peter Harwood were co-opted onto the Committee.

Cllr Byron James  
Chairman

Hatti Woakes  
Secretary