



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

ANNUAL REPORT 2010 - 2011

INTRODUCTION

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 funded by the membership subscriptions of its Individual, Family and Corporate members.

The Forum supports the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic objectives to:

- Support the greater integration and interchange between different modes of transport, for example between buses, trains, taxis, and community transport.
- Make public transport services more attractive to the needs of individuals and communities by improving, for example, the quality of passenger information, and increasing the responsiveness, reliability, and security of public transport services.
- Promote social inclusion (making services available to all members of the public) through the further development of an affordable, accessible public transport system which meets the needs of all passengers and works to remove access and mobility barriers for all public transport users.
- Encourage more sustainable modes of transport (for example, buses, trains, taxis, walking, cycling and community transport) thereby reducing the need for travel by car.

THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW - OVERALL

On the whole, the quality and range of bus and community transport services, as well as of the network of cycling and walking paths and routes, have been maintained to a commendable standard. When necessary, the Forum has flagged up matters of concern to the relevant transport authorities, operators or bodies, and we have been gratified that efforts have so often been made to put effective improvements in place.

The Forum is therefore deeply disappointed that, yet again, we are unable to highlight any improvements to Fishguard's remarkably inadequate rail services. This is especially disappointing in view of the extremely favourable BCR in the Jacobs Fishguard Rail Study, the designation of additional services to Fishguard as a top priority in the SWWITCH Regional Transport Plan, as well as included among the rail recommendations of the National Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee.

THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW - IN PARTICULAR

Buses

Service News

- *Service Provision.* On the whole, bus services in the area have operated extremely well during the period under review. Consistently, at the quarterly meetings of its regional representatives, Bus Users UK (BUUK) Cymru reports that there have not been any complaints about the services provided by Richards Brothers, Silcox and Pembrokeshire County Council.

Regrettably, it has been necessary to alter the 412 service to the old Trecwn base because of the severe deterioration of the private road from the base to the Haverfordwest Road. The bus now travels on council roads, turning round at the old base and returning past Wesley Place to the Haverfordwest Road.

- *Traws Cambria.* In July the Executive Committee had a useful meeting with David Hall, the service's Network Manager. The Committee noted that many bus travellers from North Pembrokeshire use this service which provides a strategic link to northern destinations and, in particular, to the Aberystwyth railway services. The service is also provides an important link with the Fishguard-Rosslare ferry services. The Committee stressed the importance of Sunday services and welcomed plans to introduce new direct coach style services between north and south Wales via Aberystwyth and reduce journey times between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen, as well as the possibility of linking the 412 service to that network.
- *Connection Problems.* The Forum has been informed by the Fishguard TIC that it receives many complaints from visitors about poor bus connections to and from the train services in Haverfordwest. In particular, the fact that the 08.45 412 bus from Fishguard arrives only two minutes before the departure of the 09.23 train, and in the afternoon the 17.05 train from Swansea arrives 10 minutes before the 18.45 412 bus departure. More often than not the train is late and pulls into the station just a few minutes before the bus departs. By the time the train doors open the bus has left. Often the train arrives just after the bus has left. Although there is another bus at 19.45, it is not pleasant waiting at the station at this time, especially in winter, as the station is closed and there is nowhere to sit and keep warm.

Pembrokeshire bus passengers have also informed the Forum of problems with bus connections at Synod Inn in Ceredigion, particularly on Sundays. The Forum has been informed that no Sunday services are operated within Ceredigion apart from 3 commercial services, and that it is unlikely that funding will be made available for the provision of subsidised Sunday services. Problems with timetabling continue to be a problem, with changes being made throughout the year without informing passengers. It is hoped that the new Traws Cambria services will bring improvements; they are going to try and change their timetables twice a year as the train operators do.

- *Bus Stops and Provision of Information.* During bus surveys, BUUK Cymru's Pembrokeshire representative has found that the timetables at bus stops are too high for people who are very short, as well as for wheelchair users and those who wear bifocal glasses.

It has also been observed that the real-time electronic bus display at Haverfordwest bus station has problems presenting the changed timetables connected to half-term breaks. The display also has confusing information about 412 bus journeys between the main bus station and the railway station. Pembrokeshire County Council's Public Transport Scheduling Officer has taken these issues up with Traveline the body that is responsible for the displays.

Delightful brief films about each of Pembrokeshire's popular coastal buses can now be viewed online. These 'virtual' bus experiences have been developed by Rhian Higgins, Pembrokeshire County Council's Greenways Officer and are well worth a visit at: http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=83,1629,839,1038&parent_directory_id=646. Those without access to a computer can get a DVD by writing to Pembrokeshire Greenways, Transport and Environment, County Hall, Haverfordwest SA61 1TP.

- *School Bus Passengers.* The Forum has informed Pembrokeshire County Council about the need for better identification of bus stopping points in Crymych, Clunderwen and Llandissilio, in order to help and encourage high school pupils living in those areas to make greater use of bus services. It seems that pupils are unsure of where exactly stops and timetables are located in these communities.

Community Transport

Service News

- *Bws y Bobol.* To date the problems in getting the management of Bws y Bobol services established have not been solved. A report in *The County Echo* (25th February 2011) noted that Bws y Bobol now has 31 affiliated organisations, and over 40 drivers, but despite these impressive figures use of the minibus has dropped by 10% over the last calendar year. Any community group or not-for-profit organisation can use the minibus

on a self-drive basis. Drivers need to be trained to a nationally accepted standard – the Minibus Drivers Awareness Scheme - and PACTO (the Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations) can help with this. If groups do not have a driver, Bws y Bobol may be able to help find a driver from its pool of volunteers.

Bws y Bobol is operated by Pembrokeshire Voluntary Transport, and all the bookings and paperwork are handled by the local coordinator. However more people from the community on the St Davids Peninsula are needed to help the coordinator with day-to-day tasks and publicity.

For more information or to offer help, contact Mary Smith from PACTO on 01239 8210950 Rebecca Thornton, the Bws y Bobol coordinator, on 07531 310056, or Adrian Davies, the PVT coordinator on 01646 672144.

- *Fishguard Town Rider.* On 8th March a well attended meeting was held in Fishguard to review this dial-a-ride service for elderly and disabled people who are unable to use conventional buses. The service has been running in Fishguard during the last 4½ years, and this is the busiest of the Pembrokeshire Town Rider services. Users were pleased to hear that WAG funding for the service has been assured for another year. They told the organisers that the service is absolutely first class: punctual, with an immaculate vehicle and top-rate friendly drivers. They had equal praise for the helpful, friendly telephone booking clerks.
- *Fishguard Community Minibus.* The service was developed initially, in connection with the Fishguard and Goodwick Friendship Circle, to help those who had difficulties getting to its Friday morning meetings. It serves a wider area than the Town Rider, bringing people from outlying areas into Fishguard on Friday by 10.00 am and taking them back at mid-day. Still expanding, the service is regularly used by Fishguard groups such as Greenways, the Stroke Club, the Pain Support Group, as well as by the POINT youth centre and Llain Las sheltered housing for the elderly.
- *Preseli Green Dragon.* The Green Dragon summer services were well received last year, especially the new Gwaun Valley service from Fishguard to Bwlchgwynt. Regrettably, the Friday Newport dial-a-ride was discontinued due to lack of interest. The Gwaun Valley service, as a result of passenger demand and with funding from the Big Lottery grant, will continue operating as a dial-a-ride during the winter. The service leaves Fishguard at 10.00 and runs along the Gwaun Valley to Newport. On request it will also offer transport to/from Gellifawr, Brynberian, Bwlchgwynt and New Inn. The bus leaves Newport on the return journey at 11.30. Patronage on the Sunday evening service to Theatr Mwldan is growing.

Cycling and Walking – Safe Routes in Communities

- *Fishguard Safe Routes in Communities Scheme.* Following Pembrokeshire County Council's successful bid for the Goodwick Safe Routes in Communities scheme in the last review period, a plan has now been developed with the community for a Fishguard Safe Routes bid. Schemes included in the plan should make it easier to get around the town without a car, especially for children, parents with prams and anyone with mobility problems.
- *Provision for Cycles on Trains and Bus Bike Racks.* The Forum continues to receive complaints about the limited amount of space for cycles on trains. This is especially disappointing because of the continuing growth in popularity of long-distance cycling and its importance to tourism.

It is equally disappointing that there are still no bus services in Pembrokeshire that can carry bikes. The Forum was informed that Pembrokeshire County Council looked into bike carrying on the new coastal buses, but they were limited on vehicle choice by the narrow roads and the vegetable oil conversion. The narrow 'Solo' vehicles that were bought are not structurally capable of mounting conventional cycle racks on the rear.

Forum members who have travelled to the U.S. and Canada report that bike racks are widely seen mounted on the front of buses. These racks are convenient for cyclists to use

as well as easy to supervise by drivers. We cannot understand why this practice has not been adopted on this side of the Atlantic.

- *Bike Mobility.* A new Bike Mobility scheme is running at Withybush Showground. Adapted adult and children's bikes allow disabled people to enjoy cycling regardless of age or ability, and standard bicycles are available for others to enjoy the benefits of this facility. Sessions are held on Wednesdays between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm. A donation per session of £3 per adult and £2 per child (up to 16 years) is requested in order to help cover the cost of maintaining the bikes. To book a session contact Rhian Higgins on 01437 776313. More information is available on the Access Group's website: www.pembrokeshire-access.org.uk.

Trains

Additional Services to Fishguard

- *Fishguard Trains Petition.* To date the National Assembly Petitions Committee has considered the Fishguard Trains Petition five times - between 24th November 2009 and 28th September 2010. The Committee is still waiting to receive information about the refreshed cost of the additional Fishguard services (being undertaken at the request of the Deputy First Minister). The petitioners have been assured by the Committee's support team that the Committee is fully committed to reviewing the petition by the end of term.

Services to Pembrokeshire

- *Overcrowding.* Regrettably, the Forum has seen a considerable increase in the number of complaints from passengers about overcrowding on the trains that leave Swansea for west Wales at 17.05; particularly on two-carriage trains. There have even been occasions when passengers with reserved seats were not allowed to board trains because they were so seriously overcrowded.

The Forum also continues to receive complaints about overcrowding on the 09.23 train leaving Haverfordwest during half-term breaks. This is greatly exacerbated when two-carriage trains are provided. When the trains are heavily loaded with baggage it is often difficult for passengers to get off the train before the doors are shut and the train is already on its way. On one occasion a person who had been helping a passenger with luggage on board was unable to make it to the doors in time. Although he banged on the door and the staff saw him, they refused to let him off and he had to get off the train at Clarbeston Road where there is no station, let alone a telephone.

These experiences have an extremely distressing and negative impact on passengers and regular commuters from North Pembrokeshire, and particularly on disabled or elderly passengers, holiday makers and accommodation providers who have made arrangements to collect their guests or put them on the train at the Haverfordwest railway station.

The Forum has been informed by Passenger Focus that Arriva Trains Wales has told them that the 17.05 ex-Swansea is diagrammed to be a 3-car unit, but as with all services this can change if issues crop up across the network. It is clear that this service has been particularly badly affected and greater attention will be paid to trying to ensure it is 3-cars.

All Points West South West Wales Community Rail Partnership

- *School Children.* All Points West has started its work with school children. Alex Owen, the Community Rail Officer, is undertaking a programme of "Train Training" which includes 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. More information can be found on the All Points West website: www.allpointswest.info/.
- *Proposals to set up an Irish Community Rail Partnership.* A group in Rosslare is proposing to set up a community rail partnership similar to those that operate in the UK. They have met with Alex Owen and Forum representatives at the Fishguard ferry port to ask for support and advice.

Working with Others

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

- All Points West Community Rail Partnership
- Bus Users UK Cymru
- Bws Y Bobol
- Community Transport Association Cymru
- Fishguard Town Rider
- National Assembly for Wales and the 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 (PVT)
- Preseli Rural Transport Association
- Public Transport Users Committee (PTUC)
- South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH)
- SUSTRANS

Consultation Responses

During the period the Forum provided responses to the following consultations:

- National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Transport) Order 2010 relating to learner transport and concessionary travel. Remarks were restricted to concessionary travel and community transport.
- National Assembly for Wales, Equality of Opportunity Committee: Inquiry into the Accessibility of Railway Stations in Wales.
- National Assembly for Wales, Rural Development Sub-Committee: Inquiry into Rural Tourism.
- Department for Transport: Rail Franchising.

The Executive Committee

The Forum continues to value the positive relationships that it has developed with its 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.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to members of the Executive Committee for their steadfast contribution to the work of the Forum throughout the year. In particular, we wish to extend our sincere thanks to Cllr Rod Bowen and Michael Field who are standing down from the Committee. The Committee will miss their knowledgeable and dedicated contribution to the fulfilment of the Forum's aims and objectives.

Cllr Byron James
Chairman

Hatti Woakes
Secretary