



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

ANNUAL REPORT 2011 - 2012

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 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

There have been two dramatic developments during the period under review, which have deeply affected the Forum and the North Pembrokeshire community.

First of all, after the Forum expressed its deep disappointment at last year's AGM that we were unable to highlight any improvements to Fishguard's woefully inadequate rail services - two weeks later Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones announced that the Welsh Government was going to fund additional train services to Fishguard! And not long afterwards, we learned that plans were being made to reopen Goodwick Station. Thrilling developments, after an extremely long campaign to put this last piece of our transport jigsaw in place.

In contrast, the second development - the announcement that the Welsh Government would cease funding the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative at the end of March this year - spread deep alarm throughout the community, and indeed as it later transpired, throughout the whole of Wales. In response to this announcement, which would have had a devastating effect on the Pembrokeshire Town Rider services, members of the community banded together to support the campaign to reverse this decision. Fortunately, continued funding for the Initiative has now been assured, while a review is undertaken of the services that are provided by the scheme.

THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW - IN PARTICULAR

Buses

Service News

- Towards the end of August Pembrokeshire County Council began working on arrangements for bus services to Fishguard Harbour to meet the new trains which commenced on 12th September 2011. Funding was found to provide buses to all but the first and last trains.
- Bus service changes are presenting problems to travellers between North Pembrokeshire and Aberystwyth.
- On 3rd January 2012, as part of Welsh Government's Regional Bus Corridor project, Pembrokeshire County Council launched a pilot WiFi facility onboard the 412 service which operates between Haverfordwest and Cardigan in conjunction with Richards Bros. The Wifi technology, with a download limit of 75gbs, has been fitted to 5 vehicles and is free to use.

Integration and Connections

- The Forum continues to receive complaints about poor 411 bus-rail connections between St Davids and Haverfordwest Station.
- Travellers also experience difficulties with connections between bus services when travelling between North Pembrokeshire and Aberystwyth.

Information Provision

- Pembrokeshire County Council launched its new Real-Time Information System on 16th August at the Pembrokeshire County Show. The system will use screens at 27 key locations across Pembrokeshire, plus a text service provided by Traveline Cymru, to provide next bus information across the County. There have been teething problems with the new system, and the County Council has been working with the software company to sort out the problems.
- Information problems regarding services between North Pembrokeshire and Aberystwyth are persistent. Moreover, although the Traws Cambria website provides information about connections to other services from a number of towns, it does not provide information about connections at Carmarthen to the 412 services to Pembrokeshire.
- Teething problems regarding the provision of information about the new Fishguard bus-rail connections have also been worked on by the operators, the County Council and the Fishguard TIC.
- Bus Users UK (BUUK) Cymru's Pembrokeshire representative Judi Hartland liaises regularly with Traveline Cymru with regard to information problems about our area whenever they crop up on that information system.

Community Transport

Bws y Bobol. The service is running very well, and at least 8 new groups have started using the service in recent months. In September a well-attended Community Minibus Forum for the St Davids Peninsula was held at Oriel y Parc in St Davids. Mary Smith, PACTO's Community Transport Links Worker, gave an update on the project, and Adrian Davies (the PVT Co-ordinator) and Heidi Gray (the St Davids Clerk) and Cllr Chris Taylor (the St Davids Mayor) outlined their work. There was also an open forum and discussion session.

Fishguard Town Rider. A Town Rider 'review' meeting, held in Fishguard at the beginning of the period under review, was attended by 26 users. When asked for their comments about the service there was agreement that the service is absolutely first class: punctual, with immaculate vehicles and top-rate, pleasant drivers. There was also universal praise for the helpful, friendly booking clerks.

Following the announcement that Welsh Government funding for services like the Town Rider would cease at the end of March, a meeting to discuss this matter was held in Llain Las Sheltered Accommodation in Fishguard on 31st January, attended by over 60 users and friends of the service. There was complete agreement that the service, aimed at providing transport for bus pass holders who are physically unable to use their passes on conventional public transport, had proved beyond doubt that it is an effective and valid solution to this extremely urgent problem.

Fishguard Minibus. The service covers a wider area than the Town Rider - bringing people in to the Friday Friendship Circle and also offering to get people into Fishguard by 10.00 am; leaving again by mid-day. As the Pembrokeshire Voluntary Transport (PVT) minibus used by the service is coming to the end of its useful life, PVT launched a campaign to purchase a new minibus for the area. The project was accepted by NatWest Community Force and, coming second in the voting, received a £6,000 grant for a replacement minibus. SWWITCH had already pledged £7,000 from their Community Transport Capital Enhancements Grant, and local fundraising efforts have raised £1,000. PVT will be putting some funds towards the bus, and work is underway to secure the balance, hopefully with support from the Rural Development Programme for Wales. It is hoped to have the full funding package in place in February.

Preseli Rural Transport Association. At the end of April a 4th minibus was added to the Preseli Green Dragon fleet, funded by a grant from TrACC. This vehicle is now based in the St Dogmaels/Cardigan area. This vehicle is suitable for those who took their driving test after 1997 to drive, it is under the weight restrictions that stipulate that drivers must have MIDAS. Many more people will therefore be able to drive their groups around at a reasonable cost. From 1st July to 30th September they operated summer services as before from Crymych to Bwlchgwynt and Fishguard to Bwlchgwynt, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. They also began operating an Audio Trail in the Preseli Hills, and reported that they were going very well. The tours (in both English and Welsh) were available on the Tuesday and Thursday services from Bwlchgwynt to Crymych. Community groups could book to go on the tour at other times by arrangement. The audio equipment can be used for bespoke tours on the minibus and can also be used for translating services at meetings. Passenger numbers continue to increase on the regular dial-a-ride services serving the local communities in the North of the County and also in South Ceredigion. The

organisation is currently looking for people interested in joining the committee in the hope they might like to become Trustees – if anyone is interested please get in touch with their office, Tel: 01239 698506. Email: admin@greendragonbus.co.uk.

Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative (CTCFI)

At the beginning of January, following the announcement that funding for the initiative would cease at the end of March, the Community Transport Association (CTA) Wales launched a petition to the National Assembly Petitions Committee calling for continued funding of the CTCFI. As of 7th March over 2,500 signatures had been received, including over 2,000 in hard copy rather than online.

Earlier, in a February Plenary Session on 8th February, Carl Sargeant AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities, stated that he would not be making any changes to the all-Wales scheme on concessionary fares. He added that he had written to all the affected concessionary travel community groups to advise them that he would be seeking further dialogue with them to see how they could have a successful outcome for the delivery of concessionary fares and services for the people of Wales.

Safe Routes in Communities

At the end of March the £454k funds requested by Pembrokeshire County Council for the Fishguard Safe Routes Scheme had been received. As the previous year's Goodwick scheme received £465k, a total of £919k will have been spent on schemes in Fishguard and Goodwick during the past two years.

This grant programme, which replaced the Safe Routes to School initiative in 2008, aims to improve accessibility and safety, and encourage walking and cycling within communities. The aim is to change how people travel, resulting in greater social inclusion and improved community safety. Funding is provided for capital works developed from co-operation between local authorities and the wider community, including schools; such as: crossings, traffic calming measures, cyclepaths, footpaths and secure cycle facilities (including stands and CCTV), lockers and changing facilities. More than £18million has been provided since 2008/09 when the scheme replaced Safe Routes to School.

Trains

Funding and Launch of Additional Services to Fishguard

On 29th March, Deputy First Minister Iuean Wyn Jones AM, announced up to £1.4m funding annually to provide extra train services to Fishguard. Five additional trains would run between Fishguard and Carmarthen, commencing in September 2011. A community consultation on the timetable would begin in April and would look at how the additional services would connect for travel further east of Carmarthen to the rest of the rail network. The extra 5 trains that would run in both directions every day between Mondays and Saturdays would be in addition to the two current boat train services that connect with the midday and midnight ferries. A review of the extra services would be carried out after the third year of the scheme to identify demand and passenger numbers, the nature of trips taken, and would at that time seek further community and user views.

Following this announcement representatives from the Welsh Government, the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH), Pembrokeshire County Council, the South West Wales Community Rail Partnership (All Points West), Arriva Trains Wales and the Forum held a series of meetings discuss and organise the timetable consultation. Network Rail joined in the discussions connected to the possibility of reopening Goodwick Station.

The timetable consultation produced overwhelmingly positive responses, and Arriva Trains proceeded to finalise the timetable. The new timetable was validated by Network Rail in mid August, and the launch of the new services by Carl Sargeant AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities, took place at Fishguard Harbour on 12th September.

Operation of Services and Information Provision

Although on the whole punctuality has been excellent, provision of information has presented a number of challenges. The Forum has been impressed by the efforts that have been made to respond to these challenges by all of the relevant parties. New timetables were printed by Richards Brothers and Arriva Trains Wales, and new timetables for bus services were placed at bus stops and on the Real Time Information stands in Fishguard Square. Rail station departure screens now include information about Fishguard services, including the direction to change at Clarboston Road from the Milford Haven train to catch the final connecting service that arrives in Fishguard at 20:30.

Purchase of Tickets

A number of complaints have been received about difficulties experience when purchasing tickets online for travel within the next few days; in particular about the instruction to collect tickets from a station

ticket vending machine. Unfortunately the nearest ticket vending facility is at Carmarthen station. Moreover, there is no website information about the stations that have ticket vending machines.

Reopening Goodwick Station

The desirability of reopening Goodwick Station was immediately recognised once funding for the additional train services was announced. Reopening the station as a rail-bus interchange was already among the capital projects in the SWWITCH Regional Transport Plan, but scheduled for the Plan's 5th year of operation. However, following consideration by SWWITCH, the decision to bring forward the project was taken, with Pembrokeshire County Council taking the lead role.

Funding was secured for a feasibility study to look at renovating the station, including track and platform surveys and designs to be developed for consideration by Network Rail. Pembrokeshire County Council produced simplified plans to reopen the site as a car park and bus interchange.

On the 15th and 16th of December Network Rail completed the track improvement work at the Station, and at the beginning of January the County Council began work on the development of the parking facilities and the bus stops on the road outside the station gate. The old station building was officially declared 'dangerous' and was demolished in mid August. A replacement structure is being built on the site of the old building, adjacent to the remaining brick building. Future use of these buildings has not yet been determined.

Working and Liaising 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
- Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACORP)
- Bus Users UK Cymru
- Bws Y Bobol
- Community Transport Association Cymru
- Fishguard Minibus
- 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
- Transition Bro Gwaun

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.

Clr Byron James
Chairman

Hatti Woakes
Secretary