



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

The Vital Role of Public Transport in the Sustainable Development of Peripheral Rural Areas, with a focus on North Pembrokeshire

A paper presented to the Welsh Assembly Government South West Regional Committee, at the Princes Royal Theatre, Port Talbot, on 28th November 2003 by Sophie Hurst – Director, Preseli Venture and Cllr Hatti Woakes – Secretary, North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The Transport Framework for Wales notes that the Welsh Assembly Government has adopted 3 main principles: sustainable development, tackling social disadvantage and promoting equal opportunities. The overall transport target in Better Wales is to develop a better co-ordinated and sustainable transport system to support local communities and the creation of a prosperous economy. Local transport plans and regional consortia strategies are being put in place to fulfil these objectives.

NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE

Apart from the larger semi-rural centres of Fishguard, Goodwick, St David's and Crymych, North Pembrokeshire consists of numerous small, isolated rural communities. The area is characterised by high levels of unemployment and has an increasingly elderly population, as young people are forced to leave the area in search of employment. Average earnings are relatively low.

This poor economic situation has led to Pembrokeshire being targeted for Objective 1 funding and the recent announcement of the Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire Regeneration Plan to develop sustainable communities in the area. The Plan's key objectives are to:

- Build on the area's key strength as an important tourist destination, providing facilities that will enable the area to capture a greater proportion of the local tourism market and attract new long-stay and short-stay visitors, and
- Safeguard existing jobs and create new employment opportunities.

The recently published Community Plan concludes that Pembrokeshire would benefit from a broader-based economy targeting high value added activities and business growth sectors.

THE NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE ECONOMY

The North Pembrokeshire economy is based on tourism, agriculture, and the service sector (public administration, education and health).

The area is a high quality tourist destination. Visitors from all over the world have been attracted by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Bluestone Country in the Preseli Mountains, the cathedral town of St David's, and Fishguard's 100 ft long Last Invasion Embroidered Tapestry. There is a growing "green tourism" market sector which enjoys outdoor adventure activities and the "natural environment", which is not seasonal.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN PEMBROKESHIRE

Improved public transport is crucial to the sustainable development of the North Pembrokeshire area. Yet current public transport services do not meet the needs of the travelling public. This results in an over dependence on the car as a means of transport for those who live in the area, as well as for those who come to the area on business or on holiday.

Pembrokeshire's isolated geographical location is further highlighted by being poorly served by rail links, which worsens the perception of remoteness. A residents survey conducted in the process of preparing the Pembrokeshire Community Plan revealed that half of the population never use public transport. Nearly half said nothing would make them use it more often.

A TRANSPORT SWOT ANALYSIS: NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE

1. Strengths

- Shuttle bus services. This year over 30,000 visitors and locals used the Greenways environmentally friendly coastal shuttle buses – two will continue to run in North Pembrokeshire throughout the winter for the first time. The service is ideal for visitors transport needs when walking on the long-distance coast path and enjoying the world-renowned natural environment of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Bike-carrying is to be explored as a future development.
- Community transport services. Innovative dial-a-ride and community transport schemes, such as Country Cars and the Preseli Green Dragon project, provide transport within and from remote rural communities.
- Access. Improved access to public transport from remote areas is expanding: low floor bus corridors and accessible community transport vehicles.
- Integration. There are bus, taxi, cycle track and coastal path links to the Fishguard Harbour integrated transport node.
- Park & ride. The service at St David's was used by 28,000 this summer, up 47% on the previous year.
- Cycle track network. The already well developed Celtic Cycle Track is still being expanded and is starting to make a useful network. This August over 500 cyclists a week used the Cilgerran path in the north of the area. This figure would more than double if walkers were included.
- School travel plans. The Local Authority is currently delivering templates to all county schools; a tool that can be used to decrease the use of private cars in the daily school run - offering solutions such as walking buses, safer cycling and walking routes and car sharing amongst parents.

2. Weaknesses

- Integrated transport facilities at Fishguard Harbour are undermined. The poor rail service is of no value to the local community, or to visitors to/from Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire: 2 trains per 24 hours (in the middle of the day and the middle of the night), connecting with ferry services.
- Poor transport is a barrier to recruitment. A survey regarding transport problems in the tourist industry in the county revealed that 34 out of 50 (68%) organisations identified transport as a barrier to recruiting employees.
- Poor image of public transport. Public transport is still seen as a second class method of travelling – for those who 'have no other option' – not as a mode of choice. This results in widespread public apathy and lack of interest in the issue of improving public transport in order to make it more widely available and attractive to travellers.
- Emphasis on road building as a primary transport strategy. The emphasis on dualling the A40 deflects energies away from developing and implementing strategies to counter the dominance of the car culture.

- Limited access to private vehicle transport. The relatively low statistics on the lack of car ownership (21%) probably disguises the real number of individuals who regularly do not have access to a car

3. Opportunities

- Integrated transport facilities. Rail-ferry-bus-taxi services, the cycle track, coastal path and a car park are located at or within close proximity of the railway station at Fishguard Harbour.
- Proposed marina. The proposed Goodwick marina could be closely linked with the rail-bus-walking-cycling facilities in the Fishguard Harbour area.
- Rail corridor. The railway line could be the corridor for sustainable development and tourism in the area, the gateway to Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire, as well as to/from Ireland. Rail enhancements should aim to facilitate travel to as well as through or away from Pembrokeshire. The forthcoming Wales and Borders Rail Franchise and plans to introduce a Community Rail Partnership for West Wales offer potential to provide improved rail services to Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire.
- "Green Tourism". The Wales Tourist Board has identified the growing "green tourism" market as being the major growth sector in tourism for Wales. The Board is promoting cycling, walking and outdoor adventure activities as reasons to visit Wales and in particular Pembrokeshire. "Green tourists" already have a desire to use public transport and, as seen above, the local public transport infrastructure is already in place and developing. The only missing ingredient is the required train service. (n.b., Businesses providing for their tourism needs – outdoor centres, wildlife boat trips, accommodation providers etc - already exist in the north Pembrokeshire area in close proximity to the railway station at Fishguard Harbour. The 'outdoor recreation' sector - in contrast to the 'cottage hire' sector - is very labour intensive and creates a great number of jobs.)
- Community Plan. The recently published plan includes a long-term aim to improve local transport services and reduce social exclusion; and to increase the use of more sustainable forms of transport.
- Local Transport Plan. The LTP provides strategies and targets with regard to the development and implementation of improved public transport.
- Proposed CT Pilot Demand Management Centre. This SWITCH project will aim to co-ordinate the provision of community transport services throughout the county.
- Old Goodwick Station site. The site has been reserved in the Joint Unitary Development Plan for the development of new transport infrastructure and for related employment uses.

4. Threats

- Funding. There are limited funds for the expansion of public transport services.
- Rail services. At present there are no proposals to increase the frequency of rail services to Fishguard to meet the needs of locals and visitors.
- Emphasis on road building as the transport solution to economic development. There is a lack of in-depth research into the economic effects of large-scale road projects on local businesses and job creation, local residents and the visiting public.
- Public apathy. There is widespread public disinterest in public transport services due to an almost unquestioned belief that the car is a cheaper and more convenient mode of transport.

Report on the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum presentation to the National Assembly's South West Wales Regional Committee

28th November 2003, at the Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot.

Committee Members Present:

Alun Cairns (Conservative)	Helen Mary Jones (Plaid Cymru)
Janet Davies (Plaid Cymru)	Dai Lloyd (Plaid Cymru)
Tamsin Dunwoody- Kneafsey (Labour)	Val Lloyd (Labour)
Brian Gibbons (Labour)	Catherine Thomas (Labour)
Christine Gwyther (Labour)	Gwenda Thomas (Labour)
Edwina Hart (Labour)	Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Plaid Cymru)

Apologies:

Nicholas Bourne (Conservative)	Glyn Davies (Conservative)
Andrew Davies (Labour)	Lisa Francis (Conservative)

Introduction

The meeting discussed sustainable development, and a number of groups and made presentations dealing with various aspects of the topic. In response to questions regarding the definition of 'sustainable development' Christine Gwyther suggested 'treating the earth as if you intend to stay'!

The Forum's presentation (which is attached to this report) called attention to the key role of public transport in bringing about sustainable development in peripheral rural areas, with a focus on North Pembrokeshire. Sophie Hurst made the presentation, and she and Hatti Woakes later responded to comments and questions raised by members of the public and the committee.

The Presentation

Introducing herself to the committee, Sophie stated that, apart from being a member of the Forum's Executive Committee, she is a director of Preseli Venture, a year-round adult outdoor adventure centre that is located near Fishguard. She added that she had been a member of the Forum team that had met all of the short-listed bidders for the Wales and Borders franchise in Fishguard to discuss rail services to the area. She stressed that a good public transport system was of great importance to their business, as 75% of their clients came by train and used other public transport modes while in the area.

She emphasised the crucial importance of tourism to the North Pembrokeshire area and drew attention to the fact that the area had been targeted for Objective 1 funding. In addition £30m had recently been made available in the Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire Regeneration Plan to provide a much needed boost to development in the area.

A SWOT analysis of public transport in the North Pembrokeshire area had been carried out during the preparation of the Forum presentation, and the results included in the paper that had been forwarded to the committee. Sophie noted that key threats have been identified as: (1) Limited funding for the expansion of public transport services; and (2) An emphasis on road building as a transport strategy; this could deflect energies away from developing and implementing strategies to counter the dominance of the car.

The Forum acknowledges that there are constraints and knows that there will be no quick fixes. Nevertheless, concluding on an optimistic note, Sophie stated that it was important to recognise and respond to the assets and opportunities identified in the analysis; among them:

- The integrated transport facilities at Fishguard Harbour: Rail-ferry-bus-taxi services and car park, plus the national cycle track and national park coastal path; facilities located at or within close proximity at Fishguard Harbour. (The station is identified in the SWWITCH Regional Rail Study as a perfect example of integrating different forms of transport). The proposed Goodwick Marina, to be located beside the station, would provide an additional bonus.
- The railway to Fishguard is on the South Wales Main Line and could be the corridor for sustainable development and tourism. The new Wales and Borders franchise and proposals to set up a Community Rail Partnership for West Wales also offer potential for transport improvements.
- The growing “green tourism” market, identified by the Wales Tourist Board as the major growth sector for tourism. The Board is promoting cycling, walking and outdoor adventure activities as reasons to visit Wales and in particular Pembrokeshire.

Responses to Comments and Questions

- Proposals to develop airline services from local airports. Forum view: The Forum works for an effective, integrated public transport system, utilising all modes of transport. Transport facilities should not be neglected or underutilised. But airport services should not be expanded at the expense of rail services.
- Alternative means of getting to work within local areas, where public transport doesn't meet users needs. Forum view: The Forum supports the development of travel to work plans, car share schemes, etc., and has arranged a working lunch in January with the SWWITCH travel plan co-ordinator to learn more about her work.
- Question of the Assembly having direction over rail services within Wales. Forum view: The Forum supports proposals that the Welsh Assembly Government should have powers of direction over Welsh rail services.
- Safety concerns on public transport. Forum view: The Forum agrees that fears regarding lack of personal security on trains and in unmanned stations at night are a disincentive to travel by train for vulnerable members of the public.
- Transport problems vis-à-vis job recruitment. Forum comments: Noted that a survey regarding transport problems in the tourist industry in Pembrokeshire revealed that more than half of respondents identified transport as a barrier to recruitment.

NPTF Comments on the Fishguard & North Pembrokeshire Regeneration Proposals, February 2003

INTRODUCTION

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum is an independent association, set up with the twin objectives to promote public transport and to work for the provision of effective, integrated public transport systems. The Forum supports the policies for integrated transport laid down by the Welsh Assembly Government and believes that, without such provision, government policies with regard to sustainability, social exclusion and rural development are unlikely to succeed. A key aspect of our work involves the ongoing liaison with governmental, quasi-governmental and other bodies/groups that share our desire to promote these objectives.

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum welcomes the review of local plans and strategies and the focus on creating a sustainable base for employment that form the basis of the Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire Regeneration Proposals. Among the key objectives in the Joint Unitary Development Plan are the aim to: [1] Promote economic prosperity from a diversified and expanding economy, [2] Address the needs of those who lack resources and the disadvantaged, and [3] Develop an integrated network of sustainable communities with a long-term future. The implementation of the final Action Plan will undoubtedly play a vital role in the achievement of these objectives, and the development and provision of effective transport systems should play a vital role in the process.

Dissatisfaction with public transport services and support for improvements have been reflected in community appraisals, surveys and consultation exercises:

- The Fishguard, Goodwick and Pencaer Community Appraisal (1999). 55.1% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the train service and with limited transport in general. Many noted that they were totally dependent on the car due to limited transport services. When asked what they disliked most about Pembrokeshire, the top response was 'Geographical isolation / poor transport links'.
- The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Survey of Rail Services to Fishguard and West Wales (2000). 55% of the comments made by respondents were negative. The top two complaints were about limited frequency and fares.
- Pembrokeshire County Council Local Transport Plan consultation (2000). 37% of respondents to a household questionnaire were in favour of improved rail links; 35% would use buses and trains more often if there were more frequent and reliable services; 28% were in favour of cheaper fares. Although the issue of fares was a cause for concern, there was a greater demand for the increased frequency of buses and trains along with an extended timetable of services throughout the day. These were seen to be the biggest obstacles to a willingness to use public transport. The rail network was heavily criticised for inadequacy of service and unreliability.
- Pembrokeshire County Council Local Transport Plan Annual Report (2002). Poor frequency and speed of rail services, high public transport fares, poor rail infrastructure, poor public perception of available public transport, difficulties in achieving the frequency and cost of public transport that is socially desirable, and a high level of car dependency are identified as transport weaknesses and constraints.

The Joint Unitary Development Plan recognises that transport improvements are essential to the regeneration of Pembrokeshire's economy and employment base, and recognises the need to ensure a more effective use of the transport network and to develop an integrated transport system. The document notes that a significant number of people in Pembrokeshire do not have access to private cars and consequently are reliant on public transport services to meet the majority of their travel needs and that others use public transport by choice rather than through necessity.

Among the strategies to address transport issues that the JUDP has identified are: 1] Improvements to the strategic transportation network, 2] Provision of adequate access for local communities to essential facilities, work opportunities and the strategic transport system, and 3] Reduce reliance on the use of the private motor car, encourage alternative means of travel, ensure a more effective use of the transport network, develop an integrated transport system. The Local Transport Plan sets out detailed strategies and action plans for all aspects of transport within the county.

COMMENTS ON THE REGENERATION PROPOSALS

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum provides the following comments relating to the transport aspects of the proposals as part of our contribution to the development of the final Action Plan.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths. Add:

- Local authority committed to transport improvements.
- Existing bus and community transport systems.

Weaknesses. Add:

- Settlements outside of the semi-rural town centres in North Pembrokeshire with few if any of the services required to meet their local needs and not well served by public transport.
- Integrated transport facilities at Fishguard Harbour underdeveloped and underutilised.
- The 2 trains per day to Fishguard Harbour only designed to connect with ferry services and of no value to the local community or to visitors to/from Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire.

Opportunities. Add:

- Already established integrated transport facilities [rail-ferry-bus-taxi-cycle track-coastal path-car parks] at or within close proximity of Fishguard Harbour.
- Plans to improve the standard of bus service provision through the development of Quality Bus Partnerships.
- Plans to introduce walking and cycling routes through the utilisation of grants from external sources.
- The Pembrokeshire "Greenways" project [which includes the coastal shuttle bus services] to assist in promoting more sustainable transport provision.
- Newly introduced community transport services, such as the Preseli Green Dragon project.
- Forthcoming Wales and Borders Rail Franchise and plans to introduce a Community Rail Partnership for West Wales with potential to provide improved rail services to Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire.

Threats. Add:

- Limited funds for the expansion of transport services.
- No proposals at present to increase the frequency of rail services to Fishguard to meet the needs of locals and visitors.

Key Objectives

Communications infrastructure

- The railway line should be the corridor for sustainable development and tourism in the area, the gateway to Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire, as well as to/from Ireland.
- The Forum endorses the comments provided by the Fishguard, Goodwick and Lower Town Civic Society that: 'Road and rail enhancements should aim to facilitate travel to as well as through or away from Pembrokeshire. The effects of road enhancements on Anglesey should be closely monitored, as there is anecdotal evidence that the A55 has merely encouraged new Irish business to locate in Bangor and in other centres further to the east'.
- The Forum also endorses the Civic Society's comments that : 'Greater promotion and use should be made of the underutilised ferry-rail-bus transport infrastructure, with adjacent car park, at Fishguard Harbour. Serious attention must be given to improving the particularly inadequate rail service to Fishguard and the North Pembrokeshire area. The integrated transport facility at Fishguard Harbour should also be promoted as a hub of the Pembrokeshire Park Coastal Path and Celtic Cycle Trail'.
- Local bus and community transport services should be linked to rail and ferry services to provide a seamless integrated transport system.
- There is potential for the development of the Goodwick Station site. The site has been reserved in the Joint Unitary Development Plan for the development of new transport infrastructure and for related employment uses.

Port development and diversification

- The Forum endorses the view of the Civic Society that: 'The port and marina infrastructure should be closely linked with the rail-bus-walking-cycling facilities in the Fishguard Harbour area'.

Enhancement of Fishguard town centre

- The Forum endorses the proposal to construct a town centre relief road and one way system and traffic calming in order to improve safety and the environment and to enhance trading in the town.
- The Forum has also written to Pembrokeshire County Council expressing its support for the proposed access road from Vergam Terrace to Ysgol Bro Gwaun and the proposed leisure centre.

Support for innovative, high quality tourism projects

- The value of the integrated transport facilities at Fishguard Harbour should be fully exploited within tourism strategies. This should include effective marketing and promotion of transport/tourism links.

Fishguard, Goodwick & Pencaer Community Appraisal

The Appraisal survey was carried out in 1999. The response was excellent, with 2184 questionnaires sent out and 1606 returned completed, giving a very high response rate of 73.5%. The report on the analysis of responses was published in 2000, and all of the information, comment and opinion gathered is recorded in a series of detailed Appendices.

TRANSPORT RESPONSES: KEY POINTS

1. Overall Satisfaction Ratings

1.1 The train service

× Not Satisfied	885	(55.1%)
Satisfied	320	(19.9%)
Don't Know	294	(18.3%)

1.2 The bus service

× Satisfied	900	(56.0%)
Don't know	374	(23.2%)
Not Satisfied	229	(14.2%)

1.3. The ferry service

× Satisfied	1048	(65.2%)
Don't know	303	(18.8%)
Not Satisfied	108	(6.7%)

2. Transport in General (1,161 comments)

- Limited transport: no early morning or late night public transport; totally dependent on car due to limited transport services; limited train service
- Poor transport links
- Better transport system for OAPs – town shuttle service (between 10am-4pm?)
- Poor public transport

3. Trains (678 comments)

- Limited service: What train service? One a day in daylight – service infrequent; more trains to Fishguard Harbour
- Train service linked to ferry – trains are unsuitable & infrequent for locals – must travel to Haverfordwest which is not easy without public transport

4. Buses (237 comments)

- Smaller buses running more frequently
- No late night service, particularly between Haverfordwest & Fishguard
- No bus service in St Nicholas / Moylegrove / Pencaer area
- More buses in Llain Las, Heol Glyndwr, Plas y Fron & Penwallis (for school & shopping)

NPTF Aspirations for Improved Rail Services to Fishguard November 2002

1. Introduction

Fishguard and Goodwick is the primary shopping and commercial centre in North Pembrokeshire. The area is also an important tourism and recreation centre. The area is growing as a year-round tourist destination because of its focus on outdoor pursuits. There is a growing recognition that activities such as walking, hiking, cycling and sailing are not heavily dependent on weather. Following the recent completion of a feasibility study, an application for a £7m marina development alongside the railway at Fishguard Harbour is to be submitted early in 2003.

The existing transport infrastructure -- rail-ferry-taxi-bus links, spacious indoor waiting area, disabled facilities, and car parks -- provides an excellent foundation for future intermodal transport development. Access to the National and Celtic Cycle tracks and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park coastal path is within 1 km of the rail-ferry terminal.

2. Current Rail Services

The transport infrastructure at Fishguard is grossly underutilised. At present, the two trains that serve Fishguard Harbour run in connection with ferry sailings. The train that arrives at 1338 and departs at 1350 is only service provided between the hours of 0600 and 0100.

These 'boat train' services cater almost exclusively for passengers who are travelling through Fishguard and are of no value to the resident population or visitors to the area.

3. Aspirations for Enhanced Rail Services – Wales and Borders Franchise

3.1. Welsh Assembly Government Aspirations that are relevant to Fishguard

The Assembly has noted that the current provision of rail services is not appropriate on longer distance routes. Existing track capacity permits significant early additional services, particularly to the key ports in Pembrokeshire.

Key aspirations: -

- 1 train hourly for smaller stations on mainline routes, 2 hourly services for rural routes;
- Improvement in peak hour provision, responding not only to commuter needs but also to the needs of schools, markets and other local needs;
- Regular service provision between 06h00 and 23h00 Mon-Sat, greater similarity between Sunday and weekday services.

3.2. North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum

Rail surveys carried out by the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum indicate that increased frequency of services to Fishguard is the top priority for passengers, as well as for potential passengers. Survey respondents make it clear that they require services that:

- Operate at times that meet the requirements of passengers travelling to and from Fishguard, and are not exclusively targeted at passengers travelling to and from Ireland; and
- That provide improved connections with services operating from Carmarthen and Swansea.

The Forum also wishes to make it clear that passengers would not regard enhanced bus links between Fishguard and the railway station at Haverfordwest as an acceptable alternative to the provision of additional rail services to/from Fishguard.

North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Proposals

1. SERVICES TO AND FROM FISHGUARD

1.1. Immediate Priorities

- Increase in the number of trains per day throughout the week to and from Fishguard
- Passengers to reach Carmarthen by 9am, and return from Carmarthen at the end of the day, without a change of train.
- Evening return services to arrive at reasonable times.
- Additional day time services to be evenly spaced, and to provide reasonable ferry connections.
- Sunday and Bank Holiday services to receive similar provision with weekday services.

2. CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER SERVICES

2.1. Immediate Priorities

- Services from Fishguard to be timed to connect with direct Reading services at Carmarthen, Swansea or Cardiff.
- Maximum waiting time for connections at Carmarthen and Swansea not to exceed 10 min.; not to exceed 20 min. at Cardiff.

Rail Passengers Committee for Wales Proposal for Improved Services to Fishguard, November 2001

Letter to local authority chief executives and train operating companies suggesting initiatives to be developed as submissions to the Strategic Rail Authority's Rail Passenger Partnership Fund for priority improvements to rail services in Wales.

"The first priority is considered to be an early morning and late afternoon service which provides daily journey - to - work opportunities to Carmarthen all year round.

The services could be:

Carmarthen	depart 06.20	17.30
Fishguard Harbour	arrive 07.20	18.30
	depart 07.30	18.45
Carmarthen	arrive 08.30	19.45

The up – morning train could combine at Whitland with the Pembroke Dock service; it would therefore arrive at Swansea at 09.23 with First Great Western connections arriving Cardiff at 10.22 and Paddington at 12.22.

The down evening train would provide a useful intermediate service between the 16.58 to Pembroke Dock and the 17.58 to Milford Haven; it would therefore connect with the 13.00 ex. Paddington, 14.59 ex. Cardiff and 16.05 ex. Swansea.

Alternatively in the evening, a portion added to the 12.17 Waterloo to Milford Haven at Swansea could provide additional capacity on this important commuter service at 17.05 from Swansea to Whitland where it could again be detached to run to Fishguard. If the set then returned through to Swansea, it would fill the existing gap between the 19.11 and 21.11 departures eastbound from Carmarthen."

ANNEX 4

NPTF Consultation Response

PEMBROKESHIRE BUS FOCAL POINT STUDY

December 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Pembrokeshire Bus Focal Point Study. The comments provided refer to the North Pembrokeshire area.

1. EXISTING SITUATION

- General satisfaction with present 'main-line' bus services.
- More remote areas not well served by public transport.
- Public transport in more remote areas often not available at times people wish to travel. Commuters unable to get to work by public transport.

1.1. Additional services

- Evening and weekend bus transport in rural areas vital for those going to clubs, sports events and other evening activities.

1.2. Information

- Inadequate provision of information about transport services, particularly for Sunday services.
- Confusing information at bus stops. Essential to strike the right balance between 'enough' and 'too much' information.
- In more remote rural areas growing reduction in the number of banks, shops, post offices, etc. limits number of sites available for the provision of information.

1.3. Marketing

- Better and more aggressive marketing of bus services required to attract additional passengers.

1.4. Charges

- Current bus charges perceived as expensive.
- Need to make accurate comparison of the costs of travelling by public transport and by car.

2. LOCAL ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

2.1. Information provided at Forum meetings with town and community councils

- Improved services needed for both tourists and locals.
- Need to improve cross border bus services.
- Congestion on Fishguard Square when buses providing more than one service converge.
- Lack of bus shelters on Fishguard Square.
- The unemployed without access to a car have difficulty travelling to look for work.

2.2. Information provided in community appraisals

2.2.1 Eglwysrwrw, Menter Preseli, January 1997

- Local main-line bus service used by almost half of respondents [48.9%]. 21.1% use it daily, 22.5% use it weekly, 56.4% use it occasionally.
- 62.6% satisfied with the local bus service, 10.8% dissatisfied.
- Reasons for dissatisfaction: 'Too infrequent', 'Bus times are awkward', 'High fares'.

2.2.2. Cilgerran, Menter Preseli, May 1997

- Top disadvantage of living in the area: 'Poor public transport'.
- Top additional service required was 'Improved bus services'.
- Less than half [47.4%] said the local bus service was convenient. 40.3% said it was inconvenient.
- Most bus users used the local bus for shopping, followed by leisure, travel to work and education and business.
- Reasons for dissatisfaction: 'Too infrequent' [100], 'Bus times were awkward' [72], 'High fares' [40], 'Not accessible for disabled travellers' [35], & 'Unsuitable destinations' [34].
- When asked if they would take advantage of a better bus service, 48.5% said they would. 30.9% said they wouldn't.
- When asked how they would like to see the bus service improved most comments requested a 'More frequent service' [54] and an 'Evening service' [31].

2.2.3. Wolfscastle, Menter Preseli, October 1997

- Only 35% used the local main-line bus service. 63% said they didn't.
- Bus used for 'Leisure' [43] and 'Shopping' [34].
- 46% satisfied with the local bus service. 21.5% not satisfied.
- Reasons for dissatisfaction: 'No evening service' [23] and 'Buses too infrequent' [21].

2.2.4. Newport, Menter Preseli, November 1998

- Main transport problems: 'No transport at night' [32], 'Costly to travel to other centres' [22], 'No car' [16], 'Buses infrequent' [16].

2.2.5. Manordeifi, Menter Preseli, May 2000

- Lack of public transport, 'dependent on own transport'.
- Nearly half [47.3%] regularly sought transport to travel elsewhere for entertainment.

3. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- There will be a need for focal points at places other than town centres.
- Rail stations should be treated as focal points.
- All opportunities should be explored for the development of proper integration between transport modes.
- The Forum supports recommendations for future transport development of the Goodwick Railway Station site.

ANNEX 5

Pembrokeshire County Council Local Transport Plan Consultation

Views on Public Transport in Consultation Responses

1. THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE

There was a good consultation response: 27% to the questionnaire that was sent to 4500 homes, and 46% to the key notes document that was sent to 192 individuals, public bodies, groups and organisations. The response rate among respondents to the key notes document was greatest from transport users, environmental groups and civic societies, groups and town and community councils. There were only 3 responses from the 20 invitations to participate that were sent to business organisations (supermarket chains, utilities, chambers of trade, other business groups and Gulf Oil).

2. RESPONSES TO THE HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE

There was more support for improved rail links than for dualling the A40. There was little support for priority expenditure on bypasses or other major highway improvements. Respondents would use buses and trains more often if services were more frequent and reliable and fares were cheaper. An equal number of respondents gave top priority for expenditure on public transport and strategic transport links.

2.1. Main priorities with regard to expenditure on roads:

- Better maintenance for existing roads 32%
- Bypasses or other major highway improvements 21%

2.2. What would encourage you to use buses and trains more often?

- More frequent and reliable services 35%
- Cheaper fares 28%

2.3. What do you consider to be the main long distance transport links that should be improved in Pembrokeshire?

- Improve rail links 37%
- Dualling the A40 27%

3. RESPONSES TO THE KEY NOTES DOCUMENT

Support for an integrated approach to transport policy was a common theme in the responses from community councils. Support for improved public transport services, intermodal transport facilities, park and ride/car sharing schemes, cycling and walking initiatives was expressed by chambers of trade, environmental groups, civic societies, transport users and operators. All town and community council respondents wanted to see rail improvements in the county. No support for the dualling of the A40 was expressed by the business organisations invited to comment on the strategy document. There was also no enthusiasm for dualling the A40 among the majority of environmental groups and civic societies, nor among the majority of transport users and operators.

3.1. Transport Users (70.5% response)

- Inclusion of taxi travel as part of the concessionary pass scheme.
- Park and Ride services and the Puffin Shuttle bus service should be accessible to wheelchair users.
- Introduce fast, efficient and cheap bus and train services.
- Incorporation of bus travel into journeys starting by car or cycle, with free car parking at local interchanges.

- Increase in the frequency and speed of passenger rail services to and from the County.

3.2. Environmental Organisations and Civic Societies (68.4% response)

- Free public transport for the elderly or infirm residents in the County.
- Support for the "Greenways" project, Puffin Shuttle and Park and Ride schemes.
- Free travel on public transport for accompanied children.
- An information phone line was suggested.

3.3. Town and Community Councils (48.9% response)

- Bus service felt to be inadequate: infrequent services and poor time-tabling make planning of journeys difficult. Public transport not seen as a suitable alternative to the private car.
- Concessionary travel schemes are too complex and expensive.
- Some considered that public transport could never be subsidised to the level required to reduce car travel in the County.
- A Park and Ride scheme to be based around Haverfordwest.
- All called for improvement of rail services: infrastructure as well as frequency of services.

3.4. Transport Operators (26.3% response)

- When not in use (during the middle of the day, weekends and evenings) school minibuses should be made available to local drivers to pick up passengers in small villages and provide links to main public transport routes.
- Improved public transport infrastructure; Better quality service provision, along with the provision of timetable information; Continuation of the concessionary travel scheme; Park and ride services in tourist areas in the County.
- Quality partnerships between the Authority and bus operators to provide better services for the public; Low floor buses and alternative forms of fuel such as CNG/LPG; Better information for passengers.

3.5. Organisations Representing Business (15% response = 3 Chambers of Trade)

- Discounted tickets for numerous journeys.
- Improvements to passenger rail services.

3.6. Other Respondents

(Jackie Lawrence MP, Richard Edwards AM, Dyfed Powys Police, Wales Tourist Board, National Farmers Union, Farmers Union of Wales, Mid & West Wales Fire Brigade and SPARC)

- Improvement of cycling facilities on trains.
- Public transport services in north Pembrokeshire barely adequate; Public transport services during the evenings and on Sundays either non-existent or inadequate.
- Investment in low floor buses that are accessible to the mobility impaired.
- Improved Park and Ride service in Tenby with newer low floor buses being able to access the town centre and harbour area operating for a longer season.
- Introduction of through ticketing.

3.7. County Councillors (No information provided about the number of responses)

- Agreed with proposed strategy in principle and felt that a partnership approach with organisations involved in transport would be required in order to deliver the aims and objectives of the LTP.