



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021

Introduction

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum is an independent voluntary group that works for the provision of an effective multi-modal integrated transport system to, from and within 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 Executive Committee, supported by the Forum membership, directs the organisation's work.

Due to problems associated with the coronavirus pandemic the Forum was unable to hold its Annual General Meeting in March; the Annual Report will be circulated to all recipients in the Forum's mailing lists. During the period under review Executive Committee meetings were cancelled; apart from the month of May, the Forum's monthly News Briefings continued to be circulated.

As a result of the coronavirus outbreak, prior to the period under review official announcements set the tone for future transport provision in Wales as a whole and Pembrokeshire in particular.

1. *Welsh Government Transport Minister Ken Skates MS:*

- The public transport network in Wales should now only be used by key workers in providing essential support for our communities, and those without a car to get to shops for essential food and medical supplies.

2. *TrawsCymru:*

- We are running a reduced timetable on a number of our services in line with this advice so that key workers are still able to make their necessary journeys.

3. *Transport for Wales:*

- Apart from more frequent services to Cardiff Valleys and local area Mainline (South) and Mainline (North) services, typical Sunday service times will be applied seven days a week throughout the Transport for Wales rail network.
- Train times may be subject to short notice change.

4. *Pembrokeshire County Council:*

- Changes to public bus services will maintain services to key locations such as hospitals, GP surgeries, pharmacies and certain food stores.
- These arrangements may be subject to further change at short notice. The one-day-a-week timetable for Coastal Buses will remain until further notice.

5. *Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations:*

- As nearly all passengers and many of the volunteers and drivers are themselves vulnerable, we are following government advice and therefore most community transport services have been suspended.
- Some continuation of services to be for: RVS, Bus Buddies, Take Me Too lift sharing, PIVOT and Wheelchair Accessible Cars. Green Dragon dial a ride and town rider services are all cancelled for the time being, as passengers are virtually all in the high risk category as are many of the drivers.

Notes on Transport Services During the Review Period

Bus Services

1. Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC)

Public bus services to provide essential journeys for shopping and medical reasons, and also free transport for health workers. The Council's website is being regularly updated, showing revised timetable information. Bespoke transport is being provided where key workers can no longer use public transport to get to and from work due to the reductions.

2. Richards Bros

The majority of services are running on a reduced timetable. No fixed services for the *404 Strumble Shuttle* and the *400 Puffin Shuttle* - but transport on request on Wednesdays only from 30/03/2020. Customers can book, for essential journeys only, by phoning 01239 611369 (9 am - 12 noon Monday to Friday). We are sorry for any inconvenience caused and thank you for your patience in the current challenging times. Please contact us on 01239 613756 if you have any enquiries.

3. Pembrokeshire County Council Bus Service Changes – 25th July

To travel to or along Pembrokeshire's coast by bus, please check the Council's website for the latest timetable information (www.pembrokeshire.gov/bus-routes-and-timetables). Some bus services are operating on a 'pre-book basis' to ensure room for social distancing. Services have been reduced, as due to insufficient revenue from fares, operating costs are not covered. The majority of the bus services are still operating fixed timetables but because of revenue shortfalls, they are also running less often than they did pre-Covid.

Community Transport

Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations

Initial information. Most services have been suspended. Exceptions: (1) RVS and Bus Buddies are ensuring that passengers who are isolated / isolating at home have the support they need. (2) Take Me Too assisting with lift sharing for people who need to make an essential journey. (3) The PIVOT service is providing transport home from hospital and support for people who have recently been discharged or to prevent unnecessary admissions. (4) Wheelchair Accessible Cars are available for hire for essential journeys.

In July. (1) Country Cars is operating for essential medical journeys. (2) Other services are starting to make detailed plans for when they are able to resume. (3) The Bus Buddies project is developing a 'garden to gate and beyond' support package to help people who may have lost their confidence to travel again.

In September. (1) Green Dragon have now resumed some dial-a-ride and Town Rider services in response to passenger demand. Additional COVID safety measures are in place. (2) The RVS Pembrokeshire Country Cars service has now resumed for shopping and socially necessary journeys (e.g. hairdresser appointments) as well as for health appointments. (3) The wheelchair accessible Country Car service remains suspended at this time. (4) Pembrokeshire Voluntary Transport wheelchair accessible cars and community minibuses are now available for hire. Journeys must comply with Welsh Government COVID restrictions. (5) PACTO's Bus Buddy project has been developing resources to support those who have been isolated and/or shielding to build confidence to travel again. (6) Fflecsi, a semi-scheduled, demand responsive, bus service is now in Pembrokeshire; provided by Transport for Wales in partnership with Pembrokeshire Voluntary Transport and Pembrokeshire County Council.

Cycling and Walking – Active Travel Grant

In July. A £1.2 million Active Travel grant from the Welsh Government will enable Pembrokeshire County Council to develop new traffic-free paths, improve existing routes and create better connections between networks.

The grant includes an Active Travel core allocation of £260,000 that will go towards improving existing routes in Haverfordwest, Narberth, Tenby, Milford Haven, Fishguard and Goodwick, Neyland and St Dogmaels, and plugging gaps in the networks. Funding will also be used to audit the County's active travel areas (Fishguard and Goodwick, Narberth, Johnston, Neyland, Pembroke Dock and St Dogmaels) with the aim of improving the connections within and between the communities.

In February. The Pembrokeshire County Council Active Travel Website Consultation was launched on <https://pembrokeshire.commonplace.is>. The Council is asking residents to give their views on local walking and cycling routes. The main focus is to improve areas where there is the greatest need for change and highest potential for more people to choose active travel. The locations were chosen because they are where facilities are that people travel short distances to regularly - schools, leisure centres, employment sites, local shopping districts and transport interchanges.

Fishguard Harbour and Ferries

Train services. Stena Line reported that Transport for Wales maintained 2 daily train connections with the ferry. These carried through even when in recent months ferry services dropped to one sailing a day. The daytime arrival at 12:30 allows passengers to connect with the 13:10 ferry, and the ferry that arrives at 21:25 also has a train connection.

Cruise ship visits. Sadly all of this year's cruise ship bookings were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Trains

1. Transport for Wales (TfW)

Initial information. (1) A reduced Sunday timetable in response to the evolving situation in line with industry partners and wider public health advice. Stricter travel advice, including for people to stay at home, and only travel when absolutely essential. (2) Contacting all hospitals on our route to ensure that the timetable can best meet the needs of key workers. (3) Reviewing the situation to ensure we can best suit the needs of key workers. (4) Reduced service levels Carmarthen - Fishguard Harbour (three trains a day).

Reduced services to Fishguard remained in place throughout the period under review and were reinforced on 29th March in the following West Wales information: Swansea – Pembrokeshire services to terminate/originate at Carmarthen instead of Swansea; Two Fishguard Harbour return trips a day to connect with ferry travel only.

New TfW Transport Liaison Group (TLG). The inaugural (zoom) meeting was held on 18th November. The group was set up to formalise engagement with transport user groups, associations and committees. Representatives from the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association and the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum attended the meeting. Significant TLG objectives will: (1) Give an opportunity for discussions directly with TfW. (2) Allow group members the opportunity to influence key areas of transport delivery, present local transport problems, and enable TfW and its partners to find potential solutions.

Welsh Government control of rail operations. Announced at the end of October, TfW agreed the principles of a new publicly owned model, from February 2021. The delivery of rail services will be the responsibility of a new publicly-owned subsidiary of TfW, allowing government an even greater role in the delivery of rail services in Wales and the borders, providing the most stable financial base to manage services as we emerge from the pandemic.

South West Wales Connected Community Rail Partnership. This new partnership, formed in February 2020, covers the local authority areas of Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. Its ambitions include the maximisation of the social, economic and environmental value/impact of the existing railway and services, which will naturally build the business case for continued investment in trains and infrastructure to, from and around the region.

In February the Partnership was one of the sponsors, along with Natural Resources Wales, of the *Regional Transport Conference for South West Wales* that was organised by 4theRegion and the Swansea Environmental Forum. The Forum was represented at the event which identified a wide range of challenges and aspirations for the region, that were included in the Forum's February News Briefing.

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:

- Bus Users UK Cymru
- Community Rail Partnerships in Wales
- Community Transport Association Cymru
- Fishguard and Goodwick Chamber of Trade & Tourism
- Fishguard Bay Welcome Project
- Great Western Railway
- Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association
- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Keolis/Amey Wales
- National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government
- Network Rail
- Pembrokeshire Access Group
- Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations
- Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association
- POINT (Fishguard and Goodwick Young Person's Trust)
- Preseli Rural Transport Association/Green Dragon Bus
- Richards Bros Bus Company
- South West Wales Regional Transport Forum
- Stena Line
- Transport Access Group
- Transport Focus
- Transport for Wales
- Wheelrights – Swansea Bay Cycle Campaign Group

The Forum also wishes to express its gratitude to the many bodies, organisations, companies, special projects, grant schemes and groups that have provided funding and other forms of support for the numerous transport projects and services that bring such benefit to North Pembrokeshire.

Concluding Remarks

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 put on record our appreciation for the commitment during the past year of the members of the Executive Committee: Andrew Campbell, Sally Francis, Cllr Mike James, Cllr Raymond Llewelin, Tanya and Richard McVeigh, Mike Phillips and Mary Smith. Towards the end of the period Mary Smith moved to live in England. Her long association with the Forum has been deeply appreciated, and we are pleased that she wishes to stay in contact with the Forum.

Stephen Hale, Chairman

Hatti Woakes, Secretary