



# North Pembroke County Council Transport Forum

## Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

## News Briefing – October 2009

### Community Transport

Pembrokeshire County Council has won the Partner of the Year award from the Community Transport Association Wales. Ceri Rees, the Authority's Transport Strategy Officer, accepted the award at the CTA's conference in Llandudno on 15<sup>th</sup> October. The County Council was singled out for the work and support it provides to the community transport sector across the County. The Council was also commended for introducing a number of innovative community transport schemes in partnership with the voluntary sector.

Margaret Vickery (Pembrokeshire Country Cars) and Mike Vigars (Preseli Rural Transport Association) were shortlisted for the Volunteer of the Year award, and the Preseli Rural Transport Association was shortlisted for Operator of the Year.

### Trains – Fishguard Trains Petition

The petition, launched in September by 15-year-old Moylegrove residents Sam Faulkner and Joanne Griffiths, has been concluded. Following advice from Paul Davies, Assembly Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire, Sam and Joanne are now preparing to submit a formal petition to the Assembly.

The petition will call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to provide funding for 5 additional trains per day to Fishguard, noting that:

- The extra trains are called for by the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium in Priority 1, Rail Priorities, in *Progress in Partnership – the Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales, 2010 – 2015*.
- The additional train services could be put in place immediately, as they have been designed to link with the current Milford Haven mainline service, and do not depend on proposals to redouble the line west of Swansea.
- A Benefit:Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.36 for the proposed services was reported by Jacobs Consultancy (*Fishguard Rail Study, 2008*), thus demonstrating good value for money for any WAG investment in the scheme (*SWWITCH/ Faber Maunsell Report - West of Swansea Rail Network*).
- Strong, widespread support for the proposed services was shown in a recently conducted survey that attracted 1,317 signatures.

Paul Davies has confirmed that he would be happy to present the petition to the Enterprise and Learning Committee (the committee that deals with transport). The SWWITCH Regional Transport Plan and the Faber Maunsell report can be found on the SWWITCH website at <http://www.swwitch.net/news.aspx> and <http://www.swwitch.net/page22621557.aspx> respectively.

### The National Transport Plan Consultation

The consultation concluded on 12<sup>th</sup> October. The main points in the Forum's consultation response are as follows:

#### 1. Integrating transport at an all-Wales level

- Access to schools and education has been particularly highlighted. Equal attention should focus on:
  1. access to appropriate alternative transport for those who are unable to access conventional public transport (whether for physical or geographical reasons), and
  2. access to health services and services for older and disabled people.
- With regard to the proposed Welsh Transport Entitlement card for bus and rail services:
  1. In view of the growing number of community transport services that link up with bus and/or rail services, particularly from remote rural areas, there should be consideration of including community transport services in the proposed transport entitlement card scheme.
- With regard to the improvement of bus services and the integration of community transport with conventional transport provision:

1. Ongoing monitoring arrangements should be put in place to ensure that, working with local communities, significant gaps in service provision are rapidly identified and assessed, in order to set up appropriate bus and/or community transport solutions to meet local needs.
- With regard to the improvement of rail services:
  1. The All Wales Interventions do not include proposals to improve rail services in south-west Wales that are included in the SWWITCH Regional Transport Plan.
- With regard to improving access to key sites and services:
  1. Free concessionary travel for elderly and disabled people should include travel on community transport services.
  2. The All-Wales Concessionary Pass has revolutionised travel in Wales, particularly in low population areas. It is vital to resist moves to restrict its use to off-peak.
  3. Wales needs to work with England and Scotland to ensure seamless travel by Pass throughout the UK.

## 2. Proposals for integrating transport on the east/west corridor in south Wales

- With regard to improving the reliability, quality and frequency of east-west rail in south Wales:
  1. None of the west of Swansea rail service improvements in the SWWITCH RTP are included in the NTP proposals; these include extra services to/from Fishguard and re-opening Goodwick Station as a bus-rail interchange.
- Regarding the statement that the single track section between Gowerton and Loughor restricts any potential growth of passenger services along the corridor':
  1. The Jacobs Consultancy Fishguard Rail Study (2008) commissioned by SWWITCH, proposed +5 shuttle services per day between Fishguard & Carmarthen.
  2. The additional services do not depend on redoubling the line between Gowerton and Lougher, as they were timetabled to link with the current Milford mainline service, which operates without any difficulty on the existing rail infrastructure.

## 3. Further comments

- The actions in the Plan are not ranked in any order of priority, and no financial information is provided for schemes. Nor is information provided about schemes that are linked or connected with one another.
- Rail, bus and community transport services are inextricably linked. Community transport services should be regarded and dealt with as on a par with rail and bus services, with the provision of sustained financial support.
- To ensure the success of modal change policies and strategies, it is vitally important that public transport services are provided at times and frequencies that meet the requirements of travellers, rather than the convenience of operators (for example, evening and Sunday services).
- As a strategy document the Plan's aims are commendable, as is the recognition of the role to be played by the Regional Transport Plans. However, more information about the relationship between the National and Regional Transport Plans should be provided, as this is not made entirely clear in this document. Nor is any information provided about the procedures involved in developing the National Plan. We take note of the observation by SWWITCH (in its report to the SWWITCH Joint Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009) that 'there is no evidence of widespread engagement with stakeholders, no evidence of WeITAG appraisal of schemes that were considered and discarded (and why)'.
- Chapter 7 sets out the interventions that the Government intends to make over the next five years, as well as how it intends to move towards its vision for transport, 'to support sustainable economic and social development in Wales'. We find it surprising that the interventions are so urban-centred and that there is absolutely no reference whatsoever to transport in rural areas – widely acknowledged to be in great need of sustainable economic and social development.

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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 a member of Bus Users UK Cymru, the Environmental Network for Pembrokeshire, the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services and the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association.

The Forum's work is supported by:

Individual Members (£5 p.a.), Family Members (£8 p.a.) & Corporate Members (£12 p.a.)  
 (Corporate members include town and community councils, transport operators, and groups, organisations and associations with a transport interest)

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