



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

Launch of Additional Trains to Fishguard Fishguard Harbour, 12th September 2011

Introduction

Additional rail services to Fishguard were launched by Carl Sargeant AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities, at Fishguard Harbour on 12th September 2011.

In his opening speech the Minister stated that five additional services to Fishguard, Monday - Saturdays, will be funded by the Welsh Government for at least the next three years on an experimental basis, adding 'It is now essential to ensure that these services are used regularly and are a success story'.

He referred to the local support and 'tireless' campaigning for additional trains to Fishguard over the years, and stated that 'special mention must go to Sam Faulkner and Joanne Griffiths for their petition to the National Assembly's Petitions Committee calling for more trains to Fishguard'.

The Minister went on to say that consultation responses from the local community in June had expressed a very strong level of support for the additional services, which will now provide a mixture of through services and good connections to Carmarthen, London and Cardiff and the rest of the rail network.

In his concluding remarks, the Minister stated 'I am pleased that the Welsh Government has helped deliver this service improvement, which helps support our drive to switch movement of people from road to rail. I much appreciate the cooperation and support of Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail. May I thank all of you who have been involved in the introduction of these new services'.

Additional Remarks

The additional services were also formally welcomed by Mike Bagshaw (Commercial Director - Arriva Trains Wales) Mark Langman (Route Managing Director for Wales - Network Rail), Cllr Jamie Adams (Vice Chair - South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium - SWWITCH), and Hatti Woakes, (Secretary - North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum). *See the ANNEX for the contributors' complete speeches and notes.*

Key points made by the contributors:

- This new service is for the town of Fishguard and importantly, the wider community in North Pembrokeshire.
- The 5 additional trains transform the service at Fishguard from simply a boat connection to one that offers important new journey opportunities for commuters and leisure travellers alike.
- Arriva's team look forward to working with our partners, many of whom are here this morning, to steadily build passenger numbers in the weeks and months to come.
- ATW has worked hard through the consultation process to achieve the best timetable on this route, whilst providing value for money to the Welsh Government. Emphasis has been on providing an integrated timetable, with emphasis on good connections to key destinations in Wales and the wider UK rail network.

- A range of attractive fares will help generate passenger numbers both into and out of Fishguard. Holding a Pembrokeshire Railcard ensures even better value for money.
- The network is the fastest growing in Europe with over 40% passenger growth since 1996.
- Rail is widely recognised as a key driver and enabler of economic growth; as the most environmentally sustainable form of mass transport for both people and goods; and a key link between communities the length and breadth of the country.
- Within Wales Network Rail is investing to improve and enhance the network – for example the major re-signalling of the South Wales Main Line and the renewal of the Lougher Viaduct.
- Network Rail also has stakeholders who are willingly investing in the future of the railway. The Welsh Government has proposed an ambitious work programme – with schemes to improve stations and to provide extra capacity on network
- Local authorities such as Pembrokeshire Council also recognise the importance of rail and are developing schemes to improve the network in partnership with Network Rail.
- This scheme to increase frequency on the Fishguard Line will provide the communities along it with a reliable and vital link – helping to reduce rural isolation and strengthen communities by extending the travel to work area, bringing vital health services closer and expanding other opportunities such as trips to leisure centres and shops.

In her remarks Hatti Woakes noted that North Pembrokeshire had witnessed a remarkable development in the provision of bus, community transport, cycling and walking services/facilities in recent years. The missing piece of the ‘transport’ jigsaw had been the additional rail services that were supported by the 2007 Fishguard Rail Study, included as a top priority in the SWWITCH Regional Transport Plan, and finally called for by over 1400 signatories to the Fishguard Trains petition organised by Sam Faulkner and Joanne Griffiths.

She concluded: ‘Minister, thanks to your generosity, we can now turn the page and face a much brighter future, as the last piece of that jigsaw is put in place today. We therefore extend our most sincere thanks to you and to the Welsh Government for making our dreams of better rail services to Fishguard, Goodwick and North Pembrokeshire come true at last’.

Entertainment, etc.

During the launch Arriva Trains Wales provided complimentary coffee and tea for guests as they arrived and were then entertained by Goodwick County Councillor Moira Lewis playing the harp. Stena Line arranged for coffee, tea and biscuits to be provided in the Station’s café throughout the morning, while Radio Pembrokeshire began carrying out interviews with numerous dignitaries and other guests. A phalanx of photographers (professional and amateur) busily recorded the event from beginning to end, and following the speeches, all the guests were enthralled by a superb performance from the Cór Newyddion Da, directed by Marilyn Lewis.

The All Points West Community Rail Partnership’s Task and Finish Group (chaired by Community Rail Officer Alex Owen) helped with arrangements for the event, and members distributed specially designed postcards to mark the event and promote the new train services.

Finally there was a universal cheer as the Ministerially launched train departed from the Station, marking the beginning of a new rail transport era from Fishguard, Goodwick and North Pembrokeshire.

1. Carl Sargeant AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities

Bore Da. I am very pleased to be here today to mark what I am sure you will all agree is a big development in public service improvement for North Pembrokeshire.

I am aware that there has been local support and tireless campaigning for additional trains to Fishguard over the years. A special mention must go to Sam Faulkner and Joanne Griffiths for their petition to the National Assembly's Petitions Committee calling for more trains to Fishguard. I am glad that the Welsh Government is now able to make that aspiration a reality.

Today marks the start of five additional services to Fishguard, Monday – Saturdays. The Welsh Government is committed to funding these services for at least the next three years on an experimental basis. It is now essential to ensure that these services are used regularly and are a success story.

And there is no reason as to why the people of North Pembrokeshire should not use these new trains! Arriva Trains Wales will be using their most modern Class 175 fleet of trains for some of these services, and there are through services to Carmarthen, Swansea, Cardiff and even Manchester, with good connections to London and the rest of the rail network.

We consulted the local community on the timetable option for these services in June. The responses demonstrated a very strong level of support for these additional services. It gives me great pleasure to be able to send off the 09:56 service here this morning. It has also been worth attending today just to hear the choir and brass band I have to add!

I am pleased that the Welsh Government has helped deliver this service improvement, which helps support our drive to switch movement of people from road to rail. I much appreciate the cooperation and support of Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail.

May I thank all of you who have been involved in the introduction of these new services.

2. Mike Bagshaw, Commercial Director, Arriva Trains Wales

Thank you Minister,

Good morning everyone and welcome to Fishguard.

Thank you for coming along this morning to the launch of this new service for the town of Fishguard and importantly, the wider community in North Pembrokeshire.

Many passengers and people in the rail industry talk about the benefits of simple, easy to remember, regular interval train services, which of course Fishguard has had for many years.

It's just a shame that passengers have had to wait have to roughly 12 hours between their trains!

Well not any more.

Today, it's an occasion to celebrate and to look forward with confidence, as the 5 additional trains transform the service at Fishguard from simply a boat connection to one that offers important new journey opportunities for commuters and leisure travellers alike.

We are grateful to the Welsh Government for their support of this new service and my team look forward to working with our partners, many of whom are here this morning, to steadily build passenger numbers in the weeks and months to come.

A huge amount of recognition should be given to Hatti Woakes and her colleagues on the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum who have campaigned tirelessly for the introduction of these new services.

As we can see, the fantastic scenery and range of things to do make Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire a great place to visit and not simply a gateway for ferries.

The new services will provide a valuable boost to the tourism industry and the local economy, as visitors will find a wider selection of arrival and departure times.

We have worked hard through the consultation process to achieve the best timetable on this route, whilst providing value for money to the Welsh Government

Our emphasis has been on providing an integrated timetable, with emphasis on good connections to key destinations in Wales and the wider UK rail network.

A range of attractive fares on offer will help generate passenger numbers both into and out of Fishguard. Holding a Pembrokeshire Railcard ensures even better value for money.

For those of you travelling on the 0956 departure today, complimentary tea and coffee will be served on board.

Thank you to Stena Line for being perfect hosts and to everyone for giving their time.

3. Mark Langman, Route Managing Director for Wales, Network Rail

- I've lost count of the amount of times in the last few years I've said 'These are exciting times for the railway'.
- But there have been exciting times before. Let me indulge in some history. In the July 1922 timetable there were 10 trains per day to Fishguard Harbour stopping at Letterston and Goodwick. By the May 1949 timetable (the time of the most people carried by rail – until recently – saw 6 trains per day with trains from London having portions to Pembroke, Milford Haven, Neyland, Cardigan and Fishguard Hbr!). How wonderful if all of those destinations were on the network today but at least today we can celebrate more trains to here at Fishguard.
- The network is the fastest growing in Europe with over 40% passenger growth since 1996.
- Today we have record numbers of trains and record numbers of people taking record number of journeys. Over 1 billion per year! That's 1000 million train journeys!
- Punctuality is also at record levels - with the number of trains in Wales arriving on time close to 95%.
- This success story for the railway has been achieved on the back of record investment.
- For too long, the railway was starved of investment, and passengers were the ones who ultimately suffered.
- Now, there is a broad consensus that investment is essential to the nation's economy, society and environment.
- Rail is widely recognised as a key driver and enabler of economic growth; as the most environmentally sustainable form of mass transport for both people and goods; and a key link between communities the length and breadth of the country.
- Within Wales Network Rail is investing to improve and enhance the network – for example the major re-signalling of the South Wales Main Line and the renewal of the Lougher Viaduct.
- We also have stakeholders who are willingly investing in the future of the railway. The Welsh Government has proposed an ambitious work programme – with schemes to improve stations and to provide extra capacity on network.
- Local authorities such as Pembrokeshire Council also recognise the importance of rail and are developing schemes to improve the network in partnership with Network Rail.

- This scheme to increase frequency on the Fishguard Line will provide the communities along it with a reliable and vital link – helping to reduce rural isolation and strengthen communities by extending the travel to work area, bringing vital health services closer and expanding other opportunities such as trips to leisure centres and shops.
- However we are not resting on our laurels and the work is far from finished, support from our partners will be important to help us bring even more benefits to even more communities cross Wales.
- These are exciting times for the railway.
- I'd like to conclude by taking this opportunity to pay tribute to the local campaigners who raised this issue of extra services so successfully, particularly Hatti Woakes.

4. Hatti Woakes, Secretary of the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum

Minister, Distinguished guests, and Members of our wide North Pembrokeshire community:

Since our birth in 2000, the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum has worked tirelessly for the provision of effective integrated transport to, from and within this area, and for the greater use of public transport services. We have also passionately promoted the benefits of public transport.

During this time we have welcomed the remarkable development in the quality and range of bus and community transport services in this region, as well as the impressive increase in the number of cycling and walking paths.

We are deeply grateful for the funding that has made these improvements possible, and pay tribute to all those who have worked so hard to see them put in place, many of whom are here today.

Sadly, the missing piece of our 'transport' jigsaw has been the additional rail services that were

- supported by the 2007 Fishguard Rail Study,
- included as a top priority in the SWWITCH Regional Transport Plan, and finally
- called for by over 1400 signatories to the Fishguard Trains petition organised by Sam Faulkner and Joanne Griffiths. I am happy to say that Sam is here with us today.

Five years ago, when many of us gathered here to commemorate the Centenary of the Fishguard-Rosslare boat-train service, we remembered what had been achieved in the past, but we also mourned what had subsequently been lost.

Minister, thanks to your generosity, we can now turn the page and face a much brighter future, as the last piece of that jigsaw is put in place today.

We therefore extend our most sincere thanks to you and to the Welsh Government for making our dreams of better rail services to Fishguard, Goodwick and North Pembrokeshire come true at last.