



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – August 2013

Community Transport

National Assembly Cross Party Group on Community Transport. Betsan Caldwell, the Community Transport Association's Director for Wales, has informed the Forum that the Cross Party's next meeting will be held at the Senedd on Wednesday, 25th September. The draft agenda will include the access implications of changes to delivery in health services.

Cycling

BikeMobility. A BikeMobility 'Playing on Bikes' session was held at Sir Thomas Picton School in Haverfordwest on 5th August. Participants rode a variety of adapted bikes for people of differing abilities. These included handcycles, trikes, quadcycles, go-karts, tandems, wheelchair transporters, and wheelchair bikes. BikeMobility sessions are held at the County Showground in Haverfordwest every Wednesday between 10am and 3pm. Sessions will be held on an indoor track if the weather is inclement. School groups and dedicated organisations are welcomed, as well as individuals who would like to refresh their cycling skills. Suggested donations are £3/ adult and £2/ child. For further information see: www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/bikemobility.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park - Car Free Travel Guide

Have a look at this wonderful guide: www.greentraveller.co.uk/blog/car-free-guide-pembrokeshire-coast-national-park to find all the information you need to get to Pembrokeshire without a car, to get around without a car once you've arrived, as well as all you need to know about cycling. You'll also find a link on the website to great places to eat and stay, as well as ideas for days out in Pembrokeshire.

SWITCH Rail Strategy Upgrade and Rail Priorities

Rail Strategy Upgrade. A report for the September SWWITCH Joint Committee meeting notes that AECOM has been appointed to develop the strategy. Alongside engagement with key stakeholders such as Network Rail and Arriva Trains Wales, a wider range of views and input was sought through a stakeholder workshop on 1st August in Carmarthen. The workshop was attended by around 20 representatives; Chairman Stephen Hale and Secretary Hatti Woakes represented the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum.

To guide discussions and generate debate the rail network was split into sections: East of Swansea; West of Swansea to Carmarthen; Carmarthen to Milford Haven; Pembroke Dock to Whitland; Clarbston Road to Fishguard; Heart of Wales Line; Freight; New Lines and Complementary Modes. There was a good level of input which provided the consultant with a wealth of public opinion on which to build the strategy.

The consultants are developing an appraisal matrix to enable aspirations to be filtered depending on how they contribute to economic, social and environmental objectives. They are looking at a range of scenarios which will enable the Rail Strategy to remain relevant whatever the outcome of the forthcoming rail franchises and the electrification of the rail line.

An interim report was forwarded to SWWITCH in August for review and comment. A final draft report should be ready for discussion on 19th September. It is anticipated that the commission will be concluded by the end of September. SWWITCH will then consider the report internally prior to adopting a new Rail Strategy.

Progress on Rail Priorities. The Joint Committee report notes that a number of Rail Strategy improvements have been or are being delivered, or are planned and funded for the future. The more significant schemes being:

- Improved clock face timetables

- Additional services to serve Fishguard
- Electrification of the South Wales Mainline to Swansea
- Redoubling of the line west of Swansea
- Replacement of the Loughor rail viaduct
- Renovation of Swansea High Street Station
- Redevelopment of Port Talbot Parkway Station.

Internal discussions at SWWITCH Officer level have resulted in a list of forward priorities and these have been fine tuned through Management Group appraisal. Proposed forward rail priorities arising from this process that are relevant to North Pembrokeshire include:

- *Short Term Priorities (2012 - 2014).* Preserve and enhance the Fishguard rail service (SWWITCH supports the preservation of service levels in order to maintain the behavioural change and modal shift which will have occurred as a result of improved connectivity).
- *Medium Term (2014 - 2019).* Great Western Mainline Electrification (the line will be electrified from London to Swansea - expected to be completed by 2018); Award of the Wales & Borders franchise (Welsh Government has commenced consultation with regard to changes which might be required under the terms of the next franchise; much of the focus will be aimed to improve rolling stock and financial viability of the services); Increase rail service frequency west of Swansea following redoubling the line west of Swansea.
- *Rail Freight:* The sustained increase in road traffic on the UK road network of recent decades has led to increasing instances of congestion. Consequently rail freight has increased by 60% in the last ten years and is expected to continue this trend. Consideration should therefore be given to whether more road freight can be transferred to rail within the SWWITCH region.

Trains - Station Usage

The Forum has made a comparison of the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) station usage figures for 1997/8 and 2011/12. Across Wales the overall figures increased by 87.8%, and, for our region, Clarbston Road increased by 59%, while Clunderwen increased by a whopping 293% (which ties in with informal evidence from train crew). The introduction of the additional trains from Fishguard in 2011 now gives an hourly eastbound train service from these two stations in the mornings, which has led to Clunderwen increasingly becoming the railhead of choice for the Crymych and North Eastern parts of Pembrokeshire.

A six-month long North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum survey in 2012 revealed that local passengers are travelling far and wide from the new Fishguard and Goodwick Station for a wide variety of reasons: to visit family and friends, to go to work, to go shopping, for social/leisure/recreational reasons, to go on holiday, for day trips/short breaks, for medical appointments, for educational purposes, for environmental reasons and/or because of physical difficulties. Recently a group of 'smartly dressed' couples boarded the train from the new station to attend the Ladies Day races at Foss Las, journeying on to the race course from Llanelli station on the free courtesy bus.

Community involvement with the new station is set to expand significantly following the recent adoption of the station by POINT, Fishguard and Goodwick's Young Persons Trust. Plans include checking the station each week, putting in floral displays and bird boxes and doing interpretive/heritage work to help station users know something about the area.

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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 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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