



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – October 2010

Community Transport

Preseli Rural Transport Association. The Association has won the Community Transport Association's Award for Best Marketing. The Award was presented to the Association at the CTA Wales Awards dinner in Swansea on 13th October.

Fishguard Minibus. A growing number of community groups are using Millie, Fishguard's community transport minibus: among them the Stroke Club, the POINT youth club and the Evergreens. On Fridays Millie brings people from as far as Hayscastle to meetings of the Friendship Circle in Fishguard.

Bws y Bobol Services. Discussions about ways of moving the Bws y Bobol project forward were held at a public meeting in St Davids on 19th October. It was decided that further discussions about the project should be held with St Davids City Council at the City Council's November meeting.

Rail Consultations

1. Report on the Inquiry into the Accessibility of Railway Stations in Wales. National Assembly. Equality of Opportunity Committee. The inquiry considered: (1) the range of difficulties experienced by both disabled and nondisabled people; (2) the arrangements put in place by Arriva Trains Wales to help people overcome these difficulties; (3) the pace at which improvements to the accessibility of stations is taking place; (4) actions taken by the Welsh and UK Government in order to improve station accessibility in Wales; and (5) suggested areas of intervention for the Welsh Government and others.

Key recommendations:

- The Welsh Government should incorporate station accessibility issues into the specifications for the next round of the Wales and Border franchise. The specifications should define the expected standards of accessibility that should be prioritised during the lifetime of the franchise. Such standards could be defined for individual stations, or groups of stations, and could be based on a range of factors including passenger requirements, levels of station usage and expected costs.
- The Welsh Government should seek to ensure greater integration between the rail network and other modes of transport. This would potentially assist disabled people to transfer from one type of transport to another.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on publicising the existence of the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS), as well as providing greater clarity as to the services it offers.
- The Welsh Government should consider including a formal measure of disabled passenger satisfaction with APRS, and station staff, in the next franchise round.
- The Welsh Government should encourage local authorities and other public bodies in Wales to work with the rail industry to improve the take-up of disabled people's railcards.
- Regarding a perceived lack of information in relation to accessibility issues, sufficient information on accessibility issues should be made available to disabled people in a range of formats.
- Service quality issues should be incorporated into the specification for the next round of franchises, including service quality targets, performance monitoring, potentially through tracking passenger perceptions.
- The involvement of disabled people in planning and monitoring accessibility issues could be deepened.

The full inquiry report can be obtained via the following link:

www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-eoc-home/bus-committees-third-eoc-inquiry/eoc3-inq_rail.htm

2. Department for Transport Rail Franchise Consultation. The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum provided a response to the consultation.

The Forum endorsed the following points in the consultation document:

- There is unlikely to be a single "correct" solution, applicable to all franchises. While retaining certain common principles that can be applied across the board, a reformed system needs to be capable of providing a spectrum of approaches suited to different types of franchise
- Many regional and local services are not viable on a wholly commercial basis and might not be operated without Government support
- It may well be the case...that franchises with a significant proportion of subsidised services will need greater specification than those which are more commercially viable without Government support.
- Specified outcomes to drive service quality improvements for passengers...would set out the Government's required outcomes and bidders would be invited to put forward proposals on how best to achieve them.
- Our focus is very strongly on improving life for passengers. By introducing output measures, we believe a reformed franchising system can work to incentivise operators directly to monitor and improve the aspects of service quality that have the greatest importance to passengers, such as crowding, overall journey experience and managing disruption.
- the Minister of State for Transport's statement that 'efforts to ensure rail can provide an attractive alternative to higher carbon modes of travel are an important part of our approach to reducing emissions from transport and addressing climate change'.

The Forum was disappointed by the lack of passenger involvement in the specification process and assumed that Passenger Focus, the independent public body set up by the Government to protect the interests of passengers, would be closely involved in the process -- in view of the breadth and depth of data about passenger priorities and needs that the organisation has accumulated over the years through its twice yearly National Passenger Survey (NPS).

Factors such as frequency, punctuality, sufficient room to sit or stand, toilet facilities, facilities for disabled passengers, luggage space, carriage of cycles and security will be of varying importance vis-à-vis the contracting of specific franchise services. For every type of franchise there must be transparent specifications and performance targets for core services by which the operator's performance can be measured and which will enable passengers to hold them to account for poor performance.

The longer the franchise the more adept it has to be to changing circumstances. The Forum noted the consultation document's suggestion (4.16) that an additional or alternative review mechanism could be built into long franchises, either at pre-set points during the life of a franchise or in response to an exceptional change in circumstance, and believes that this could provide a useful sanction to ensure that operators deliver their commitments.

The full consultation document can be obtained via the following link:
www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/2010-28/consultationdoc.pdf

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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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