



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – October 2014

Buses & Community Transport - Research into Rural Pembrokeshire's Transport Needs

Research into rural Pembrokeshire's transport needs was carried out by ASK Consulting and Alyson Jenkins Consultancy between 2010 and 2012. Priority issues were identified for older people, young people, people with mental health issues, young and adult disabled people, and carers.

- All the groups gave high priority to Weekend/Evening Services and Access to Social, Cultural and Leisure Facilities.
- Over half commented on the need for Regularity of Buses/Amount of Time to Complete Tasks, and Seeking Work being Made Difficult by Irregularity of Service.
- A third mentioned Lack of Confidence by Users, Concerns about Accessibility, Lack of Awareness of Full Service of Offers, Shortage of Volunteer Drivers, and Cost of Public /Transport /Taxis

The final report noted that what Pembrokeshire does have that many areas do not have is a genuine commitment to providing a comprehensive transport offer by the County Council and partner organisations - working hard to ensure all residents have equal access to transport. The voluntary and statutory sectors are working together with a holistic vision on meeting the needs of all groups of people in Pembrokeshire - with many examples of excellent community transport provision and an acknowledgement that there are some unmet needs.

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum (established in 2000) can bear witness to the accuracy of these conclusions, having witnessed the past work carried out by all those involved in meeting the area's bus and community transport needs and their determination to 'keep at it' no matter the difficulties faced along the way.

Download the full report 'Research into Unmet Transport Needs in Rural Pembrokeshire' from the Forum website: www.nptf.co.uk/materials/viewcategory/3-documents.html.

Pembrokeshire Community Transport Forum 2014, 1st October

Debbie Johnson (PACTO Community Transport Development Officer) opened the well-attended meeting with an overview of Pembrokeshire's community transport services. The services, used mostly by elderly and disabled individuals, aim to fill the gaps left by other transport services. They include a range of dial-a-ride services operating in all the county towns, social car services providing lifts that don't fit in with the dial-a-ride services, community based car hire schemes (some wheelchair friendly), electric car schemes, minibuses for community groups (including wheelchair users), as well as the new Sgwt scheme's short-hire scooter loans.

Before lunch an *Update on Hospital and Health Transport Initiatives* was provided by Delyth Jacob (Non-emergency Patient Transport Manager, Hywel Dda Health Board) and Jan Williams of PIVOT (Pembrokeshire Intermediate Voluntary Organisations Team). During the lunch break an *Information Fair* provided an opportunity for attendees to meet operators, discuss the services that are available in their areas and collect new marketing materials. After lunch Emma Lewis (PACTO Rural Community Transport Projects Officer & Green Dragon Operations Co-ordinator) gave presentations on (1) *Overcoming transport barriers to work, the Sgwt Project*, and (2) *Extra support for CT users, the proposed Bus Buddies service*.

National Assembly Enterprise & Business Committee

Wales and Borders Rail Franchise. In a letter to the Chair of the Enterprise and Business Committee in September Transport Minister Edwina Hart AM provided the following update on the future of the Franchise:

'As the Committee is aware from its inquiry into the future of the Wales and Borders franchise, the current agreement ends in October 2018. It is possible for the franchise to be extended for up to a further five years until 14 October 2023. The decision on whether an extension should be considered is a matter for the Secretary of State for Transport.

I am continuing to press the UK Government for the necessary powers and requisite funding to

be devolved so that the Welsh Government is responsible for specifying and procuring the next Wales and Borders franchise.

As with rail franchising, the role of the Welsh Ministers in setting the priorities and funding of the rail infrastructure in Wales is limited. The responsibility for presenting the High Level Output Specification that sets the priorities for Network Rail remains with the Secretary of State for Transport. Welsh Ministers are consultees in this priority setting process for our railway infrastructure, which limits our ability to deliver infrastructure improvements. This has been highlighted in the ongoing discussions with the Secretaries of State of Wales and Transport in relation to electrification of the Valleys Lines.

I have written to the Secretary of State for Wales about south Wales rail electrification and I am continuing to work with the UK Government to provide more detail on the costs and options required to deliver the electrification of the Valleys Lines, to which we remain fully committed'.

On 2nd October, the Transport Minister, James Price (WG Director General for Economy, Science and Transport) and Jeff Collins (WG Director - Operations & Infrastructure - Economy, Science & Transport) responded to questions from the Committee on Rail Electrification and Ports. The transcript (the full report) of the meeting can be found on the following link:
www.senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s32023/2%20October%202014%20morning.html?CT=2.

This News Briefing focuses on key points/responses of particular relevance to North Pembrokeshire and the South West Wales region.

Rail Electrification.

- The Minister reported on very positive, continuing discussions with the Minister for Transport, with enormous help from Stephen Crabb, the Secretary of State for Wales. Although some of the information is still commercially sensitive and confidential, the economic appraisal upon the wider economic and social benefits, not just on the narrowness of electrification, is still very good.
- Swansea electrification is almost sorted, and they are now dealing with some of the issues around the Valleys lines, as well as issues with increasing costs on Network Rail projects. There is a need to look at what is going to go beyond Swansea, but that would be part of the Great Western franchise map. It would also be part of the Wales and Borders franchise map.
- The important thing is to get devolution of powers so that they can really get the maximum benefit out of the electrification exercise. They also need the transfer of functions for rail franchising urgently and have given the Department for Transport a provisional timetable to transfer the necessary powers and functions for rail franchising.

Follow-Up Scrutiny on Ports.

- The WG is clearly of the view that ports need to be devolved - as essential to the infrastructure development. As it is a matter for the UK Government, the WG is looking at a memorandum of understanding with the ports - regarding how they can work together if devolution is not immediately forthcoming.
- The WG has a good relationship with Stena. It has done quite a lot of work in Holyhead, and is working quite closely with Stena on the Fishguard development (now discussing having somewhere where lorries can park up close to that) and the Fishguard marina development.
- With regard to multimodal transport, rail and ports meet through Fishguard, Pembroke and Milford. The WG is currently looking at the issues of interconnectability. There is a need to integrate ports into the mainstream transport plan. The Minister assured the Committee that it will certainly see that when they produce the new national transport plan - in terms of rail, road, ports and the interlinkages.

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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