



North Pembroke Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

ANNUAL REPORT 2003 – 2004

During the past year the Forum has continued to work for and promote improved transport in North Pembroke, in fulfilment of our constitutional objectives. We wish to extend our sincere thanks to the Sustainable Development Fund for the award of a three year grant of £12,810 at the beginning of the report period. Without this generous financial support our efforts would inevitably be far less effective.

As in previous years there have been both improvements and disappointments in the transport arena during the period under review. However, with the exception of rail services, we are pleased to report that setbacks have been outnumbered by changes for the better.

Bus and Community Transport services

During the past year the Greenways coastal shuttle bus and the Preseli Green Dragon minibus services have provided greatly enhanced travel opportunities for both locals and visitors to the area. Pembroke County Council, the Pembroke Coast National Park Authority, the National Trust and the Preseli Rural Transport Association are to be congratulated for the part they have played in enabling these services to make such an important contribution to transport throughout North Pembroke. The Forum helped to promote this year's pilot winter extension of the coastal shuttle services and welcomes the recent announcement that the future of both the summer and winter shuttle services is secure.

It has been reported that the introduction of the Preseli Green Dragon dial-a-ride services and community transport for groups has sparked off requests for mini buses from other communities. Many enquiries stem from the development of community action plans that have identified a need for a community minibus. The Preseli Green Dragon services were promoted at a number of summer shows.

The Forum also co-operated with Pembroke Council on a bus project to gather information about travel requirements, raise awareness of available services, identify weaknesses and develop new services. A research questionnaire was prepared and distributed by Forum volunteers at the Nevern and Pembroke Agricultural Shows.

Road safety - Travel plans

The Forum welcomed information that plans for a footbridge at Lower Town, Fishguard are at feasibility stage and that consultants are to be appointed to the project. This will bring a much needed safe crossing for pedestrians who currently have to share the narrow road bridge with vehicular traffic. The Forum is also looking into road safety concerns that have been raised by residents at Stop and Call in Goodwick, examining the issues raised within the context of the new Welsh Assembly Government Road Safety Strategy for Wales.

The Executive Committee was briefed on the development of travel plans by Jayne Cornelius, Travel Plan Co-ordinator with the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH). The first completed local travel plan was produced by the

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, in connection with its forthcoming move to Llanion. Ms Cornelius is also working with students at Pembrokeshire College; in a project that is examining the transport needs of young people.

The Forum has been informed that Pembrokeshire County Council is committed to the preparation of a Green Travel plan for County Hall. Following the final analysis of a survey that was conducted last year, a number of initiatives will be developed, the timescale for which has yet to be determined.

Rail Services

Two developments with the potential to bring improved rail services over time were: (1) the award of the new 15 year Wales and Borders franchise and (2) reports of steady progress on the proposed Community Rail Partnership for West Wales.

Although the agreement for the new franchise only requires the operation of existing services, the new franchise holder, Arriva Trains Wales, has indicated that it wishes to consult with stakeholders about their aspirations and priorities. The Forum has accepted this invitation, stating that we look forward to working with them to improve rail services in our area. We have monitored train services to Fishguard on a weekly basis since Arriva took over operation of rail services on 7th December and can report that the changeover has been smooth. Trains are arriving promptly, and no major problems have been reported by Stena Line staff at the station.

Meetings to move forward the proposed Community Rail Partnership (CRP) for West Wales are being held on an ongoing basis, under the auspices of SWWITCH. The meetings are aimed at setting out the aims and objectives of the partnership, as well as dealing with funding and staffing matters. The Forum enthusiastically supports this proposal and has become an Associate Member of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP).

During the period the SWWITCH Regional Rail Study has been received. It will be used as an input to the Regional Transport Strategy that is to be submitted to the Assembly Economic Development and Transport Minister in June. Although the study states that the rail network is to be the core of an integrated and accessible transport network, supporting the needs of residents, visitors and businesses, Fishguard is excluded from recommendations for additional services or other improvements to rail services in the region. The Forum has expressed its dismay about the failure to address the needs of Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire to SWWITCH officers, elected representatives, the Rail Passengers Committee for Wales (RPCW) and ACoRP.

Other disappointing aspects of rail travel are: (1) misleading Cheap Day Return promotions between Pembrokeshire and Swansea that are of no value to travellers from Fishguard; and (2) the changed timetable requiring passengers to wait on the train in Carmarthen between 00:49 and 01:45 on Monday to Friday. The Forum, along with the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association, has strongly objected to the train operator about the new arrangement, which is a cause of extreme distress to passengers. RPC Wales supports these objections.

Transport Development

During the year the Forum put forward the case for improved transport in North Pembrokeshire in the following consultation responses: (1) Fishguard and North Pembrokeshire Regeneration Plan; (2) Community Plan for Pembrokeshire; (3) Pembrokeshire Local Bus Strategy – Stakeholder Consultation Workshop; (4) The Joint Unitary Development Plan; (5) Pembrokeshire County Council: Traffic and Parking Review for Fishguard; (6) Welsh Assembly Government: Trunk Road Agency Review; (7) Rail Passenger Council: Consultation on Aspirations for the Greater Western Rail

Franchise; (8) Welsh Affairs Committee: House of Commons, Inquiry into the Provision of Railway Services in Wales; and (9) Welsh Assembly Government: Wales Spatial Plan.

We also represented the interests of the area at the following meetings: (1) Community Transport Forum for Pembrokeshire, Letterston, 10 April 2003; (2) Annual Conference, Association of Community Rail Partnerships, Shrewsbury, 4 July 2003; (3) Rail Passengers Committee for Wales meetings, Llanelli, 23-24 September 2003 and Cardiff, 27 January 2004; (4) Dynamic Smaller Towns Research Project, Round Table Discussion, Fishguard, 26 September 2003; (5) Welsh Assembly Government, Economic Development and Transport Committee, 1 October 2003 and 22 January 2004; (6) Welsh Assembly Government, South West Wales Regional Committee, Port Talbot, 28 November 2003; and (7) First Great Western Stakeholder Forum, Bristol, 11 February 2004.

Working with Others

As in previous years, the Forum has continued to develop productive relationships with those who share our transport interests. We have welcomed the support and co-operation of elected representatives and government at all levels, as well as our ongoing contacts with bus, ferry, rail and community transport operators. We have also liaised with and/or provided information to a wide variety of groups with a transport interest. The support and information provided through all of these exchanges has been invaluable.

The Executive Committee

During the year the Executive Committee held 8 meetings. We wish express our thanks to the members of the committee for their steadfast contribution to the work of the Forum throughout the year.

Cllr Byron James
Chairman

Cllr Hatti Woakes
Secretary