



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – November 2015

Coastal Buses

Pembrokeshire County Council's website reports that 'passenger numbers on Pembrokeshire's coastal buses shot up by nearly 2,250 this year. New figures show that 66,775 journeys were made on the Pembrokeshire Coastal Bus Service in 2015, compared to 64,532 in 2014.

The six routes allow people to access coastal towns, villages and beaches, covering much of the coastline. In a survey of passengers last year, most people (34%) said they used the coastal bus to go walking, while 15% of people said they used them to go to the beach, and 12% for a scenic tour. The service is run by Pembrokeshire County Council, and is funded by the County Council together with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority'.

Community Transport - Local Service Updates

Green Dragon. All services are running very well, with drivers always going the 'extra bit' to help passengers when needed. The Wheels2Work scooter scheme is going strong, and all 13 bikes are allocated. They haven't expanded the scheme just yet. The Clydau Car Club is attracting many new members and is being promoted by local small businesses.

Bws y Bobl. The services have really taken hold and are making a big difference to users. The bus offers the usual range of community transport journeys, including helping St Davids residents to go and visit relatives in outlying communities. Passengers with dementia are being helped by other passengers to get out and do their shopping.

Midas Training. The Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO) has recruited a new Midas (minibus driver) trainer, who is now preparing his first training courses.

PIVOT. The Pembrokeshire Intermediate Voluntary Organisations Team, a service that gets people home from hospital and settled in at home, is getting very favourable reports. There have already been requests to extend the service into Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, as staff in hospitals there have discovered the service. PIVOT drivers (all RVS volunteer drivers) will be issued winter drivers' packs shortly, enabling them to carry patients home from hospital when they don't have adequate clothing for winter travel. Drivers will be equipped to warm cold houses, clear up any spills and will also have torches so they can see where they are going on dark winter nights.

National Assembly Enterprise & Business Committee Inquiry into Bus & Community Transport Services in Wales

Inquiry sessions were held on 11th and 19th November. Evidence was provided by a wide number of organisations. Visit www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IIId=1307 to consult or download the transcripts. The next session will be held on 3rd December.

Key Points Made by Participants

The following points made by Graeme Francis of AGE Cymru typify many of the issues associated with the provision of bus and community transport services:

'We need a consistent long-term funding basis so that operators can properly plan their routes, and particularly so that community transport is fully supported and we don't see reductions in services. Proper integration is essential; accessibility as well. Then, co-ordination between the types of services that exist to help older people get to hospital, and commercial services could be better joined up, and there are probably missed opportunities in not working together on that in terms of economies of scale or sharing of resources. Equally, we believe the Welsh Government and local government need to be very strong over those routes that may not be commercially viable but are socially critical to older people to enable them to get to the services that they need, and in particular there I guess we'd also be talking about evening services and weekend services, because those are the ones that are quite frequently raised with us as being particularly lacking'.

Other points made by participants:

- Lack of use should not be seen as lack of demand for public transport. If services do not meet the special requirements of travellers and/or are not provided at the times that people wish or need to travel, they will turn away from public transport, seek other means of transport, or be unable to travel at all.
- Community transport provides a wide range of economic, social and health benefits in supporting people to live independently. The cost savings to the public purse of CT are quite significant. With fewer services, there would be more demands on social care, more demands on the health service and, obviously, if people were unable to live independently, there would be a cost there in terms of having to go into nursing homes.
- Many health and different services make decisions in isolation without proper consultation with each other. It would be good if overarching communication and engagement, before any policies are implemented, took place with disabled people and people on the ground as well, working together on the policy.
- Transport doesn't come to an end at a boundary. The Regional Transport Consortia were good...Proposals for the reorganisation of local government may well help producing planning areas that make a bit more sense in an economic and transport sense.
- In south-west Wales, we still work very closely together, the four authorities, in terms of co-ordinating some of the public transport side of things, working together on administering some of the funding arrangements...The resources aren't just monetary; the resources are about having the capacity and the people to be able to bring forward these changes as well.
- You can invest in good-quality infrastructure, but you need to maintain it as well for the passenger. Local authorities are having problems with staffing levels and providing quality information at bus stops. Also...where you have poor bus stops, bus shelters and interchanges, the passenger experience is poor and they're not going to use public transport.
- Regarding the National Transport Plan—it's not clear from that plan how a lot of those projects are going to be delivered and what role the local authorities are going to have in that delivery. Are we leading or are Welsh Government leading where some of the funding's going to come from?
- There's unanimous support from operators, local government and all other parties for bus registration coming back to Wales and, hopefully, then presenting a much better service to all parties.

Trains

Electrification to Swansea Delayed. Network Rail has revealed that electrification of the Cardiff-Swansea part of the line, previously scheduled to be completed by March 2018, would not now get done until the period 2019-24.

On 29th November, *The Western Mail* reported that, reacting to the news, Sir Terry Matthews, Chair of the Swansea Bay City Region Board, said 'This is very disappointing news and creates a damaging air of uncertainty around efforts to advance the future prosperity of the Swansea Bay City Region...I understand that large infrastructure projects can sometimes end up costing more and taking longer than initially planned. If a delay is inevitable we must have clarity on how this will be minimised with cast iron certainty regarding the timetable for delivery...I will be seeking these assurances directly from both Network Rail and the UK Government. Connectivity, including digital connectivity, is of critical importance. From our perspective Swansea Bay is the start and not the end of this line. We'll be making sure that this is very clearly articulated and understood'.

Improvements to Fishguard and Goodwick Station. By the end of November the additional car park was open and in use by the growing number of vehicles that are being parked at the station. The added car parking space will be a big help during many train arrivals, reducing previous congestion caused by taxis, as well as the large number of cars and minibuses belonging to people coming to collect friends and clients.

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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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