



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum

Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

Notes for a Presentation to a meeting of the Public Transport Users Committee for Wales, held at the Giltar Hotel, Tenby on 15th February 2012

Hatti Woakes, Secretary - North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum

1. When the Public Transport Users Committee was set up the Forum realised that it was going to make a very important contribution to public transport in Wales. We wish to assure you of our support for your efforts and also to thank you for inviting me to tell you about our work.

2. When the Forum began work in 2000 public transport in North Pembrokeshire was rather limited:

- 2 trains a day
- Mainline buses between Cardigan-Fishguard-Haverfordwest and Fishguard-St Davids-Haverfordwest; once a week buses to various smaller settlements; and a single coastal shuttle bus between St Davids and Milford Haven
- Country Cars
- Good footpath and cycle networks

3. We in the Forum were extremely enthusiastic about what the Assembly had in mind for transport and assumed that others felt the same way. We soon discovered the widespread lack of interest in public transport - regarded by many as a second class service, and only meant for people who didn't have a car!

We also soon discovered an equal lack of concern about the green agenda as applied to transport.

4. We woke up with a jolt as we saw how much work there was to do!

It was clear that improvements were needed with regard to all the transport modes:

- To provide viable, attractive and well integrated transport
- To meet the transport requirements of all types of travellers
- In a sufficiently attractive and reliable manner
- In order to entice people out of their cars.

And there was an enormous amount of work to do with regard to raising the profile and gaining acceptance of the validity of the environmental arguments.

5. Over the years there have been enormous improvements across the board, and the transport system in North Pembrokeshire is vastly different from that of 2000. I will provide a brief outline the changes that have been put in place.

5.1. Trains:

- The Rail Passengers Committee for Wales called for additional trains to Fishguard.
- The South West Wales Community Rail Partnership was established and funded the Fishguard Rail Study that came up with a positive BCR for additional trains to Fishguard.
- The additional rail services and the reopening of Fishguard & Goodwick Station were included in the SWWITCH Regional Transport Plan.
- A National Assembly Transport study recommended that Welsh Government should fund the additional train services.
- Sam Faulkner & Jo Griffiths' Fishguard trains petition was the icing on the cake!
- The additional trains were launched by the Minister on 12th September last year.
- Pembrokeshire County Council is organising the work to re-open Fishguard & Goodwick Station, which we understand will take place in May. We owe the Council and Network Rail a

huge debt of gratitude for their determination to put this project in place as quickly as possible.

5.2. Buses:

- Improved bus-rail connections to Haverfordwest station were put in place.
- Low floor buses were acquired for the mainline buses and raised platforms put in place at bus stops along these routes.
- The coastal shuttle bus services were extended north from St Davids, all the way to St Dogmaels.
- Real time information displays have been installed at the main Haverfordwest bus station and in Fishguard Square.
- Bus connections have been put in place to most of the new Fishguard train services.

5.3. Community Transport:

- A wide range of dial-a-ride and group use services are now being operated by a fleet of Preseli Green Dragon minibuses, fuelled by vegetable oil.
- Similar services are now being operated in the St Davids area by the Bws y Bobol scheme.
- The 3 days-a-week Town Rider dial-a-ride services in Fishguard (funded by the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative) have been hugely successful.
- The Fishguard PVT minibus service is one of the most recent additions to the community transport sector and when its new minibus arrives in a few months time these services will be extended to Letterston and Newport.
- Cars for Carers and Country Cars services provide for the needs of many others.

5.4. Walking and Cycling:

- Safe Routes to Schools - now expanded as Safe Routes in Communities - continue to provide improved walk ways, cycle tracks and other road safety measures, and are designed in cooperation with local communities.
- An initial utility pathway linking Fishguard and Sceddau for walkers, runners and cyclists was such an immediate success that more of these multi-use pathways are being put in place.

5.5. Major changes in attitudes to public transport:

The car is less attractive due to:

- Growing congestion on the motorways and roads.
- Growing parking charges and the difficulty in finding parking spaces.
- The high cost of petrol.

Public transport is more appealing due to improving service provision:

- Better timetables.
- Better punctuality and reliability.
- Better trains, better buses and better community transport vehicles.
- The introduction of bus passes for senior citizens and disabled persons.
- Other special fares promotions.

Finally, there is now a much greater awareness and acceptance of the green agenda and the need for modal change.

6. In closing, my husband and I worked for 10 years in northern Nigeria before coming to settle in Wales in 1990. On our way to work we often drove behind the minibuses that provided local public transport - taking in the wonderful range of slogans on the backs of these little buses - such as: "Young Boy in Action", "Who Knows Tomorrow", as well as passages from the Bible or the Koran.

Two in particular have stuck in my mind and still make a great deal of sense - namely:

"No condition is permanent!" and "Going slowly doesn't prevent you getting there!"