



# North Pembrokehire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

## News Briefing – February 2010

< < **NEW AGM DATE** > >

**The Forum's Open Annual General Meeting is now set for  
Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2010, 7.00pm, Letterston Memorial Hall**

**Keynote Speaker: Alex Owen, Community Rail Officer, All Points West  
“Youth and the Railway - The future for young people and trains”**

### Community Transport

Bws y Bobol. Latest passenger numbers, reported at the February meeting of the St David's and Peninsula Community Bus Group, were November (233), December (163) and January (100). Two Users Fora are planned: a daytime coffee morning on 24<sup>th</sup> March and an evening forum on 20<sup>th</sup> April. The coffee morning is aimed primarily for the older people's groups that use Bws y Bobol on a regular basis, and the evening meeting is for user groups whose members are unavailable during the day.

Fishguard & Goodwick Town Rider. A sounding board meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February was informed that the Welsh Assembly Government has agreed to continue funding the service. The service, as a whole, is getting busier, and there are now 630 regular users (100 more than in 2008); with 117 users in Fishguard and Goodwick. 11,600 passenger journeys were provided in 2009; with nearly 3500 in Fishguard and Goodwick, which had the highest number of journeys in the county. Over 27,000 journeys have been made since the services started in 2006.

Proposed National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Transport) Order 2010

Disability Wales reports that it has been informed by the Minister for Economy and Transport Ieuan Wyn Jones that “The Welsh Assembly Government remains wholly committed to the concessionary travel scheme and we have no plans whatsoever to change the entitlement or eligibility criteria for those who benefit from the scheme including disabled people and their companions”. The organisation was pleased to hear that there are no plans ‘whatsoever’ to change the entitlement or eligibility criteria at this point in time.

Debbie Johnson, Community Development Officer, Pembrokehire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO), has also confirmed that the scope of the legislative competence order will include community transport as well as conventional bus services, which will leave the door open for the Welsh Assembly to fully include CT in their concessionary fares policies in the future.

STOP PRESS. Pembrokehire County Council has just won the award for ‘Best Local Authority 2010’ at the Community Transport Association UK Awards in Manchester; praised for its innovative approach to coordinating public and community transport - the best in the UK. More about this in next month's briefing.

### Cycling

BikeAbility ‘Wheely Good Try-Out’ Session. As part of the Bikeability project, Pembrokehire County Council and Pembrokehire Greenways recently provided around 50 people with an opportunity to test a range of specially designed cycles at Withybush showground in Haverfordwest. The event was funded by Health Challenge Pembrokehire. BikeAbility Wales was set up to enable people of all abilities to enjoy the pleasures and health benefits of cycling and offers a variety of specially designed machines - including handcycles, trikes, quadcycles, tandems and wheelchair bikes. First set up in Swansea, the scheme's organisers now hope to expand into Pembrokehire. Further taster days are planned; for more details contact Rhian Higgins, Greenways Initiative officer, on 01437 776313. A PDF version of BikeAbility's leaflet can be downloaded from: [www.bikeabilitywales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/bikeability-charity-leaflet-2009.pdf](http://www.bikeabilitywales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/bikeability-charity-leaflet-2009.pdf).

## Trains

Fishguard Trains Petition. Following its consideration of an update on the petition on 1<sup>st</sup> February, the National Assembly's Petitions Committee agreed to write to the Deputy First Minister asking when the Gowerton Lougher redoubling work will be completed, when the Minister envisages reviewing the decision to provide funding for additional trains, and for further details of the blockages preventing the funding of the additional services. The Committee also agreed to write to the Chair of the Enterprise and Learning Committee to ask if the recent report on rail infrastructure in Wales made any recommendations in relation to Fishguard.

Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales (National Assembly for Wales. Enterprise & Learning Committee. January 2010). As reported in our January News Briefing, the Enterprise and Learning Committee has recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should agree to fund the additional services to Fishguard that are supported by SWWITCH and petitioners to the National Assembly.

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum makes the following points with regard to the recommendation:

- With only one exception, west-coast railway stations in Wales (from north to south) are well provided for, particularly from Monday to Saturday. During this period, six trains call at both Pwllheli and Pembroke Dock between 6.00 am and 7.00 pm, while only one calls at Fishguard, identified as a key transport hub in the Wales Spatial Plan.
- The Forum therefore supports the recommendation to fund 5 additional trains to Fishguard: namely the proposed 1 carriage Carmarthen–Fishguard shuttle service, to connect with the Milford Haven mainline service.
- The service requires relatively modest revenue costs and is not dependent on the redoubling scheme (*Passenger Focus*. National Transport Plan consultation response).

The Forum has welcomed the Deputy First Minister's assurance that he will talk to the regional transport consortia about their priorities and how they can be taken forward and his statement that he understands the priority attached to the Fishguard development by petitioners (Assembly Plenary Session. Paul Davies AM: Short Debate on Train Services in West Wales, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009).

The Forum has also welcomed the Minister's acknowledgement that it would be possible to run extra trains to Fishguard before the redoubling scheme is completed; that he is aware of the good business case for the additional services; and that he will keep this under consideration (Correspondence to the Chair of the Assembly Petitions Committee regarding the Fishguard Trains Petition, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010).

As a member of the Fishguard Rail Study's Management Group, the Forum can confirm that the study looked exclusively at the provision of improved services to Fishguard. The services were not linked with the redoubling scheme, or with improvements to other rail services, in any of the Group's discussions.

Thus far, the North Pembrokeshire area has not benefited from the service improvements witnessed in other parts of Wales following the introduction of the Wales and Borders franchise. This modest proposal would provide Fishguard with service levels similar to, or on a par with, those enjoyed by other coastal railway stations in West Wales.

The Forum urges the Welsh Assembly Government to implement the Committee's recommendation to fund additional services to Fishguard as a matter of utmost importance.

National Assembly Plenary Session, 17<sup>th</sup> March. A debate on the full Enterprise and Learning Committee report will be held during this Plenary meeting. Those wishing to view the meeting from the public gallery may book seats up to 3 weeks in advance. Phone: 0845 010 5500 or 0845 010 5678; E-mail: [assembly.booking@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.booking@wales.gsi.gov.uk) or utilise the electronic booking form on: [www.assemblywales.org/sen-home/sen-visiting/get-visits-plenary.htm](http://www.assemblywales.org/sen-home/sen-visiting/get-visits-plenary.htm).

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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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