



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum

Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

ANNUAL REPORT 2007 – 2008

Introduction

The Forum works for the provision of an effective integrated transport system in the North Pembrokeshire area, promotes the benefits of public transport and works towards greater use of public transport systems. Our activities involve conducting research and gathering data with regard to all aspects of transport; providing an advice and assistance service to the travelling public; and actively promoting our aims to and through governmental, quasi-governmental and advisory bodies.

As we reported last year, bus services in the area continue to provide an extremely good quality ride, and the remarkable growth in innovative community transport services continues apace. The excellence of the cycling and walking facilities in our area also remains a source of great pride. Regrettably, although many aspects of passenger services on West Wales trains have improved, the issues surrounding poor service frequency on the Fishguard line remain a matter of deep concern.

The Forum values the supportive relationships that have developed with our individual, family and corporate members, as well as with transport providers, a wide variety of groups with a transport interest, and elected representatives and officers in all levels of government.

The Wales Spatial Plan

Looking to the future, the Forum notes that the Welsh Assembly Government's Spatial Plan has identified Fishguard/Goodwick as one of three complementary hubs in the Pembrokeshire Haven area. These hubs perform a regional role and will be an important focus for future investment. Fishguard and Goodwick are recognised as important drivers of the regeneration of North Pembrokeshire. Specific opportunities include: the ferry port gateway to Ireland (providing national/international connectivity), marina development, and the brownfield development site at Trecwn.

The Plan notes that the new Regional Transport Plans will take forward the Wales Spatial Plan objectives, which include a focus on improving the quality of connections to key settlements and hubs, providing access to services and job opportunities, tackling deprivation, and facilitating wider social and economic regeneration. Transport funding will be used to further the aims of the Spatial Plan, prioritising links between areas of need and areas of opportunity, and rail services will be an important component of the National Transport Plan.

Buses

Service News

- The 430 bus service between Cardigan and Narberth is now being operated by Richards Brothers. Midway Motors will continue to operate the 431 Pentre Galar–Cardigan service and the 432 Crymych–Haverfordwest service.
- During the month of August users of the coastal bus services travelled free on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Funding for the initiative was provided by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and Pembrokeshire County Council to promote greater access to the coast by public transport. Patronage increased by 31% over the same period in the previous year, exceeding expectations by about 50%.
- Abereiddy is now served by the Strumble Shuttle throughout the year. Previously the service did not call there during the winter.
- The 410 Fishguard Town Service now includes evening calls to the Fishguard Leisure Centre. The hourly service, which commenced in January, operates Monday – Friday between 6.30 pm – 9.25 pm.
- From 2nd January changes in the Richards Brother's 412 timetable provided passengers with a much better connection to most of the trains departing from Haverfordwest rail station.

Pembrokeshire County Council Bus Bid

The Forum provided a letter of support for the Council's Rural Development Plan bid to fund 6 new buses for the coastal bus network. The funding will also pay for the vehicles to be converted to run on pure vegetable oil, to be sourced from locally grown and pressed rape seed crops (carbon neutral fuel). The new vehicles will be low floor and wheelchair accessible providing even more people with access to the coast for walking and recreation.

Bus Users UK (BUUK). The Forum has a close association with BUUK in Wales, with members of our Executive Committee serving as successive local representatives of that organisation. Judi Hartland, the present representative, has attended representative meetings in Cardiff and Aberystwyth as well as the BUUK bus surgery in Tenby. As a mystery passenger she has made 29 bus journeys on local bus services, on pre-planned routes using Traveline Cymru.

Community Transport

Service News

- In April the Preseli Rural Transport Association launched its new 'Green Dragon' minibus to celebrate the start of the third year of its successful walkers' service. The bus, a fully accessible Mercedes Sprinter, was funded by Pembrokeshire County Council, an Awards For All grant and donations from members. Services include a doctor's dial-a-ride service to Narberth on Mondays and Wednesday's Mynachlogddu and Clydau to Cardigan service. The walkers' dial-a-ride service operated on Tuesdays and Saturdays between May and the end of September.
- The Association ran a MiDAS (Minibus Drivers Awareness Scheme) course in Ysgol Hermon in April. Participants came from local community groups in Hermon, Llanfyrnach, Tegryn, Newport, Cardigan, Crymych, Mynachlogddu and Boncath.
- A TownRider Sounding Board Meeting was held in Fishguard in February. Users reported that the new minibus was not as well designed for their needs as the original vehicle had been, and transport officers promised to look into the matter for them. Users had nothing but praise for all other aspects of the service; it gives them independence, as they no longer have to call on family or friends for help in getting out of their homes.
- During the period the Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO) received an award of nearly £250,000 from the Big Lottery Fund for the Community Transport Links project. The grant will provide two new wheelchair accessible minibuses to meet urgently identified needs on the St Davids Peninsula and the border area between Pembrokeshire, West Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, as well as a link worker to work with all the community minibuses in Pembrokeshire to develop their usage.

Forthcoming Developments

- From next summer residents of the peninsula will have a new minibus, operated by the St Davids & Peninsula Community Bus Group. The group is now running a 'Name the Minibus' competition, open to residents or groups on the peninsula. Work on the project got under way in September. Arrangements are being made for the acquisition of the new minibus, driver training, and all aspects of service provision.
- The Preseli Rural Transport Association is expanding its services, developing new cross border community transport projects in the St Dogmaels, Cardigan and Cilgerran areas. These will include provision of dial-a-ride services similar to those operated by the Fishguard Town Rider. Its Green Dragon minibus will be running a dial-a-ride service from Tegryn, Crymych and the Newport area to all live evening events at Theatr Mwldan in Cardigan, starting in March.

Cycling

The Forum's monthly News Briefings have included reports about the cycling routes and facilities in the North Pembrokeshire area. Readers have also been provided with information about advice for cyclists that can be found on the websites of transport providers, local and national authorities and cyclists'

organisations. In spite of some improvements, there continue to be concerns about the limited provision for cycle carriage on public transport, particularly for groups of cyclists.

Trains

Services

- *Rolling Stock.* Complaints have been received about rolling stock that is not appropriate for passengers who wish or need to work while travelling, with few tables or provision for laptops. We have also received complaints about heating problems on some trains; and there are still problems with the toilet facilities on older trains. There is also a need for the provision of additional carriages to reduce over-crowding on peak-time or holiday services to and from west Wales.
- *Destination inter-availability in West Wales.* Tickets for travel out of Pembrokeshire are valid for return on any branch. After passengers experienced difficulties with some train employees about this matter, Arriva Trains Wales reissued the instruction and added it to the regular briefings that are attended by all conductors.
- *Alternative Bus/Coach Provision - Information Regarding Delays/Cancellations.* There has been a significant reduction in the number of complaints received about problems with alternative transport provision due to delayed or cancelled trains. Although we continue to receive complaints about the provision of information about delays and cancellations, these have also reduced in number.

The Fishguard Rail Study

Responding to concerns that the inadequate frequency of rail services to Fishguard Harbour does not meet the travel needs of the local resident community or visitors to the area, the South West Wales Community Rail Partnership commissioned a £30,000 feasibility and business case study to look at the provision of enhanced passenger rail services to Fishguard and the possible re-opening of stations on the line. The study was also to examine the role that enhanced services could play in attracting visitors to the area outside the main tourist season and assisting integrated travel within the county, by means other than the private car, during people's visits to the area.

Jacobs Consultancy was selected to carry out the 6-month long study, and the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association and the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum were represented on the study's management group. Following the collection of relevant data from Arriva Trains Wales and the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH), a consultation programme sought the views of a wide range of stakeholders.

In July the management group approved a preferred option of shuttle services between Fishguard and Carmarthen, connecting with the existing main line service. The timetable was designed to meet the needs of local residents, visitors to the area, and the conventional and fast ferry services. The group also supported the proposal to re-open Goodwick Station. The study findings were then referred for comment to the Welsh Assembly Government's Rail Unit. Once the Unit's comments have been received the Management Group will be re-convened to consider them.

In September SWWITCH representatives expressed support for the shuttle services when presenting evidence to a meeting of the National Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee which looked at Planning for Future Railway Provision in Wales.

In the 19th February 2008 Plenary session at the National Assembly, the First Minister was asked if he could ensure that the Assembly Government's investment in rail services places a priority on services west of Swansea, to improve both frequency and speed. The Minister responded that services through to Fishguard are currently being examined by the South Wales West Integrated Transport Consortium. It is hoping to provide more rail services between Carmarthen and Fishguard to cover local transport requirements.

Walking

Walkers are spoilt for choice with a wide variety of paths and trails throughout North Pembrokeshire, and an increasing number are accessible by public transport. The Forum has drawn attention to the Steps2Health project, part of the all-Wales "Walking the Way to Health" initiative.

The project offers free short walks, led by trained volunteers, aimed at encouraging more people to enjoy the benefits of regular brisk walking. The project, initially run under the auspices of the

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, is now led and managed by Pembrokeshire County Council as part of Health Challenge Pembrokeshire.

Future Transport Developments

A number of forthcoming documents will have a bearing on future transport development throughout Wales and throughout the SWWITCH region.

- The Welsh Transport Strategy, the longer-term broad-scale vision, will be published in the summer. A more specific Action Plan to deal with services to achieve the strategy will be published a few months later.
- The Regional Transport Plan (RTP) for South West Wales: (1) Informal draft to be sent to the Assembly (March 2008); (2) Publication of the draft RTP for consultation (June 2008); (3) Submission of initial RTP to the Assembly (December 2008); (4) Submission of final RTP to the Assembly (April 2009).

Working with Others

During the period under review the Forum represented the transport interests of North Pembrokeshire through its involvement with the following bodies, organisations and meetings:

- Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP). Conference on Tourism & Rural Railways, Llandudno.
- Bus Users UK. Meetings, Tenby Bus Surgery.
- Community Transport Association.
- Environmental Network for Pembrokeshire.
- Fishguard, Goodwick & District Chamber of Trade & Tourism.
- Fishguard Rail Study Management Group.
- National Assembly for Wales: Enterprise and Learning Committee.
- North Pembrokeshire Agricultural Shows.
- Passenger Focus.
- Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO).
- Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS).
- Pembrokeshire Community Transport Forums.
- Pembrokeshire Greenways.
- Pembrokeshire-Haven consultation event: Wales Spatial Plan Update 2008, Pembroke Dock.
- Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association.
- Preseli Rural Transport Association.
- St Davids & Peninsula Community Bus Group.
- St Dogmaels Medieval Day.
- South West Wales Community Transport Operators Forum.
- South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH). Workshops on Developing the Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales.
- Third Sector Economic Development Network.
- TownRider Sounding Board meeting, Fishguard.
- Transition Community Initiative meeting, Fishguard.

The Executive Committee

During the year the Executive Committee held 9 meetings. We wish express our appreciation to the members of the committee for their steadfast contribution to the work of the Forum throughout the year. We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to Denis Watkins who left the committee during the period. The committee accepted his resignation with regret as his input into our work was constructive and sustained.

Cllr Byron James
Chairman

Cllr Hatti Woakes
Secretary