



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum

Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

ANNUAL REPORT, 2001 – 2002

During the past year the Forum has continued to campaign for improved and effective transport in North Pembrokeshire. We have also become more proactive in promoting the need for (and the benefits of) integrated public transport. The Forum has been active in gathering information about the views of members of the public about local transport issues and services. This information has then been made available to government, transport operators, transport organisations, user and other interested groups. While there have undoubtedly been disappointments and set backs during this period, the Forum has welcomed the introduction of a number of transport improvements in our area.

Working with Others

We are pleased to report that the Forum has continued to develop productive relationships with those who share our transport interests. We have welcomed the support and cooperation of elected representatives and government at all levels, as well as our ongoing contacts with bus, ferry, rail and community transport operators. The support and information that has been provided throughout the year by groups such as the Community Transport Association, the National Federation of Bus Users, the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association, the Rail Passengers Committees, Railfuture and SUSTRANS, to name but a few, has been invaluable.

We have also liaised with and/or provided information to a wide variety of groups, among them the British Red Cross, St John's Ambulance, the Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations, the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association, and the local branches of Plaid Cymru, and the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties.

Campaigns

Campaigning for improved and effective transport has involved the call for the extension of the Puffin Shuttle north to St Dogmaels, support for the provision of bike buses, backing for future transport development of Goodwick Railway Station, and requests for improved bus and bus-rail connections in particular areas in the region. The Forum campaigned successfully for improved signage to Fishguard Harbour and added its support to community campaigns for reduced speed limits through Lower Town, Fishguard and Letterston.

Information provision continues to be a matter of concern, in particular the inadequate information provided at bus stops about Sunday and Bank Holiday services. Meetings organised by the Forum in communities throughout the area have revealed that there is still a great deal of ignorance with regard to existing community transport services and concessionary fares schemes.

During the past year the Forum campaigned vigorously for improved rail services to Fishguard at meetings organised by the Rail Passengers Committee for Wales and the West Wales Rail Forum. In particular at the Wales & West Sub-Committee meeting in Cardiff (30 October), the Llandudno Seminar on Railway Stations (23 November), the First Great

Western Investigation in Cardiff (14 January) and the RPC Wales quarterly meeting in Cardiff (29-30 January).

The Forum has joined with West Wales user groups in expressing extreme disappointment with the more limited scope and the drastic reduction in funding for the newly re-launched Wales and Borders franchise. However, the newly selected 8 bidders will still be expected to consult with local stakeholders, and the Forum has forwarded its previous set of aspirations for improved services to each of them. Several have responded, indicating their willingness to meet with us to discuss rail services to the area.

The decision by First Great Western to withdraw its London - Fishguard summer mid day service has caused widespread consternation. Although Wales & Borders Trains hold the franchise for this service, First Great Western has been running the service on a commercial/voluntary basis. At present Wales & Borders is consulting with regard to its proposal to run the summer daytime service between Cardiff and Fishguard, Monday - Friday. Reports have been received that First Great Western will provide the mid day London - Fishguard service on weekends. The Forum, West Wales user groups and RPC Wales have expressed deep reservations about these proposals at meetings of RPC Wales and the West Wales Rail Forum.

Transport Promotion and Gathering Information about Local Views on Transport

In September the Forum held a public meeting in Fishguard to discuss transport issues in connection with the National Assembly's Policy Review of Public Transport. Dr Richard Edwards AM, Chairman of the National Assembly Environment, Planning and Transport Committee was to have led the discussion, but due to unforeseen circumstances was unable to attend the meeting. Mrs Jackie Lawrence MP kindly agreed to take his place. The meeting was attended by members of the public, local elected representatives, transport officers from Pembrokeshire County Council and representatives of user groups.

The first in a series of area transport surgeries was held in Crymych in January. Members of the public, council transport officers, local transport providers and representatives from the Community Transport Association, the National Federation of Bus Users and Sustrans broke up into groups to discuss ways in which better transport could be provided in the area. Members of the Forum Executive Committee, transport officers and representatives from Midway Motors and Jones Login held a follow-up meeting in February to discuss more specific proposals for transport improvements.

Further rail surveys have been undertaken during the year. In September a two-week survey was conducted, primarily aimed at determining whether or not there was over-crowding on the smaller Wales & Borders trains following the withdrawal of the First Great Western 125 service. In February, as a result of the changes made to the Wales & Borders franchise process, a survey was commenced to ascertain the views of local rail passengers about rail services from Fishguard, Haverfordwest, Clarbston Road and Clunderwen stations. This survey is aimed at updating information obtained in the Forum's previous survey of passenger rail experiences (conducted in 2000).

Transport Development

The Forum has played a part in transport development through the consultation responses it provided in connection with the Pembrokeshire Bus Focal Point Study and Safe Routes to Schools Scheme, the South Wales West Integrated Transport Consortium Regional Rail Study, the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee Inquiry into Transport in Wales and the National Assembly Transport Framework for Wales consultation.

Representatives of the Executive Committee attended the NFBU bus surgery that was held in Fishguard Square in August. The Forum also welcomed moves to expand the provision of low floor buses into our area and proposals to develop cycle tracks along disused railway lines. Forum representatives participated in the Greenways Consultative Forum, Haverfordwest, in December, which conducted a wide-ranging examination of issues related to transport access in rural communities.

With regard to rail services, the Forum has expressed its wholehearted support for RPC Wales's proposal that Strategic Rail Authority Rail Passenger Partnership funding be sought to provide additional train services to Fishguard. The Forum has also endorsed the proposal to establish a Community Rail Partnership for West Wales.

Finally, the Forum welcomes the National Assembly's free local bus travel scheme for pensioners and disabled people due to start in April. The scheme is to be publicised on buses throughout Wales, in local newspapers and post offices. Leaflets and posters have been sent to all local authorities, and copies of publicity material and guidance on the categories of disability are being sent to GPs and other health care professionals who may be asked to comment on applications. A television advertising campaign is also planned in the run up to the launch.

Thanks to the Executive Committee

During the year the Executive Committee held 6 meetings. Members of the Committee also participated in the Fishguard and Crymych transport meetings, and as mentioned above, represented the Forum at other transport meetings. We would like to take this opportunity to thank each of them for their support throughout the year.

Cllr Byron James
Chairman

Cllr Hatti Woakes
Secretary

20 March 2002