



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

ANNUAL REPORT 2018 - 2019

INTRODUCTION

During most of the past twenty years, the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum (NPTF) has focused on the need to identify the disincentives to the use of public transport, to work for their removal and, to promote improvements once they have been put in place. The Forum now welcomes the launch of an ambitious new rail franchise, plans to integrate bus services with rail and other transport services, as well as an emphasis on providing good quality walking and cycling infrastructure that will enable people to travel on foot and by bicycle for their everyday journeys.

Bearing in mind the often multi-modal nature of journeys that passengers make, the challenge of providing effective integration along these journeys must be taken very seriously. All too often familiar integrated journeys fall apart when timetables change. The issues surrounding the current variety of timetable arrangements must be given serious attention to see how they might be harmonised. As much as possible, train platforms, bus stops and links between walking and cycling paths should be regarded, designed and operated as transport hubs. In a dream scenario, this might help solve many of the issues surrounding accessibility, punctuality, cancellations and the provision of replacement services.

NOTABLE TRANSPORT MATTERS IN THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

Accessible Transport

1. *Hywel Dda University Health Board - Big NHS Change' Consultation.* In its response NPTF noted that North Pembrokeshire is predominantly rural in nature. Mainline hourly bus services operate on the A487 from Cardigan to Haverfordwest, and then on to St Davids. A variety of community transport (CT) services meet the needs of residents living in the outlying rural areas and are highly valued by users, who would otherwise be isolated and disadvantaged. NPTF also made the following points:

- We foresee that the proposed changes will bring significant additional pressures to local CT services. 80% of these passengers are over 60 years old, with two thirds over the age of 80, and 80% of them have some kind of mobility impairment.
- Social Car services are currently limited to one journey a week, due to pressure of funding and availability of volunteers. The Dial-a-Ride services are already very busy, with limited capacity for additional journeys within the current schedules.

2. *Transport for People with Developmental or Learning Difficulties.*

- Audio-Visual Aids. At a meeting organised by the Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO) young people with learning difficulties said that they prefer travelling on the T5 TrawsCymru buses because they are the only buses in the area that provide information on the audio-visual screens that are provided for passengers with auditory or visual impairments.
- The Orange Wallet Scheme. The Orange Wallet is designed for people who would like support to communicate with staff when travelling by bus or train. The scheme is funded by the Welsh Government (WG), as part of the All Wales Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) strategy, and is particularly designed for passengers with ASD. For more information visit <https://tfwrail.wales/accessible-travel/initiatives/orange-wallet-scheme>.

3. *Use of Wheelchairs on Transport.* The PACTO - Bus Buddies Wheelchair Passport Scheme checks to see that wheelchairs are suitable to be transported in and within safe limits for ramps, lifts, tie-downs etc. Guidance is provided on how passengers and their wheelchairs should be safely secured within a vehicle. After the assessment has been completed a

personal wheelchair passport is provided which can be attached to the wheelchair and shown to drivers so they know how to transport the individual safely.

4. *'Customer Focus CPC' Training*. Developed by the South West Wales Regional Transport Forum, this new course provides 7 hours of the required 35 hours of training that bus drivers need to undertake in order to keep their CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) entitlement to drive. This course is currently being rolled out across the Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot regions. Training is customer centred, interactive and also focused on developing drivers' awareness of the potential disabilities of their passengers in line with the Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard requirements. Drivers are given an opportunity to focus on the needs of their passengers and share best practice to ensure top customer service.

Two other courses have been developed at the Forum's Safe School Transport approved driver training centre: (1) the School Transport Driver CPC course and (2) the Emergency First Aid CPC course. Both provide 7 hours each towards the 35 hours of required periodic training.

Buses and Community Transport

1. *Pembrokeshire County Council - Bus Services Consultation 2018*. The opening statement noted: 'There are over 30 local bus services operating in Pembrokeshire. Whilst some of these are operated commercially by bus companies, the vast majority are subsidised by the Council. Over the past 6 years there have been a number of service changes as the result of the Welsh Government and the Council's own budget for transport being reduced. Unfortunately, due to further budget pressures, the Council has identified a need to further reduce the budget available for passenger transport services. In order to ensure that the service changes implemented have the least negative impact it is important that we obtain your feedback'.

The consultation report 'Local Bus Services – Contracts and Proposed Service Changes' is on the Agenda for a meeting of the Council Cabinet on 11th March 2019. To read the report *visit* <http://mgenglish.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=4331&x=1&LLL=0>, click on Agenda reports pack PDF 12 MB, and scroll down to number 20.

NPTF's March News Briefing will include a report on the Council's consideration of the report.

2. *Welsh Government - Improving Public Transport Consultation*. The consultation sought the views of respondents on how to improve local bus services and the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles. WG proposals to improve the planning and delivery of local bus services are to be brought forward for further public consultation in the summer 2019. This work will also consider the contribution that taxis, private hire vehicles and local transport operators working under the community transport (CT) permit regime can make to WG's vision for integrated public transport..

NPTF made these remarks in its response: NPTF works for the effective integration of multi-modal transport services that meet the needs of travellers and would hope to see the following points incorporated in the forthcoming service review:

- As often as possible, 'destinations' should be regarded as 'transport hubs', and everything that is required to provide for ongoing connecting services, by whatever mode, is in place and operating smoothly.
- It is also essential that mechanisms should be in place that provide for the ongoing review of all connecting services, in order to be in a position to react to any changes as quickly and effectively as possible.

3. *Department for Transport - Consultation on the use of section 19 & section 22 permits for road passenger transport in Great Britain*. NPTF's comments focused on concerns about the potential impact of proposed changes to the CT permit regime that are of particular relevance to North Pembrokeshire, as follows:

- There are limited Commercial Bus Operators, with only one operator providing subsidised public bus services in the North of Pembrokeshire.
- Rural Dial-a-Ride services are provided by Community Transport groups; these groups provide transport for residents to access services where there are no other travel options. The Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations oversees the CT

operation and works alongside the Local Authority, ensuring that there is no duplication and therefore no abstraction of income from commercial operators.

- It is understood that the Local Authority recently went to the open market for some rural bus services in Pembrokeshire. As there were no commercial respondents, this would have meant that large swathes of the County would be without services. There were unfortunately no community transport operators in that specific area, and the Local Authority is now providing the service under the Section 22 permit regulations.

Cycling and Walking

1. *Dangerous section of the A487 between Newport and Dinas Cross.* The passage of a bicycle or a pedestrian on this section of the road would be foolhardy, as the possibility of the simultaneous passage of a bus and a lorry in opposing directions could well be injurious. This effectively isolates cyclists and walkers between Newport from Dinas Cross. It has proved difficult for NPTF to identify who has the responsibility for taking action on this matter. The fact that Newport is not included in the 'Travel to Work' scheme is also an issue.

2. *New Pembrokeshire County Council - 'Cycle Pembrokeshire' Website.* This well-designed website includes a raft of information about cycle trails in the county, including their location on an excellent map. For each trail there is: (1) An Overview; (2) Fact Files containing grid references, trail highlights, distances & times, plus information about car parks and nearest stations; and (3) Trail Directions from start to finish, that include points of interest along the way, as well as attractive photographs. Visit www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/cycle-pembrokeshire for further information.

3. *Taking bikes on the train.* A Fishguard cyclist has informed NPTF that the new Great Western Railway (GWR) trains are unable to accommodate her hybrid bike (that combines features of a road bike and a mountain bike) because its wheels cannot fit into the brackets. She added that it is difficult to hang bikes because the brackets are too high.

The following comments made by another cyclist are worth sharing with readers of this report:

'Hanging a bike is not an option for everyone. If your bike is older and/or heavier, the space is cramped and you are feeling weary, it is a struggle. If you have baskets or panniers, it is extremely difficult if not impossible. What about people on touring bikes who carry luggage for their holidays (people who contribute to the tourism activity of Wales whom we want to encourage, along with commuters and local cyclists).'

In Copenhagen last year, there was a whole carriage on each train set aside for bikes with racks, herringbone arrangement, on both sides of the compartment, for people to access easily and without disrupting other bikes. Then, along the carriage 'wall' was a bench type seat where cycling passengers could perch. It sent out a signal that bikes and cyclists were welcome. On routes where people are travelling up to an hour to commute or for shopping, it was an excellent arrangement. It's a shame that outlook hasn't reached here'.

Trains

1. *'My Trains Wales'.* The project is led by Pembrokeshire County Council on behalf of the South West Wales region, and delivered to schools and social groups across Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. For the third successive year the project has secured funding from GWR's Customer & Communities Improvement Fund.

The project's main objective is to target the next generation of potential rail users, break down potential barriers to rail patronage and demonstrate that the train is accessible to all. Phase 3 work will feature the following activities:

- Promotion of train travel and safety to a range of user groups and educational establishments across the City and County of Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.
- Further expansion of the links established with Primary Schools; continuing the unique opportunity to visit a rail station and see 'behind the scenes', to meet staff and to experience a rail journey.

- Peer Education will also be incorporated into the training whereby Secondary School pupils will be involved in the development of a safety and promotional message. It is envisaged this will be filmed and delivered to their younger peers still within the Primary age range.
- As part of the promotional theme, secondary school pupils will also be encouraged to consider different modes of sustainable transport and explore the possibility of walking, cycling and the use of local bus services to access their nearest train stations. Pupils will be encouraged to develop an increased awareness of local public transport, empowering them with knowledge to access travel information and a range of travel modes.

2. *North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum - Fishguard Train Services Survey*. NPTF carried out the survey between 1 August and 13 October 2018.

- Responses were received from 219 local residents and 64 visitors. Because of the small number of responses from visitors, the evaluation of responses was only carried out on the responses from locals, most of whom came from Fishguard, Goodwick, Newport and Dinas Cross. Other responses were from individuals living in scattered North Pembrokeshire communities. The frequency of their journeys varied widely; and a majority rated services as good or average.
- Noteworthy comments about services: 'A more regular & reliable service', 'A more convenient timetable', 'More frequent trains', 'Better connections', 'More afternoon trains', 'Quality of trains/better trains', 'Formation of trains/overcrowding'.
- Information about journey types: 'Visiting family & friends', 'Shopping', 'Leisure, recreation, pleasure & social' and 'Business, work & meetings' topped the types of journeys made. Respondents travelled to over 100 destinations: 27 in Wales, 85 in the rest of the UK and 13 in Europe.

3. *Transport for Wales - Wales & Borders Rail Franchise*. In May WG announced that Keolis Amey had been awarded the contract to run the franchise for the next 15 years. The new franchise commenced operations in mid-October.

NPTF was represented at subsequent meetings with representatives of the new operator in Swansea and Carmarthen, at which plans for new franchise were presented. With regard to North Pembrokeshire: (1) There would be no changes to the timetable, (2) Rolling stock would be unchanged until the introduction of Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) in 2022 - with an increase in the number of bicycle spaces from 2 to 3, and (3) A new Community Rail Partnership for West Wales.

Transport for Wales (TfW) is carrying out a stations audit across all stations in the Wales and Borders franchise area - to be completed by the end of March, after which time TfW will develop its plans for station improvements. Stakeholders were asked to provide their thoughts and requests by the end of February.

Views Collected by NPTF. Following a request to recipients of its local mailing list, the NPTF received thoughts, observations and requests from a variety stakeholders. The comments below are illustrative of their responses:

- 'Need Provision of accurate and up to date information'. 'Inconsistent, and usually, poor information about delays or cancellations.'
- 'With electronic display boards, it should be possible to give informative information in real time. especially important at stations where there are no staff and no facilities'.
- 'It is not possible to get a mobile phone signal at Clunderwen station which is located down a hill from the road above. This can be very frightening when there are unannounced disruptions or cancelled services at night.'
- 'Problems with the Fishguard & Goodwick ticket machine'. 'All unmanned stations should have a sign clearly stating that you can purchase a ticket on the train.'
- 'Need local places where Pembrokeshire railcards can be purchased'.
- 'There needs to be more shelter space for waiting passengers at Fishguard & Goodwick'. 'More lighting'. 'Protection from weather and the dark.'

WORKING AND LIAISING 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 groups:

- Arriva Trains Wales
- Bus Users UK Cymru
- Community Rail Partnerships in Wales
- Community Transport Association Cymru
- Fishguard and Goodwick Chamber of Trade & Tourism
- Fishguard Bay Welcome Project
- Great Western Railway
- Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association
- Keolis/Amey Wales
- National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government
- Network Rail
- Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations
- Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association
- PLANED, Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development
- POINT, Fishguard & Goodwick Young Person's Trust
- Preseli Rural Transport Association/Green Dragon Bus
- Richards Brothers
- South West Wales Regional Transport Forum
- Stena Line
- Transport Access Group
- Transport Focus
- Transport for Wales
- Traveline Cymru

The Forum also wishes to express its gratitude to the many bodies, organisations, companies, special projects, grant schemes and groups that have provided funding and other forms of support for the many transport projects and services that bring such benefit to North Pembrokeshire.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Forum continues to value the positive relationships that it has developed with its Individual, Family and Corporate Member/Supporters; 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. We extend our sincere thanks for their interest, encouragement and support.

Finally, we wish to put on record our appreciation for the commitment during the past year of the members of the Executive Committee: Andrew Campbell, Sally Francis, Cllr Mike James, Cllr Raymond Llewelin, Mike Phillips, Mary Smith and Tanya McVeigh (who was co-opted onto the Committee in November).

Stephen Hale
Chairman

Hatti Woakes
Secretary