



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – October 2017

Bus Consultations

1. *Welsh Government. Discounted Bus Travel for Younger People in Wales.* Delivering a more effective network of local bus services, together with seamless, integrated and multi-modal ticketing arrangements as part of the new travel arrangements for Wales, are fundamental to building a connected and sustainable society. This is no less important for younger people, who may be continuing their education or training, beginning apprenticeships, looking for work, starting a job, or meeting friends.

The Welsh Government (WG) recognises the significance of providing an attractive offer to encourage young people to use the bus. The current MyTravelPass scheme offers young people aged 16 to 18 a one-third discount on all bus journeys in Wales. Some of the consultation topics are: (1) Possible enhancements to the current scheme, (2) Extending the age of eligibility, (3) Payment methods, (4) What categories of journeys should be eligible for discounted travel, and (5) Extending the scheme to assist other groups.

Visit: <https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/discounted-bus-travel-younger-people-wales> for full information about the consultation. The deadline for consultation responses is 4th January 2018.

2. *Welsh Government. Mandatory Concessionary Fares Scheme in Wales.* WG supports free bus travel anywhere within Wales where eligible scheduled bus services operate for people aged 60 and above, disabled people and veterans. Free bus travel makes a valuable contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of these individuals and also helps to reduce demand on health services. Moreover, by enabling more individuals to remain active for longer, the scheme promotes independent living.

Maintaining access to free bus travel for these groups remains the WG policy objective, but an increasingly ageing and active population requires that careful consideration is given to whether continuation of the scheme is financially viable and sustainable into the future.

WG is consulting on options to improve access to and use of free bus travel in Wales. It is important that standards are universally applied to local scheduled bus services across the whole of Wales. The quality of service delivered in the more rural parts of Wales should overall be no less favourable than those provided within the metro or more urbanised parts of the country. Universal network coverage and improved service accessibility are essential requirements if people who are eligible for free bus travel in Wales are able to benefit from the scheme.

Visit <https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/mandatory-concessionary-fares-scheme-wales> for full information about the consultation. The deadline for consultation responses is 12th January 2018.

Fishguard Harbour – Cruise Ship Visits

This summer 26 cruise ships brought over 5,000 visitors from 18 different countries to visit Fishguard and Goodwick. The Fishguard's Friendly Faces team welcomed passengers from all of the ships and provided them with bags holding information about Fishguard and Goodwick before buses carried the visitors up into the towns, as well as to other attractions in the area. Stena Line has now treated Fishguard Friendly Faces to a lunch on board the Stena Europe to thank them for their splendid work in promoting Fishguard and Goodwick as a cruise destination. The team say that "Feedback has been fantastic. 2018 and the Year of the Sea is on our horizon. We look forward to putting Fishguard, Goodwick and north Pembrokeshire on the map".

Traffic Commissioner for Wales – Annual Report to the Welsh Government

The report from Nick Jones, the new full-time Traffic Commissioner for Wales, was included in the agenda papers for the 19th October meeting of the National Assembly Economy, Infrastructure and Skills (EIS) Committee. Topics covered in the report included: bus registrations, taxi and private hire law, DBS checks, financial constraints on PSV operators and the bus service support grant (BSSG).

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Other topics of interest:

Concessionary fares.

- Increases in retirement ages results in an increasing proportion of those who commute to work utilising concessionary passes. It is for political representatives to determine whether those monies might be better spent on something else, one suggestion being increased subsidies in rural areas.
- WG's consultation document on Bus Services Policy issued in March 2017 indicated that bus passenger numbers had declined, however there has been a significant increase in the number of concessionary journeys undertaken.
- Most concessionary fare journeys are validated by use of a card; however not all operators have the equipment to utilise the card...There is a case for requiring operators to use equipment, if necessary supplied by the Welsh Government. Again, it might form part of the eligibility for BSSG to require use of IT in the specification set from time to time by WG.
- Using rough figures, for every £1 spent on BSSG, £3 is spent on concessionary fares...the more that is spent on concessionary fares, the less that is available for BSSG. If it is the view that BSSG might be used to shape and target funding for bus services in Wales to address the transport requirements of those who need local bus services, additional funds might be needed from some other source, or alternatively, consideration could be given to reducing concessionary fare expenditure.

Community Transport. Currently the issue of community transport permits is undertaken by a hotch-potch of organisations with an almost complete lack of transparency and/or accountability...three types of body grant permits:

- Traffic Commissioners. The existing system is not very effective. Another licensing body recently told me that where it had refused a permit, the organisation reacted by successfully obtaining the same type of permit from a traffic commissioner. Curiously the reverse has also happened, so where a traffic commissioner sought to introduce a form of seminar to train potential permit holders prior to issue, applicants decided to withdraw their applications and obtain them from an alternative licensing body.
- Local authorities. I am unaware of there being any special problem in Wales.
- Designated bodies. About 60 bodies have authority to issue permits...One is strikingly different as it has far more effective control than any of the others. It is the Community Transport Association (CTA)...If there was only one licensing body, with a single coherent rulebook, that might leave the Traffic Commissioner for Wales to be the appeal body...bodies such as local authorities and the Confederation of Passenger Transport could be able to object to applications for permits and/or their continuation.

Visit www.assembly.wales/en/bus-home/committees/Pages/Committee-Profile.aspx?cid=446 (the EIS Committee's website) > click on Browse meetings and agendas > click on 19 Oct 2017 12:15 Agenda, Minutes > Click on Papers for this meeting in a PDF pack. Mr Jones' report is included in the pack.

The Next Wales and Borders Rail Franchise Procurement Process

Transport for Wales (TfW) issued the Invitation to Submit Final Tenders to the four bidders at the end of September. The final bids have to be submitted in December.

On 31st October Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, announced that Arriva Trains Wales had notified Transport for Wales that they intend to withdraw from the bidding process for the franchise. TfW reported that the other bidders remain fully engaged in the process. Mr Skates added "We recognise Arriva's extensive work to date. We would like to thank the company for their support and positive attitude since the procurement started and we will continue to work closely with the company to ensure that existing staff and customers are central to our transition planning over the next 12 months".

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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'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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