



# North Pembroke Transport Forum

## Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

### **Background Paper for a Presentation to a Meeting of the Public Transport Users Committee for Wales, held at the Giltar Hotel, Tenby on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Forum, an independent voluntary group, was set up following a meeting called by Newport Town Council at the end of 1999 - where there was complete agreement that existing transport services did not effectively meet the requirements of North Pembroke residents or visitors to the area.

The Forum's key aims and objectives are:

- To work for the provision of effective, integrated public transport services to, from and within North Pembroke to satisfy people's reasonable requirements, utilising a multi-modal approach in order to:
  - Reduce private car use
  - Facilitate sustainable development, and
  - Reduce perceived inequalities between urban and rural areas.
- To promote the benefits of public transport
- To provide an advice and assistance service to the travelling public.

The Forum believes that without the provision of effective, integrated transport to, from and within areas such as North Pembroke, government policies with regard to sustainability, social exclusion and rural development are unlikely to succeed.

*The Setting.* The Forum began work in a time of 'great change for the better' with regard to transport. It rapidly became clear that the transport policies of the new National Assembly for Wales were progressive in the best sense of the word and that these policies were broadly in line with the Forum's aims and objectives.

*The Forum's Approach.* We do not refer to the Forum as either a 'campaign group' or a 'pressure group'! Rightly or wrongly such groups are sometimes associated in observers' minds with the use of aggressive and/or confrontational strategies to achieve their goals. The Forum prefers to use the terms 'working for', 'support for' and 'working with' to describe the way it works. We believe that it is far better to work with others whenever possible in order to achieve the things that we all want to see put in place.

*The Executive Committee and Membership.* The work of the Forum is carried out by its Executive Committee, supported by its Individual, Family and Corporate Members. Corporate members include town and community councils, transport operators, and groups, organisations and associations with a transport interest.

When invited to make this presentation, I was asked to address the following questions:

- What campaigns, other than Fishguard train services, have been successful?
- How were those campaigns decided upon?
- How are ordinary members views sought?
- How does NPTF promote itself?
- How does NPTF support the needs of protected interest groups/seek views of disabled people?

It is not easy to respond to these questions in isolation - as, for example, in a meeting with a town council we might:

- Hear complaints about poor transport for disabled people, mothers with prams, and cyclists; as well as hear views about other transport matters
- Be informed about a transport campaign that was getting under way, and

- Be given the opportunity to promote the Forum when asked to explain what it does.

As a result I propose to outline how the Forum has carried out its work since it was set up, in the hope that the answers to PTUC's questions will emerge in the process. For the sake of orderliness I will focus on:

- Gathering of information
- Identifying work to be done
- Working for improvements

We find that all of these activities provide frequent opportunities to promote the Forum.

## **1. Gathering of information**

The Forum gathers information from a wide variety of sources and activities - through:

- On-going monitoring of National Assembly, Regional Consortia and Local Government transport policies, strategies and developments
- Attending government transport meetings at national, regional and local levels
- Attending meetings and liaising with representatives of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
- Attending meetings of local town and community councils and other local groups with a transport interest
- Attending Pembrokeshire Community Transport Forums, meetings of the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association and the Preseli Rural Transport Association, BUUK Cymru bus surgeries, Town Rider sounding board meetings, meetings of the St Davids Peninsula Bws y Bobl steering group, etc.
- Inviting transport specialists to Executive Committee and Annual General Meetings to discuss/give keynote presentations about their work and the transport issues they deal with
- Regularly receiving reports on rail, bus and community transport from specialist members of the Executive Committee; and now receiving reports on the work of PTUC from Steve Hale
- Collating the comments received from Forum members and others, relating to all aspects of transport
- Ongoing informal meetings, correspondence, telephone conversations with transport operators, transport officers, elected representatives, members of transport user groups and other groups/associations with a transport interest.

## **2. Identifying work to be done**

The identification of 'work to be done' arises from the information received from the above-mentioned sources and activities. For example:

### *Information Provision.*

- Public ignorance of the various transport services provided in the area, particularly in the more remote rural areas; difficulties in obtaining or providing transport information
- Timetables and provision of information at bus stops not suitably accessible for disabled passengers or those with hearing or visual impairments
- Problems with the real-time electronic bus displays at the Haverfordwest bus station and the newly installed ones on Fishguard Square
- Need for better identification of bus stopping points in Crymych, Clunderwen and Llandissillio to encourage high school pupil in those areas to make greater use of bus services
- Changes in service provision resulting from roadworks causing problems for passengers if operators fail to provide full details about the changes

### *Service Provision.*

- Extremely limited (or lack of) bus services on Sundays and/or Bank Holidays
- Little (if any) bus service provision in the evenings
- Limited rail service to Fishguard, until the new trains were introduced
- Limited Sunday rail services to Pembrokeshire

### *Integration.*

- Need for better bus-rail integration, particularly on services to/from St Davids

- Problems with connecting bus services between North Pembrokeshire, Cardigan and Aberystwyth.

*Railways:*

- Problems at railway stations: limited opening hours, toilets locked in afternoons and/or evenings, lack of information provision when unstaffed
- Limited amount of space for cycles on trains. This is especially disappointing because of the continuing growth in popularity of long-distance cycling and its importance to tourism
- Overcrowding on trains with limited rolling stock during half-term breaks, at Christmas and other national holidays, and during the tourist season. Passengers with reserved seats have, at times been unable to board their trains. Overcrowding reduces luggage space and makes it difficult to access toilets

### **3. Working for improvements - with others, whenever possible**

Working with others involves sharing and discussing information about a 'job to be done' with a relevant 'other' or 'others'! In most cases it is fairly obvious that the 'other' or 'others' should and will take on the job; as it is their 'day job', they have the required expertise and, hopefully, access to the required funding!

The Forum's role will be to provide support, particularly with regard to the provision of local information and later with help in informing the public about the work that is being done. The Forum also provides 'support' when it is able to explain to members of the public the reasons why a particular proposal/project cannot be introduced or may have to be postponed/delayed.

*Working with the local authority.* The Forum frequently connects with Pembrokeshire County Council's team of transport officers who are responsible for:

- Delivery of subsidised bus services (80% of the total)
- Development and delivery of community transport services
- Development and implementation of accessibility improvements
- Development and operation of sustainable transport, working with Pembrokeshire Greenways
- Development and expansion of the walking and cycling network, and
- Activities/work connected with road safety

Throughout the period, the Forum has provided letters of support for the local authority's grant applications for Safe Routes to Schools/Safe Routes in Communities schemes and its Rural Development Plan bid to fund 6 new buses for the coastal bus network. The Forum is now deeply involved in supporting efforts to guarantee continued funding for the Pembrokeshire Town Rider services.

*Consultations and meetings.* The Forum continues to make the case for transport improvements in North Pembrokeshire through participation in a wide variety of transport consultations and attendance at a wide variety of meetings relating to transport matters. Further information about these consultations and meetings is provided in the Annex.

Regrettably, opportunities to meet and work with members of the different communities in North Pembrokeshire have proved difficult to organise and facilitate. Although the Forum has made conscious efforts to hold meetings in different parts of the area, turnout has almost always been poor. Conflicts with other meetings, bad weather, and/or the often considerable distances to travel have been common reasons provided in the apologies that were received.

The area the Forum covers does indeed make frequent (or even infrequent) contact with others extremely difficult; as the area stretches from St Davids in the far west as far as Clydau in the north east, and from St Dogmaels in the north on the border with Ceredigion down to Wolfscastle, approximately 8 miles from Haverfordwest in the south.

*The News Briefing.* The establishment of our monthly News Briefing was initially designed to be a source of relevant transport information for our members and the communities in North Pembrokeshire. However, thanks to the ease of electronic transmission, we have been able to expand its distribution more broadly, and the Briefing now goes out to over 250 recipients, in addition to the 31 North Pembrokeshire town and community councils.

*Working on our own.* When it hasn't been possible to work with others, the Forum has worked alone on projects; chiefly those connected to train services; which ultimately resulted in the provision of additional train services to Fishguard last September and the forthcoming reopening of

Fishguard and Goodwick station in a few months time. As I have been asked to talk about 'campaigns, other than Fishguard train services' today, I will not elaborate on our work to do with train services.

#### **4. Campaigning. Public transport information and integration in North Pembrokeshire**

*Advice for campaigners.* I have been asked to offer advice 'for other groups with equally valid local issues that struggle to get air time'. Personal experience gained in working on previous campaigns proved extremely useful when it came to asking for more trains to Fishguard, and I am happy to share the lessons that have been learned.

To start off, the most important thing to bear in mind before dipping one's toes in the water is:

Credibility is crucial if you are to be taken seriously. Don't go public in a big way until you really know what you are talking about and your facts add up.

Other guidelines that may be helpful:

- Identify and precisely define the project/proposal and your objectives
- There is no point in asking for something that cannot be done!
- Gather information about laws, regulations, service obligations, finance, etc. that are relevant
- Find out if the project is included in the local Regional Transport Plan. If it isn't, try to find out why and if there is provision for further projects to be added to the plan in future
- Identify your campaign target(s): all those with responsibility for providing, funding, delivering, and/or operating what you are asking for
- Prove the need for your campaign:
  - Carry out surveys and write credible reports on the results
  - Collect reports on any previous surveys and on other aspects connected to the project/proposal, including media coverage
- Attend relevant transport meetings, including government committee meetings, and make contact with those who are (or ought to be) involved with what you are asking for
- Make contact with other individuals, groups, etc. that might help with your campaign
- Do not hesitate to ask others for information and advice; it's a good way of getting to know people and make them aware of the fact that you want to know everything there is to know about your project/proposal
- Never think that you know everything; things keep changing and you'll build up your credibility when people realize that you keep abreast of new developments

A word of warning! Don't be upset at the beginning when/if you are given the brush off by the 'powers that be'. This behaviour is quite common, and sadly it often stops campaigners in their tracks. Politely thank these individuals for seeing you and just keep going.

If you continue to make your case with the facts at your finger tips, hopefully you will find that people eventually realize that you know what you are talking about, you are not going to go away, you make sense, and that you are worth listening to!

Once you begin to feel confident of your knowledge, and begin to understand the way things work, there are a range of ways to get 'air time':

- Provide reasoned arguments for your project/proposal in responses to relevant government consultations
- Make appointments to discuss your case with relevant elected representatives, transport officers, transport operators and other significant players
- Provide news releases to the media and invite their representatives to come and meet with you 'on the ground' to see what you are talking about
- Consider if it would be appropriate (and practical) to set up a website and/or use real-time information networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to promote your case

#### *Public Transport Information in North Pembrokeshire*

From the Forum's perspective, those responsible for the provision of public transport in North Pembrokeshire have made significant strides in the way that they provide information. Information provision is strong in the main town centres, but weaker in the small rural hamlets.

In the main towns Richards Brothers, Arriva Trains Wales, Pembrokeshire County Council and Pembrokeshire Greenways regularly provide printed timetables which are available in the town centre TICs and on their websites. Traveline leaflets are also available in the TICs. Pembrokeshire County Council is responsible for the bus timetables that are placed at bus stops, and the authority has just installed real-time displays for buses in Fishguard Square, which also tell which buses call at Fishguard Harbour to meet the trains and the mid-day ferry.

Although those who live outside the town centres in the small hamlets that are dotted throughout North Pembrokeshire can access transport information over the telephone and online, many of them simply don't know about the services or, if they do, how to go about accessing them over the phone or online, even if they do have a computer. This problem is raised time and time again at transport meetings. Sadly, with the closure of so many rural banks, post offices, village shops and schools, most of the traditional places where rural folk used to find such information are no longer there.

There have been teething problems with information provision for the new train services. All Points West (the Community Rail Partnership), the Forum, Pembrokeshire County Council and Arriva Trains West have been working together to iron out problems as they are made aware of them, and we are beginning to see a system emerge that is fit for purpose.

### *Integration*

Pembrokeshire County Council takes transport integration throughout the county extremely seriously. Within the inevitable constraints posed by increasingly stretched financial resources and limitations in the number of available vehicles, the authority tries its best to ensure that the services it controls integrate as well as possible.

The Forum reports the complaints that it receives about problems with bus and bus-rail connections to Pembrokeshire County Council, and its public transport officer does try to resolve them, if the particular buses are subsidised. However there are times when changes simply cannot be made because of connection problems this would cause with other services. The authority has no control over the commercially run Fishguard town centre bus services.

With the introduction in September of the additional trains to Fishguard the County Council was able to provide funding for bus connections to the station at Fishguard Harbour that meet all but the first and last trains. The authority has now commenced work connected to reopening the former railway station. Free parking and bike racks will be provided at the reopened station.

It should be noted that the excellent cycling and walking networks that continue to be developed integrate well with bus, train and ferry services. This will also be the case at the reopened rail station.

## **5. Closing Remarks**

During the past 11 years, we have welcomed opportunities to liaise and work with all those (far too numerous to name here) who share our objectives and continue to demonstrate a keen interest in transport developments in our area. We extend our sincere thanks for their interest, encouragement and support.

Finally, when I was invited to make this presentation PTUC asked:

‘When will NPTF’s work be done? When will there be nothing else to do?  
and What is on the wish list?’

It's difficult to reply to these questions without a crystal ball to gaze in! And one doesn't always know what is coming around the next corner. However, we can be certain that people will continue to want and/or need to travel to, from and within the North Pembrokeshire region in the years to come. I have no doubt that, as a consequence, the Forum will find plenty of work to do and that it will be up to the challenge.

*Hatti Woakes*

Secretary  
North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum