



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum

Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

South West Wales Community Rail Partnership

Feasibility Study:

Enhancement of Rail services on the Fishguard Harbour Route

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY TO OUR ORGANISATION

The study's aim to develop improved rail services on the Fishguard Line is of enormous relevance to the North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum, as we have been working to improve services on this underutilised transport asset since we were established in 2000.

1. The Situation

- The North Pembrokeshire area is well served by bus and community transport services that are linked to an excellent (and expanding) walking and cycling network.
- The current rail service is the weakest (if not the missing) link in an otherwise well developed transport network and only serves the needs of people who are passing through the area. The service is of little value to local residents or visitors to the area.
- The 1999 Fishguard, Goodwick and Pencaer Community Appraisal revealed that the thing that residents most disliked about the county was its geographical isolation and its poor transport links.
- In a 2004 North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum 'local residents rail survey' all but four respondents provided examples of enhancements that would attract them onto the train, or cause them to travel by train more often. Top of the list was the provision of 'more regular, convenient services during the day'.

2. The Case for Fishguard

- The area is growing as a year-round tourist destination. Activities such as walking, hiking, cycling and sailing are not heavily dependent on weather, and the world famous Last Invasion Tapestry will be on permanent display in the Town Hall from the end of May.
- The existing transport infrastructure at Fishguard Harbour -- with rail-ferry-taxi-bus links -- provides an excellent foundation for intermodal transport development. Access to the National and Celtic Cycle tracks and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park coastal path is within 1 km of the rail-ferry terminal.
- The enhancement of rail services is key to the economic regeneration of the area.

OUR VIEWS ON THE PROPOSED OPTIONS FOR STUDY

Enhancements to the train service pattern:

- Our principal aspiration is to see an increase in the number of trains per day, throughout the week (including Sundays and Bank Holidays), to and from Fishguard, connecting to mainline services, at either Whitland or Carmarthen.
- Passengers working or studying in Carmarthen should be able to reach that town by 9am and return to Fishguard at a reasonable time in the evening.
- Waiting times for connections at Whitland and/or Carmarthen should be reasonable. Our survey in 2002 of the Fishguard mid-day summer service found that passengers did not mind changing trains because the connections with other train services were good (without long waits and on the same platform). Less than 10% of respondents called for the re-instatement of the through service to London.

New station opportunities:

- We entirely support the proposal to consider the reinstatement of the Goodwick Station, and agree that it is better sited for Fishguard Town Centre, and would be a more attractive and convenient option for most passengers.
- We would not support the reinstatement of Mathry Road if it meant that the cost of opening both stations jeopardized the opening of Goodwick station.

Options to improve the attractiveness of travelling by train:

- We are in full support of the proposals outlined in this section.
- The "provision of improved facilities for the sale of tickets" should be included in these proposals.

OUR VIEWS ON FURTHER OPTIONS FOR STUDY

We are satisfied with the options that have been identified and feel that they respond to the aspirations that have been identified in our surveys and in other meetings / contacts with existing and potential rail passengers.

OTHER COMMENTS PERTINENT TO THE STUDY

1. Previous Welsh Assembly Government Transport Aspirations

Developing Aspirations for Improved Rail Services in Wales: Key Priorities and General Principles (National Assembly for Wales, LGE-04-00, January 2000).

- Services to the West of Swansea have been neglected. Studies suggest that there are no current track capacity problems for passenger services, so arguably it would be possible to achieve significant improvements early if additional services, particular to key ports in Pembrokeshire, could be provided. (Para. 15.b).
- At present, current provision is not appropriate on longer distance routes which will be used by those in more remote parts of Wales to seek employment, or by those from England or elsewhere in Wales for business or leisure day trips. (Para. 26).

The Assembly Vision For Rail Services In Wales And The Borders: A Guide For Franchise Bidders (National Assembly for Wales, November 2000).

- The Assembly has set out frequency aspirations, supported by the results of the rail audit conducted in November 1999. The general aspirations which emerge from the rail audit suggest that appropriate coherent standards of provision could be:-
 - 1 train hourly for smaller stations on mainline routes (e.g. Whitland, Abergele)
 - 2 hourly services for rural routes. (Para. 3.3).

2. In an essay entitled "Whole Assembly Strategy Must be Underpinned by Travel Solutions", Prof Stuart Cole, Director of the Wales Transport Research Centre, University of Glamorgan, stated that the passenger transport system in Wales should be linked to all the other Assembly policy areas, namely health, education, economic development and social inclusion". (*The Western Mail*, 26 April 2007).

3. The recently published Department for Transport *Review of Community Rail Development Strategy* (March 2007) notes that this Government strategy forms a framework to facilitate the development of local and rural railways, stations and services. The objectives of the Strategy are:

- Increasing ridership, freight use and revenue;
- Managing costs down;
- Greater involvement of the local community; and
- Enabling local rail to play a larger role in economic and social regeneration.