



North Pembroke Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – November 2013

Community Transport

Green Dragon Bus is still operating Town Rider services in Cardigan (including St. Dogmael's and up to Aberporth) 4 days a week, St. David's 1 day a week and Fishguard/Goodwick, Milford Haven/Hakin, Pembroke/Pembroke Dock and Haverfordwest each 2 days a week. Rural services operate from Bwlchygroes/Crymych to Narberth, to Cardigan and the Sunday evening service via Newport to Cardigan one day a week each.

These services are generally well used, but face a threat, as do many bus services of all kinds across Wales with the possible reduction of concessionary fares rebates by about 40%, which would make very many bus services in rural Wales unsustainable.

The Car Club cars are now in operation, making essential journeys with a mix of hirers, who are 25 years old or above who have a valid drivers licence with 6 points or less. The large, accessible 7 seater (with additional wheelchair space) is available at £18 per day + 65p per mile; and the small 5 seater is available at £12 per day +45p per mile.

The Green Dragon Scooter Scheme is revving up to start. Those who have expressed an interest in the scheme have been invited to apply and come for interview in the next two or three weeks. If all goes well and they are selected, they will receive Compulsory Bike Training, safety gear and scooters, in return for a scooter charge of £35 per week.

Trial Fishguard Train Services

As the trial period ends next September, concern about the uncertain future of the additional Fishguard train services is growing, as reflected in the following emails received by the Forum this month:

From Kristiina Castren, a Fishguard hotelier: *'I have had a request for information from a group of walkers from Finland who want to come to Fishguard at the end of September next year. Now, as the extended train services might finish in September, I have to know what date this might be. This would affect what flight they would book to fly to Heathrow in order to catch a convenient train! I have found the extended train services very useful for my customers who have often arrived 7PM and taken the 8AM train out.'*

From Angela Evans, a St Nicholas commuter: *'I use the train service from Fishguard and Goodwick at least once a week to travel to Swansea and other destinations for my work. The service is very convenient and has encouraged me to make more train journeys. I have noticed that usage is steadily increasing as people develop travel routines that include the Fishguard train service. Any reduction in service would undermine all the resources invested in the service we have started to value over these recent years.'*

In response to subsequent correspondence about this matter, Edwina Hart AM, Minister for the Economy, Science and Transport, has informed the Forum Secretary that her officials are currently monitoring the additional services and gathering information which will form part of the review. She will be in a position to consider the future of the additional services once this review is complete.

National Assembly Enterprise & Business Committee Inquiry into the Future of the Wales & Borders Rail Franchise

On 21st November the Committee took evidence on the structure of the rail industry and on the Trans European Transport Networks and the Connecting Europe Facility.

Structure of the Rail Industry - Wales & Borders Rail Services. Professor Karel Williams and Dr Andrew Bowman from the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change in Manchester made the following points with regard to the future of the Wales and Borders Rail Franchise:

- The train operators and leasing companies should be removed.
- Arriva Trains Wales should be replaced by a not-for-profit franchise.
- Buses are, in fact, moneyboxes on wheels. You would want to think about bus and rail in an integrated way.
- The trains should be publicly purchased and publicly owned.
- Vertical integration of train and track would, broadly speaking, be sensible.
- Look at other ways of raising tax revenues for the railway. New infrastructure, for instance, will raise property prices, and this is an untapped increment, which could be tapped by some form of land-value tax.

The Trans European Transport Networks (TEN-T) and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). By video link from Brussels, Herald Ruijters from the European Commission, provided information about the new trans-European network for transport and the new infrastructure fund (the Connecting Europe Facility) that will take effect on 1st January 2014.

- In the Core Network: (1) Ports and Inland Waterways includes Milford Haven, Newport and Cardiff, (2) Rail includes the link from Newport to Cardiff to Swansea to Milford Haven, as well as the link to Holyhead, and (3) Roads include those that go to Milford and to Holyhead. 80% to 85% of the available core funding will be put into elements, nodes or lines of the Core Network. The regulations foresee that the Core Network shall be implemented and be fully functional by 2030.
- The new TEN-T framework also designates 'Corridors' which are a tool to help implement the development of the Core Network, particularly for co-ordinating cross-border projects. Wales is not included in the United Kingdom's corridor.
- The Commission, in its initial proposal, foresaw the inclusion of links across Wales towards Ireland and the motorways that link the United Kingdom and the island of Ireland, towards the continent. There was originally an intention to include Wales in the Core Network Corridors. In the negotiations in the Council, the United Kingdom was very clear that the instrument of the core network corridors was not a priority for the UK. It was clearly seen by the UK—by London—to be as limited or reduced in its impact as possible.
- Although Wales is not included in a corridor, this does not prevent you from asking for a grant from the Connecting Europe Facility. We are at your disposal to work with Wales to see that possible requests on those lines or nodes can be filed and honoured properly. For those parts of the network that are not included in a corridor we will remain, as the European Commission and also the executive agency, available—as though they were included—and we will be happy to assist, wherever assistance is needed.
- In the meetings that we had leading up to this new regulation, the Welsh experts indicated to us that there are quite a few projects that you still have and that you would like to carry out on your core network lines and nodes. I think that they already provide quite a good opportunity for co-operation between us. We are ready to travel to Wales and to receive you here in Brussels to work with you and to see which projects have the best chance of getting part of the EU co-funding.

(In response to subsequent correspondence about this matter, Edwina Hart AM, Minister for the Economy, Science and Transport, has confirmed that Wales is not currently part of a corridor covering the UK, and informed the Forum that she has written to the Secretary of State about the routing of the corridor covering the UK).

See <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=1307> for the full transcript of this meeting.

Final Report on the Future of the Wales & Borders Rail Franchise. Closed meetings will be held on 27th November and 5th December to work on the report, which will be launched on 11th December.

Passenger Focus Conference and Board Meeting, Cardiff on 13/14th November

The Forum Secretary represented the forum at these meetings. The conference presentations are available on <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/events/cardiff-2013>.

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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 is a member of Bus Users UK Cymru, the Environmental Network for Pembrokeshire and the Pembrokeshire Rail Travellers Association.

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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