



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – March 2016

North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Annual General Meeting

The Forum's 16th AGM was held on 22nd March at Llwyngwair Manor in Newport. In the conclusion of her presentation on 'The Role of Community Transport (CT) in Multi-Modal Public Transport' Debbie Johnson (PACTO's Community Transport Development Officer) asked '*What is the role of community transport then within the multi modal transport system?*' and made the following points:

- CT services focus on people and their needs and helps those who would otherwise be excluded, especially by meeting the needs of people with severe mobility difficulties and/or those in the most rural areas. CT provides an alternative for people without access to their own private transport for their journeys.
- CT services can provide connections to bus stops or train stations where it is not feasible or economic for public transport to run.
- CT services fill gaps when there are not enough passengers to justify provision of public transport. While public transport works well along main routes and between larger centres, travelling cross-country (e.g. between villages) or against the traffic flow is more tricky.
- CT also helps those who are unable to access the public transport network by providing specialist services for people with particular mobility difficulties, including vehicles adapted for their needs which have added flexibility to give the one-to-one assistance that is required and a door-to-door service.

National Assembly Enterprise & Business Committee Inquiries

1. Bus & Community Transport Services in Wales. The Committee's inquiry report was published this month. Key recommendations state that the Welsh Government should:

- Develop a Community Transport Strategy in consultation with the sector to clarify its role in an integrated network and work with local authorities to promote understanding of community transport and what it can and cannot do.
- Review good practice in the provision of financial and policy support for bus services and Community Transport to consider what lessons can be learnt and applied in Wales to promote greater stability and partnership working in Wales.
- Explore the current approach to eligibility for concessionary fares to ensure that scarce resources are being targeted most effectively to help those in greatest need and consider how any change might impact on the Community Transport sector.
- Review the reimbursement rates available to Community Transport operators to ensure they are not losing money and ensure that future funding settlements for concessionary fares provide the greatest possible certainty for both bus and Community Transport operators.
- Set a deadline of 2018 (to coincide with the introduction of the rail franchise) for implementation of an all-Wales integrated ticketing system to be used on all commercial bus, rail and Metro services.

The report also notes that the Committee supports the Welsh Government's calls for greater powers over buses.

2. Priorities for the Future of Welsh Rail Infrastructure. The Committee's inquiry report was also published this month. Key recommendations state that the Welsh Government should:

- Seek absolute assurance that the electrification of the South Wales Mainline will continue as a single project, without a break, all the way to Swansea.
- Increase its engagement with Department for Transport's review of project appraisal guidance to increase its effectiveness, and ensure that it does not further undermine business cases in Wales (and other similar areas). In particular, the process must adequately reflect the wider social and economic benefits of rail infrastructure investment.
- Press Network Rail to ensure that its structures are fit for purpose in delivering its functions across route boundaries. We believe these should be developed in parallel with, and relate to, the Welsh Government's own arrangements for working with English regions.

- Work with key national bodies, particularly Network Rail, to ensure that projects to be delivered in Wales are managed from Wales with effective oversight from Welsh Government where appropriate.
- Increase its efforts to develop key cross border relationships with devolved rail planning and delivery bodies and other key stakeholders in England. This should build on the good work already undertaken in North Wales and the north of England.
- Make it a priority, in negotiating with the UK the details of the devolution of franchising responsibilities, to ensure that the next Wales and Borders franchise includes popular, profitable routes which are essential to the travelling public.

The report adds:

- Even without formal devolution of infrastructure powers through legislation, Welsh Government must be given greater responsibility for rail infrastructure, including input into the Period Review, HLOS development, project delivery and governance of Network Rail which must be more accountable to Welsh Government.
- There is a strong case for legislative change to devolve responsibility for Network Rail funding to Wales as it is in Scotland. However, in advance of devolution the Welsh and UK governments must publicly and clearly set out how the following issues will be addressed:
 - A fair funding settlement to accompany devolution.
 - How Network Rail's debt will be apportioned and future borrowing managed.
 - How the cross-border nature of the network will be managed.
 - How the risks will be managed, including risks of overspend, latent defects in the network, and emergency remedial works.

The Committee also supports the Office of Rail and Road's ambition to ensure that Welsh Government is fully involved in the periodic review process.

To consult both reports visit <http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IIId=2225>.

Welsh Government Rail Franchise Consultation

The consultation closed on 18th March. The consultation document asked a series of questions about the development of the future franchise, and key responses made by the Forum include:

- *High-level outcomes:* Continuation of the current franchise's cross-border services from West Wales.
- *Passengers' top priorities* (based on long journeys to/from Pembrokeshire): Always able to get a seat on the train. Keep passengers on trains and at stations informed about delays. Well maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train. Good connections with other train services and, especially in rural areas, with other public transport services at stations. Sufficient space for passengers' luggage and bikes.
- *Changes to range/frequency of current services:* Additional Sunday services to Fishguard. An additional Monday-Saturday mid-afternoon service to Fishguard.
- *Train capacity/standing times on journeys* (re: overcrowding on long journeys): Improve existing train capacity, which will also remove disincentives towards travelling by train. No acceptable limit for all travellers on long journeys, and not just for disabled and elderly passengers.
- *Dealing with disruptions:* Communicate planned service disruptions in sufficient time to enable people to make alternative travel plans. Keep passengers informed at stations and on trains of any unplanned disruption and the expected impact on their travel plans. Make alternative arrangements available for passengers so that they can continue their journey and, if this is not possible, explain the rights passengers have to complain or claim compensation.
- *Station improvements:* Install a ticket vending machine, improve the limited open waiting space on the platform and the extremely limited CIS information at Fishguard and Goodwick station.

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)

For further information, contact the Secretary, 2 Hill Terrace, Fishguard SA65 9LU

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