



North Pembroke Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

October News Briefing, 2021

Swansea Bay & West Wales Metro Project Update With regard to matters of Relevance to Fishguard Rail Services

1. Welsh Government. Consultation Document

1.1 North Pembroke Transport Forum (NPTF) Observations

The Introduction

- 'The proposals are all about making it easier to travel, whether you're travelling by train, bus, bike or on foot. **It's about making it easier to get to work or school, to get to your hospital appointment or to get out and about in the evenings and weekends using public transport.** These include increased frequency of long-distance strategic services; increased local services from West Wales to Carmarthen and Swansea; new stations and improvements to existing stations; and development of a Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro network' (Our emphasis in bold).

Frequency and Connectivity: West Wales

- Option 11. Reconfigure Swansea to Fishguard Harbour services. Additional Frequency: Two trains per day. Total Frequency: One train every two hours.

1.2 Transport Focus. Comments and Observations

Transport Focus is the independent consumer watchdog, with a Board Member for Wales appointed by Welsh Ministers. The consultation response is informed by an extensive evidence base and through engagement work in Wales.

Comments and Observations

- The top five Priorities for Improvement for passengers in Wales: 1. Reliability and punctuality; 2. Price of train tickets offers better value for money; 3. Passengers able to get a seat on the train; 4. 'Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel'; and 5. Train company keeps passengers informed about delays.
- Connectivity with other services is important. Historically there have been some issues with connection timings in Swansea towards West Wales.
- The changing dynamic between commuter and leisure travel. It appears anomalous, therefore that in terms of the consultation, one of the aims is cited as 'Increase the number of trips made by public transport, focusing on commuter trips'.
- Meeting the needs of the increased leisure market must be considered – issues such as room for luggage and improvement in terms of connectivity with other services. If the domestic staycation market is to be actively promoted, it is important that resource meets demand.
- It is important that the needs of disabled passengers are considered as early as possible ...by involving them and relevant advocacy groups. Planning needs to consider the long term to future proof provision and not just to adhere to current required minimum standards. New provision also needs to consider the ageing population.

Conclusion

- The options to improve frequency of services towards west Wales can only be good for the economic prosperity of Wales, giving better access to jobs and leisure activities, and potentially boosting domestic tourism...This is an opportunity to promote Wales as an attractive staycation destination in the first instance, but longer term to attract overseas visitors. Any drive to improve services must be supported by sufficient financial and physical resources.
- With regard to Frequency and Connectivity: West Wales. For question 10 Add 2 per day to Swansea-Fishguard Harbour: Service would be two-hourly: possibly a problem with a rigid pattern – specific peaks might be "missed" – e.g., when a boat is scheduled.

2. Welsh Government. Summary of Responses

2.1 NPTF Observations

Data

- 570 questionnaires were completed. A relatively even spread of ages suggesting a good cross section of the population was reached. 153 from Pembrokeshire.
- Swansea, Fishguard & Goodwick/Harbour, Haverfordwest, Milford Haven, Carmarthen and Neath the main stations of origin, collectively the most common departure station for two thirds of all respondents.
- Average journey times highest for passengers from Pembrokeshire, over 80% of the journeys lasting 80 mins or more.
- 55% of respondents use the train less than once a month, with only 20% using the train at least once a week.
- The predominant reason for using the train in Swansea Bay and South West Wales is for leisure and visiting friends and relatives, over 60% of all the respondents use the train predominantly for leisure and visiting family and friends.
- Just over 30% of respondents use the railway primarily for commuting or business.

Outcomes

- The consultation survey results indicated a very strong support for the project.
- 95.7% of the respondents said the proposals will improve their experience of using the railway.
- 95.9% of respondents said that the proposals will encourage them to use the railway more frequently.
- These comments were constructive and will help shape the options through the next stages of the WeITAG process.

Actions following consultation

- The questionnaire results, additional information and opinions received will be considered and will inform the decision on which options will be recommended to be taken forward to WeITAG Stage 3.
- Within the consultation feedback additional comments and suggestions were received in relation to the options and complimentary measures proposed. These comments will be

considered within the further development of the preferred options during WelTAG Stage 2 and 3.

- The outcome of this consultation process will contribute to the development of a single preferred package of options to form Phase 1 of the Metro scheme. These will be taken forward to WelTAG Stage 3.
- Further consultation work may be required after further development of the preferred option to be taken forward to WelTAG Stage 3.

3. Capita. Executive Summary

Contradictory Objectives

Welsh Government Consultation Document:

- 'The proposals are all about making it easier to travel, whether you're travelling by train, bus, bike or on foot. It's about making it easier to get to work or school, to get to your hospital appointment or to get out and about in the evenings and weekends using public transport'. (Page 4)

Capita Executive Summary:

- 'Increase service frequencies...across South West Wales to improve suitably for daily commuting...Increase the number of trips made by public transport, focusing particularly on commuter trips. (Page 3)

Option Development

- Option 11 will provide additional services on the Fishguard Harbour Branch Line, to provide a 2-hourly interval service from Carmarthen, increasing from a 7 trains per day (tpd) service in 2019. This will require two additional return services per day. An option from Swansea was also assessed but was not operationally viable due to turnaround time at Swansea. (Pages 4 – 5)

1. Welsh government Consultation Document: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-03/consultation-document-swanse-bay-and-west-wales-metro.pdf>

2. Transport Focus response: <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/publication/swanse-bay-and-west-wales-metro-consultation/>

3. Welsh Government Summary of Responses: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-10/swanse-bay-and-west-wales-metro-summary-of-responses_0.pdf

4. Capita Swansea Bay & West Wales Metro WelTAG Stage 2. Final Report: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-10/swanse-bay-and-west-wales-metro-weltag-stage-2-final-report.pdf>

5. Capita Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro WelTAG Stage 2. Executive Summary: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-10/swanse-bay-and-west-wales-metro-weltag-stage-2-executive-summary.pdf>

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
Tel: (01348) 874217. Email: hattiwoakes@gmail.com