



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – June 2008

Buses

Bus Users (BUUK) UK Wales. Margaret Everson, BUUK Senior Officer for Wales, has reported that the group intends to further develop its mystery traveller work and also to develop a Passenger's Charter for bus passengers. Last year they carried out a survey of bus services to form an information base and will now be carrying out a second survey so as to identify improvements or deterioration in services. BUUK will also continue to hold bus user surgeries on a monthly basis.

The All-Wales Concessionary Fares Scheme. In September-October smartcards will replace existing travel passes. The new passes will contain a small electronic chip which will be used to check the user's concessionary entitlement and also to ensure that the bus operator is reimbursed for the journey. The new cards will be free, and there will be a standard charge of £5.00 for any replacements.

Community Transport

The St Davids and Peninsula Minibus Group. Quite a few volunteer drivers have come forward, and the first MiDAS training session was held in Treffgarne Owen on 20th June. There is seed funding from the Lottery grant to pay for training a pool of drivers for services provided by the project. Those who wish to be trained to drive only for their group will have to pay for their training. Regrettably the delivery of the new bus has been delayed by about 8 weeks, until the end of August or beginning of September. In the meantime discussions continue regarding the establishment of management procedures.

Voluntary Drivers Petition. The mileage limit for volunteer drivers has not increased since 2002, despite the substantial increase in fuel costs. In Pembrokeshire, there is concern about the impact this could have on Country Cars and Cars for Carers, which together provide over 18,000 essential passenger journeys for elderly and vulnerable people in the county every year. There is a petition on the Downing Street website calling on the Prime Minister "to raise the 'approved mileage allowance payment' for volunteer drivers from 40p a mile, an amount which was set in April 2002". The petitioners add that "Many volunteers who use their own cars to enable elderly and disabled people to access health care, shops, social events, etc. will find it difficult to continue if the situation doesn't change. If the Government wishes to promote volunteering, more must be done to recognise and support the excellent work being done by this valuable group of people." Further information can be found on the Downing Street website at: <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Voldrivers/>. The petition's closing deadline is 27th September.

Trains

Arriva Trains Wales. Mike Vaughan, Arriva's Franchise Manager, in his update to a meeting of the SWWITCH Joint Committee on 20th June, reported that reliability improvements continue on an upward trend across all types of the company's fleet. Discussions are continuing with the rolling stock leasing companies on a significant refurbishment of the Class 158 fleet. ATW's performance continues to be strong, and in the last accounting period it was 4th in the league tables for regional operators. Responding to questions from participants, he commented that it is too early to see if rising fuel prices has led to increased use of the train.

Fishguard Rail Study. The Forum is satisfied that the project is receiving serious consideration. The consultants are currently being asked to re-analyse some of their findings, and it is hoped that their final report will be presented to the Study Management Group in the near future.

Passenger Focus. Simon Pickering, Passenger Link Manager for Wales, has reported that their recent South West Wales Passenger Survey revealed that the majority of respondents (out of 610 completed questionnaires) chose the train because it was the most direct route (37%), although a significant number (23%) said they used the train because they had no access to a car. For 37% there was no factor limiting their use of the train, while 17% said that the cost was the main factor in this regard. The top three desired improvements to stations were access to a toilet, more/better visual information on train departures, and staff at the station (42%).

The next edition of the National Passenger Survey (which surveys 25,000 rail users across Britain) will be released in the next few weeks. In the last survey ATW recorded an overall satisfaction of 85% and FGW 74%. The National Stations Improvement Programme, being coordinated by Network Rail, is beginning to gather momentum. Swansea, Port Talbot and Carmarthen are currently in the draft list of stations selected for inclusion in the first round of work. Stations are an area of particular concern in Wales, with passenger satisfaction scores significantly below the average across Britain.

South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH)

The schedule for the Regional Transport Plan (RTP) is well on course. The consultation draft RTP will be published at the end of July this year, the final draft RTP will be submitted to the Assembly in December, and the final RTP will be submitted to the Assembly at the end of March 2009.

The draft RTP will be subject to a two month consultation period from the end of July to the end of September. During the consultation period SWWITCH will hold consultation workshops in each of the four Council areas. The Pembrokeshire workshop will be held on 16th September. The workshop will be repeated three times during the day to allow stakeholders to attend whichever timing is most convenient.

The draft RTP will be available for download or by email from 11th July and the printed draft RTP from 25th July. The draft RTP appendices will be available for download or by email from 25th July, and the printed draft RTP appendices from 8th August.

The draft programme pool was approved for consultation purposes in February. However, since then a number of additional schemes have been proposed, and more are expected during the course of the summer consultation period. For clarity SWWITCH has not amended the draft programme pool, but the covering letter which will accompany the draft RTP, includes those additional schemes already identified. This will help prevent many respondents including the same schemes in their draft RTP feedback.

The National Transport Plan (NTP) will not be consulted upon and published until after the Regional Transport Plans have been published. This is regrettable, as the NTP will contain much of the critical detail about what the Assembly plans to invest in as well as its priorities for infrastructure expenditure over the next 10-15 years, information that is of great relevance to the RTPs. Therefore the first Annual Progress report on the RTP may require significantly more work to incorporate whatever South West Wales proposals and schemes arise from the NTP.

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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 specialist advisor to the Pembrokeshire Community Transport Strategic Partnership and a member of Bus Users UK, the Environmental Network for Pembrokeshire, Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services 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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