



North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum Fforwm Trafnidiaeth Gogledd Penfro

News Briefing – July 2008

Buses

Bus Users UK Survey

As previously reported BUUK is carrying out a detailed survey into the quality of bus services in Wales and our BUUK area representative Judi Hartland reports that she has now surveyed most of the Pembrokeshire services. In addition to journeys, the survey includes other aspects of bus travel such as the state of the bus shelters and the timetable information provided at shelters. Judi is pleased to report that so far she has found very few instances of poor practice.

New Bus Passes

Ceri Rees, Pembrokeshire County Council's Public Transport Manager, reports that the roll-out of new smartcard passes for the 22,000 bus pass holders in Pembrokeshire is underway. The new ticket machines and smartcard readers will be installed on the buses later this year. Consequently the smartcards should be used as 'flash' passes, in the same manner as the old passes, until this equipment is installed.

Community Transport

The St Davids and Peninsula Minibus Project

Plans to put the new "Bws y Bobol" on the road have made significant progress, and the official launch will take place at 2.00 pm on Thursday 9th October at Oriel y Parc (the National Park Visitor Centre) in St David's.

Preseli Rural Transport Association (PRTA)

Cardigan Town Rider. The wheel chair accessible service is one of the Association's two new initiatives. Operating on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 10.00 and 15.30 within a 4 mile radius of Cardigan (including communities in North Pembrokeshire), the service is run on the same basis as the Town Rider services that have been introduced in Pembrokeshire.

Green Dragon Connect. This is a wheel chair accessible, door-to-door service that provides passengers between Crymych and Efailwen with connections to the Richards Brothers 430 Cardigan – Narberth service on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and on Thursdays with the Jones Login 391 service to Narberth. Further information about the new services can be found in the News section of the Association's website: www.pрта.co.uk, or by telephone: 0845 6860242 or email: info@prta.co.uk.

South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH)

Regional Transport Plan

The consultation on the Draft Regional Transport Plan (RTP) concluded on 30th September. The final draft is to be submitted to the Assembly in December, and the final RTP will be submitted to the Assembly at the end of March 2009.

The RTP process now involves the selection and prioritization of the projects that will go into the final draft. There have been numerous meetings and workshops where all of the issues relating to selection, prioritization and funding have been examined in considerable depth. It has become clear that there are no easy answers to many of the questions that have been raised. In the end there will have to be a balance between policy fit, achievability, deliverability, value for money and the regional impact of selected projects; as well as between the wide range of modes, outputs and intentions; not to mention between the economic, social and environmental elements.

Ian Westley, Pembrokeshire County Council's Director of Transportation and the Environment, made some important observations at the September meeting of the SWWITCH Joint Committee, namely that rurality is an important issue in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. He noted that

there are certain things that should be 'rights'; for example: getting children to schools, education and health. Predominantly rural authorities need easier access to health, access to decent affordable housing, employment and leisure facilities; as well as access to decent shopping and retail outlets. This led to a discussion about land use planning; in particular about 'where things are located'. Participants stated that rural communities mustn't be allowed to die because of lack of facilities, and the provision of good transport shouldn't drain people out of small rural market towns.

Funding is a major issue. There will be no funding of the RTP in the first year, and it is not known whether or not already committed schemes will be drawn from RTP funding. The SWITCH September Newsletter reported that the Assembly has been talking with stakeholders, including the consortia and the Welsh Local Government Association, for more than 18 months about how the funding to help deliver the RTPs across Wales will be allocated. There are strong and diverse views about this with some organisations preferring to see a formula based allocation of funds (where elements like population, rurality or length of highway are considered), others preferring to see funding directed to those RTPs which will deliver most improvements and then a contingent who want to see a combination of both formula and merit based approach. Because of the wide variety of views the Assembly appointed independent consultants to take evidence and weigh up options and their recommendations have been put to the Assembly for consideration.

The North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum consultation response.

The RTP process seeks to produce a plan that will put in place a series of fundamental transport projects aimed at delivering critically important infrastructure and services for our region. These should facilitate efficient, sustainable, flexible and cost-effective mobility for all: from the individual school child or passing tourist to the largest industrialist and employer. The fact that the required funds may not be available at this point in time should **not** preclude developing and setting out the region's aspirations and priorities **now**. In this way, the projects will be ready to go once funding is available.

While the Forum is in broad agreement with the vision, objectives, regional priorities, policies and component strategies set out in the draft, it has requested that the key features of 'social inclusion' and 'more environmentally beneficial transport options' should be explicitly referred to in the RTP objectives, policies and strategies.

The Forum's priority revenue project is the proposal for the addition of five daily return trains between Carmarthen and Fishguard; the priority capital project is the re-opening of Fishguard and Goodwick Railway Station. Other recommended projects for inclusion in the first 5 year programme are: (1) the area's Strategic Bus Corridors – including the Cardigan-Narberth route, (2) a bus focal point at Fishguard and Goodwick Station, (3) the North-South walking and cycling route in Pembrokeshire, and (4) HGV parking facilities near Fishguard Harbour.

Finally, the Forum strongly supports the Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Operator's view that community transport (CT) is about more than access to employment and health care. Access to shops and services, to social opportunities, reducing isolation and promoting independence are all key roles for CT in both urban and rural areas.

Copies of the Forum's consultation response are available from the Forum Secretary, 2 Hill Terrace, Fishguard SA65 9LU. Tel: 01348 874217. Email: info@nptf.co.uk.

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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).

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