

REPORT OF PLANNING OFFICER (PARK DIRECTION)

SUBJECT: THE GREENWAYS PARTNERSHIP – ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Purpose of Report:

To report to members the outcome of the work undertaken by Pembrokeshire Greenways detailed in the Annual Report for 2016 appended to this report.

Background:

The Pembrokeshire Greenways Partnership is comprised of public and community organisations and groups which are involved in the promotion and delivery of sustainable travel throughout the County.

The key objectives of the Partnership are:

- Encouraging residents and visitors to use public transport within the County;
- Developing links between public transport and public rights of way, cycleways, and other access opportunities including multi user routes;
- Providing information for travel by train and bus for walkers and cyclists;
- Providing and promoting access opportunities in close proximity to public transport routes;
- Meeting where possible, the access requirements of all sections of the community.

The National Park Authority makes an annual financial contribution to the partnership which assists in the delivery of the Coastal Bus Services, the Bikemobility Initiative and also part-funds the post of the Greenways Officer, employed by Pembrokeshire County Council.

The day-to-day work of the partnership is administered by the Greenways Officer who also co-ordinates work undertaken by other partners. The Partnership meets 3 to 4 times each year to receive updates and decide on future actions. An annual report is prepared for the group at the end of each calendar year setting out the main achievements to date and challenges to be faced for the year ahead.

Whilst the majority of funding for many of the activities and services is provided by Pembrokeshire County Council (via its public transport funding) the National Park Authority contribution of £46,000 towards the running of the Coastal Buses provides just under one fifth of the total cost of funding the services. The contribution helps to ensure that a 2-day service operates through the winter months as well as a 6/7 day operation throughout the summer. The bus services have become a well-known brand and are popular with visitors and residents alike. The most popular service is the Celtic Coaster which operates around the St Davids Peninsula providing access to the popular visitor destinations of Whitesands and St Justinians.

Despite the National Park Authority contribution to the services remaining constant for a number of years, the County Council's own budgets have had to be cut due to their reductions in funding. This has affected all bus services across Pembrokeshire and has necessitated a reduction of service from 3 to 2 days during the winter. It has also impacted on the Coastal Cruiser service which operates in the south-west of the County.

Funding from the National Park Authority has also been used to support the Park and Ride bus service between the Salterns car park and Tenby town centre during the summer holiday period.

The Authority also helps to support the Bike-mobility Initiative which helps to enable people of all abilities to enjoy cycling through funding of advertisements and Officer support.

Conclusion

The National Park Authority's contribution to the Greenways Partnership has helped considerably in maintaining the popular Coastal Bus services which benefit tourism and local communities in the National Park.

Recommendation

That the Greenways Officer is thanked for preparing and advising on the Greenways Annual Report for 2016: the contents of which are noted.

Background Documents:
Greenways Annual Report 2016

(For further information, please contact Sarah Middleton)

Author: Sarah Middleton
Consultees: Owen Roberts; Tegryn Jones



Pembrokeshire Greenways
Lonydd Glas Sir Benfro

Annual Report - November 2016

Introduction

Pembrokeshire Greenways is a partnership initiative to promote access and enjoyment for all by bus and train travel, walking, cycling, and horse riding rather than by the use of the private car.

The partnership comprises of public and community bodies who are involved with promotion and delivery of sustainable travel in Pembrokeshire. Partners include Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire County Council, Public Health Wales, National Resources Wales, PACTO, PLANED, Pembrokeshire Access Group, Pembrokeshire Tourism and Sustrans.

The key objectives of Pembrokeshire Greenways are:

- Encouraging residents and visitors to use public transport within the County;
- Developing links between public transport and public rights of way, cycleways, and other access opportunities including multi user routes;
- Providing information for travel by train and bus for walkers and cyclists;
- Providing and promoting access opportunities in close proximity to public transport routes;
- Meeting where possible, the access requirements of all sections of the community.

The Greenways Officer is employed by Pembrokeshire County Council on behalf of the Pembrokeshire Greenways Partnership, and the post is joint-funded by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and the Council.

Pembrokeshire Greenways have been successful in demonstrating how integrated public transport opportunities and rights of way management can help visitors and local residents travel to and enjoy the countryside without using a car. Particular achievements have been:

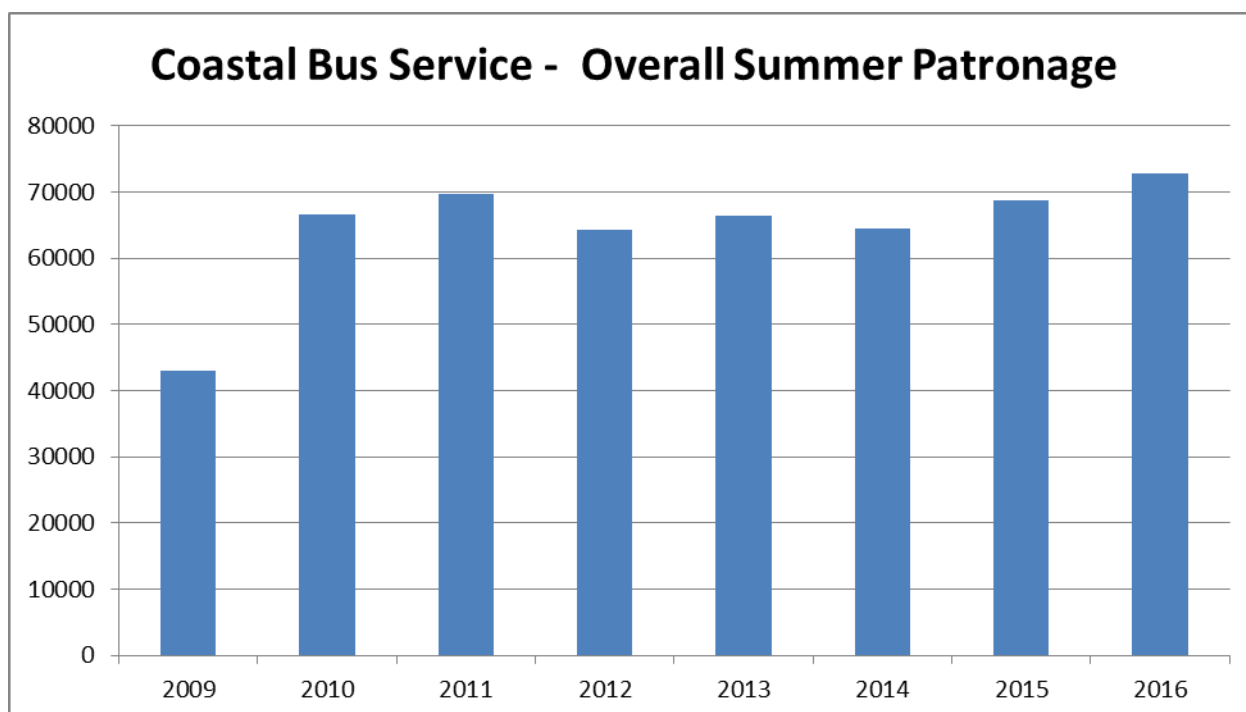
- A network of “branded” coastal bus services, which along with local bus services, provide access to the entire length of the 186 mile (299km) Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail. Services are funded by Pembrokeshire County Council with contributions from Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority;
- The clearing and up-grading of key waymarked rights of way;
- The production and distribution of promotional literature covering bus and train services, walking, cycling and riding routes and places to visit and stay;
- The development of the Walking Pembrokeshire website to promote walking.
- BikeMobility, which is a cycling initiative that makes cycling accessible to all by providing a wide range of accessible cycles and a safe secure environment for cycling.

The last 12 months

There have been many changes to bus services and active travel initiatives over the past 12 months.

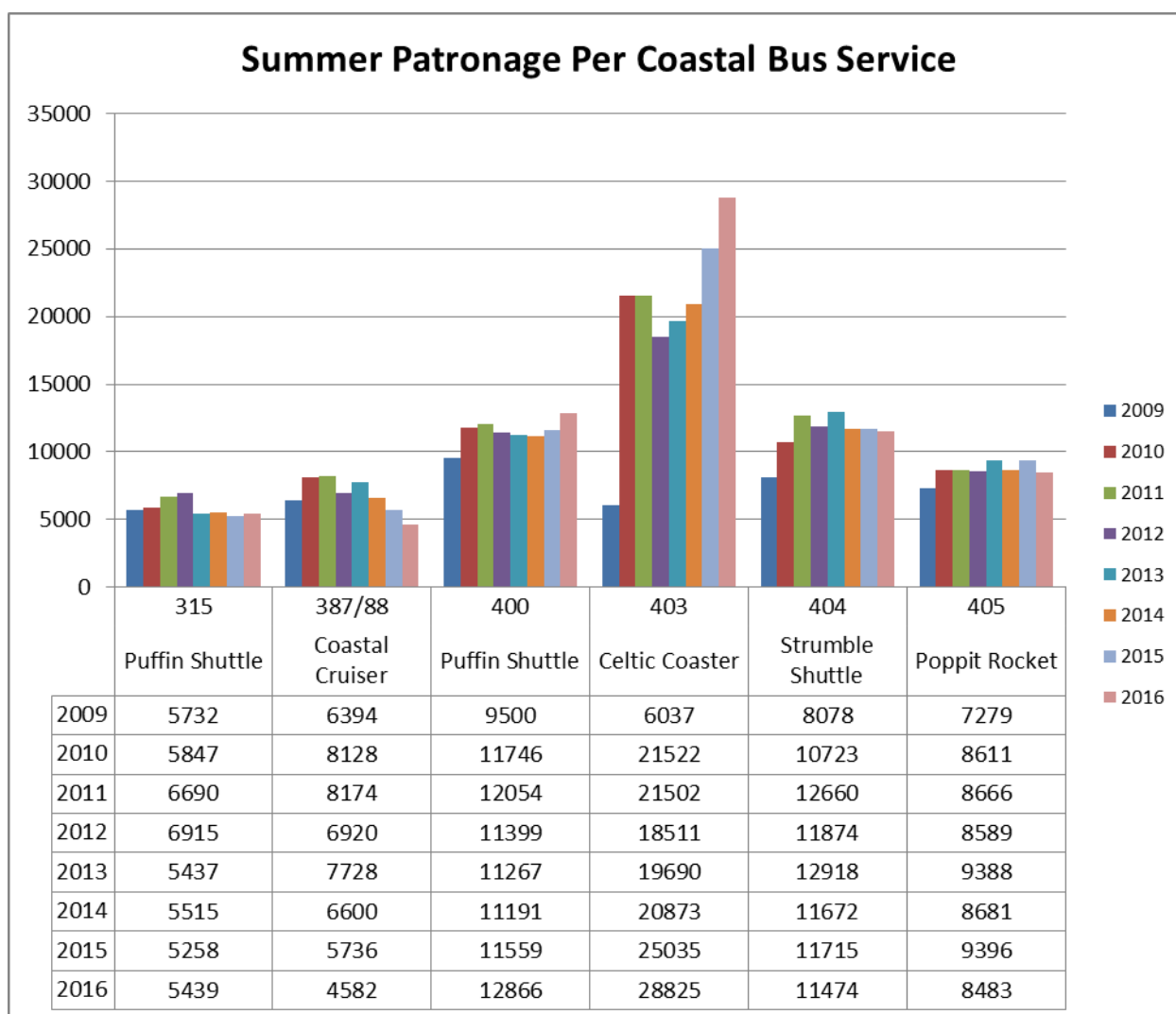
Coastal Bus Services

The patronage figures for the Coastal Buses during the Summer timetable (1st May to 25th September 2016) have now been collated and show an increase of 4,144 compared to last year. The overall figure is over 70,000 passengers for the first time.



The graph below shows the summer patronage for each of the Coastal Bus services over the past 7 years. Whilst some services have remained fairly static, others have fluctuated from year to year.

Summer Patronage Per Coastal Bus Service



The 403 (Celtic Coaster) continues to improve from year to year, with a staggering 27,767 passengers transported during between the start of May and the 25th of September. This is despite the bus service being reduced from 3 buses to 2 during the school summer holidays in 2013.

The reducing patronage of the 387/8 (Coastal Cruiser) is of concern as it has fallen by nearly 3,000 over the past three years. There have been reductions and changes to this service during this time but the current level of passenger numbers is very low and the cost per passenger is considerably more than the other services.

Local Bus Services

Silcox Coaches

On Sunday 5th May 2016, Silcox Coaches ceased trading and was placed into administration. The Council had made contingencies with Edwards Coaches (Pontypridd) to cover the school services, but they were not able to cover public transport as well.

Local and national operators were invited to quote for providing replacement services, but due to it being a very busy time of the year with coach holidays and trips there was limited capacity to cover.

Whilst a number of services were operated on 6th June with little disruption, there were some services that did not run which did result in negative publicity. Further services were covered by negotiating with operators and amalgamating routes. Appendix A provides the list of former Silcox public service routes, along with details of replacement services implemented.

T5 Bus Service

In January 2015 the Haverfordwest to Cardigan bus service was merged with the Cardigan to Aberystwyth service to form the T5 bus service. This is part of the Traws Cymru Bus Network which is funded by the Welsh Government and provides fast reliable journeys between key strategic towns.



The service is funded by the Welsh Government which has enabled funding to be redistributed to maintain other local bus services, despite the Council's budget reductions. It has also improved the quality of the service, with new vehicles with branded livery, audio destination announcement. There is now also a Sunday service during the Summer.

Bwcabus

The Council has worked closely with Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion to submit a funding application to implement a Bwcabus zone within Pembrokeshire. Bwcabus is a demand responsive service that enables people in rural areas to travel anywhere within a designated zone as and when they want. It was announced in October that the funding bid was successful and that the three year project would go ahead.



Community Transport

Let's Talk Transport Event

PACTO and PLANED held a joint Transport Forum in Crundale Hall on 25th May. It was very well attended, with a wide range of public and community transport users, along with local interest groups such as Pembrokeshire People First, Pembrokeshire Access Group, Young Voices for Choices, Theatre Forum and North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum.

The Greenways Officer provided a presentation about public transport in Pembrokeshire, highlighting the provision of bus and rail services, the challenges faced and what is being done to move forward. There were many discussions and a number of concerns identified. A number of work streams will be taken forward to try and address the main issues raised.

Bus Buddies Project

Lottery Grant funding has been provided to PACTO (Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations) to undertake a project to provide assistance to those who would otherwise be unable to use Community Transport and Public Transport.

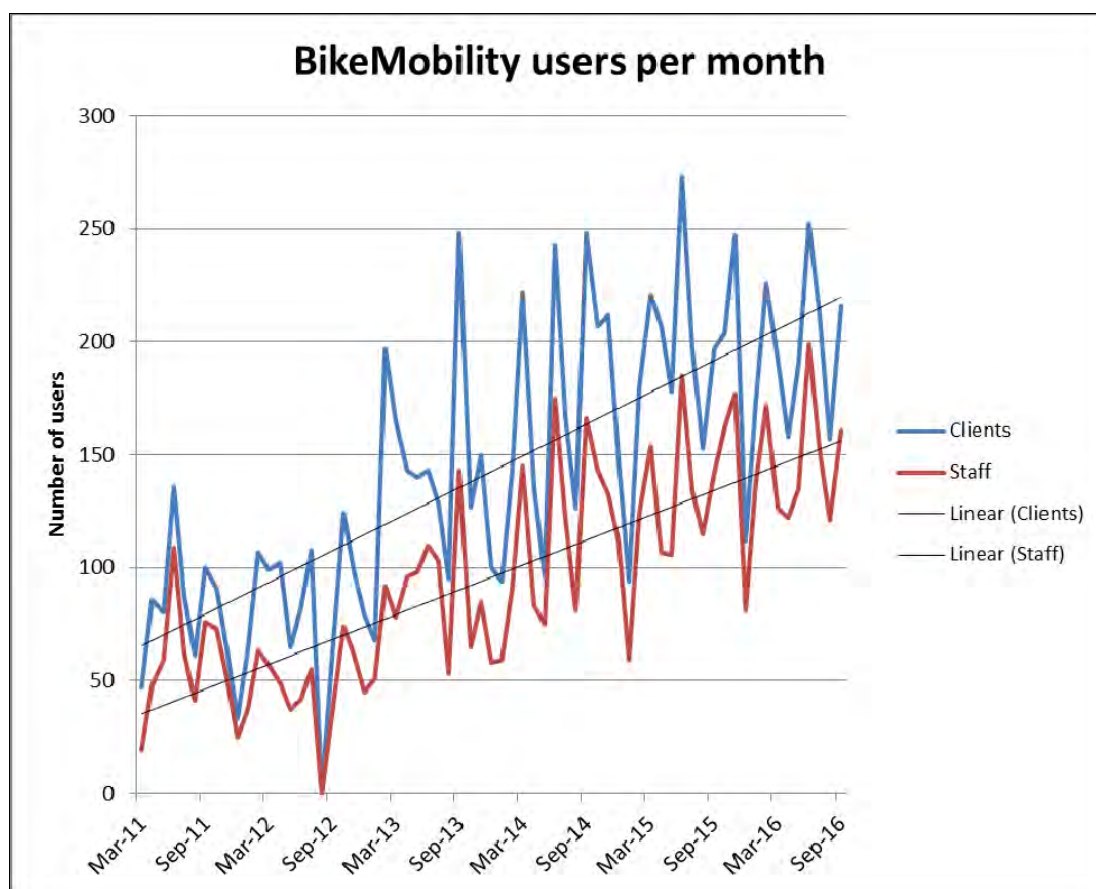
Lift sharing

RDP funding has been secured to undertake a study to look at the feasibility of implementing a lift share scheme specifically for Pembrokeshire. Over 200 people have been consulted so far.

Walking & Cycling

BikeMobility

Since the initiative was established in 2011, the number of people attending has increased. Over 4,000 have people participated in cycle sessions over the past 12 months. The graph below shows the number of customers and carers that have attended each month.



In order to ensure that BikeMobility is sustainable and can be further developed, on 1st August 2016 the BikeMobility assets were transferred to Value Independence which is a Community Interest Company based in Milford Haven. They currently provide a range of accessible activities and are looking at the possibility of relocating BikeMobility to an alternative site in order to provide a number of accessible activities all in one place.

Active Travel

- In January 2016, Pembrokeshire County Council submitted their Existing Route Map (ERM) to Welsh Government in January. After 221 walking audits and 119 cycling audits of routes, 4 routes were felt to be Active Travel routes but fell just short of passing the audit.

- A questionnaire has been developed and is currently out for consultation. This will look at levels of walking and cycling in the Active Travel towns which will hopefully result in improvements and new routes being suggested. The closing date of the consultation is the 27th January 2017.
- PCC is in the process of publishing a cycling and walking leaflet showing the ERM routes and other routes in the County with a print run of 30,000.
- Staff are developing a programme to monitor usage of existing Active Travel routes and new routes along with walking and cycling as modes of transport in the Active Travel towns of the County.

Walking Pembrokeshire website

A new route template has been designed for all walking, cycling and horse-riding routes. This will be used for all existing walking and cycling routes as well as for a number of identified horse riding routes.

Electric Vehicles

The statistics for the Councils two charge points show that over 50 different users have accessed the charge points in the last 12 months with a total of 927 transactions. There has also been a wide range of cars using the charge points, including Tesla, Mercedes, BMW, Renault, Nissan and Mitsubishi.

At present, there are a limited number charge points located around the County. Some of these are shown on the Zap Map, below:

Pembrokeshire is working with other Councils in the region to look at expanding the network of charge points and to ensure a standard method for accessing the charge points.



Advertising & Promotion

The Coastal Buses and BikeMobility were both advertised in this year's Coast to Coast Magazine. The inclusion of the summer timetable in the magazine is very worthwhile as feedback from coastal bus users indicate that this is the most popular source of timetable information.

The Coastal Bus Timetable booklet was printed just before the summer timetable began. Unfortunately, due to the changes following Silcox Coaches going into administration, a number of the timetables within the booklet became out of date.

Due to the timetable changes it was decided not to print the County Timetable Booklet. This has resulted in a number of complaints from service users, particularly those without internet access.



What next?

The continued budget restraints mean that the expansion of existing services and the establishment of new initiatives are difficult. Therefore, the focus will be on ensuring that current initiatives are maintained and deliver value for money.

Public Consultation

In order to ensure that bus services are meeting the needs of the public, a consultation is being undertaken. A questionnaire has been produced and distributed on all bus services, via leisure centres, libraries, information centres and online (www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay). The closing date is the 30th December.

As well as providing benchmarking data for public transport the questionnaire responses will be used to identify concerns that the public have and to potential resolutions.

Bus Service Tenders

The former Silcox Coaches public bus routes are currently being retendered, with the new contracts due to start on 1st April 2017. There will be an opportunity for timetables to be tweaked following the consultation and prior to the new contracts starting.

Bus Quality Standards

As from 1st April 2017, bus operators will be required to meet a minimum quality standard in order to be able to obtain bus subsidy. The Greenways Officer will be assisting operators in Pembrokeshire to implement the necessary measures and will be monitoring their performance against the various criteria, which includes the introduction of bus driver disability awareness training, driver uniform, customer complaints procedure and vehicle cleanliness.

Timetable information

Any timetable changes following the retendering and consultation will be implemented by the end of February 2017 in order to enable timetable booklets (Coastal and County) to be produced and distributed by Easter. There may be a charge for the booklet, depending on the outcome of the consultation.

The Greenways Officer will work closely with relevant organisation to develop easy read versions of each timetable service. These will be made available on the Council's website. Once contracts and timetables have been finalised, efforts will be concentrated on ensuring that the information shown on the bus stop digital displays is accurate and up-to-date.

Community Transport

The Greenways Officer will liaise with PACTO to assist them with the implementation of the Bus Buddies Scheme and the Lift Share Feasibility Study. These will be vital in supporting those that are currently unable to access bus services either due to their mobility or as a result of there being no suitable public transport for the journey they require.

Train Training Project

Funding has been secured from Great Western Railway to deliver a regional project to encourage young people and older social groups to make more use of the train along with promoting the safety message to younger age groups.



Travel Planning

Work with the Regional Travel Plan Coordinator to work with businesses along the coastal bus routes to develop travel plans and to promote the use of advertising on the buses.

BikeMobility

The Greenways Officer will continue to work with Value Independence to support them in developing BikeMobility and making it sustainable.

Active Travel

Continue to assist with the implementation of the Active Travel Act. This will include revising and printing the Traffic Free Guide. The Walking Pembrokeshire and Cycle Pembrokeshire websites will be amalgamated and the existing routes will be reviewed and updated. Also, a selection of horse riding routes will be developed and guides produced for the website.