

SWWITCH

Newsletter

March 2014



Looking back...Looking forward...

The future of the transport consortia in Wales has been in question for some time. The Minister for Economy, Science and Transport had made plain her view that they were not providing benefits expected by businesses and that they were viewed as an additional tier of bureaucracy.

SWWITCH was set up in 1998 (before to the Welsh Government!) by the four constituent Local Authorities and has developed and evolved over the years to meet changing needs. It was formalised in 2005 by the establishment of a Joint Committee and it has been supported by the Welsh Government with revenue funding to employ a small team of officers since 2002.

However, the establishment of the Swansea Bay City Region has provided a new and more “economy focused” opportunity for collaboration on transport within the region and the Minister will now be seeking City Region Board views/input and City Region priorities for strategic transport in South West Wales. SWWITCH has been supportive of the City Region Board since the idea was first raised and has indeed taken the decision within the last year to align programme priorities with the City Region and the regional economic regeneration strategy.

With the Minister’s decision in January this year to withdraw the consortia revenue grant from 31st March 2014 with the exception of the Travel Plan Co-ordinator post which will remain, there is inevitably significant change ahead. None of the SWWITCH Councils is able to plug the funding gap and SWWITCH staff have been put on notice. Whilst it is inevitable that there will be changes in terms of capacity (fewer staff) and outward signs (branded website, materials, papers etc) what will not change is the determination of the four Authorities to work with each other and to engage with partners to ensure that improvements to transport and access in the region are driven forward. That is the priority and focus for the future. To users of our transport network and systems the names, logos and boundaries don’t matter, it is the quality, coverage and capacity that matters. The four Authorities get that and that is why they will continue to collaborate long beyond SWWITCH.

No Oscars, but huge thanks

There is no money for a grand event, no red carpet or glittery ornaments for the mantelpiece, but we couldn’t draw a line under SWWITCH without passing on thanks to all those who have helped and supported the joint working over the last 16 years. This includes the all elected Members, Directors and Heads of Service who have all contributed time and effort over the years and especially the Officers:

Simon Charles, Ceri Rees, Ben George, Brian Biscoe – take a bow fellas!



And of course the SWWITCH staff who are currently seeking alternative employment:

Marcus Judd, Allison Gough and Richard Watkins – we couldn’t have done it without you and we wish you all the best of luck in your new careers.

Regional Contacts

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The School Transport Project has been branching out in every sense of the word! We have created a series of clips all about accessing train services. Filmed via a headcam with great support from our producer and editor Simon Worley, the clips show how to buy tickets online, collect tickets at the station, board the train and complete a journey. After a couple of days of Hollywood filming (well, Carmarthen train station and at home in the Preselli Hills!), we are very proud of the efforts of Ben Workman and Ella Rees our film stars with Iolo Rees coming in at the last moment to save the day with our Welsh voiceover. The clips, which are bilingual, will be used to complement a school assembly package aimed at Secondary School pupils but will also be completely accessible on the School Transport Website which will be an information source covering Bus Safety Training, CPC Driver Training, Train Training and relevant travel and transport information in our region.



Regional Network Strategy

The SWWITCH Regional Network Strategy was submitted on time to the Welsh Government on the 17th January 2014. It was largely informed by the responses received to the consultation and (unlike other consortia strategies) focuses on managing changes to bus funding through the establishment of a financial and accessibility model. The Minister intends to ask the newly established Bus Policy Group for Wales to include the regional strategies as part of their work plan in the next year.

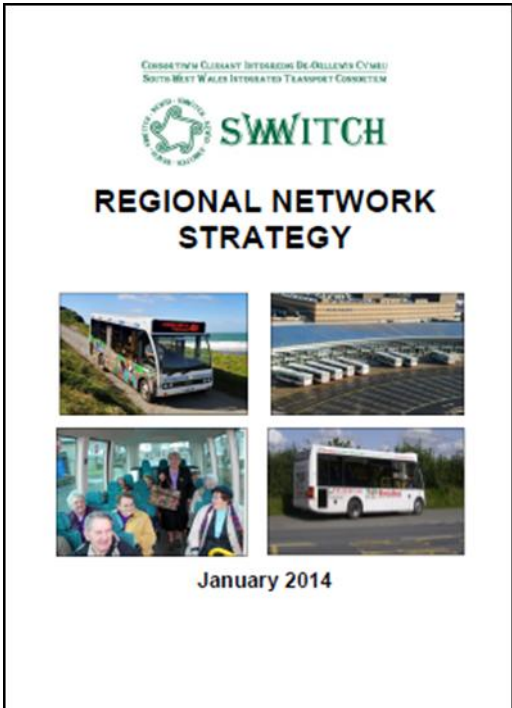
Long Term Planning Process for Rail services in Wales

Network Rail is making progress in the Long Term Planning Process (LTPP) for Rail in Wales. This work is intended to develop a range of options for future investment in rail for the period beyond 2019. The Wales work follows other LTPPs prepared for Long Distance, Regional and Urban and Rail Freight services.

The process which includes engagement with key stakeholders will examine various growth (or reduction) demand scenarios and look at what needs to be done to rail infrastructure to ensure that demand can be met (i.e. that rail can play an appropriate role in supporting economic development). Funders will then have a range of options and a clear pathway to achieve those options.

The work is still at an early stage, but it is expected that a draft Wales LTPP will be published in autumn 2014 and the final LTPP will be published in summer 2015.

Network Rail has met with SWWITCH twice already as part of this process and has acknowledged the value of the SWWITCH Rail Strategy in supporting the LTPP work.



Local Transport Fund bids

The funding regime for delivering RTP projects has changed from the former Regional Transport Consortia Grant to the Local Transport Fund from April 1st 2014. This new fund (which has only £15.4m available across Wales in 2014/15) requires a minimum of 10% match funding from Local Authorities. A maximum of 5 projects per Authority can be submitted and the Welsh Government will pay no more than £1.5m per project. The closing date for submissions was 28th February 2014 and fingers and toes are crossed that the four SWWITCH Councils will be rewarded for their efforts in submitting well prepared and presented bids.



Baglan Bridge

Construction has started on the £7.3 million link bridge on Baglan Energy Park. The four span bridge crosses railway lines and sidings that sever the Park, constraining its development and access options. The bridge creates a viable through route for buses that can deliver employees close to the offices and SME's on the Park, connecting with Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot. It will also form part of a safe route to the proposed new school in Baglan Bay. The link is due to open in June 2015.



Green Dragon Bus

Just after the last newsletter was issued Green Dragon publicised their first user for their community scooter hire scheme. The scheme, based on the "wheels to work" principle, is intended to help those (over 17 years old) who live in rural areas and who have no access to private transport and no public transport options, to be able to hire a scooter at a reasonable rate to allow them to access training and job opportunities. Their first applicant completed the process in two weeks, including an application, interview, compulsory basic training and being issued with safety clothing. The applicant Toby (pictured left with the CBT Trainer) was very grateful for the freedom the scheme will allow him.

Scheme Name	LA	14/15 RTP Bid £k
Port Talbot to Swansea bus corridor and link bridge	NPT	1,500
Port Talbot Interchange	NPT	100
Fabian Way walking/cycling/bus access***	SWA	330
Amman Valley Cycleway **	NPT	505
Park and share sites near the M4	SWA	55
City Centre Urban Cycling	SWA	330
NCN links to Railway Stations (Fishguard, Goodwick and Milford Haven)	PCC	179
Carmarthenshire Walking & Cycling linkages	CCC	300
Strategic Bus corridors in Carmarthen	CCC	150
Strategic bus corridors RTI development	SWA	110
Haverfordwest to Tenby Bus corridor & Tenby Public Transport Interchange	PCC	603
Pembroke Dock Public Transport Interchange	PCC	405
Carmarthen Station Interchanges	CCC	175
Morfa Distributor road	SWA	1,500
Waterston/Blackbridge Access Improvements	PCC	135
Northern Distributor Network - Bulford Road*	PCC	697
Cross Hands ELR	CCC	500
Ammanford Economic Regeneration infrastructure	CCC	400
Community Transport Capital Enhancement Grant	NPT	65



The 'All Wales' bilingual journey sharing scheme was launched on Tuesday 18th February 2014 at the Liberty Stadium, Swansea. The main function of the site is to provide an online tool matching potential Car Sharers, both drivers and passengers. The website is free to register on and provides all the information needed by potential car sharers, such as safety information, cost savings, and carbon savings. It is a secure website to match registered users' journeys and has the benefit of providing useful information on carbon saving compared with a single occupancy driver making the same journey.

Users of the scheme do not have to be able to drive or own a car as there will be the facility to choose to share as a passenger. Alternatively the user can choose another mode of transport such as cycling or taxi sharing.

As part of the launch event, Craig Barrack from Carbon Heroes, with Jayne Cornelius the Regional Travel Plan Coordinator announced the launch competition 'Win a tank of fuel'.

Tell it how it is

The Petitions Committee of the National Assembly for Wales is keen to hear the views of users across Wales on bus and community transport provision. In particular views on any recent changes in provision and how they have affected users. An online survey is available on

<http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=218>

Responses will be used alongside other evidence gathered to help form a series of recommendations to the Welsh Government. But hurry! The closing date is 31st March 2014.

Bus funding

The Minister has announced a change to the new bus funding regime introduced last April. The Regional Transport Services Grant will be replaced by a new fund "Bus Services Support Grant". This will be paid directly to Local Councils, who are able to continue to work together if they choose. In South West Wales the joint working on that element of bus funding which relates to mileage based payments LKSG (the former Bus Service Operators Grant) has worked well, with stability maintained throughout the year, helping operators of bus and community transport services plan better. So the decision to continue to work together (with Swansea as Host financial authority) was relatively easy.



Goodbye from the
SWITCH Team

sharecymru 

sharecymru helps you travel more sustainably whilst commuting, on business and at leisure.



When you've registered at www.sharecymru.com, you can add journeys you're planning to make and find people with whom you might share.

Tablets to make transport better

Funding obtained through the SWITCH Capital Enhancement Programme has been used to purchase and implement 3 computer 'Tablet' screens to enable passenger booking information to be sent directly to the Town Rider vehicles utilising Trapeze software.

Bookings for the Town Rider services are managed by the Pembrokeshire Council's Demand Management Centre. Prior to the introduction of the new technology, the transfer of booking information was sometimes problematic in terms of ensuring the drivers are provided with the latest bookings, trip cancellations and changes to pick-up times.

The implementation on this technology ensures the drivers always have the latest booking information available on-board the vehicle and it will also allow changes in booking information to be sent direct to the vehicle at short notice. This will allow the 24 hour notice required for bookings to be reduced to same day bookings.

