

Access Group Meeting 14-06 10 June 2010

1. Present

H Langen, Chairman	A James	R Rainford
B Thomas Cleaver	A Hunt	E Rich
B Cleevely, Treasurer	H Mathias	J Price
Cllr C Cavill	M Bell	M Goodall
J McNamara	A Barrett	R Griffiths
A Burns	M Bunney	Cllr S James

2. Apologies

Cllr J Codd S Butler A Tinnuche P Murphy, Secretary

3. Guest Speaker

Angela Burns AM was welcomed to the meeting together with other guests. Questions were then put and discussion ensued on

a) The Blue Badge consultation and reform.

The main commitments were given in January 2010. The badge scheme will cover infants with medical conditions yet to be defined. Other persons will also be eligible under the revised scheme. Badge abuse is to be addressed through database checks and powers to seize badges. It was questioned if badges could be of temporary duration perhaps by colour coding. This would be of benefit to a person with a major trauma. Some 11,000 badges are issued in Pembrokeshire with 8000 being sanctioned by doctors.

The revised scheme will be in place between 2010 and 2014. A timetable is on the internet defining progress to be made with the reform.

b) Access to train services.

A call for evidence on accessibility drew attention to various lackings at stations. Currently data gathering is still being completed for examination and proposals to be made. The Pembroke Dock interchange has been approved for implementation by WAG. There have been improvements to railway stations by Arriva. That body has reduced disabled parking in many stations on the basis of under use. Pre-booking of train journeys is required to deal with special needs. Taxis are provided to transfer passengers to access friendly stations. The allocated space on trains for a wheelchair user was questioned for adequacy. The use of first class carriages would be an easy remedy as these carriages are more spacious. The problem is that the design standards were set many years ago and do not reflect the use of large powered wheelchairs. Disabled toilet provisions on trains was criticised.

c) Achievements in improving access to services and facilities.

Various documents have been published and a website established. A petitions committee has been set up to deal with any matters of concern. The Assembly Estate requests two weeks notice to access the Assembly building. Policies have been set up and feedback sought from disabled groups.

Locally bus stops have been improved using WAG funds. The template for blind voters was criticised for difficult use. Councillor S James joined the meeting.

- d) Support for transport initiatives such as the Town Rider Scheme.
L.A.'s are provided funded in a grant of which 10% must be spent on Community Transport. Future budgets will be difficult and continuity will be disrupted by finance and the re election of the Assembly. PACTO is undertaking valued work and its support will be lobbied for continued assistance. The concessionary bus pass is available to over 60's and disabled persons. Currently the scheme is being examined to see if administration costs can be reduced. The current transport provision for young pupils was complimented.
- e) Promotion of access groups and access officers.
Disability Wales are being funded for specific projects. It was felt other access groups were not being supported financially. Access Officers have reduced to three in the 22 Councils in Wales, the function being added to other officers remit in most L.A.'s.
- f) Access to tourism and the venues database.
The database is not publically available although completed. The data would be valuable in booking premises. Businesses in the grading scheme are required to have an access statement.
- g) Health Centre, Narberth.
There is a step link to Bellmore Gardens. Land is private where a ramp could be provided. The Health Centre as owners will not answer requests for the release of land to construct a link ramp.

A Barrett left the meeting.

The internal layout of the building is difficult with disabled toilets on the first floor. A site meeting was agreed as the way forward. An audit of Health Centres was undertaken some time ago by the Health Board and a definition of work at each centre drawn up.

- h) Information provided by Angela Burns.
 - 1) An offer of work experience at the Assembly for young people was made.
 - 2) A short debate can be run in the Assembly. Angela would be happy to speak for 15 minutes to make a case on any particular topic.
 - 3) Ideas for the conservative manifesto were requested such as promoting the designation of Access Officers.

Angela was thanked for her attendance and she left the meeting.

4. Minutes of 13 May

A walkabout by Guide Dogs at Narberth was postponed. Narberth Town Council has sought a meeting on the matter of a crossing on Spring Gardens.

5. Treasurers Report

The current balance is £2, 857.50

6. Correspondence

- a) Civil Parking Enforcement is to be progressed with the powers for on street enforcement transferring to the Council. This would be further discussed at the next meeting.
- b) The Bishops Palace in St Davids has received an award. The Group has been invited to an event on the 1st July for the conservation award presentation.
- c) Disability Wales is to hold a campaign briefing in September. 'Independent Living Now' is the subject.
- d) Breast Test Wales will have an accessible vehicle when in the County.
- e) Disability Wales special meeting is to discuss the memorandum and articles for terms of holding positions on the Board. The Group agreed the changes.

7. Pembrokeshire Passport Launch

This will be at 1.30 for 2.00 on Wednesday 16th June at Plas Hyfred, Narberth. Wales Council for the blind have quoted for CD versions of the booklet at £40 plus £5 per copy.

Speakers at the event would be Henry, Sian and Alan.

Passports and leaflets have been provided to the Contact Centre for issue. Arriva Trains representative is the Franchise and Stakeholder Manager. Visitors to the event are to sign in with contact numbers.

C Cavill left the meeting.

8. Street Displays

Concern was expressed at the use of footways in Dew Street and High Street, Haverfordwest for the display of goods for sale. The Streetcare section of the Council would be informed.

B Thomas Cleaver left the meeting.

9. Chairman's Report

Town and Community Councils are recommended to have a disability officer. That person can then have training from Disability Wales. Cabinet members of PCC run quarterly meetings with Community Councils where this could be raised.

10. Access Officers Report

Equality training was available to the Group on 2nd, 9th or 12th July 9.30 – 1.00 in County Hall. It was agreed to proceed on 2nd July.

11. Any Other Business

- a) It was noted that the next meeting would be preceded by the AGM.
- b) A display stand was agreed for acquisition.

Meeting finished 4.40pm