

An award winning transport project that is revolutionising public transport in West Wales celebrates its first birthday on 24<sup>th</sup> August.

Bwcabus, which has received almost £500k from the EU's Convergence European Regional Development Fund, is a pilot bus service aimed at revolutionising transport in the Teifi Valley. It uses the latest technologies to provide flexible local public transport. The system developed by the University of Glamorgan is designed to provide the local communities with a local bus service which takes people directly to the main bus route, to enable them to travel further afield.

Since the Bwcabus service was launched over 700 passenger have registered for the service and it is likely to reach 12,750 passenger journeys by its first birthday which is 37% over the annual target.

Customer satisfaction results have shown that people are using Bwcabus to access a wide range of services such as healthcare and employment and have started travelling to additional destinations not on a conventional bus route.

Regular users Mr & Mrs Pearce from Pentrecwrt said, "At first we were sceptical about the running of such an innovative service, but are delighted at its efficiency and success. From a personal view point, we no longer have to walk a mile or more to the bus route in all kinds of inclement weather, in order to meet the Carmarthen to Cardigan service to socialise with friends or go shopping. Not only do we get to our connection, the Bwcabus will get us back home. A superb door to door service. The Bwcabus also gives us quicker, easier access to places such as Llanelli, Llandeilo or Swansea and of course Newcastle Emlyn and Cardigan in the other direction without the use of our car – therefore cutting our costs and also our carbon footprint to a minimum. Thanks to Bwcabus!"

Bwcabus has achieved all that was expected of it and more. Its popularity with travellers in north Carmarthenshire and south Ceredigion has increased demand on the Bwcabus network by 45% in its first year. This compares with a decline in rural public transport usage generally'. said Professor Stuart Cole who initially created the concept.

'The Bwcabus radical innovation came from the Welsh Government's posing a simple challenge to the Wales Transport Research Centre (WTRC) at the University of Glamorgan five years ago. How do we as a Government provide an improved quality bus service for rural passengers? This objective fits in with the Government's policy to make the concessionary fares bus pass available to more over 60's travellers'.

'Producing the highly sophisticated system took time. But through our dedicated development team at the WTRC, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion county councils working with the bus companies and Traveline it worked well from the start. We are now looking at the extension to the Bwcabus service'

'The University of Glamorgan has shown how government, academia and industry can work together to produce and implement radical ideas which provide workable solutions. From difficult policy questions to concept to innovative practical answers'

The Bwcabus project has already won two prestigious awards. On 15th July, it won 'Most Innovative Transport Project' category at the National Transport Awards in Manchester, beating off a strong field of national and regional initiatives from across the UK.

This follows on from the award won earlier in the year from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport Cymru. Bwcabus won the category of Best Partnership recognising the work of Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion County Council, the University of Glamorgan's Wales Transport Research Centre, Welsh Assembly Government, Traveline Cymru, Richards Bros and Morris Travel.

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