

# Exhibition highlights ATW disability scheme

## Hidden disabilities come to fore with Confident Traveller

### COMMUNITY

▶ A photographic exhibition by an autistic Arriva Trains Wales passenger is highlighting a pioneering scheme which gives people with hidden disabilities the confidence to travel by train.

Robert Mann, 30, has Asperger syndrome and holds a degree in media studies, but he was previously unable to travel on public transport by himself because he lacked the confidence to speak to staff.

ATW's Confident Traveller initiative, launched three years ago, enabled him to get out and about with his camera on the trains of North Wales. Last week a selection of his photography went on show at his local station, Llandudno. It will tour stations on ATW's network to highlight the Confident Traveller scheme, for which Mann is now an ambassador.

ATW station support officer Phil Caldwell, who initiated the

scheme, said: "This Confident Traveller support isn't available anywhere else in the country, but it should be. It's empowering, and it's such a simple concept. You could extend it to people with dementia, for example, and to buses and taxis."

Caldwell has lectured on safety in many primary schools. When he was asked to talk to youngsters with Down's syndrome in Aberystwyth, he realised that the usual education materials were unsuitable.

ATW teamed up with

Shropshire's Derwen College, for young people with learning difficulties, to produce a video called A Helping Hand, which is available on YouTube. This explains to people with hidden disabilities how they can book tickets and arrange journeys, and follows three students making independent train journeys to Derwen College from as far afield as London Euston.

Caldwell uses the video in his talks to special educational needs groups. "I take them on the train so that they can put into practice

everything we've spoken about in the classroom."

A key element of the scheme is the Orange Wallet, which denotes that the holder has a hidden disability. The wallet is increasingly recognised by transport operators. Users can place tickets and passes in the wallet, and write questions inside to ask a member staff. ATW provides printed labels with questions such as "Where is the nearest toilet please?", "What time does the train to ... depart?" and "Could I please buy ... from the trolley?"

Customer-facing ATW staff wear orange badges and have been trained in how to interact with Orange Wallet holders.

The Orange Wallet transformed Robert Mann's confidence, according to his father David, who said: "About two years ago he wouldn't go out of the house on his own."

Creative arts charity TAPE is helping Mann to develop his film-making skills. Steve Swindon, the charity's chief executive, said: "For someone that has a lot of anxiety getting on a train or a bus, it makes a massive difference to know that the person in control of that vehicle or who works for the train company knows that they need support." ■



## TRAFFIC CAMERAS ARE WELCOMED

### Swansea cameras to enforce key junctions

#### BUS PRIORITY

▶ Bus operators in Swansea are delighted the city council is taking the first steps towards deploying enforcement cameras at key junctions or bus lanes.

All Welsh councils have the power to penalise drivers for moving traffic offences, such as unauthorised

stopping on yellow box junctions or making prohibited turns. Data from Cardiff, the first area to use the power, shows a marked reduction in fines from individual junctions as drivers get used to the enforcement. Bus operators believe the move has aided peak traffic flow.

Swansea is now gearing up to use similar cameras. It has operated a camera car since 2014 to deter motorists from parking in bus stops and outside schools.

A council spokesman said: "We are

in the process of surveying a variety of sites where we think there could be issues, with a view to introducing some camera enforcement."

Bev Fowles, vice-chair of CPT Cymru's bus commission, said: "It's excellent news for bus operators in the city that Swansea are biting the bullet and getting on with it.

"Journey times are critical to passenger satisfaction. Poor parking and stopping on box junctions adds to the passengers' frustration and the operators' frustration."

His company, the independent bus and coach operator South Wales Transport, is based in Swansea. He said there were many places in the city where traffic flow could be improved through enforcement of rules.

New Adventure Travel has lengthened schedules in Swansea because of growing traffic congestion. Managing director Kevyn Jones said traffic on the eastern approach to Swansea was always a problem. ■