

## **CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference that took place at Y Ganolfan, Porthmadog on Friday, 20 May 2016 from 1.00pm until 2.30pm**

### **PRESENT**

Councillors E. Selwyn Griffiths, Anne Lloyd Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Angela A. Russell, Eirwyn Williams, Owain Williams (Gwynedd Council), Cllr Michael Williams (Powys CC), Liz Saville Roberts (Member of Parliament - Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), David Roberts (Snowdonia National Park Authority), Ben Davies (Arriva Trains Wales Ltd), Tracy Parkinson (Talyllyn Railway), Roger Goodhew (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association), D. Woodhouse (Aberdyfi and Tywyn Tourism), Trefor Jones (Un Llais Cymru (Dwyfor)), Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group), Sam Hadley, Sian Lewis (Network Rail), Llinos Roberts (Public and Community Transport Officer), Mererid Watt (Translator), Glynda O'Brien (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**Apologies:** Councillors Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Dewi Owen, Gethin Williams, Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Assembly Member - Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Alun Wyn Evans (Un Llais Cymru (Meirionnydd)), Tudur Williams (Ysgol Ardudwy), Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Committee), Claire Britton (Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway), Rhyddian Mason (Cambrian Railway Partnership), Rob Newman (British Transport Police).

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

**Resolved:** To re-elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Chairman of this Committee for 2016/17.

### **2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**Resolved:** To re-elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Vice-chairman of this Committee for 2016/17.

### **3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

### **4. URGENT ITEMS**

**Setting the direction for a response form for the Wales and Borders Rail consultation**

The Chairman reported that he had held an urgent meeting with the Vice-chair and the Chair of the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Committee to draw up and send a response to the recent consultation by the Assembly Government regarding the franchise. Attention was drawn to some of the main matters such as:

- More train coaches required
- More frequent and punctual trains
- An additional train on Sundays (and especially during holidays)

- Many passengers travelling on weekends
- A direct train from Pwllheli to Cardiff
- More parking spaces around some stations
- Resources at stations to buy tickets in advance
- Improve stations along the line

**Resolved:** To request that the Member Support Officer sends a copy of the response to Members of the Cambrian Railway Committee, for information.

## **5. MINUTES**

**Submitted:** Minutes of the conference meeting held on 13 November 2015 subject to the following correction:

Item 6 (iv) – Bryn Llestair (Picnic Island) – correct the figure to 12,000 students .... instead of 1,000.

**Resolved:** To accept and approve the above minutes.

### **5.1 Matters arising from the minutes:**

#### **Bryn Llestair (Picnic Island)**

Mr David Roberts took the opportunity to convey his gratitude to Network Rail deriving from positive feedback at a meeting with Rebecca Collins regarding land in Network Rail's ownership.

## **6. NETWORK RAIL REPORT**

Sam Hadley, Public Affairs Manager and Sian Lewis, Commercial Scheme Sponsor (Network Rail), were welcomed to the meeting.

**(A)** Sam Hadley explained that he would be attending the meetings of this committee in future and Members were encouraged to contact him directly with any matters of concern. He responded to the formal questions submitted and noted as follows:

- (a) Talwrn Bach, Llanbedr level crossing - what is the latest regarding the installation of bars on the level crossing bearing in mind that transport increases over this crossing daily and there would be even more transport as the village hall is re-located (temporarily) to the airfield site.

Several members supported the same concerns as Councillor Annwen Hughes, local member for Llanbedr, and that it was a matter that had been raised by this committee for many years and that there was a real need to solve the matter once and for all.

In response, it was explained that a site inspection would be undertaken at the end of the year and it was promised that the Member Support Officer would be informed and that a comprehensive report would be submitted as well as a development timetable.

- (b) Litter on the railway in the Cricieth area, specifically on the eastern side of the town from Black Rock to Morannedd.
- (c) A number of trees and shrubs had overgrown along the railway - what were Network Rail's plans to cut/manage growth and to eradicate Japanese Knotweed?

In response, it was explained that Network Rail was getting rid of litter but there was a need to prioritise e.g. there was currently a huge clear-up project in Flintshire in light of the fact that the Urdd National Eisteddfod had been held there with the local authority providing skips and staff to assist.

In terms of a vegetation programme, if any growth was problematic it was confirmed that it would be prioritised. In terms of Japanese Knotweed, Network Rail had a legal responsibility to get rid of it if it spread on third party land. The local member was asked to provide details of specific locations where Japanese Knotweed was problematic and it would be followed up without delay.

(ch) Litter between Penychain and Pwllheli.

Again, the officer confirmed that he would deal with the above and that Network Rail was much more responsive in north Wales and any collaboration with local Councils was welcomed.

**Resolved: (a) To thank the officer for the response and to ask him to follow-up without delay.**

**(b) That Councillor Eirwyn Williams provided details of specific locations where Japanese Knotweed was spreading on third party land so that the Operational Maintenance Co-ordinator could address the problem.**

**(B)** A presentation in the form of a slide-show was received from Sian Lewis, Commercial Scheme Sponsor (Network Rail), on the background of the Barmouth Viaduct, the work so far, the scope of the work programme as well as risks and challenges associated with the repair work on an iconic listed (Grade II) viaduct.

Work undertaken to date was outlined namely:

- Site visits during summer 2015 to determine the current condition of the viaduct
- Production of a report of high level options for metallic and timber structures
- Meeting with stakeholders such as the Barmouth Viaduct Access Group (B-VAG)
- Meetings with CADW, Gwynedd Council and Snowdonia National Park

It was noted that the work had been divided into two parts namely Urgent Work and Development Work and the scope of the work was outlined as follows:

**Urgent Work:**

- Development plan to undertake repairs on the steel structure
- Work included replacing rivets and other similar materials
- An initial design was expected by the end of May

- It was aimed for it to be submitted to CADW and local authorities in June / July
- Approval of initial design during the summer
- Detailed design to be developed in October 2016
- Commence on the site in Spring 2017

#### **Development Work:**

- Develop and produce an options report during the summer
- Submit it to CADW and local authorities in September 2016
- Further meetings with CADW and local authorities were anticipated during the Autumn to agree on a preferred option, and it was hoped that it would be held by the end of the year.
- Currently, it was estimated that the design would take a year or more due to the sensitive nature of the structure.
- Actual work on the site to follow sometime in 2018
- Each one of the above would depend on the initial design stages and on consultation with the stakeholders

In the context of the challenges faced, it was noted that these would include:

- Consulting with the stakeholders
- Permissions / conditions for a listed structure
- Ecological / environmental requirements
- Unsure of the duration of the work and how much disturbance it would cause on the railway

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions to the officer and the following points were highlighted:

- (a) An appeal was made by the Chairman and the Member of Parliament - Dwyfor/Meirionnydd to be realistic with the work programme bearing in mind the previous difficulties with the delay that derived from repair work on Briwet Bridge, Penrhyndeudraeth and it was hoped that lessons had been learnt from this. Also, the importance of collaboration with Arriva Trains Wales was noted and an appeal was made for Network Rail to do so.
- (b) Importance of informing the public of what is taking place
- (c) Assurance was requested that the footpath near the bridge would remain open and collaboration with Gwynedd Council was encouraged to this end.
- (d) The A496 was a very busy highway and dangerous in light of the number of accidents that had occurred recently and that a 40 m.p.h speed limit for the road should be considered. Should there be an accident on the road in question, this would mean having to divert passengers for approximately 60 miles.

**Resolved: To accept, note and thank the officer for the presentation.**

#### **7. REPORT BY ARRIVA TRAINS WALES LTD**

A verbal report by Mr Ben Davies, Arriva Trains Wales was received, who noted that

- there was an increase in the number of passengers who used the trains and that the problem was that they did not have enough trains;
- Wi-fi provision would be ensured on the Cambrian's number 150, 158 and 175 trains from September onwards and he drew attention to the fact that some places could not receive a connection but it was ensured that it would be possible to have a connection in the Stations;
- the Comedy Festival held in Machynlleth over the May Day Bank Holiday had been a success for the service and the community;
- the hard work of promoting and developing the service would continue for the next two years until the franchise would come to an end;
- the Orange Wallet Scheme for the needs of people with learning difficulties was very successful and that it was now being promoted in film form throughout the country;
- in terms of announcements through the medium of Welsh on the Cambrian railway, it was assured that the Welsh language was important to Arriva Trains Wales and that a bilingual service would be arranged for every Station in Wales. It was noted further that there were no problems in the Stations but problems had been experienced on trains due to the distance between stations. In response to an enquiry by the Chairman regarding the timetable to receive bilingual provision on the Cambrian railway, Mr Ben Davies explained that it would not be possible to provide a specific date but that he would follow the matter up and ensure that the language provision would be included in the new franchise. It was further noted that all Arriva Trains Wales conductors were Welsh-speakers;
- the lift would be completed in Machynlleth Station by 18 June 2016;
- in terms of the 8.00pm train from Machynlleth to Pwllheli not stopping at all Stations along the line, it was explained that the main problem was the time limit for train drivers to drive without a break (4 hours) and if they had to stop at the different stations, they would exceed the time permitted to drive. It was suggested that the best way forward was to discuss further with Mr Ken Skates, Assembly Member and an appeal was made for the Member of Parliament - Dwyfor/Meirionnydd and the Assembly Member - Dwyfor/Meirionnydd to pursue the matter as well;
- discussions continued with Gwynedd Council regarding the Tourist Information Centre in Barmouth, as the Council was eager to close it and it currently sold tickets for Arriva Trains Wales for the Cambrian railway;
- a new trainline "app" for mobile phones was available to order tickets - "Arriva Train Tickets";
- in terms of low platforms, Arriva Trains Wales had undertaken work to repair 27 of them and that more required work;

**Resolved:**                      **To accept and note the report.**

**(b) To send a letter of congratulations to Ken Skates, Assembly Member - Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, Welsh Government and to invite him to attend a meeting of this Committee in future.**

**8. REPORT BY THE CAMBRIAN RAILWAYS PARTNERSHIP OFFICER**

In the absence of the Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer, his report was submitted to the Committee for information, which outlined activities / announcements that had been held / made by him since the previous meeting.

The Chairman noted that the Railway would be celebrating 150 years in 2017 and it was hoped that activities would be arranged for the celebration.

**Resolved: To accept and note the report.**

**9. REPORT BY THE BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE**

In the absence of PC Rob Newman, his report was submitted to the Committee for information, which noted a decline in most crimes on the Cambrian Coast line.

**Resolved: To accept, note and thank PC Rob Newman for the report.**

**10. FORMAL QUESTIONS**

Four formal written questions had been submitted by Members of the Conference and the Community Council and it was noted that the relevant officers had addressed these during their presentations.

**Resolved: To accept and note the above.**

**11. CORRESPONDENCE**

A statement by Dyffryn Ardudwy and Talybont Community Council was submitted which noted that they did not support the re-opening of the railway from Afonwen to Bangor because of the estimated cost of approximately £50 million which could be better spent on improving roads in the Meirionnydd area.

**CHAIRMAN**