

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE

Minutes of a meeting of the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference that took place at y Ganolfan, Porthmadog on 13 November 2015 from 1.00 pm until 2.20 pm

PRESENT

Councillors Annwen Hughes, Anne Lloyd Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dewi Owen, Angela A. Russell, Eirwyn Williams, Owain Williams (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Michael Williams (Powys CC), Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Assembly Member Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Mr David Roberts (Snowdonia National Park), Ben Davies (Arriva Trains Wales), PC Rob Newman (British Transport Police), Mr Philip Sayers (Talylyn Railway), Mr Roger Goodhew (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Passenger Association), Mr Alun Wyn Evans (Un Llais Cymru (Meirionnydd), Mr D. Woodhouse (Aberdyfi and Tywyn Tourism), Mr Rhydian Mason (Cambrian Railway Partnership), Llinos Roberts (Community and Public Transport Officer), Mr Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group), Mr Dylan Bowen (Network Rail), Mrs Mererid Watt (Translator), Mrs Glynda O'Brien (Member and Scrutiny Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Selwyn Griffiths, John Brynmor Hughes, Gethin Williams, Mrs Liz Saville Roberts (Member of Parliament Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Ms Rebecca Evans (Assembly Member, Mid and West Wales), Mr Simon Thomas (Assembly Member Mid and West Wales), Mr Tudur Williams (Ysgol Ardudwy), Mr Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Committee).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: (a) To re-elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as Chair of this Committee for 2015/16.

(b) To express the Committee's thanks to Councillor Selwyn Griffiths for his hard work in his role as Chairman over the last year.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: (a) To re-elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2015/16.

(b) Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams was asked to chair this meeting as Councillor Selwyn Griffiths was unable to attend due to a family bereavement.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

4. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were received for discussion.

5. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of the conference meeting that took place on 24 April 2015.

Resolved: To accept and approve the above minutes.

6. NETWORK RAIL REPORT

No written report was submitted by Network Rail, however, Mr Dylan Bowen reported verbally on the following developments:

- (i) That Network Rail had written to the stakeholders to advise that there would be a delay with the work of completing the lift at Machynlleth Station until March 2016. Due to the weather forecast for this weekend, it would be impossible to use the crane and it was trusted that the work could be completed by March.
- (ii) In response to the above, a Member stated his disappointment and that only one platform could be used and in addition passengers had to wait at Dyfi Junction. Having said this, it was felt that the provision when in place would be a huge improvement.
- (iii) In response to a question by Councillor Owain Williams regarding concern about the delay at Dyfi Junction specifically for passengers from Machynlleth to Pwllheli, Mr Bowen explained that in terms of upgrading the route for road-users Network Rail would be more than willing to collaborate with a third party to provide a plan but it would be more beneficial if such a plan could be included in a wider transport plan. It was stressed that Network Rail would not be responsible as the main driver of any plan in terms of funding but it was ensured that they would collaborate with authorities and he made reference to examples where such plans had been operated to provide car parks in South Wales.
- (iv) It was suggested that an item to discuss Dyfi Junction should be referred to the joint meeting of the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Committee and the Cambrian Coast Railway Committee that would take place on 27 November 2015 at y Plas, Machynlleth.
- (v) In terms of Cllr Gethin Williams' question regarding implementing a moratorium on Barmouth Bridge payments during the planning/repair period, Mr Bowen noted that he had discussed the matter earlier with the Member. It was noted further that Network Rail was in the same position as Gwynedd Council regarding having to find savings with a target to find approximately 20% over the next period. However, discussions were continuing with Gwynedd Council regarding repairing the bridge with the intention of reducing maintenance costs. It was currently premature to report fully but it was noted that initial discussions were on-going between Network Rail and relevant stakeholders including Gwynedd Council and the Snowdonia National Park and CADW.
- (vi) Mr David Roberts referred to concern regarding land in the ownership of Network Rail called Bryn Llestair (Picnic Island) and he was aware that the South Snowdonia Access Forum had contacted Network Rail regarding the land yet they had not received a response. The land was used by approximately 1,000 students from Outward Bound Wales.
- (vii) In response to the above, Mr Bowen noted that he was not aware of the matter, however, if the South Snowdonia Access Forum could contact him and/or via the Member Support Officer he gave an assurance that he would follow the matter up.
- (viii) Concern was expressed by Councillor Dewi Owen regarding the excessive overgrowth on land in the ownership of Network Rail between the A493 boundary wall and the railway. It was noted that there were sharp corners on the highway in question and there was a real need to cut back the overgrowth to prevent any accidents.

Friday, 13th November, 2015

- (ix) In response to the above, Mr Bowen noted that Network Rail had a successful vegetation management plan and that railway safety was a priority for Network Rail. It was suggested that if the Member noted the exact location of the overgrowth and forwarded this to the Member Support Officer she could then send this on to Mr Bowen to follow up. It was further noted that Members could contact the 24 hour helpline with any issues of concern and if they were not satisfied with the response then they could contact Mr Bowen directly.

Resolved: (a) To request that the Member Support Officer refers the above matters to Mr Dylan Bowen for further attention.

(b) To refer an item to discuss Dyfi Junction to the joint meeting of the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Committee and the Cambrian Coast Railway Committee to take place on 27 November 2015 at y Plas, Machynlleth.

7. REPORT BY ARRIVA TRAINS WALES LTD

Reference was made to the report submitted and attached to the agenda by Mr Ben Davies on behalf of Arriva Trains Wales Ltd. that referred to:

- Key achievements – noting that customer satisfaction was at record levels (89%) and was one of the top performing rail operators in the UK
- Performance measures – 97.9% and 93.5% in terms of reliability and punctuality
- £45m had been invested against a franchise requirement of only £400,000
- New and improved services that included adding trains with additional seats, introducing new products and supporting community projects
- Franchise overview and it was stated there were:
 - 2,204 employees
 - 1,009 route miles
 - 956 services operated per day
 - 27.4 million passenger journeys per year
 - a fleet of 128 trains
 - 247 stations, 55 of which were staffed.

During the meeting an additional hand-out was circulated to the Members.

Mr Ben Davies added that there had been an increase in the number of passengers on the trains during this summer and that this was heartening year on year with the ERTMS system proving to be a success.

A new service was seen from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth with the 7.00pm train and although it did not stop at each Railway Station discussions were continuing to try and resolve the situation.

Mr Trevor Roberts, Vice-Chair of the Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth Railway Committee had been in discussion with officers from Welsh Government regarding a timetable that was acceptable to all.

It was recognised that there was a need to give consideration to establishing more shelters and more car parks and the intention would be to conduct local discussions.

In response to the complaints regarding long waits for connections at Dyfi Junction, the Cambrian Railway Partnership Officer explained that the matter was receiving attention in terms of identifying which train has to wait long in order to identify this for the new timetable next year.

The following matters were drawn to the attention of Mr Ben Davies and he gave an

assurance that he would give them urgent attention.

(a) That the train windows were dirty

(b) Complaints regarding the toilets

Resolved: To accept and note the report and request that Mr Ben Davies deals with points (a) and (b) above.

8. **CAMBRIAN RAILWAY PARTNERSHIP OFFICER'S REPORT**

A report was submitted by the Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer outlining the activities undertaken, such as:

- A Helping Hand – Film Project – film for young people with special needs that won an ACoRP award in the category 'Passengers Matter'. The film had also been submitted to the UK Rail Industry Awards. In addition, it was noted that arrangements were in hand to show the film and address Members of Parliament, Assembly Members, Peers and senior civil servants at both the Senedd in Cardiff and the Palace of Westminster.
- Aberystwyth Station – Shopmobility – there was an agreement in principle to work with CAVO to meet rail passengers who had pre-booked a shopmobility scooter at Aberystwyth station.
- School Posters Campaign - this was part of a programme in which pupils were tasked to design a safety poster and a number had been displayed at stations local to their schools.
- Publications – he elaborated on several examples in order to encourage railway use.
- Cambrian Implementation Group - focus groups and surveys had been organised together with discussions with Caersws Community Council to look at the potential opportunities for a more suitable car parking arrangement for the station
- Community Rail Wales – A meeting had taken place with the Minister to see how the work of partnerships could be further supported by Welsh Government.
- Website – it was noted that the number of visitors were increasing.

In response to a comment made by a Member regarding promoting the film, the CRP Officer noted that Arriva Trains Wales would assist with this. He took the opportunity to thank Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas in relation to the arrangements to visit the Senedd on 19 November to launch the film.

It was added that it would be possible to show the film to Members of this Committee at the next meeting, however, in the meantime a link could be sent to the Member Support Officer to forward to Members.

On behalf of the Committee, the CRP Officer was congratulated for all his work in promoting the railway.

Resolved: To accept and note the report.

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

PC Rob Newman presented a brief summary of recent activity and noted that not much had happened on the Cambrian Railway. The majority of cases dealt with were road traffic offences mainly the on-going problems of vehicle drivers misusing level crossings.

Friday, 13th November, 2015

Locally, it was noted that there were cases of misuse across Talwrn Bach level crossing at Llanbedr. It was understood that barriers would be installed soon on the level crossing in question.

It was noted that the opening of Wetherspoons Public House at Pwllheli had impacted on the amount of passengers on the 20:12 hours service from Pwllheli to Machynlleth on Friday and Saturday evenings. Some reports had been received from train crews reporting abuse from passengers, particularly in relation to the time access given to the train before departure from Pwllheli. They would work closely with British Transport Police from Bangor and Rhyl to monitor any further problems.

It was noted further that if there was any problem on the railway/trains that it was possible to contact British Transport Police or send a text message to number 61016.

In response to the Police Officer's report, it was pleasing to hear that barriers would be installed on Llanbedr level crossing bearing in mind that approximately 500 cars travelled from Mochras at any one time and that it was one of the largest camps in Europe.

In response to a comment made by a Member regarding having a Police Officer on duty outside Wetherspoons, Pwllheli, PC Rob Newman explained that this would be under the jurisdiction of North Wales Police but Pwllheli Transport Police could try to target problems at the railway station and on the train. It was not possible for them to be in Pwllheli every Saturday night but it was understood that there was CCTV outside the public house.

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

10. **FORMAL QUESTIONS**

(a) Two formal written questions had been submitted by Conference Members and it was noted that the relevant officers had dealt with one of these during their presentations. Regarding the question from Councillor Gethin Williams it was understood that he had discussed the matter with Mr Dylan Bowen, Network Rail.

(b) Membership – A request had been submitted by Penrhyndeudraeth Town Council together with a letter from the Meirionnydd Committee of Un Llais Cymru to invite every Community and Town Council with the railway line running through their wards to be members of the Cambrian Coast Railway Committee.

It was reported to the meeting that there were 16 Community / Town Councils on the coast. It was also noted that local Gwynedd Council Members had been elected to serve on the Committee and were able to report to the Community/Town Councils they attend on the matters discussed at the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference.

Following a discussion on this matter, it was suggested that the Community/Town Councils may raise matters with the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference by referring them to either the local elected member / the two representatives of One Voice Wales and / or by agreement of the Chair that a representative may be invited to attend the meeting. Also, in future the Members and Scrutiny Support Officer be requested to send an agenda to the Clerks of the 16 Community / Town Councils as listed below.

Resolved: To request that the Member Support Officer:

(a) responds to a letter from the Dwyfor and Meirionnydd Area Committee to convey the Committee's decision as outlined above.

Friday, 13th November, 2015

(b) in the future that an agenda/minutes of the Committee is sent to the following Community/Town Council Clerks:

Meirionnydd

Dwyfor

Aberdyfi

Porthmadog

Tywyn

Cricieth

Llangelynnin

Llanystumdwy

Arthog

Llannor (Abererch)

Barmouth

Pwllheli

Dyffryn Ardudwy

Llanbedr

Llanfair

Harlech

Talsarnau

Penrhyndeudraeth

CHAIRMAN