
CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE 10/11/17

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference held at Y Ganolfan, Porthmadog, on Friday, 10 November 2017
From 11.00 a.m. until 1.15 p.m.**

PRESENT

**Councillor E. Selwyn Griffiths – Chairman
Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams – Vice-chairman**

Representing:

Cllrs. Dylan Bullard, Anne Lloyd Jones, Dewi Owen, Annwen Hughes, Angela Russell (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. J. Michael Williams (Powys County Council), Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Assembly Member Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Sioned Roberts (Office Manager to Dafydd Elis Thomas AM), Bedwyr Gwilym (representative on behalf of Mrs Liz Saville Roberts MP), Cllr. Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group), Cllr. Trefor Jones (Dwyfor Representative One Voice Wales), Mr Alun Wyn Evans (Meirionnydd Representative One Voice Wales), Ms. Claire Britton (Ffestiniog and Eryri Railways), Mr R. M. Whitehouse (Talylyn Railway), Mr Ben Davies (Arriva Trains Wales), Mr Lewis Brencher, (Arriva Trains Wales), Mr Sam Hadley (Network Rail), George Collinson (Network Rail), Mr Roger Goodhew (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association), Llinos Roberts (Public and Community Transport Officer), Mrs Mererid Watt (Translator), Mrs Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support Officer).

Observers: Cllr. Louise Hughes (Friog and Llwyngwrl Community Councils)

Apologies: Councillors John Brynmor Hughes, Gethin Williams Owain Williams (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Liaison Committee), Mr Tudur Williams (Head teacher of Ysgol Ardudwy), PC Rob Newman (British Transport Police), Mrs Liz Saville Roberts (MP for Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Cllr. Freya Bentham (Snowdonia National Park), Mr Neil Hamilton (AM for Mid and West Wales), Mr Stuart Williams (Talylyn Railway), Mr Aled Jones-Griffith (Assistant Head, Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor), Ms. Claire Williams (Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer), Ms. Ann Elias (GMW),

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved: To elect Councillor E. Selwyn Griffiths as Chairman of this Committee for 2017-18.

The Chairman took the opportunity of:

- (a) Thanking members for electing him as Chairman.
- (b) Congratulating Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas, on his recent appointment as Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Welsh Government.
- (c) Welcoming Bedwyr Gwilym to his first meeting on behalf of the Dwyfor Meirionnydd Member of Parliament.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Resolved: To elect Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams as Vice-chairman of this Committee for 2017-18.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received from any member present.

4. URGENT MATTERS

No urgent matters were received by the Chairman.

5. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of the meeting of the conference held on the 3 March 2017.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes.

6. REPORT BY NETWORK RAIL

Mr Sam Hadley, Wales Route Public Affairs Manager, and Mr George Collins were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Hadley reported as follows:

(a) Barmouth Viaduct 150th Celebrations

That the above celebration in Barmouth had been a great success. Mr Andy Thomas, the Wales Route Manager, had met with the Member of Parliament, Assembly Member and county and local members during the weekend of the celebrations.

It was noted that there is commitment to invest in the above structure in order to make it viable for the next 150 years.

(b) River Artro Blockade

- Innovative approach had been developed collaboratively between the designers, contractors and Network Rail engineers in order to maximise the output over the 10 day blockade with regard to the temporary works jacking system used on the river Artro Bridge. This system negates the need to remove the track completely.
- Afon Wen – emergency works were undertaken when a sink hole had opened after recent storms and 66 cubic metre of fibre reinforced concrete was used to speed up the process which negated the need for mesh. Further storm damage had been identified nearby which will be addressed by Network Rail as soon as possible.
- Barmouth Viaduct – longitudinal timbers were changed on the viaduct and it was great to see other delivery units utilising the Artro Blockade to maintain the network.
- Rock netting in the Aberdyfi area also delivered in the blockade and is ongoing which is designed to prevent future unplanned closures due to rockfall.

(c) Penhelig

The Penhelig Station will be closed for 3 months from 3 January to allow delivery of a major platform renewal. Letters had been sent out to local residents and a drop-in session will be held in December.

It was further reported that rock netting work will be delivered in the local area.

Members made the following observations:

- (i) In response to a question by the local member of Aberdyfi with regard to taking equipment to undertake the work at Penhelyg, Mr Hadley promised to find out the details and contact the member with the information.
- (ii) Network Rail engineers / contractors were thanked for the work carried out on the River Artro blockade, and it was noted that they did not impair on the residents nearby.
- (iii) With regard to the latest situation regarding the installation of barriers at Talwrn Bach crossing, Llanbedr, Mr Hadley stated that this work has been scheduled for 2018.
- (iv) No update was given with regard to the Dyffryn Ardudwy Station Car Park but Mr Hadley promised to contact the local member when information comes to hand.

Resolved: To receive, note and thank Mr Sam Hadley for the above report.

7. REPORT BY ARRIVA TRAINS WALES

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ben Davies and Mr Lewis Brencher to the meeting.

Ms Claire Williams, the newly appointed Cambrian Railway Partnership Officer, had apologised for her inability to be present at the meeting but had sent a report to Mr Davies which he presented as follows:

The report referred to activities prior to Claire's appointment and activities since that time. Prior to joining the world of Community Rail, she spent 5 years working as a Neighbourhood Partnership Officer with Cardiff Council where her role covered all aspects of Community Safety, Health and Well Being, Environmental Issues and Education and Employment so with a background in community engagement she brings with her a wealth of experience.

During this short time Claire has met with a number of partners, both funding and strategic to introduce herself and to discuss how she can continue working together in collaboration to ensure that work isn't duplicated work and that the best value is received for public monies.

Rail Franchising and Welsh Government support

Ms Claire Williams has recently attended a meeting with Arriva Trains Wales where the future of CRPs was discussed and how they might fit in with the next franchise and is due to meet KeolisAmey and MTR Corporation (Cymru) Ltd in the next few weeks.

Surveys

The Cambrian Railways Partnership was delighted to work with the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee and to commission a survey that was undertaken in spring 2017 as part of a grant from the Welsh Government. The surveys follow on from the success of the 2013 and 2015 surveys which resulted in improved services on the Cambrian Lines. The results of this survey are being presented to Gareth Evans, Rail Economist for Welsh Government by the Committee November 17th 2017 at a meeting in Cathays Park.

201/2018 Promotional Campaign

The partnership received additional funding which allowed to prepare a brand new tourist-focussed website which is now live, the web address is www.walesonrails.com and to produce further short films which will be released February/March until early summer this year. The campaign will be exclusively based on social media platforms and based on the 2018 “Year of the Sea”.

2018 is “Year of the Sea” and in conjunction with Visit Wales, ATW, and various other key partners a number of community engagement events will be put together throughout the year based on the various themes of each season with all events taking place within the Cambrian Coast, with some taking place on the train. More details will be available at the next meeting.

Mr Ben Davies added that Arriva Trains Wales will be working closely in partnership with the Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer and were keen to link communities together with promotions to travel by train. One event suggested was turning a train into a carnival during the summer months, holding a massive sandcastle competition in Cricieth to bring in more people, working in partnership with Haven, Pwllheli, Visit Wales, Ffestiniog Railway, etc.

Bow Street Re-opening

Ms Claire Williams has recently attended a meeting with Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and a number of other strategic partners regarding the re-opening of Bow Street Station following the UK Department for Transport (DfT) announcing the outcome of successful applications made to its New Stations Fund– funding which has been made available towards the capital expenditure cost of schemes to open new or re-open previously closed railway stations promoted by third parties in England and Wales.

The proposed scheme is a local and regional transport priority in the Mid Wales Joint Local Transport Plan 2015-2020 and will provide a public transport interchange with a new railway station, car and cycle parking facilities to enable passengers to access both bus and rail services and to car share from this location. The scheme also seeks to address local road safety concerns by providing a A487/ A4159 junction improvement with active travel facilities. The scheme will support and deliver potential economic growth opportunities and improved access to services and facilities located in and around Aberystwyth and North Ceredigion.

Whilst the project is currently in its design stage, it is on plan for completion during the summer of 2020.

2017-2018 Business Plan

The business plan for this current financial year was presented at the March 2017 meeting of the Cambrian Railways Partnership for approval by the funding stakeholders. The business plan was approved by the partnership and is currently being worked on.

Dementia Friendly Communities and Stations

As the new Cambrian Railways Partnership Development Officer, one of the key objectives is Community engagement, developing plans to expand the reach of the CRP to a wider range of groups including those socially disadvantaged.

Under this remit, Claire is currently working with strategic and funding partners at making The Cambrian Railway Line a Dementia Friendly Community in its own entity. This is a huge task and will

take approximately 3 years to fulfil. However, she is looking to break this down and do it station by station, starting with those manned stations, and these initially will be, Machynlleth, Barmouth, Pwelli and Shrewsbury. This would make the Cambrian Railway Line the first Dementia Friendly Railway Line in the UK. There are currently a very small number of DF stations in Wales but she strongly believes this goal is achievable.

As Bow Street is in the design element, it has been requested that whilst doing an Equality Impact Assessment for the re-opening of Bow Street and by working with the Alzheimer's Society to make it a Dementia Friendly Station.

In conclusion, Mr Ben Davies stated that Arriva Trains Wales had withdrawn from the bidding process to run rail services in Wales from 2018. However, the 2000+ staff will be transferring under the terms and conditions of TUPE to the new franchise company. Arriva Trains Wales will continue to improve the service for the people of Wales for the next eleven months.

The weather had not been favourable during the summer and in partnership with Network Rail the performance had begun to increase and may continue to do so.

During the ensuing discussion, individual members made the following comments:

1. Mr Ben Davies was thanked for the up-date and with regard to the new franchise, it is understandable that employees of Arriva Trains Wales are worried about their future and that of their families. Public Transport jobs in Machynlleth are valued and a huge percentage of the population of the town and area rely on public transport jobs for their living. The working relationship between Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail was valued and also the support to the area by the Welsh Government.
2. Arriva Trains Wales have really improved over the years and hopefully the successful company who wins the new franchise will continue the good work undertaken.
3. It was stressed the importance of conductors / guards on the trains.
4. It was also noted the importance of looking after disabled people using the services.
5. That there is a need to build a shelter at Dyfi Junction. In response, Mr Ben Davies agreed to further investigate into this matter.
6. With regard to issuing train tickets to a group of people together, Mr Lewis Brencher stated that Arriva Trains Wales had invested in a new scheme and are working on reducing the size of tickets. In future, passengers will be able to buy monthly tickets as well as group tickets, and also tickets can be downloaded onto mobile phones.
7. In response to whether there would be more carriages on Bank Holidays due to health and safety aspects, Mr Davies stated that Arriva Trains Wales did not have sufficient trains – 24 running from Machynlleth. Next year Arriva Trains will be investing and hopefully there is the possibility that more trains will be available for the summer of 2018.
8. It was pleasing to note of the objectives at making The Cambrian Railway Line a Dementia Friendly Community in its own entity. This is extremely important and it was suggested that the Cambrian Railway Partnership Officer contacts Emma Quaek at the Glaslyn Leisure Centre, Porthmadog, if she needs further information since Emma has been undertaking specialised events with dementia patients.

Resolved: To receive, note and thank the officers for the above report and observations.

8. FORMAL QUESTIONS

Formal written questions had been submitted by Members of this Committee / Community Councils / and individuals which were addressed as follows:

(i) As sponsors of ERTMS signalling used on the Cambrian, it behoves Network Rail to press for all converted passenger vehicles to be used thereon. This means that Network Rail takes their responsibility for the non-availability of non Class 158 stock on the Cambrian. Either all 24 units of Class 158 are properly allocated or Network Rail funds conversion of other vehicles to meet demand.

In response, Mr Sam Hadley stated that he had discussed this matter with Cllr. Trevor Roberts when he met him in Barmouth, in relation to the steam train. In terms of the wider issue, he was not at all certain with whom the responsibility lies. The UK Government are looking at expanding digital enhancement. Mr Lewis Brencher went on to say that less use of 158 outside of the Cambrian Line, the more potential is to use them on other lines. 24 (158 units) out of Machynlleth is an ideal number and quite a formidable fleet.

Discussions were ongoing with the Member of Parliament for Dwyfor / Meirionnydd and Mr Hadley stated that he would update this Committee when further information was to hand.

(ii) Crash barriers/boundary wall – Main Road (A493) – between Llwyngwriil and Friog

Mr Hadley stated that following the last meeting of this Committee this matter was raised with the Route Asset Manager. A site meeting was held between officers of Network Rail and Gwynedd Consultancy when it was agreed that Network Rail send a remit to Dylan Davies, Senior Engineer with Gwynedd Consultancy to carry out the work. At present there is no known commencement date for the works, but Mr Hadley promised to keep this Committee informed of developments.

(iii) Lack of Lighting in Llwyngwriil Station Car Park

Mr Hadley stated that Network Rail are not funded to deliver enhancements but was pleased to report that they were looking into a lighting scheme at the car park as an opportunity has arisen. There is no known date for the work but Mr Hadley will update Committee members of developments.

(iv) Is Arriva Trains Wales able to assure that they offer a bilingual service?

Mr Ben Davies stated that Arriva Trains Wales do reply bilingually to correspondence but they do have difficulty in terms of a bilingual service on the trains due to lack of funding. Hopefully the successful company of the new franchise would be able to offer a bilingual announcement service on the stations and trains.

The Chairman also referred to the letter received by Porthmadog Town Council regarding the lack of use and priority for the Welsh language. He also stated that the above matter had been discussed at this Committee for many years without any success and that it was a priority to ensure the use of the Welsh language, and proper pronunciation of Welsh names during announcements on trains, and on notices in stations.

In response, Mr Davies stated that the announcements are made via a text to speech system and was not always done by a person. However, it was further stated that non-speaking staff are given an opportunity to learn the language and are encouraged to speak Welsh. There is a

known Company who are able to provide the Welsh language but Mr Davies reiterated that it would be very costly and that Arriva Trains Wales had no funding.

(v) Is Arriva considering having one fast train a day to and from North to South?

Mr Davies noted that this was not going to happen and it was added that it would be a matter for the new franchise to consider.

(vi) Is Arriva considering offering a catering service on the train between Pwllheli and Machynlleth?

Mr Davies promised that he would look into the above and that he would be more than happy to discuss this further with anyone who would be willing to offer the service.

(vii) The train stations between Pwllheli and Machynlleth do not have ticket machines - and it is inconvenient that there is no means of printing tickets bought on the Internet or being able to download them on an app. Can this be resolved?

In response Mr Davies stated that there was no intention to install machines due to a lack of space at the stations. However, new technology that would be available to everyone will be introduced and it is important to consider all means of selling tickets as well as considering maintenance and reliability.

(viii) Is it possible to have signs on the train station in Criccieth?

Mr Davies promised to consider the above further and Mr Sam Hadley indicated that Network Rail would support if they could.

If the question refers to brown signs, the matter would have to be referred to the Transportation and Street Care Service, Gwynedd Council.

Resolved - To receive, note and thank the officers for their responses to the above questions and that they take appropriate action where required.

9. DATE FOR THE DIARY

It was noted that the joint meeting between the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Liaison Committee and the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference be held at 11.15 a.m on Friday, 24 November 2017 in Y Plas, Machynlleth.

CHAIRMAN.