
CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE 9/03/18

Minutes of a meeting of the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference held at Y Ganolfan, Porthmadog, on Friday, 9 March 2018
from 11.15 a.m. until 1.00 p.m.

PRESENT

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

Representing:

Cllrs. Dewi Owen, Annwen Hughes, Angela A. Russell, Eirwyn Williams, (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. J.Michael Williams (Powys County Council), Cllr. Frey Bentham (National Park Authority), Cllr. Trefor Jones (Dwyfor Representative One Voice Wales), Cllr. Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury/Aberystwyth Railway Committee), Mr Stuart Williams (Talyllyn Railway), Mr Ben Davies (Arriva Trains Wales), Mr Sam Hadley (Network Rail), Mr Roger Goodhew (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association), Mrs Claire Williams (Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer), Mrs Llinos Williams (Transport Co-ordinator), Mrs Mererid Watt (Translator), Mrs Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Dylan Bullard, Anne Lloyd Jones, Gethin Williams Owain Williams (Gwynedd Council), Mr Tudur Williams (Head teacher of Ysgol Arduwy), PC Rob Newman (British Transport Police), Liz Saville Roberts (MP for Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Assembly Member Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Cllr. Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group)
Mr Alun Wyn Evans (Meirionnydd Representative One Voice Wales), Ann Elias (GMW).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. URGENT MATTERS

No urgent matters were received by the Chairman.

3. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of the meeting of the conference held on the 10 November 2017.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes.

4. REPORT BY NETWORK RAIL

Mr Sam Hadley, Wales Route Public Affairs Manager, was welcomed to the meeting and he reported on the following matters:

(a) Extreme weather – it was highlighted the exceptionally quick recovery from the severe weather experienced across Wales last week, compounded by an issue which saw the

temporary withdrawal of the 175/ 1758 fleet due to wheel damage. The Network Rail and Arriva Trains Wales' teams worked heroically across Wales tackling a range of different weather impacts from 8ft high snow drifts to giant icicles in the Ffestiniog tunnel and frozen points and signals across the network.

Particular tribute was extended to the track and off-track teams based out of the Machynlleth Depot. They worked tirelessly on Thursday / Friday and then over the weekend inspecting points, proving the route and helping to clear the access path to Machynlleth Station and elsewhere.

It was further noted that there were 25 fallen trees on the route between Dyfi Junction and Pwllheli alone. Network Rail received fantastic feedback from the public over the course of the bad weather.

The officers and members of the Conference paid particular tribute and thanked frontline staff for their incredible efforts and hard work in the toughest of circumstances.

(b) Strategic Business Plan

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that Network Rail had published its first strategic business plan for the devolved Wales and Borders route last month, which is a key document in terms of funding for the next contract period. It focuses entirely on operations, maintenance and renewals – "the steady state" railway as enhancements will now be considered separately. In terms of local interest, the plan does include the £20m+ refurbishment of Barmouth Viaduct, as part of a £1.3b total funding package. This is the first time the devolved Wales Route will receive its own regulated financial settlement and Network Rail believe that it has developed a robust plan. The last of a series of formal meetings with the regulator, The Office of Rail and Road, have recently been completed and hopefully a full settlement of the bid submitted will be received as part of the plan.

It has also been important to have the strong support of the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales who have been closely involved with the development of the above plan throughout. By standing together with the key workers and stakeholders Network Rail believe that they have a fantastic settlement for Wales and Borders.

A copy of the summary had been sent to the Members' Support Officer who would in turn forward the copy onto members of this Committee.

(c) Up-date on key local projects

- Penhelyg Station had been closed for a number of months to allow Network Rail to carry out a complete reconstruction of the platform. It was noted that the work is progressing really well and on track for the station to re-open on 1st April.
- Tywyn Station – A scheme will be delivered to make good the platform since an area of the old wooden platform which has rotted is currently cordoned off from passengers, but the station will remain open for the duration of the work.
- Major track renewals, which is a £7.25m project which will see up to 6km of track renewal between Talerddig and Caersws. Old jointed rail will be replaced with new welded rail reducing noise for those living near the railway and resulting in a better quality ride for passengers. This also keeps maintenance costs down over the longer term and is part of Network Rail's longer term strategy to replace jointed track on the Cambrian Line.,
- Other projects included Aberdovey Rock Netting; the River Artro bridge renewal and of course Barmouth Viaduct

In conclusion, Mr Hadley stated that Network Rail are committed to the long-term future and

growth of the Cambrian and the Cambrian Coast Line.

During the ensuing discussion, Members' noted the following issues:

(i) Concern that there are 5 sets of traffic lights (3 of which are the responsibility of Network Rail) on a 6 mile stretch of road in Aberdyfi and the local member had received complaints by ambulance drivers as well as local bus drivers of the inconvenience, and particularly with Easter approaching the roads and Aberdyfi will be very busy.

In response to the above, Mr Hadley stated that he would speak to the Manager of the Project Team and report back to Councillor Dewi Owen, in due course.

(ii) It was reported that Aberdyfi had become very popular with passengers from the Porthmadog area. The local member stated that a taxi service was available from Penhelyg to the main train station.

(iii) In view of the number of trees which had fallen along the railway line, it was asked whether a tree survey should be undertaken prior to extreme weather.

In response, Mr Hadley stated that Network Rail do undertake regular surveys but some of the trees which had fallen were on third party land. Whilst appreciating that more could be done in this respect it was stated that it can only be undertaken between September and March.

If there are local tree contractors in the area, Mr Sam Hadley agreed to send the details to the Procurement Team for future references.

(iv) In reply to a query from the local member regarding Dyffryn Ardudwy Car Park, Mr Hadley promised to check the latest situation.

Resolved - To receive, note and thank the officer for his report and attendance at the meeting.

5. REPORT BY ARRIVA TRAINS WALES

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ben Davies, Arriva Trains Wales, to submit his report on Arriva Trains Wales' activities to date.

Mr Davies stated that by now there were only two companies bidding to run the rail services in Wales from 2018.

As regards public performance measure, it was noted that Arriva Trains Wales were sixth out of 26 within the UK which meant that trains were on time. Discussions were ongoing with the Traws-Cymru buses in order to arrange better connections with the trains. Also, Mr Davies was in contact with officers from CADW regarding two for one offers for passengers who visit the area.

In conclusion, Mr Davies stated that the canopy had been repaired on the Borth Station and was up and running since the past two days.

Resolved - To receive, note and thank Mr Ben Davies for his report.

6. REPORT BY THE CAMBRIAN PARTNERSHIP RAILWAY OFFICER

The Chairman welcomed Claire Williams, Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer, to her first meeting of this committee.

She outlined activities undertaken since the previous meeting as follows:

(a) Improving links with local communities and their railway

Community and engagement work was continuing with Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail. A level crossing safety competition was held recently with Ysgol Maenofferen, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Ysgol y Traeth, Barmouth and Ysgol Tan y Castell, Harlech, as part of the partnership with Network Rail to change the historical mindset of how level crossings are not important to young people and to show them the dangers of not using them correctly. The winner and two runners up received free family tickets to see Santa on the Highlands and Ffestiniog Railway and book tokens courtesy of the Cambrian Railway Partnership and the Welsh Books Council.

(b) Continual improvement and development of existing rail services and infrastructure

Strategic stakeholder meetings take place on a monthly basis for the development of Bow Street with the chair of the SARLC also attending these meetings. The Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer has recently been asked by Welsh Government and Network Rail to be the lead on the Equality and Diversity element of the project. The plans are shortly going out to consultation and are currently working with a substantial number of disability and equality groups to ensure that the plans do not have a detrimental effect on service users.

(c) Local line-specific timetable production

The December 2017- May 2018 pocket timetable has now been produced and distributed to relevant TIC's, stations and other relevant outlets. The Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer will also be working closely with ATW on any amendments to the May 2018-December 2018 timetable.

(d) 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 the 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 were presented to Gareth Evans, Rail Economist for Welsh Government along with other WG officials by the Committee November 17th 2017 at a meeting in Cathays Park. WG then disseminated this information to the franchise bidders as supporting information for their final bid, which had to be submitted to WG and TfW in December 2017.

(e) 2018/2019 Promotional Campaign

The RDO has also agreed with the partnership that to make the best of the Visit Wales "2018 Year of the Sea" thematic year and its potential for increasing tourism to the regions that it would be best to issue an invitation to tender for the creation and management of a complete Year of the Sea social media campaign along with continued management and maintenance of the new Wales on rails website. The invitation was sent out in December with responses to be received by Mid-January. The contract was awarded to Equinox Communications in Cardiff, who have already started making significant changes and fixes to the website and social media platforms, with the new website <http://www.walesonrails.com> due to go live mid-March in readiness for Easter. Members were given an opportunity of seeing the website at the meeting.

(f) Reports and Meetings

The Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer stated that she also attends a number of town council meetings to raise the profile of making the Cambrian Railway a Dementia Friendly Community in its own entity. A number of towns such as Machynlleth, Welshpool, Porthmadog and Newtown are already Dementia Friendly Communities and are now looking at adding travel as part of their action plans and she is assisting them along with the Dementia Friendly Communities Co-ordinator to support them in gaining the status for their stations. A request had also been made by the Managing Director of Traveline Cymru to assist them with best practice and how to make themselves a dementia friendly organisation.

It was further noted that it is hoped to arrange for small groups with dementia to engage with children at various events.

(g) During the ensuing discussion, the following matters were noted:

(i) The Chairman welcomed the co-operation of working with communities especially helping those people suffering with dementia and the Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer was requested to send details of any events to the Members' Support Officer for onward transmission to members in order for them to publicise such events in their respective wards.

(ii) It was also encouraging to note that work was being undertaken regarding level crossings with schools. In response, the Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer stated that she was currently working on a project for level crossings in creating two videos, one aimed to the tourism market and the other aimed to young farmers, and hopefully these will be finalised by the end of March and circulated to schools thereafter. The video footage would be about 2 minutes when they would have to watch, and sign that they will adhere to level crossing requirements.

(iii) The Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer was congratulated for her work in getting more passengers to use the railway line. However there is a need for more rolling stock, i.e. 4 carriages on the line, and particularly during the holidays.

In response, Mr Ben Davies (Arriva Trains Wales) agreed that there was a need for more carriages but stated that there is a shortage of stock of trains in the UK and the company has to rely on cascading stock. This summer it will be possible to cascade rolling stock onto the Cambrian Line with the possibility of trains with 4 carriages to be seen on the line. It was further noted that this is a matter, which the new franchise needs to investigate and which should be lobbied with Welsh Government. Shortage of staff and drivers was not an issue.

(iv) The two for one offers with CADW was a brilliant idea and it was encouraged to advertise widely within communities, at local campsites, hotels, etc.

(v) With regard to the new website, it was suggested that it would be advantageous, not only to form a link with places to stay but also with local taxi services. Far more people were using the train but some passengers were proving difficulty to go further due to the loss of bus services in the area.

In reply, Mr Ben Davies stated that he was working closely with the Manager of TrawsCymru in order to try and link more trains with the buses but there were various constraints i.e. contract to ensure that school children arrived in Ysgol Ardudwy on time.

Resolved - To receive, note and thank the Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer for the report.

7. **FORMAL QUESTIONS**

Formal written questions had been submitted by various Community Councils which were addressed as follows:

(a) Criccieth Town Council – Is there an up-date regarding signs for the train station in Criccieth?

The Public Transport Co-ordinator had made enquiries and sent an e-mail to the Members' Support Officer stating that the land is owned by Gwynedd Council but due to the lack of parking capacity and also as the road is not very suitable for many vehicles, the Traffic Department is not keen to direct vehicles there. However, they would be happy to look at more signs for pedestrians. Should the Town Council wish to discuss the matter further, an application should be made to the attention of Dylan Wynn Jones, Traffic Manager.

(b) Llanbedr Communtiy Council – Enquiring as to the exact date of the installation of the barrier at Talwrn Bach Crossing. It was understood that the work would be undertaken this year in 2018.

Mr Sam Hadley reported that there was no good news with regard to the above. The work was supposed to start in 2018 but unfortunately due to Carillion Construction going to financial difficulties, Network Rail would have to go through a process of re-tendering the work and therefore it is anticipated that the work would be undertaken in 2019.

Resolved: To express appreciation for the questions and for the favourable response given by the officers.

CHAIRMAN.