

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON COMMITTEE

29 November 2024

Present:

Cllr Dewi Owen (Cyngor Gwynedd) - Chair
Cllr Gwynfor Owen (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Eryl Jones-Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Gwilym Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Elfed Wyn ab Elwyn (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Elin Hywel (Cyngor Gwynedd)

Cllr Meryl Roberts (Eryri National Park Authority)
Cllr Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury / Aberystwyth Railway Committee)
Bill Redfern (Shrewsbury - Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association)

Tomos Roberts (Network Rail)
Heledd Walters (Network Rail)
Tomos Davies (British Transport Police)
Rhian Williams (Integrated Transport and Road Safety Manager, Cyngor Gwynedd)
Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer, Cyngor Gwynedd)

1. APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from Cllr Louise Hughes (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Richard Glyn Roberts (Gwynedd), Liz Saville Roberts (MP for Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Mabon ap Gwynfor (MS for Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Llio Hughes (Plaid Cymru Office), Delyth Griffiths (Plaid Cymru Office, Dolgellau), Joyce Watson (MS for Mid-Wales and West), Gail Jones (Transport for Wales) and Clare Britton (Ffestiniog Railway)

Condolences were extended to the family of the late Councillor J M Williams (Powys County Council) who had been a loyal member of the Committee for many years.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair accepted the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 23 May 2024 as a true record.

5. UPDATE FROM THE SERVICES

Transport for Wales (TfW)

Disappointment was expressed that a representative from Transport for Wales was not present at the meeting given that a number of issues needed a response.

- That the response of Ken Skates (Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport) to a notice of motion tabled at a meeting of the Full Council in May 2024 had been received in October - it was shameful that up to 5 months had elapsed before a response had been received and the response contained the same excuses and poor answers.
- The time of the last northbound train (19:00) was unacceptable as there were no night buses between Machynlleth and Tywyn or Barmouth and Porthmadog. A question will be put to the Full Council in December calling on Cyngor Gwynedd to make strong representations to TfW and the Welsh Government regarding the loss of the later train on the Cambrian Coast line. A reduction in service will have an impact on the economy of the area as people are unable to travel home by train from work and social events – this excluded people / imposed a curfew.
- Totally unfair compared to the number of trains running on the south Wales railways
- TfW passenger numbers had never been accurate with claims of empty trains when, in fact, the trains were full and passenger fares were not collected - the information collected was misleading and complete nonsense. What were the resulting financial savings?
- Visiting times to towns such as Shrewsbury, had been reduced from 8 hours to 3 hours.
- The TfW Online Timetable Review had not considered the equality impact. This was the Government's responsibility – in accordance with the contract there must be consultation with assessments completed before implementing any changes. **BR to share the information with LHE.**
- What is the structure of TfW? The Welsh Government are the owners of TfW and therefore who was liable?
- That the number of users of the Llanbedr platform nearly matched the pre-covid figures – evidence that the railway was being used! How then did TfW gather data?
- That cuts to an adequate service made the situation inadequate for the consumer.
- There was a need to press upon Dwyfor Meirionnydd MPs to voice their opinion.
- When will the new trains be introduced?

In response to a comment about the need to press Dwyfor Meirionnydd representatives to have their say, it was highlighted that Mabon ap Gwynfor had set up a petition calling on TfW and the Welsh Government to protect the Cambrian Coast Line services. It was noted that the petition highlighted that the railway was a vital transport link for local residents and Gwynedd's visitor economy with communities reliant on the service for education, employment, tourism, shopping and health reasons. It was added, rather than cutting further services, TfW and the Welsh Government should be investing in local transport links across north west Wales, ensuring that local people and visitors have access to robust, reliable and accessible train services.

[Petition to Safeguard the Cambrian Coast Line](#)

Network Rail

Tomos Roberts and Heledd Walters were welcomed to the meeting.

Following a recent fatal accident in Talerddig, condolences were extended to the families and passengers who had suffered, and it was noted that TfW and Network Rail were working together to restore the situation.

Attention was drawn to the work being carried out on the line between Machynlleth and Pwllheli with replacement buses between Machynlleth and Pwllheli stations from 16.45, 8 December 2024 until 07.30 on 16 December 2024. The reason for the closure was because Network Rail would re-lay more than 1km of track between Dyffryn Ardudwy and Harlech stations which would include 1,800 new sleepers and 3,600 tonnes of ballast (*trackstone*). It was added that if you needed to plan a trip full details were available on the Transport for Wales website.

The investment by Network Rail was welcomed.

In response to a comment that incorrect information had been shared about an alternative way to use it during the closure, it was noted that the comment will be directed to the Project Team for correction.

In response to a question as to why trains could not run between Barmouth and Dyfi Junction during the completion of the works between Dyffryn Ardudwy and Harlech, which would reduce the impact (particularly on school children's journeys), it was noted that works at other sites along the railway line were also being completed and therefore the closure was required.

Other matters:

- Machynlleth Station Lift - lift instructions were in English only, had this been rectified?
Tomos Roberts to check with the Local Team.

British Transport Police

Tomos Davies was welcomed to the meeting.

He noted that one significant issue had come to the attention of the Police involving a landowner who was now refusing to make a phone call to seek permission to open the gates to cross the railway line. Following a complaint from the landowner that the telephone service was not available in Welsh, he decided not to make calls for permission, and he opened the gates himself. This was seen as an irresponsible use of the crossing and therefore resulted in the landowner being issued with a Court Order. It was reiterated that the matter had been ongoing for some years with the Police having had to intervene on several occasions. Whilst accepting the landowner's frustration that Railway Crossing Managers were not available to respond in Welsh, contrary to TfW policy, it was noted that the matter was now regarded not as a purely linguistic matter, but as a blatant flouting of railway rules and public safety.

In response to the issue, it was noted:

- That the issue needed to be resolved before there was an accident.
- The Police's response to issue a Court Order was welcomed.
- There was a need to ensure public safety.

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- That TfW / Network Rail had a responsibility to ensure that a Welsh language service was available.

Other matters arising:

- Penrhyndeudraeth station
That there had been incidents of anti-social behaviour at the station. The Police had responded and spoken to the children about respecting the property of others and protecting public image.
- Level crossing near Ysgol Harlech.
A request from Cyngor Gwynedd's Integrated Transport and Road Safety Manager for the Police to chat with the children about safety. **TD to discuss this with the Machynlleth Office so they can monitor the situation. The nature of the complaints to be shared with Cllr Gwynfor Owen so he can discuss this with Phillip Caldwell (Network Rail Local Crossing Manager) who was always ready to respond to safety issues.**
- Tywyn station
The time between Tywyn High School closing and the train home for pupils leads to misbehaviour at the train station. A request to consider having a Street Pastors presence at the station and/or on the platform as no station employees were present. **TD to discuss the possibility with the Machynlleth Office.**
- The Welsh Language
That more Welsh needs to be seen on Cambrian trains.
There was a suggestion to invite Lowri Joyce (Welsh Language Strategy Lead, Transport for Wales) to the March 2025 meeting.

[Welsh Language Strategy | Transport for Wales](#)

6. FORMAL QUESTIONS

Questions were received from Llanbedr Community Council, Cricieth Town Council and Porthmadog Town Council.

It was noted that the Services would respond directly to the Community / Town Councils.

Next meeting to be held in March 2025 – **LHE to arrange.**

The meeting commenced at 10:30 and concluded at 12:00

CHAIR