

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON COMMITTEE 21/11/25

Present:

Cllr Dewi Owen (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Eryl Jones Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn (Cyngor Gwynedd) Cllr Gwilym Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Louise Hughes (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Meryl Roberts (Eryri National Park Authority), Bill Redfern (Shrewsbury - Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association), Lorraine Simkiss (Talylllyn Railway), Linda Taylor (Ffestiniog Railway), Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Ffion Williams (Office of Liz Saville Roberts – UK Government), Llio Hughes (Plaid Cymru Office - Dwyfor Meirionnydd), James Nicholas (Transport for Wales), Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer, Cyngor Gwynedd)

1. ELECT CHAIR FOR 2025/26

It was proposed and seconded to elect Cllr Dewi Owen as Chair.

RESOLVED to re-elect Cllr Dewi Owen as Chair of this Committee for the year 2025/26

2. ELECT VICE CHAIR FOR 2025/26

It was proposed and seconded to elect Cllr Gwynfor Owen as Vice-chair.

RESOLVED to re-elect Cllr Gwynfor Owen as Vice-chair of this Committee for the year 2025/26

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Craig ab Iago Cyngor Gwynedd - Cabinet Member for Environment), Cllr Gwynfor Owen (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Elfed Wyn ab Elwyn (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Richard Glyn Roberts (Gwynedd), Cllr Alwyn Evans (Cyngor Sir Powys), Cllr Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury / Aberystwyth Railway Committee), Mabon ap Gwynfor (Senedd Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Joyce Watson (Senedd Member for Mid and West Wales), Gwyn Rees (Network Rail) and Robert John Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd - Education Transport Manager)

Condolences were expressed to Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones who had recently lost her sister.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

5. URGENT MATTERS

None to note

6. MINUTES

The Chair accepted the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 28th March 2025 as a true record.

7. TO RECEIVE UPDATES FROM SERVICES

Transport for Wales (TfW)

James Nicholas was welcomed to the meeting; he worked as a Business Support Partner for Transport for Wales.

It was reported that the performance of the service had been good over the last period with the number of cancelled trains at 0.7% of all services along the Cambrian. He reiterated that this was seen as a solid service and an improvement in the performance of trains on time. He noted that performance is measured by a 3-minute rule from arrival at the station and expressed that the percentage of 75% above the Welsh target of 72% is acceptable given the number of trains running.

In the context of the Cambrian Railway's Winter timetable, it was expressed that Transport for Wales had decided to continue the service of the last train and that this was encouraging news. He highlighted that Transport for Wales will keep an eye on user numbers and encouraged everyone to promote usage.

It was expressed that safety tests on the fleet of the new Class 197 trains had been implemented and it was hoped that the new trains would come into service in September 2026, following the completion of platform improvements at some stations. He added that further test journeys would be conducted in January 2026 and training for drivers and conductors in the new year.

An update was given that Network Rail had procured a new Maintenance Delivery Unit to replace several unsuitable facilities at the Machynlleth depot. The site will be a modern, safe and efficient workplace that will be able to fully support services across the region.

It was pointed out that defence works will be completed during May 2026 which is likely to cause some disruption to services: The dates in mind were 13-17 May between Machynlleth and Pwllheli and 17 – 23 May between Dyfi Junction and Aberystwyth. It was reiterated that preparatory work was being carried out for the installation of toilet waste disposal (CET) tanks from the new trains.

James was thanked for the update.

Comments and matters arising from the ensuing discussion:

- It was welcomed that the last train service would be retained – this was a major

boost to the local economy. Everyone was thanked for the positive campaign.

- There was concern about the publicity of the Cambrian Railway – there was a need to operate regular marketing campaigns to encourage use. That clear messages need to be shared that the evening service would continue.
- A request was made for a special meeting to be arranged to discuss the implications of the Talerddig accident on 21 October 2024. Although an interim report had been published in April 2025, a final report was expected to confirm the conclusions and recommendations.
- Concern that a vulnerable section of the railway near the Dyfi Junction was vulnerable to flooding which could be prevented if Natural Resources Wales took action. Was this a long-term plan to sacrifice the railway? More information was required.
- The lack of opening up ditches near the railway, created flooding.
- Request for information regarding user numbers. Has the service returned to pre-covid figures?
- That good use was made of the train and the introduction of four-carriage trains in the summer would continue. Standing during a journey should not be an option.
- Request for information about the locations of the Harrington Humps.
- Illegal use of the crossing at Penrhyneddraeth – update needed from British Transport Police.
- That the service was very good, the staff were friendly and willing to help. The experience of travelling by train was positive.

In response to the disappointment that the Class 197 fleet was not being introduced in May 2026, it was noted that this was due to the need to conduct test journeys and training prior to rolling-out the entire fleet on the railway. It was decided to avoid the busy summer months.

In response to a comment that trains had been cancelled during Storm Claudia due to flooding, although the water did not appear to be high, and therefore the water level which leads to an impact assessment prior to train cancellations, it was noted that the decisions were not made lightly. It was reported that decisions relating to extreme weather were being made in conjunction with information from the Met Office and plans being implemented based on the needs and safety of passengers. He highlighted that decisions must be made in advance so that alternative modes can be arranged, but every attempt was being made to avoid no travel. He added that the information that led to decisions made during the storm could be shared.

In response to a suggestion that there was a need to increase the use of freight trains, which will consequently generate income and reduce freight lorries causing damage to bridges e.g. the Dolgoch Bridge, which was causing significant delays for rail passengers, it was noted that Network Rail was responsible for freight route arrangements and was not aware of any intention to suspend the service. In terms of increasing the service, it was noted that the railway was currently at full capacity, and therefore it would be difficult to run more freight trains unless there was significant expenditure to create passing loops; it would also be difficult to run more on the evening service as Network Rail was carrying out maintenance during this period.

In response to a question as to whether there were plans to run a steam train trip from Machynlleth to Pwllheli which was a good attraction for visitors and rail users, it was noted that due to the full use of the railway, it would be difficult to run a steam train without an impact on the daily service. However, the comment was accepted, and a promise was made to look into this and share information with the Committee.

Network Rail

Disappointment was expressed that a representative from Network Rail was not present at the meeting to provide an update, but their willingness to receive comments/feedback about the service was noted.

British Transport Police

There was no representative from the British Transport Police present at the meeting to give an update.

8. FORMAL QUESTIONS

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

The Transport for Wales Officer stated that he would be responding directly to the Local Councils, but the following issues were broadly addressed:

- Location of a Historic Tram at Pwllheli Station – construction work had been carried out on the previous site and at present no suitable site had been identified.
- Painting Cricieth Station - painting the station was the responsibility of the building owners. They should be contacted first to see what is possible.
- Welsh-language announcements between Porthmadog and Shrewsbury - that there are bilingual announcements on the trains, although there may be a technical problem on the day in question. Certainly, it was agreed that consistency was needed.

Other questions raised at the meeting:

Dyfi Junction:

- The noticeboard is not visible/conspicuous from one platform to the next
- That the shelter and the width of the platform need to be looked at
- That the Derwen Ias road down to the station was in poor condition

Next meeting to be held March 2026.

Questionnaire about time/date to be circulated to Members/Officers.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 11.35 am

CHAIRMAN