
CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON COMMITTEE 22/05/26

Attendance:

Cllr Gwynfor Owen (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Dewi Owen (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Eryl Jones-Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Gwilym Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd)
Cllr Meryl Roberts (Eryri National Park Authority)
Bill Redfern (Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association)
Bedwyr Gwilym (Office of Liz Saville Roberts)
James Nicholas (Transport for Wales)
Rhian Williams (Integrated Transport and Road Safety Manager)
Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer, Cyngor Gwynedd)

1. ELECT CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded to elect Cllr Gwynfor Owen as Chair

RESOLVED to elect Cllr Gwynfor Owen as Chair of this Committee for the 2026/27 year

2. ELECT VICE CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded to elect Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones as Vice-chair

RESOLVED to elect Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones as Vice-chair of this Committee for the 2026/27 year

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Louise Hughes (Cyngor Gwynedd), Cllr Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury/Aberystwyth Railway Committee), Liz Saville Roberts (MP for Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Mabon ap Gwynfor (MS for Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Gwyn Rees (Network Rail), Lorraine Simkiss (Tal-y-llyn Railway), Llio Hughes (Plaid Cymru Office – Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Chris Wilson (Service Manager – Safe and Sustainable Travel - Ceredigion), Gerwyn Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department [Transport]) and Deb Justice (Development Officer – the Cambrian Community Railways)

MEMBERSHIP:

Elected Members' Seats:

It was noted that there were two vacant seats for Elected Members on the Committee. In accordance with the Committee's constitution, the requirement is that there is a total of 10 members amongst the Elected Members, five members from the Dwyfor area and five members from the Meirionnydd area. With five Members already on the Committee from Meirionnydd, the two vacant seats would have to be filled by Members from Dwyfor.

The Chair noted that he would discuss the vacant seats with the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Cllr Craig ab Iago.

Ceredigion Council vacant Seat:

There had been no nomination received from the Council for some time now. A request was made to send a message to the Council asking again for a nomination.

Powys Council Seat:

Since his nomination in March 2025, it was noted that Cllr Alwyn Evans had not been present at the meetings. A request was made to contact Powys Council again; it would be good to have the Machynlleth Councillor present at the meeting as many matters / elements relating to the railway happened at the Compound in Machynlleth.

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 signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 21 November 2025, as a true record.

7. TO RECEIVE UPDATES FROM SERVICES

Transport for Wales (TfW)

James Nicholas (Business Support Partner, Transport for Wales) was welcomed to the meeting.

Fleet of the new Class 197 Trains

- The new trains would be introduced to the service in September 2026. He noted that the Class 197 trains would be more reliable and would perform better – they had been designed to be more accessible than the older Class 158 trains; there were central doors on the trains that facilitated travellers to get on and off the train with greater ease, as well as move between carriages. Despite the ability to travel at a speed of 100mph, there would be no amendments to the timetable, but the hope was that the trains would arrive and leave on time.
- There was an intention to send one of the new trains to Aberystwyth during the summer, inviting stakeholders to see the train and meet some of the members of the Operations Team that had been working on the project.
- Training for drivers was continuing, and training for train managers would commence in June.
- Installing CET (toilet waste disposal tanks) had been approved for Pwllheli, with the hope for the work to be completed in August.
- Harrington Humps were being installed at six stations along the coast.

- Platforms were being adapted at Abermaw, Harlech and Porthmadog stations.

In the context of performance, it was reported that 482 services had been run between April and May, which was more than any other period in the year. It was elaborated that the performance of 'arriving on time' had slightly reduced, but continued to be higher than the target levels for Wales. In terms of cancelled journeys, these were below 2%, and once again was better than the average for Wales.

For the summer season, there was an intention to run four-carriage trains along the coast, depending on the impact of training crews for the new trains.

There was an intention to run the luxury sleeper train Britannic Explorer on the Cambrian, with a plan developed to ensure that it would not have an impact on cancelling any services for travellers.

Transport for Wales would pilot amendments to the coastal timetable with slightly later departures, therefore everyone was encouraged to check times before travel.

James was thanked for the update.

Comments and matters arising from the ensuing discussion:

- Transport for Wales was congratulated on the performance improvement, however, the number of service hours were much fewer compared with the rest of Wales (trains ran approximately every two hours [Monday – Saturday] and less frequently on Sundays).
- The intention of introducing four-carriage trains over the summer was welcomed.
- Trains were on time, there was an increase in use, a number of events in local towns were supported by the use of the train – the hope was that this could lead to trains running every hour. The increase in use would also lead to an increase in employment.
- There was a request to keep the late trains on the winter timetable for 2026/27.
- There was concern at the number of cases where travellers did not pay, or the ticket inspector did not reach travellers, and therefore they were not included in the data of the number of users. The Committee did not wish to see the total ticket sales as the only way of measuring the number of users – there was a need for correct figures.
- In a recent Conference, Mark Hooper, the Welsh Government's former Deputy Minister for Transport, thanked Transport for Wales for the investments into connections with Liverpool and Manchester, however it appeared that locations in Wales required more investment. Despite congratulating this, there was a need to ensure support for the Cambrian Railway and hope that there would be future investment and consideration to trains every hour.
- It appeared that Phil Cauldwell (Harlech Crossing Manager) had retired – had another person been appointed to replace him?

In response to a question regarding the Machynlleth Compound and the numbers that were employed there, it was noted that many of the train service elements were conducted there – it was a centre for engineers, drivers, ticket inspectors, cleaners and catering. The officer had no information available, but it was possible to get the information and report back.

In response to a question regarding the shortage of bins at stations, it was noted that the recycling law meant that there was a need for three bins at each station instead of one for general waste and one for recycling. It was elaborated that providing a suitable place for the bins at stations was a matter that was receiving quite some attention from the Sustainability Team who were working to improve recycling matters; the question would also be referred to the Arriva Trains Wales Station Manager.

In response to a question regarding the meaning of 'platform re-instatement' and whether this related to the 'level' of the platform or the 'length' of the platform, it was noted that the length of the platform was relevant here; some stations had a platform that was closed off and therefore there was a need to bring this area of the platform back into use at Porthmadog, Abermaw and Harlech stations.

Network Rail

Disappointment was expressed once again that no representation from Network Rail was present at the meeting to submit an update.

It was noted that a Road Rail Partnership Group meeting was being held between Cyngor Gwynedd Officers and Network Rail and it was possible to request information through this group in the future.

British Transport Police

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

The responsibilities of British Transport Police had been divided according to area on the Cambrian. A request was made for more information regarding this allocation.

8. FORMAL QUESTIONS

Questions were received from Cricieth Community Council and Llanbedr Community Council.

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

- That the service of the new trains would start in September 2026
- In response to a request for the timetable to show the through-trains to and from Birmingham because not every train comes up the coast, it was noted that the general message was to check before travelling, and that officers were available at the stations to share information and help with connections
- Llanbedr platform could do with some care – ideally a platform extension, and a suitable access route was required to the station; he would respond directly to Llanbedr Community Council

Other questions raised at the meeting:

Welsh Water Work, Dyffryn Ardudwy

The Local Member had raised concerns regarding the use of the railway crossing by 30-tonne lorries with trailers carrying heavy loads over the period of the work. He did not want the work to have any impact on the railway service, the rails or the sleepers. He also asked whether Network Rail officers had conducted a site visit to assess the situation.

Was the Cambrian being left behind because the ERTMS system on the railway was outdated?

It was noted that the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) was a unified, automatic system of a high quality which was used to manage railway traffic. The signals for the Cambrian were changed to ERTMS in 2011 as part of trialling the Early Deployment Scheme that was being submitted to the UK. It was considered that the ERTMS offered advantages for performance, safety and reduced costs in the long-term. It was elaborated that roll-out to the rest of the UK had been much slower than expected, but the intention was to continue whilst recovering momentum, with work to start on the East Coast Main Line. The Cambrian was not left behind, with upgrades done in 2020.

It was explained that introducing the ERTMS meant that Steam Trains, which was a very popular attraction, could no longer run on the Cambrian and that campaigning for a portable version for the steam trains had not made much progress.

Bill Redfern noted, in his opinion, that a portable version was an obstacle due to the high level of integration that was required between the ERTMS equipment and the steam train. The cost would likely be much higher than progressing with running a suitable steam train for the Cambrian. It was elaborated that the Tornado steam train had recently been installed with ERTMS and was tested on the Cambrian between Shrewsbury and Newtown, but it was too heavy to go further.

The next meeting to be held on 27 November 2026.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 11.45 am

CHAIRMAN