

## **CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference held  
at Y Ganolfan, Porthmadog, on Friday, 3 March 2017  
From 11.00 a.m. until 12.45 p.m.**

### **PRESENT**

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

#### **Representing:**

Cllrs. Anne Lloyd Jones, Dewi Owen, Annwen Hughes, Eirwyn Williams, (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. J. Michael Williams (Powys County Council), Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Assembly Member Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Cllr. Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group), Cllr. Trefor Jones (Dwyfor Representative One Voice Wales), Mr Alun Wyn Evans (Meirionnydd Representative One Voice Wales Claire Britton (Ffestiniog and Eryri Railways), Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury/Aberystwyth Railway Committee), Mr Ben Davies (Arriva Trains Wales), Mr David Crunkhorn (Arriva Trains Wales), Sam Hadley (Network Rail), James Widdowson (Network Rail), Sally Biggs (Network Rail), Ann Elias (GMW), Mr Roger Goodhew (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association), Mr Rhydian Mason (Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer), Llinos Roberts (Public and Community Transport Officer), Mrs Mererid Watt (Translator), Mrs Glynda O'Brien (Members' Support Officer).

**Observers:** Cllr. Louise Hughes (Friog and Llwyngwriol Community Councils), Mr Ian Hunt (Porthmadog local resident)

**Apologies:** Councillors John Brynmor Hughes, Angela Russell, Gethin Williams Owain Williams (Gwynedd Council), Mr Tudur Williams (Head teacher of Ysgol Ardudwy), PC Rob Newman (British Transport Police), Liz Saville Roberts (MP for Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), David Roberts (Snowdonia National Park), Mr David Woodhouse (Aberdyfi and Tywyn Tourism), Mr Neil Hamilton (AM for Mid and West Wales).

#### **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 11 November 2016.

**Resolved:** To accept and approve the minutes.

#### **4. REPORT BY NETWORK RAIL**

Mr Sam Hadley, Wales Route Public Affairs Manager, Ms Sally Biggs and Mr James Widdowson were all welcomed to the meeting.

(a) With regard to the urgent works to be carried out to the Barmouth Viaduct, Ms Sally Biggs stated that the work would be starting on 12<sup>th</sup> June until 14<sup>th</sup> July and would not affect the train traffic since the work would be carried out between 12.00 midnight and 5.00 a.m. In response to a query from a member with regard to signage at each end of the Mawddach pathway, it was stated that there will probably be watchmen on duty at the site.

It was further noted that these urgent works undertaken will determine what other work would be required in the longer term and hopefully the officers would be able to report further with additional information at the next meeting of this Committee.

In response the Chairman stated that communication is very important to members of this Committee and the public and requested with regard to any developments that the information be forwarded to the Members Support Officer in order that it is disseminated to the members.

A member who serves on the Snowdonia Access Forum was reassured that the Mawddach Trail and which forms part of the coastal path would be kept open.

With regard to the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration anniversary of the viaduct, it was stated that a separate meeting between Councillor Trevor Roberts and the relevant officers would be held to discuss the matter.

(b) Mr James Widdowson, gave a brief introduction of his role within Network Rail, by stating that he was responsible for the maintenance team which manages vegetation cutting / encroachment, invasive plants, ditches, flooding, etc.

(b) Congratulations were extended to Network Rail for the work carried out to cutting back the overgrowth between the main road and the railway line in the Aberdyfi area but concern was expressed about the safety of road users due to the inadequate fencing which had been put up between Gogarth Halt and Aberdyfi. Also it was brought to the officers' attention that an object most probably had come off a lorry and was lying along the railway line and had been there over the past two weeks.

(c) In response to the above, Mr Widdowson stated that Network Rail's policy is to replace fencing like for like and it may well be that this is the case but that he would speak to the contractor who carried out the work.

(d) The relevant officers responded to members' verbal questions as follows:

- Mr Widdowson agreed to ask one of his team to have a look at Dyffryn Ardudwy Railway Station Car Park in terms of health and safety which according to the member does need resurfacing and marking out with disabled spaces
- Mr Sam Hadley promised to follow up the bilingual signs on the lifts at Machynlleth Station
- With regard to drainage problems, Ms Sally Biggs stated that Network Rail would be carrying out an assessment and any drainage problems would be resolved following this assessment

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

(i) **Lack of engagement with the Users, Access Group and Gwynedd Council regarding the work carried out at Dyffryn Ardudwy Car Park** which resulted in a new access being created to the road, a gate was installed but there was a stone stopping the gate opening. When vehicles went over the road, the gate was restricting the gate to the station opening. It was further of concern that Network Rail had not consulted with the Community Council, the Meirionnydd Access Group and as a result they had received numerous complaints regarding mobility problems in accessing the station. It was further suggested that the best solution would be the installation of barriers with automatic lights.

In response to the above, Mr Sam Hadley stated that the work was carried out by off-track team, addressing concerns raised by the level crossing keeper due to people crossing in front of trains after alighting therefore safety was paramount and the intention was to quickly address an identified safety concern. Mr Hadley apologised most sincerely that they had made a mistake and are aware of the circumstances, lessons had been learnt and an additional "sense check" will now be mandatory as part of works assessment in situations like this in the future. He stressed that Network Rail does recognise the importance of Access Groups. With regard to the level crossing gate, he would have to discuss this further with colleagues and as regards the installation of barriers this would be a long term issue to resolve.

(ii) **Lack of Lighting in Llwyngwriol Station Car Park** – Mr Hadley stated that any new lighting in the car park would be an enhancement and Network Rail have no current funding for this. However, there may be potential for community relations impact and if there is funding available this will be considered.

(iii) In response to the above answer, Councillor Louise Hughes, the local member for Llwyngwriol who was present at the meeting, stated that she understood from an e-mail received by her from Network Rail that there was funding available and went on to ask whether there was a possibility of obtaining a "motion light" from the station to the car park.

(iv) In response, Mr Hadley stated that he would be happy to discuss the matter further with his colleagues.

(v) **Crash barriers/boundary wall – Main Road (A493) – between Llwyngwriol and Friog** - Mr Hadley stated that this matter requires further investigation and indeed stressed the importance of collaboration with Gwynedd Council. This is now part of Network Rail's agenda and it is the intention of two senior asset engineers to visit the site on the afternoon of 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017. In response, the Chairman read out an e-mail received from Gwynedd Council's Area Engineer stating that the crash barriers falls within Network Rail's responsibility and meetings had taken place on site between officers of Gwynedd Council and Network Rail when it had been stated the importance of the crash barriers in terms of public safety. Gwynedd Consultancy had offered Network Rail to carry out the work on their behalf, but they need an official order to do this. It was further requested that Mr Adrian Williams, Meirionnydd Area Engineer, and the local member, Councillor Louise Hughes, be invited to attend the site meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

(vi) **Up-date on the work to improve the surfacing on the Criccieth crossing following a pedestrian accident?** - The maintenance team had only looked at Merlyn Crossing and it was made clear at the meeting that an accident had also happened when a pedestrian slipped on the crossing located in the centre of Criccieth. It was suggested that Mr James Widdowson speaks further to Councillor Eirwyn Williams about the incidents.

(vii) **Talwrn Bach Crossing, Llanbedr** – In response to a request by the local member of an up-date regarding this crossing, Mr Hadley stated that there were plans to up-grade in 2018 and if there are any changes he promised to up-date this Committee as soon as he becomes aware of any developments.

**Resolved - To receive, note and thank the officers for their reports 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.

It was reported that storm "Doris" had caused problems last week and that Arriva Trains Wales were collaborating with Network Rail with any outstanding issues.

It was further reported that Wi-Fi would be available on all trains before Easter.

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

(i) **Provision of a shelter at Dyfi Junction** – Mr Ben Davies stated that funding was available to provide another shelter and that arrangements were in had to proceed with this matter.

(ii) **Why is there no free travel pass for the elderly throughout the year rather than during the winter months only?** - Mr Ben Davies, Arriva Trains, stated that there wouldn't be sufficient seating capacity to be able to offer this concession during the summer months. However, the matter had been discussed with the Welsh Government Minister, especially in terms of sufficient rolling stock as part of the new franchise.

(iii) **The Welsh language, bilingual announcements on the trains, better pronunciation of Welsh names on notices in stations** - Whilst agreeing that the Welsh language is very important, Mr Davies stated that the problem was lack of funding and not knowing as yet what is happening to the trains with regard to the new franchise. However, he announced to the Committee that he had been appointed to serve on the Arriva Group in London which is responsible for the franchise bid. He assured members that he would voice the concerns of the people of North Wales regarding the Welsh language, timetables, etc and would ensure that the language policy is sorted.

In response to the above, members congratulated Mr Ben Davies on his appointment and supported the need to sort the language policy. Councillor Trevor Roberts, assured the Committee that the four bidders for the franchise had been made aware of the need for bilingual information on the Welsh lines and stations.

During the ensuing discussion, members made the following comments:

- That the Welsh language is very important and that the announcements in the newly installed lift at Machynlleth should be bilingual
- With regard to pronunciation, it was stated that it is far easier for a Welsh speaking person to pronounce the English stations than it is for an English speaking person to pronounce the Welsh names of stations

In response to the above points, Mr Ben 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.

A member took the opportunity of paying tribute and thanking the following four members who had worked tirelessly during the consultation period of the Wales and Borders Rail Service:

Councillor Trevor Roberts  
Councillor J. Michael Williams  
Mr Rhydian Mason  
Mr Robert Robinson

**(iv) Is it possible to arrange a daily two-way express train on the Cambrian Coast to speed up the journey to Machynlleth and back?**

Mr Ben Davies stated that there would be no change to the time-table and no additional trains, however, he promised to take the matter further. Personally, he was in favour of a two-hourly train including on Sundays.

**(v) What are the developments for a late train from Pwllheli?**

Mr Ben Davies stated that there would be no additional train from Pwllheli. However, there will be an improvement in service since the Machynlleth train will wait until the 8.30 p.m. train from Shrewsbury arrives in Machynlleth thus giving better communication from Machynlleth to Pwllheli.

**(vi) Standard Facilities at Porthmadog train station – display boards, shelter, etc. Would it be possible to discuss the way forward in terms of enhancing the station’s vision on first appearance? It needs improving and upgrading urgently. It was noted that this is the first appearance of the town to people and it does not create a very good impression.**

In response to the above, as well as correspondence received from Mr Ian Hunt, a local resident of Porthmadog, it was suggested that Mr David Crunkhorn, Arriva Trains Wales, arranges to meet with Mr Hunt, and Councillor Selwyn Griffiths, Chairman of Porthmadog Town Council, at the Porthmadog Station, on a date convenient to all parties, to discuss the way forward.

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

**6. REPORT BY THE CAMBRIAN PARTNERSHIP RAILWAY OFFICER**

**Submitted -** A written report by Mr Rhydian Mason, the Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer outlining activities undertaken since the previous meeting which included;

**(a) Developments on the promotion of the Orange Wallet Scheme nationally**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department of Transport, had given his endorsement to promote the Orange Wallet Scheme nationally and in consultation with Arriva Trains Wales and Arriva UK Group, this would be taken forward.

**(b) Rail Franchising and Welsh Government support**

Numerous meetings regarding the rail franchise had been attended along with colleagues from the 4 other Wales and Borders Community Rail Partnerships.

**(c) Publications**

Reference was made to a new booklet to be published of short walks on the Cambrian Lines which will replace the Cambrian Trailways leaflets. Walking is very popular and it was hoped that the Tourist Information Centre in both Porthmadog and Barmouth would be re-opened in order to promote activities.

**(d) Surveys**

The Cambrian Railways Partnership was commissioning surveys schedules for spring 2017 as part of a grant from Welsh Government. These surveys follow on from the success of the 2013 and 2015 surveys which resulted in improved services on the Cambrian Lines.

**(e) 2017 Promotional Campaign**

In terms of promoting, this period had been very important and an additional fund had been secured to prepare a brand new tourist-focussed website and further short films.

**(f) Stories and Books by Cambrian**

Confirmation of details and funding availability is awaited to pilot a project of linking stories and books with the Cambrian Lines which would promote trips for school children on the trains.

**(g) 2017-2018 Business Plan**

The business plan was in the process of being prepared and would be submitted to the Partnership at its next meeting. A copy would be made available to Members of this Committee through the Members' Support Officer.

In response to a question by a member regarding the time-table of the Cambrian Coast in the form of a small card which proved very popular with locals and visitor, Mr Mason stated that these were still produced but found it difficult to distribute them to visitor centres, etc. Distribution had been focused on Railway Stations but if the Aberdyfi Tourist Centre required further supplies that they contact the Cambrian Railway Partnership Officer.

It was brought to the Committee's attention of the "Big Train meets Little Train" publication and the Manager of the Festiniog and Eryri Railways, as Chairperson of

the North Wales Tourism would be more than happy to distribute any publications further afield.

In concluding, Mr Mason stated that he would be resigning from his post within the next few days and had secured a new post with Network Rail, as Railway Crossings Manager covering the area from Barmouth to Pwllheli. He thanked the members for their co-operation and support whilst in his present post. He understood that the Partnership would be renewing the post and hopefully a successor would be appointed in the near future.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, took the opportunity of congratulating Mr Mason on his recent appointment and thanked him for all his hard work and support to the Committee over the past few years.

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

## **7. REPORT BY BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE**

PC Rob Newman, British Transport Police, had sent his apologies for his inability to attend the meeting, but had literally nothing to report, relevant to the Cambrian since it had been a very quiet period since the last meeting in November.

**Resolved: To receive and note the above.**

## **8. FORMAL QUESTIONS**

The formal written questions had been addressed as part of the officers' reports and noted in 5 and 6 above.

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

## **9. DATES FOR THE DIARY**

The Transport for Wales would be launching public consultation on the Wales and Borders Rail Service including the South Wales Metro and would be hosting half-day, morning workshops to gather views on the new services on the following dates and at the venues noted:

|          |                                                   |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 20 March | Canolfan Gateway Centre, Amwythig / Shrewsbury    |
| 21 March | Venue Cymru, Llandudno                            |
| 28 March | Coleg y Cymoedd, Nantgarw                         |
| 29 March | Gwesty'r Ivy Bush Hotel, Caerfyrddin / Carmarthen |
| 3 April  | Gwesty'r Marine Hotel, Aberswyth                  |

The Chairman took the opportunity of thanking members for their support and co-operation over the past years during his term of office as Chair of this Committee, as

well as wishing members who face an election all the best in the forthcoming local government elections on 4 May 2017.

**CHAIRMAN.**