

# CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE

11-02-2022

## Present:

Cllr Dewi Owen (Gwynedd Council)  
Cllr Gwynfor Owen (Gwynedd Council)  
Cllr Louise Hughes (Gwynedd Council)  
Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones (Gwynedd Council)  
Cllr Eryl Jones-Williams (Gwynedd Council) – Chair  
Cllr Selwyn Griffiths (Gwynedd Council)  
Bedwyr Gwilym (Dwyfor & Meirionnydd AM Office)  
Clare Britton (Ffestiniog Railway)  
Cllr Trevor Roberts (Aberystwyth/Shrewsbury Railway)  
Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group)  
Stuart Williams (Tal-y-llyn Railway)

Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer) **LHE**

Sam Hadley (Network Rail) **SH**

Gail Jones (Transport for Wales) **GJ**

## 1. **APOLOGIES:**

Cllr Eirwyn Williams, (Gwynedd Council), Cllr Angela Russell (Gwynedd Council), Cllr Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment - Gwynedd Council), Liz Saville Roberts (MP Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Mabon ap Gwynfor (SM Dwyfor Meirionnydd), Cllr Annwen Hughes, (Snowdonia National Park Representative) Claire Williams (Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer), Cllr Michael Williams (Powys Council), Ann Elias (Ceredigion County Council) and Joyce Watson (SM Mid and West Wales Region)

The Chair drew attention to the fact that Councillor Selwyn Griffiths would be retiring as a County Councillor in May 2022. He thanked the Councillor for his work and support to the Cambrian over the years. In response, Councillor Griffiths noted that he had enjoyed being part of the group and he stressed the need for the group to continue to ensure that the Cambrian was key to the Gwynedd economy. He thanked the officers for their support and willingness to cooperate and to respond to concerns. On behalf of Network Rail, Sam Hadley expressed his thanks to the Councillor for his work and also for the warm welcome he received when visiting Porthmadog.

## 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 1 October 2021, as a true record.

Matters arising from the minutes:

- Ensure that posters at Llandanwg station highlight taxi services. **GJ to check this and ensure that current information reminding users of the bus services that are available as a result of the closure of Barmouth viaduct**
- Safe Routes to Services Strategy - how could input be given to the strategy? **GJ to share details with Councillor Gwynfor Owen**
- Installation of crash barriers and repair of boundary wall on the A493 between Llwyngwril and Friog. The next meeting with the Community Council had been arranged for 9/3/22. There was concern by the Local Member (Cllr Louise Hughes Llangelynnin) that the condition of the wall had worsened and the time-schedule to complete the work had slipped. SH highlighted that a project manager and budget had been set for this work and it continued to be a priority area.
- Llanbedr Station - it was reported that a meeting to discuss improvements/possible alterations to the station had taken place with the Community Council in October, and David Crunkhorn (Station Master) had visited the station and a second meeting had been arranged with the Community Council. **GJ requested an update when more information was available.**
- An application for funding to conduct a short study on the potential train service between Bangor and Afonwen had been unsuccessful as more evidence was required regarding the possible benefits. BG reported that work was being undertaken to re-submit an application in the future.

### 5. UPDATE FROM THE SERVICES

#### NETWORK RAIL

Mr Sam Hadley, Wales Route Public Affairs Manager, was welcomed to the meeting

### **Update on upgrading Barmouth viaduct**

Key images and facts were presented on the work completed on the viaduct between September 2021 and December 2021. It was noted that the work had been challenging and physically difficult for the workers as the work was dependent on the weather.

In response to a question if there was any of the original bridge left, it was noted that every effort had been made to retain as much as possible of the original features and any replacement was 'like for like'. It was added that the bridge was listed (Grade II) and every effort had been made to ensure that the features were safeguarded.

### **ETCS (European Train Control System)**

It was reported that the ETCS System used to control train signals and speed would be upgraded for the Class CAF 197 Civity fleet that would be used on the Cambrian in the near future.

In response to a question if the Cambrian line would close over the period to upgrade the ETCS system, it was noted that the work was likely to be undertaken over the weekend and/or during another planned closure period to avoid any inconvenience.

### **Glandulas Project (Black Bridge) near Machynlleth**

That erecting the bridge over afon Dulas had been very successful. The bridge had been erected one metre higher to reduce the impact of flooding (the river level rose during heavy rain and the Cambrian line had to close). Bearing in mind that it was a fairly small investment, the impact was substantial - during recent rough weather it was noted that the usual flooding had not stopped the Cambrian services.

### **Access for all Programme**

It was highlighted that the programme improved access to stations and that stations across the country were being considered for improvements. For the first time this year, it was highlighted that two Cambrian stations had been included on the possible work schedule - this was something that had not been seen before and was encouraging news.

## **TRANSPORT FOR WALES**

Gail Jones, Transport for Wales, was welcomed to the meeting to present an update on the activities of Transport for Wales.

Information about the new Class CAF 197 Civity trains was presented

In response to a question regarding seeing a model of the new carriages that an invitation to visit the new trains had been organised in April 2022 with a test run to Llandudno Junction. In response, it was highlighted that the visit dates in April were during the period prior to the election and therefore it was likely that these would need to be re-scheduled.

Reference was made to SGWRS, namely the Transport for Wales on-line research community to share views on transport in Wales with an opportunity to participate in surveys, on-line discussions and discussion fora to improve the service.

[SGWRS \(tfw.wales\)](https://www.tfw.wales)

Concern was highlighted that the new carriages had fewer seats with only one toilet for two carriages. It was added that the Cambrian was one of the busiest routes in Wales and the use increased year on year. It was considered that offering fewer seats did not respond to the demand and therefore it was formally proposed that consideration needed to be given to having 4 permanent carriages for a journey.

In response to a comment regarding the lack of toilets on the new trains and a reduction in the number of seats, it was noted that it had to be ensured that every element was considered such as sufficient space for prams, wheelchairs, bags, bicycles and the number of toilets.

Other matters raised during the discussion

- Llandecwyn station bins - was it proposed to re-install these? Was this a matter for the Council or for TFC? **GJ to look into this**
- Litter on the railway highlighted untidiness - there was a need for cooperation to improve the image
- There was a need for better cooperation between bus and train time-tables to promote public transport
- There was a need to consider the re-introduction of freight trains - in response it was noted that the Mid Wales Transport League had discussed the possibilities and the Senior NR Freight Manager had mentioned a pilot scheme to look at this possibility - the Cambrian was suitable for this purpose. It was suggested that Jess Lippitt (Senior Freight Routes Manager - Network Rail) should be invited to a future meeting to discuss general freight issues.

## **BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE**

No representative from the British Transport Police was present to submit a report It was highlighted that no response had been received from Inspector Karl Anderson. SH noted that only a very small team now worked for the Railway Transport Police. **SH to send a new contact to LHE.**

**The officers were thanked for the updates.**

**6. FUTURE OF THE CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY**

It was proposed to defer the discussion on this matter until after the elections. It was added that it was essential to hold this discussion and the members' wish was to continue as a separate group. It was necessary to ensure that Gwynedd Council officers were aware of this.

**7. RESPONSE TO FORMAL QUESTIONS**

Formal written questions had been received from Cricieth Town Council

*'Cricieth Town Council is concerned that Network Rail is not communicating adequately in notifying the public when the trains had recently re-started - this needs to be improved in future as it is a health and safety issue. Is it possible to ensure better communication about future service changes? Cricieth Town Council is also concerned about the tidiness /appearance of the land around the station on the right. Can something be done about it'*

SH accepted the criticism and highlighted that every effort had been made to ensure as little disruption and complexity as possible during the challenging period of closing and re-opening the railway. He added that in future there would be more consideration to safety matters at level crossings and there would be an improvement in communication methods when working towards Phase 3.

In the context of the station's tidiness, it was noted that TFC was responsible for the tidiness of the station and Network Rail, as the landowner, was responsible for the railway and land either side to the railway and leased the station to TFC to manage day-to-day matters. He noted that he would make a service request on behalf of Cricieth Town Council and an assessment would be made of the essential work. GJ added that he would contact the Station Manager.

Everyone was thanked for their contributions.

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

**CHAIR**