

# **CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE**

**1 December 2023**

## **Attendance:**

### **Present:**

Cllr Dewi Owen (Cyngor Gwynedd)  
Cllr Gwynfor Owen (Cyngor Gwynedd)  
Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd)  
Cllr Eryl Jones-Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd)  
Cllr Gwilym Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd)  
Cllr Louise Hughes (Cyngor Gwynedd)  
Cllr Richard Glyn Roberts (Cyngor Gwynedd)

Liz Saville Roberts (MP for Dwyfor Meirionnydd)  
Delyth Griffiths (Office of MP for Dwyfor Meirionnydd)  
Cllr J M Williams (Powys County Council)  
Ann Elias (Ceredigion County Council)  
Clare Britton (Ffestiniog Railway)  
Cllr Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury/Aberystwyth Railway Committee)

Tomos Roberts (Network Rail)  
Charlotte Harries (Network Rail)  
Tomos Davies (British Transport Police)

Lowri Haf Evans LHE (Cyngor Gwynedd Democracy Services Officer)

## **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

**RESOLVED to elect Councillor Dewi Owen as Chair of this Committee for 2023/24.**

## **2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**RESOLVED to elect Councillor Gwynfor Owen as Vice-chair of this Committee for 2023/24**

## **3. APOLOGIES:**

Apologies were received from Mabon ap Gwynfor (Dwyfor Meirionnydd MS), Councillor Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Clare Williams (Cambrian Railway Partnership).

## **4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

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

## **5. URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

## **6. MINUTES**

The Chair accepted the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 31 March 2023, as a true record.

## **7. UPDATE FROM THE SERVICES**

### **NETWORK RAIL**

Tomos Roberts and Charlotte Harries (Network Rail Communications Managers) were welcomed to the meeting.

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

It was reported that the bridge upgrades and additional repair works on the railway were completed and that the railway between Pwllheli and Machynlleth and the footpath along the viaduct would re-open on 2/12/2023. It was added that an official event to celebrate the opening had been arranged in the Dragon Theatre on 8 December 2023. It was confirmed that the work had been completed on time and thanks were given to the committee and to the local communities for being patient during the work.

#### **Update on Aberdyfi viaduct**

It was reported that, as with Barmouth viaduct, Aberdyfi viaduct also re-opened at the end of October and that the work of fully renovating the structure had been completed successfully.

The officers were thanked for the update and the investment was appreciated locally.

#### **Update on Local Enterprises**

It was reported that the Local Team for the Cambrian had been created under the leadership of Gwyn Rees (Network Rail Performance and Transformation Director for Wales and the Cambrian Local Railway Partnership Director). It was highlighted that the team ensured collaboration between Network Rail and Transport for Wales and that response to the team's work thus far had been positive. With collaboration between Transport for Wales and Network Rail, four-carriage trains were re-introduced on the railway during the summer. With spectacular views along the Cambrian, the four-carriage campaign allowed more people to take full advantage of the popular journey by increasing revenue and boosting the local economy. Reference was also made to the work of washing the carriage windows in the stations which highlighted the team's proactive attitude towards improving the passengers' experience.

They were thanked for the update.

Observations arising from the ensuing discussion:

- Highlight pride that the bridge had been opened and that the railway between Machynlleth and Pwllheli would open on 2/12/23.
- The work had been approved – it was completed under very challenging circumstances.
- Although there were complaints regarding the bus service that ran whilst the railway was closed, there was only one official complaint, and it was due to floods.
- That the period felt long, especially for school children.
- Thanks to Barmouth Community Group for regular updates regarding the work.
- Welcomed four-carriage trains. Despite this, only **one** return journey with four carriages ran per day during the summer holidays.
- That cleaning the train windows was a simple solution - this was appreciated.
- That free travel was offered to travellers over 60 years of age, only during the winter - a request to consider extending this throughout the year.
- Thanks to Network Rail for visiting the rail crossing path in Porthmadog and for listening to the Town Council and local residents' comments. Welcomed the decision to protect the crossing instead of closing it.
- Thanks to Gail Jones (Transport for Wales) for collaborating with Liz Saville Roberts' Office to coordinate the Harlech Beer Festival arrangements. Unfortunately, without the intervention of the MP, Transport for Wales' commitment was very slow, but a solution was found following many discussions.

In response to a question regarding further additional work done to the railway and whether it included platform height adaptation for the new trains, it was noted that discussions were being held with the Local Railway Team to seek resolution. It was highlighted that using 'Harrington Humps' had been suggested - a system where it was possible to increase the railway platform height for a relatively low cost.

**Action:**

- 1. Tomos Roberts (Network Rail) to share a statement to the press with the office of Liz Saville Roberts MP so that it would be possible to submit an 'Early Day Motion' in the House of Commons to highlight the work that had been completed.**
- 2. Tomos Roberts to contact Councillor Rob Triggs to discuss the work on the tracks in Barmouth.**
- 3. Councillor Gwynfor Owen to share information with Network Rail regarding land erosion problems near property that is located on British Rail land (now Network Rail). The intention was to arrange a visit to the site.**
- 4. Request for an update on Network Rail and Natural Resources Wales' plans/discussions to protect the railway from floods in Pwllheli - protecting the railway was a priority.**
- 5. Request for Network Rail and Transport for Wales to extend the four-carriage train service, every day of the week, throughout the year. This would increase revenue.**
- 6. An update of the situation on the cliff road on the A493 near Friog. There had been a decade since the traffic lights were set up and there had been no**

**action taken since then. Recently there had been a landslide near the site - the location was fragile. Request to hold a public meeting in Llangylennin Village Hall with the Cabinet Member Councillor Dafydd Meurig and Steffan Jones (Head of Highways, Engineering and YGC). Invitation also to be sent to Liz Saville Roberts and Mabon ap Gwynfor. LHE to contact Steffan Jones to highlight the concerns and seek an update by the next meeting.**

## **TRANSPORT FOR WALES**

Gail Jones was not present in the meeting to receive an update.

The Members noted their disappointment that there was no representation from Transport for Wales.

## **BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE**

Tomos Davies was welcomed to the meeting.

Tomos introduced himself to the Members. He noted that he was located at the Bangor police station which represented the railway from Pwllheli to Porthmadog. He noted that Porthmadog to Machynlleth was under the management of Machynlleth station British Police and that Machynlleth station was now fully staffed. He reminded the Members of the British Police's responsibilities and noted that there were very few problems on the railway. He highlighted that the railway was busier during the summer, and that there were a few problems with school children's behaviour and anti-social behaviour in some areas.

He was thanked for the update.

Observations arising from the ensuing discussion:

- Gratitude was expressed for the work. It was welcomed that BTP attended meetings in the community.
- It was suggested that BTP visited local secondary schools to discuss the children's behaviour in the stations and on the trains.
- The BTP and North Wales Police were thanked for their good collaboration work in Machynlleth.

In response to a question regarding installing CCTV in some of the Cambrian's stations, it was noted that BTP supported any aspect that would improve the safety of the stations, but Transport for Wales would have to support the matter. It was reiterated that if a response was required for an incident, there was a need to text 61016 or download the 'railway guardian' app - both ensure that there would be a record of the incident that would support the request for CCTV.

In response to a request regarding collaboration with North Wales Police, it was noted that the relationship had improved since the appointment of a new Sergeant in 2018. It was reiterated that the situation had improved and that there was more collaboration.

Thanks were given for the updates.

## **8. RESPONSE TO FORMAL QUESTIONS**

### **Cricieth Town Council:**

Question: Would it be possible to paint Cricieth station? 'Cricieth in Bloom' worked very hard on improvements and grounds maintenance there, and the station receiving a coat of paint would be a big boost to improve its appearance and welcome users.

Reply: Unfortunately, Gail Jones of Transport for Wales was not in attendance - TfW were responsible for matters of painting stations. It was noted that it would be possible to ask for a written response by TfW.

Question: Graffiti has been painted on some of the bridges between Cricieth and Black Rock - would it be possible for you to remove it?

NR Reply: A request was made for more details regarding the graffiti - its location and any photos that could be shared. It was added that it would be possible to send out a community team to deal with the matter.

Thanks were given for the question.

### **Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams**

Question: An update was needed on the results from a recent survey (held during the summer) of the opinions of passengers on the Cambrian Railway.

Reply: Councillor Trevor Roberts noted that he would present the report in the next meeting but that some of the observations included concerns that the new trains would offer fewer seats and toilets in the carriages - this would lead to full, unsafe trains.

Network Rail and British Transport Police were thanked for their support and for responding to the matters raised at the Committee. They were encouraged to ensure that there was clear communication with the public regarding any events / updates.

The next meeting to be held in spring 2024 - LHE to arrange.

The meeting commenced at 10:30 and concluded at 11:40.

**CHAIR**