

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE Friday, 11 November 2016

Minutes of a meeting of the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference held at Y Ganolfan, Porthmadog, on Friday, 11 November 2016
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, Gethin Williams, Eirwyn Williams, John Brynmor Hughes, Angela A. Russell, (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. J. Michael Williams (Powys County Council), Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Assembly Member Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Mrs Liz Saville Roberts (Member of Parliament Dwyfor/Meirionnydd), Cllr. Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group), Cllr. Trefor Jones (Dwyfor Representative One Voice Wales), Mr D. Woodhouse (Aberdyfi and Tywyn Tourism), Mr Ben Davies (Arriva Trains Wales), 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).

Apologies: Councillor Owain Williams, Mr Tudur Williams (Head teacher of Ysgol Ardudwy), Mr Alun Wyn Evans (Meirionnydd Representative One Voice Wales), PC Rob Newman (British Transport Police), Cllr. Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Liaison Committee), Mr Neil Hamilton (AM for Mid and West Wales), Tracy Parkinson (Talylyn Railway).

A two-minute silence was held at 11.00 a.m. before the commencement of the meeting to remember the nation's war dead for Armistice Day.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest were 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 20 May 2016.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes.

4. REPORT BY NETWORK RAIL

Mr Sam Hadley, Wales Route Public Affairs Manager, and Mr Mark Peters, Asset Engineer, were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Mark Peters had prepared a presentation on Barmouth Viaduct, in the form of slides, but unfortunately due to equipment not being available, he promised to send the presentation to the Members' Support Officer for onward transmission to members of the Committee.

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE Friday, 11 November 2016

He went on to state that trains have now been running since the recent fire on Barmouth Viaduct and hopefully only a small amount of remedial works need to be completed which will be done soon as possible.

The Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer stated that the 150th celebration anniversary of the viaduct is to be held next year and was anxious to know as to the work programme of the development work to be undertaken on the viaduct and the timescale as to how long would it be out of use. He also requested that Network Rail be mindful in order to minimise disruption during the busiest tourist season since the area relies hugely on the tourism economy.

A suggestion was made as part of the celebrations to the showing of the famous Ghost Train thriller film to which Mr Ben Davies, Arriva Trains Wales, further suggested that half of one of the trains could be used as a cinema for the showing.

In response to the above, Mr Sam Hadley stated that Sian Lewis, who was present at the last meeting, is no longer the sponsoring officer of the Commercial Scheme Sponsor (Network Rail) and there will be a new sponsor. He also added that Network Rail will want to participate in the celebrations and will contribute. Mr Hadley promised that as soon as information is available he would pass it on to the Members' Support Officer in order to inform members of this Committee.

A member stated that he was aware that the 150th celebration would take place in October so as not to clash with the Three Peaks Race which is held annually in June.

In response to concerns expressed, Mr Hadley reassured Members of the Committee:

- that Network Rail had no intention of closing the line, despite local people being fearful that it would be closed, and was aware of how valued it is for the community
- that there would be no disruption to the 150th celebrations in terms of sea defence works
- That the additional rock face work at Llanaber will not affect the railway line at all and it was reassured that the necessary machines would be accessing the work from the beach

In response to the Dwyfor/Meirionnydd Member of Parliament's request for further information as regards planning applications, design, etc, on the Barmouth Viaduct, Mr Hadley stated that there was no clarity on this matter but he would write to up-date the MP and members of this Committee as soon as information is to hand.

Members also noted that when the work is carried out:

- That Network Rail/Arriva Trains should liaise together in order to put two extra carriages on the train from Barmouth to Pwllheli
- That Network Rail should liaise with Gwynedd Highways Department regarding the busy A496 between Barmouth and Dolgellau in light of the number of accidents that had occurred which means having to divert vehicles via Maentwrog

Mr Ben Davies, Arriva Trains, stated that if the repair works are long term, it will pose problems since the trains have to be checked in accordance with safety standard guidelines every three weeks.

Mr Hadley went on to note the following:

- That Mr Andy Thomas had been appointed to the post of Route Managing Director and that his priority is to ensure the Wales route is delivering on the priorities of elected representatives and the communities they represent
- Level crossing update
- Community rail

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE Friday, 11 November 2016

During the ensuing discussion, the following matters were raised by Members:

- (a) Concern and complaints received about the difficulty and lack of parking spaces at Machynlleth Station with passengers having to drive on to Caersws

In response, Mr Sam Hadley stated that the lifts are now commissioned at Machynlleth Station and fully accessible however there are outstanding issues with the toilet block. With regard to the car park, Mr Hadley promised to discuss the matter with Mr Ben Davies, Arriva Trains Wales, but stipulated that any improvements that would be above and beyond what would be considered station enhancement would require third party funding.

Mr Rhydian Mason added that as part of his role as development officer for the railway line, he was in consultation with Powys Council, looking at various options to create a railway station interchange through better layout, creating a turning circle for buses and an enhanced car park. There is land which may become free which could be used to double the size of the car park. It had been hoped to put a bid to Welsh Government this year, but unfortunately the bid is not near enough ready since there are still outstanding issues with drainage and a few other hurdles to overcome. Whilst appreciating that the position at present is far from ideal, it was assured, given time that there will be massive changes and there will be a meaningful and impressive interchange scheme in Machynlleth.

In the meantime, Mr Ben Davies agreed to consult with the Station Manager in Machynlleth to put signage up that the car park should be solely used by rail passengers.

- (b) It was brought to the attention of the officers that Fairbourne car park is very distressed and needs tidying up.

In response, Mr Sam Hadley and Mr Ben Davies agreed to check who was responsible for the above car park.

(c) In response to Cllr. Dewi Owen's concern regarding Dyfi Junction, Mr Hadley stated that he was familiar with the issues and had been in discussion with the Community Council, and understands that the gate is now locked for vehicular access. If there is further information on this, it will be passed on.

Resolved: (a) That the report and observations made above be noted.

(b) That Mr Andy Thomas, Wales' Route Managing Director, be invited to the spring meeting of this Committee.

(c) That Mr Sam Hadley up-dates members of the following issues as soon as information is to hand:

- **Barmouth Viaduct in terms of new sponsor, planning application details,**
- **Parking issues at Machynlleth Station**
- **Ownership of Fairbourne car park and the need to tidy it up**
- **Dyfi Junction**

5. REPORT BY ARRIVA TRAINS WALES LTD

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ben Davies, Arriva Trains Wales, to submit his report on Arriva Trains Wales' activities to date.

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE Friday, 11 November 2016

Members' had received via e-mail the autumn newsletter.

Mr Davies stated that it had not been a particularly good summer for Arriva Trains Wales in terms of operational problems on the line due to:

- The fire on Barmouth viaduct
- Lack of train drivers – when drivers take early retirement it may take as long as 12 months to train prospective drivers and therefore they have no spare drivers
- Insufficient supply of trains on the line - only 24 of the 158 fleet were compatible with ERTMS

However, it was hopeful that the situation will improve.

The Cambrian Partnership Railway Officer was congratulated and thanked for his work in promoting the line. It was further noted that Ysgol Ardudwy had been excellent and co-operative in view of the problems encountered on the Barmouth viaduct.

In response to comments made by members, Mr Davies replied as follows:

- Accepted that there was a need for extra carriages due to more passengers travelling on the train nowadays
- That this is the best time to canvass for extra trains for Wales before the prospective companies submit tenders for the next franchise in 2018.
- That it would be possible to run extra trains on this line provided that the trains were installed with the necessary apparatus for compatibility with ERTMS
- That the new ticketing issuing system on the train will be compatible with the London underground

During the ensuing discussion it was noted by individual Members:

(a) That there is a sub-committee of 4 members namely:

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

who are in contact with Mr Ken Skates, the Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, and if there are any issues of concern that these be brought up at the joint meeting with the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Committee to be held on the 25 November 2016.

(b) With regard to the problem of insufficient train drivers, it was suggested why not recruit part-time drivers

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;

- Shopmobility at Aberystwyth
- Floral Display at Aberystwyth Station
- A Helping Hand – film project and follow up
- Library Initiative
- Arriva UK plc Society and Communities Event

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE Friday, 11 November 2016

- Caersws community sign / Mid Wales Arts Centre
- ACORP Awards
- New “promotional” film
- Safe Crossings Campaign
- Publications
- Aberystwyth University Fresher’s Fair
- Community Rail Wales
- Welsh Government community Rail Capital Fund Grant applications

Mr Mason referred to the recent passing of Cllr. Mansel Williams in July and that there will be a commemorative memorial on Platform 3 in the Shrewsbury Railway Station in memory of the late Cllr. Williams. Mr Mason had arranged for a Welsh couplet to be inscribed thereon.

Ysgol Ardudwy Head Teacher and pupils were to be commended for their work as station adoptees. There will be an event to celebrate the work undertaken on 16 December 2016 when the Ysgol Ardudwy Band will be playing.

It is hopeful that Mr Mason will be able to invite Mr Ken Skates and Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas to visit some of the activities to be undertaken.

With regard to the Helping Hand orange cards, it was hoped that a special function may be arranged with the Dwyfor/Meirionnydd Member of Parliament and the Dwyfor/Meirionnydd Assembly Member in Westminster before the end of the year. It was further noted that the orange card could be used by any individual who required aid on the train. In response to an invitation to attend the Meirionnydd Access Group in order to promote the orange cards, Mr Mason agreed to liaise with Councillor Delwyn Evans with regard to arranging a suitable date.

With regard to applications for the Welsh Government Community Rail Capital Fund Grant, a bid had been submitted for shelters at Welshpool, Dovey Junction and Llanaber, and it was hopeful that one of these three bids would be successful.

In response to the above, members made the following points:

- That a bid be made to upgrade the parking in Fairbourne
 - If the bid for Llanaber was successful that it be ensured that the seating should not face the sea
 - What is the situation with regard to having steam engines on the Cambrian Coast Railway Line?
 - Whether the orange cards could be made available on all public transport i.e. buses, taxis.
 - Whether the Pwllheli Station could be tidied up
- (a) Mr Sam Hadley replied stating that he had written a detailed response to the Dwyfor/Meirionnydd Member of Parliament with regard to the steam trains and that this information be passed on to members of this Committee via the Members support Officer.
- (b) Mr Rhydian Mason agreed to draft a letter on behalf of this Committee to Mr Ken Skates with regard to the orange wallets being mandatory on all public transport

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

7. REPORT BY BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE Friday, 11 November 2016

In the absence of PC Rob Newman, British Transport Police, his written report was submitted to the Committee for information, and members were asked if there were any matters of concern within the report.

- (a) Councillor Annwen Hughes was concerned regarding the offences at Talwrn Bach level crossing at Llanbedr, and in view of the fact that work on the installation of barriers would not commence until 2018, she was anxious that an accident could occur at this location.
- (b) In response, Mr Sam Hadley noted the observation made and would arrange for his colleagues to attend the next meeting of this Committee to up-date members regarding the level crossing renewals programme as well as the Community Safety aspect.

Resolved: (i) To receive and note the report by the British Transport Police.

(ii) To ask Mr Sam Hadley to invite his colleagues to the next meeting of this Committee to up-date members as outlined in (b) above.

8. FORMAL QUESTIONS

Formal written questions had been submitted by Members of the Committee which were addressed as follows:

- (i) The provision of sufficient rolling stock to meet passenger demands during the period of the new franchise had been addressed in item 5 above and Mr Ben Davies added that he would forward further information to members of the Committee via the Members Support Officer
- (ii) The need for Welsh or bilingual announcements in all stations along the railway line. Mr Ben Davies responded by stating that he was meeting with officers from the Welsh Language Board fairly soon in order to ensure that all announcements were bilingual through Wales, and would up-date members following his meeting. It was further added by a member that the announcements in the lifts in Machynlleth Station should also be bilingual.
- (iii) Members of Llannor Community Council's concerns that not all the rubbish is accruing from the Recycling Centre Pwllhelli since it is all the way from Pwllhelli to Penychain. Mr Sam Hadley had responded to Llannor Community Council's concerns by stating that he had raised the matter with a member of Network Rail's maintenance team who was aware of the problem and believed the problem stemmed from a containment issue at the local authority site and had been liaising with them to try and resolve the matter. However, Mr Hadley apologised that the matter was still unresolved and promised to raise the matter again with the maintenance team. He also informed the Committee if members / organisations are aware of any hotspots along the line that need clearing up, that they report the matter immediately by calling the communities team on **03457 114141** or by e-mailing crwales@networkrail.co.uk
- (iv) Late correspondence had been received via Councillor Gethin Williams which had been sent to Barmouth Town Council regarding the construction of a new fence along the boundary of the rail track and Gwynedd Council's main car park boundary. Whilst appreciating that safety is of paramount importance, it was felt that the size and nature of the fence was unsympathetic to its surroundings and also an over-development as to its purpose. In response, Mr Sam Hadley promised to look into the matter further and to contact Councillor Gethin Williams directly. He also stated that he was aware that one of his colleagues was intending to visit Barmouth to talk to the Town Council.

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

9. **MEMBERSHIP**

Submitted - A request from the Regional Officer for Strategic Transport, representing Ceredigion, Gwynedd and Powys Councils, to attend the Cambrian Coast Railway Committee.

Resolved: That the request be approved.

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members were reminded that the Joint Meeting with the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Committee was to be held on Friday, 25 November 2016 in Y Plas, Machynlleth.

CHAIRMAN.