

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE

01-10-21

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)
Cllr. Angela Russell (Gwynedd Council)
Cllr. Annwen Hughes (Snowdonia National Park Authority Representative)
Bedwyr Gwilym (Dwyfor & Meirionnydd AM Office) **BG**
Ann Elias (Ceredigion County Council)
Clare Britton (Ffestiniog Railway)

Rhian Williams (Integrated Transport and Road Safety Manager, Gwynedd Council)
Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer) **LHE**

Sam Hadley (Network Rail) **SH**
Lowri Joyce (Transport for Wales) **LJ**
Kevin Collins (Network Rail) **KC**

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams was re-elected as Chair for 2021-22.

Councillor Gwynfor Owen was welcomed to his first meeting of this Committee

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Delwyn Evans was re-elected as Vice-chair for 2021/22.

3. APOLOGIES:

Cllr. Eirwyn Williams, (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Selwyn Griffiths (Gwynedd Council), Cllr. Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment - Gwynedd Council), Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd MP), Mabon ap Gwynfor (Dwyfor Meirionnydd MS), Claire Williams (Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer), Cllr. Trevor Roberts (Aberystwyth/Shrewsbury Railway), Cllr. Michael Williams (Powys Council), Stuart Williams (Tal-y-llyn Railway), David Crunkhorn (Transport for Wales), Aled Williams (Ysgol Ardudwy), Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group)

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 8 November 2019, as a true record.

7. **UPDATE BY TRANSPORT FOR WALES**

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

Since the relaxation of the covid 19 restrictions over the summer, in September 2021 a general increase had been seen of 8.5% in service use that was by now approximately 85% of the 'normal pre-covid' use. It was added that more services had re-opened between south and north Wales and it was proposed to add more in March 2022. It was noted that it was difficult to compare the situation with the pre-pandemic period as several changes had been implemented. It was also noted that the public continued to be concerned about travelling on public transport, however, Transport for Wales sought to ensure that they kept people safe.

In response to all the changes it was reported that workshops were being conducted to seek feedback and views on the service and there was a questionnaire to be circulated.

LJ noted that she had been appointed as Head of Engagement (temporary) with Transport for Wales - **In the meantime, LJ would inform LHE regarding who will report on Transport for Wales services to the committee.**

During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were noted:

- Need to ensure that train and bus connections were effective. It appeared that there was a lack of awareness by bus drivers of train time connections
- Assurance was needed that the stations closed during the pandemic would re-open.
- There were local concerns that train coaches were overcrowded - two coaches were insufficient
- There were concerns that bus drivers, who ensured service continuation as a result of the renovation work to Barmouth viaduct, were not local drivers. They did not know the area and did not stop in prominent stops to pick up travellers.
- Posters were required at Llandanwg station to highlight taxi services - **LJ to check this with David Crunkhorn**
- Buses serving Talwrn Bach Station causing congestion

In response to a question regarding safe routes to railway stations and a request by Councillor Gwynfor Owen (Harlech/Talsarnau Member) for the Committee to support him in a request for the various authorities to provide a safe walking/cycling path to Tŷ Gwyn station from Ynys and Glan y Wern, LJ noted that Transport for Wales would be supportive of the application and highlighted that a strategy was being drafted on safe routes matters. It was added that the application would be in keeping with this strategy.

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.

It was suggested that it would be useful for Members to see a model of the new coaches prior to their implementation on the railway - LJ to share details.

Although the investment into Barmouth Viaduct was to be welcomed, it was accepted that problems had arisen - LJ was thanked for resolving the concerns of residents regarding the bus service to Barmouth and the problems with the journeys of schoolchildren that had been resolved following discussions with the Education Department.

Lowri Joyce was thanked for the update and best wishes were extended to her in her new post.

8. **UPDATE BY NETWORK RAIL**

Sam Hadley, Wales Route Public Affairs Manager, was welcomed to the meeting and he introduced Kevin Collins (Network Rail Route Delivery Director (Wales)) to respond directly to matters regarding work on the boundary wall on the A493 between Llwyngwrl and Friog.

Llangelynnin Community Council wanted to know when the long-awaited work of installing crash barriers and to repair the boundary wall on the A493 between Llwyngwrl and Friog would commence. It was reported that the matter had been submitted to Gwynedd Council in January 2015, however, the matter had been transferred to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in May 2015, as NRW were responsible for the boundary wall and the crash barrier. The complaint had been drawn to the attention of the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Committee in March 2017 and had been discussed several times since then and remained unresolved.

KC noted that the work was now on Network Rail's priority list and a budget and resources had been earmarked for this. A pledge was made that there would be better communication with local residents and a site visit would be organised with local Councillors. It was added that stakeholders needed to be reassured that the work was being prioritised and although there was no time schedule for the work, he would be willing to present an update at the next meeting.

- **SH to arrange for a letter to be sent to local residents informing them of what was proposed.**
- **Update to be submitted to the next meeting**

In response, Councillor Louise Hughes (Member for Llangelynnin) thanked the officer and stated that the condition of the wall was now disastrous and she was very supportive of Network Rail's response. When it was asked for a possible date, KC noted that he could not give a specific date but once a time schedule was in place, the dates would be shared with SH and LHE. He accepted there had been difficulties in the past, however, he was confident that the response highlighted Network Rail's intention to improve the situation.

- **The dates of the work time schedule to be shared with SH and LHE.**

Mr Collins was thanked for attending the meeting and for the update.

Glandulas Project (Black Bridge) near Machynlleth

That the work of erecting the bridge over afon Dulas had been completed. The bridge had been erected one metre higher to reduce the impact of flooding and to prevent the closure of the line as a result to the river level rising during storms and heavy rain.

It was noted that Councillor Michael Williams and Councillor Trevor Roberts had been campaigning for some time regarding this. The work was welcomed and this would prevent serious delays for Cambrian Railway services.

Shrewsbury Station

In response to a question about a scheme to improve Shrewsbury station and the opportunity to increase the number of platforms for Cambrian Railway services, it was noted that discussions were being held with Transport for Wales regarding the re-use of platforms in Shrewsbury and the intention was to increase the number of platforms to offer more services. **It was suggested that BG should contact SH and LJ directly to receive further information.**

The officers were thanked for the updates.

9. **UPDATE ON UPGRADING BARMOUTH VIADUCT**

It was reported that part 2 of the 3-year project was now underway and this included the removal of timber work. It was noted that weekly meetings would be held to discuss progress and they were confident that the work would be completed by 12 December 2021 and the railway would re-open. It was noted that site visits had taken place with local Councillors and everyone was very supportive of the project and appreciated the investment.

It was suggested that there was a need to ensure that the history of the event was recorded and ideas were requested regarding what could be made educationally, historically and creatively to celebrate this event. **Ideas to be submitted to SH**

10. **RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S QUESTIONS**

Formal written questions had been received from Llangelynnin Community Council and Llanbedr Community Council.

Llangelynnin Community Council - work to repair the boundary wall and installation of crash barriers on the A493 between Llwyngwrl and Friog. (The response had already been discussed in item 8 above). Councillor Louise Hughes (Llangelynnin Local Member) accepted the response and would report back to the Community Council.

Llangelynnin Community Council

Regarding installing barriers across the road, SH highlighted that he had discussed the matter with the assets team. He noted that there was a plan afoot to improve the station and it was proposed to add a barrier to the level crossing. He confirmed that there was a budget for the work and although there was no specific time-table, he suggested that the work would be undertaken at the end of the summer 2022 season. He added that there would also be an access ramp added to the back of the platform - this would be an improvement.

It was added that Llanbedr residents were very disappointed that there had only been expenditure and improvements to Tŷ Gwyn and Llandanwg stations and not to Llanbedr that was a very busy station. It was asked if there were plans to upgrade the station in the future. SH noted that he would share the concerns with the Senior Management of Network Rail. He asked for ideas regarding what they would like and there may be a budget available (2022/23) for renewal.

In response, Councillor Annwen Hughes (Llanbedr Member) noted that with the coming of the Llanbedr bypass and developments in the airfield, the possibility of a 106 agreement could be considered that would contribute financially to railway matters.

The Chair noted that Llanbedr Station had been neglected and it had been a matter of concern for years - any adaptations, improvements were to be welcomed. In response, SH noted that it would be possible to organise a visit to the Station to discuss the possibilities. **SH to organise for the Senior Management of Network Rail and Transport for Wales officers to meet with the Community Council to discuss the possibilities - SH to share the details.**

To extend thanks for the questions and for the favourable responses received from the officers.

Other matters:

- a) Railway workers avoiding wearing face coverings - Cllr. Anne Lloyd Jones highlighted that a matter had been brought to her attention that some railway workers did not wear face coverings in shops.
 - **Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones would note the concerns in an email to SH.**
 - **SH to refer the concern on to the Project Managers as an urgent matter for them to ensure that railway workers comply with covid guidelines.**

- b) Bedwyr Gwilym highlighted
 - that the APPG Heritage Rail Group Report had been published - **copy to be shared with Committee Members**
 - that an application for funding had been submitted (March 2021) to conduct a short study on the potential train service between Bangor and Afonwen - **it was agreed for the matter to be an item at the next meeting**

11. **BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE REPORT**

No representative from the British Transport Police was present to submit a report

LHE to ensure that a written report is submitted, if a representative cannot attend in the future.

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

CHAIR