

Paper to:	The Montgomeryshire Committee on Wednesday, 8 th March 2017
Author:	County Councillor J. Michael Williams, Powys County Council's Montgomeryshire Rail Representative
Subject:	The Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Railway Liaison Committee

1. Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Railway Liaison Committee held on Friday, 10th February 2017.

1.1 Attendees.

Present were representatives of the County Councils of Powys, Ceredigion, Gwynedd and Shropshire; the Town/Community Councils of Barmouth, Machynlleth, Welshpool, Aberystwyth, Caersws, Carno and Newtown; Cambrian Rail Partnership; Arriva Trains Wales; Rail Future; Aberdyfi/Tywyn Tourism; Tallylyn Railway; West Coast 250, Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers 'Association and Carno Station Action Group.

1.2 Former Chairman Cllr. Mansel Williams.

Immediate past chairman and former Shropshire County Councillor Mansel Williams passed away during 2016.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the success of the Committee in bringing about the current enhanced services to the line, arrangements are well in hand for the unveiling of a plaque at Shrewsbury station on March 17th, 2017.

Invitations to be sent out shortly.

1.3 Surveys for Welsh Government (April and August 2017).

The Secretary, Robert Robinson, outlined the details of the surveys that Welsh Government has commissioned the Committee to carry out in April and August of this year. The findings of which will form a report to Welsh Government.

1.4 Franchise Meetings held in Welshpool.

The four bidding franchise companies attended well-received sessions with members of the Committee over two days in January 2017.

The areas discussed at the meeting are posted on the website: <http://shrewsburyaberystwythrailway.org>

1.5 Welshpool Station Car Park.

There is still some doubt over the ownership of the site. Powys Estates own the freehold but there is no proof of title record of a lease to Network Rail at present.

1.6 Machynlleth Station Lifts.

It was noted that the lifts were working. However, the bi-lingual signage/messaging was still not in place.

1.7 Travel Plan for 2016-2020.

The Travel Plan has been posted on the website since November 2016 with no further comments received. The Committee adopted the Plan as the Committee's formal policy and can be accessed via <http://shrewsburyaberystwythrailway.org>

1.8 Guards on Trains.

The Committee considered the importance of Guards/Other Staff with a safety critical role on trains on the main and coast lines.

The importance was underlined by recording the following important points:

Arriva Trains Wales confirmed that, during their franchise, there will always be a conductor/guard on all trains.

- i) Rural nature of the lines (no stations are manned all the time).
- ii) Important information to passengers as trains split and there are short platforms.
- iii) There are a lot of children using the services for local journeys.
- iv) Revenue collection and safety of passengers.

Actions: The Secretary is to write to Transport for Wales, the Welsh Government Secretary (Ken Skates AM) and the Shadow Transport Secretary (Russell George AM).

The Secretary is also to issue a press release as this is an item of public interest.

1.9 Report by Ben Davies, Arriva Trains Wales.

A verbal report was given by Arriva Trains Wales' Ben Davies with the following points of particular interest:

- i) Class 158 trains should all have free Wi-Fi by Easter 2017.
- ii) Increase in passenger traffic from 2015 to 2016 saw increases of 9.5% local and 5.2% non-local journeys.
- iii) Late Coast train is now stopping at all stations.
- iv) There is to be a change in the timetable to allow the last train to link better at Machynlleth. (Arrival of ex Shrewsbury at 21.43 with the Coast Train leaving at 21.49). This will be Monday to Friday at first.
- v) Improvements in bi-lingual information was a hot topic during the franchise meetings. However, there will be no investment to improve this during the life of the franchise as it is not clear if the trains will still be used in Wales after the new franchise in 2018.
- vi) Bi-lingual information on platforms was raised.
- vii) Work is still continuing to improve Machynlleth station as a transport hub.
- viii) The new toilets at Machynlleth have been delayed but the temporary ones were always clean and well-kept.
- ix) Tickets should be purchased if possible before going onto a train. However, the policy is that people should seek out the guard/conductor at the first opportunity when on the train.
- x) Information was asked for on cancellations but with little evidence to back up the statement of 60 out of 120 trains running late or cancelled. The member was asked to provide details so that Arriva Trains Wales could respond.
- xi) Appreciation was expressed at the work of Arriva Trains Wales and what they do for the Cambrian lines.
- xii) New shelters are due to be put in place at Machynlleth station.
- xiii) New style of tickets was raised with such issues as not being able to use them in London Underground ticket barriers. The tickets are being reviewed shortly.
- xiv) Lack of toilets was raised with regard to platform 3 at Shrewsbury. It was pointed out that except in exceptional circumstances this is an interchange platform and a train is normally already in the platform with the trains having toilets on board.

1.10 Report by Rhydian Mason, Line Development Officer (LDO), Cambrian Railways Partnership.

A written and verbal report (copy on the website: <http://shrewsburyaberystwythrailway.org>) was given by Rhydian Mason LDO, Cambrian Railways partnership.

- i) **Meeting with Paul Maynard MP.** We have been fortunate to be offered a meeting with Paul Maynard MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department for Transport (Rail Minister, DfT, with a view to seeking his endorsement for the efforts we're making to promote the Orange Wallet scheme nationally. I attended along with Ben Davies, Phil Caldwell and David Crunkhorn of Arriva Trains Wales (ATW), and we were given a fair meeting with Mr. Maynard. He was able to give us his endorsement for the scheme along with advice on how to proceed with our efforts, in conjunction with his officers. This is an excellent example of how a local, community rail partnership project is able to make a national mark, and we will be taking his advice forward, working in partnership with ATW and the Arriva UK Group.

- ii) **Rail Franchising and Welsh Government support.** I've attended numerous meetings along with colleagues from the 4 other Wales & Borders Community Rail Partnerships (CRP) where we've been discussing the future of CRPs and how they might fit in with the next franchise. This year we've been fortunate to receive grant funding for both revenue and capital projects from Welsh Government (WG) and we are naturally keen to work with WG to secure more funding for the coming financial years. We have had a verbal confirmation that we have been successful in our capital grant bids for new shelters for Welshpool, Dyfi Junction and Llanaber stations.
- iii) **Publications.** We are imminently ready to proceed to publish our new booklet of short walks on the Cambrian lines. This booklet will take the place of the Cambrian Trailways' leaflets which proved extremely popular some years ago. We have secured the endorsement of the Wales Coastal Path (via Natural Resources Wales) and are seeking approval to use the Welsh Government/Visit Wales logos on it as well.
- iv) **Surveys.** The Cambrian Railways Partnership is delighted to work with the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Railway Liaison Committee and we are commissioning surveys scheduled for spring 2017 as part of our grant from the Welsh Government, to be delivered on our behalf by this Committee and the Mid Wales Rail Implementation Group. The surveys follow on from the success of the 2013 and 2015 surveys which resulted in improved services on the Cambrian lines.
- v) **2017 Promotional Campaign.** We have already produced a short promotional film and are seeking additional funding to allow us to prepare a brand new tourist-focussed website and further short films which we are looking to release in February/March until early summer this year. The campaign will be exclusively based on social media platforms.
- vi) **Stories and Books by Cambrian.** We have been approached by the Ceredigion Council library service and the Welsh Books Council to work on further projects linking stories and books with the Cambrian lines. We are currently awaiting confirmation of details and funding to pilot what could emerge as a pan-Wales project.
- vii) **2017/18 Business Plan.** Our business plan for the next financial year is being prepared and will outline our project for the coming 12 months. This will be presented at the next meeting of the Cambrian Railways Partnership for approval by the funding stakeholders, due to be held in March.

1.11 Written Report from Network Rail.

The Committee received a written report from Network Rail (copy on the website: <http://shrewsburyaberystwythrailway.org>).

- i) **Sponsorship/Enhancement update.** Toilet improvement works will commence on Shrewsbury station in early summer 2017. The layout will include the splitting of disabled/ladies toilets. The layout of the existing toilet block will be altered, particularly in order to separate the disabled toilets from the lobby of the ladies' toilet. There will also be an extension that will accommodate new cleaners' room and disabled toilet, which will make them easier to access. The façade will be clad in a similar manner to the recently constructed waiting room and information centre in order to create a cohesive image for new structures amongst the existing buildings.
- ii) **Welshpool Car Park.** There are property issues to be resolved at car park with Network Rail Property. Network Rail solicitors are doing title searches at the present time.
- iii) **Talerddig Level Crossings.** Eight crossings are to close in 2017, road construction work now underway.
- iv) **Machynlleth station car park.** A meeting to be arranged for 15th February to review options – attendees include Network Rail, Arriva Trains Wales, the local authority and Rhydian Mason.
- v) **Bow Street.** Asset protection and support work for proposed new station. Network Rail understands that an application has been made to the DfT New Stations Fund to support this scheme.
- vi) **Maintenance update.** Majority of the blocks on this line involve re-sleepering, re-ballasting – replacing life expired assets and rectifying faults. Disruptive possessions

- leading to replacement road transport occurring over next few months, between Sutton Bridge and Aberystwyth on nights of: 3/4 July, 4/5 July and 6/7 July.
- vii) **Community Rail.** Active schemes at Tywyn, Tywyn station, Penychain and Criccieth. Network Rail is promoting and supporting Community Rail and welcome applications for new schemes. Barmouth Viaduct celebrations are being led by Rebecca Heeley from Network Rail.

1.12 British Transport Police.

No report received.

1.13 Carno Station.

There was nothing further to report at this stage on the re-opening of Carno station. Papers on timetabling had been circulated to officers.

1.14 Date of Next Meeting.

The date of the next meeting (AGM) was noted as Friday, June 2nd, 2017, at Welshpool Town Hall, 11:15am:

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