

<b>Paper to:</b>	The Montgomeryshire Committee on Wednesday, 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2016.
<b>Author:</b>	County Councillor J. Michael Williams, Powys County Council's Montgomeryshire Rail Representative.
<b>Subject:</b>	The Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee

## **1. Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee held on Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016.**

### **1.1 Record of Attendance.**

Present were representatives of the County Councils of Powys, Ceredigion, Gwynedd and Shropshire; the Town/Community Councils of Barmouth, Machynlleth, Welshpool, Aberystwyth, Caersws, Newtown and Carno; Cambrian Rail Partnership; Arriva Trains Wales; Rail Future; Aberdyfi/Tywyn Tourism; Talylyn Railway; Dafydd Ellis Thomas AM.

### **1.2 Former Chairman Cllr. Mansel Williams.**

The meeting received a report on the health of the immediate past chairman and former Shropshire County Councillor Mansel Williams. He had resigned from his position as a councillor and as chairman of this committee.

The meeting agreed to alter the constitution to allow the appointment of a president. The meeting further agreed to appoint Mansel Williams as the President.

### **1.3 Elections.**

Officers were appointed as follows:

Chairman: Cllr. Trevor Roberts.

Vice-Chairman Cllr. Michael Williams

Secretary: Robert Robinson.

### **1.4 Cambrian Rail Survey.**

The meeting received reports on the following:

- a) The final copy of the survey report as presented to the Welsh Government Minister, Edwina Hart.
- b) To receive a report on the meeting with the Minister (as above) on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016. The points of note were:
  - a) Welshpool Town Council has agreed to continue with administration support in the future to ensure sustainability for the Committee with its links with the industry and Welsh government.
  - b) The surveys will continue on a regular basis starting in July/August 2016. The full survey results are to be posted on the web site after the meeting. A meeting with the Minister before the Assembly Elections is to be sought and also a meeting with the new Minister after the elections.

### **1.5 Actions Taken Since the Last Meeting.**

The meeting received an update on the actions taken since the last meeting were:

- a) The completion of the rail survey.
- b) Visit to the Minister.
- c) Completion of the Welshpool Station Car Park.

### **1.6 Visit On Site by Welsh Government.**

The Chairman had met with Officers of the Welsh Government on a tour of the line with various improvements discussed including extension of shelter provision and lift access at Welshpool, signage at Newtown, car parking at Caersws.

### **1.7 Infrastructure on the Line.**

- a) Machynlleth Station: Lifts and bridge almost complete, some concern over access if lifts fail. Car parking provision with a bus turning circle taking its course.
- b) Caersws Station: A new site for car parking has been identified and investigations are progressing.
- c) Shrewsbury Station Staff: The secretary will pass emails sent on a matter to Ben Davies for information.
- d) Welshpool Station: The addition of further shelters, lift access and litter bins (by the Town Council).
- e) Rail Ticket Sales – Tourist Information Office (TIO), Welshpool: It was confirmed that the business at Newtown has been purchased and will continue. Welshpool TIO will sell rail tickets from just after Easter.
- f) Holiday Trains on the Coast Line: The provision of holiday trains was noted.
- g) Newtown Station: Signage to be improved.

### **1.8 Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) – Report by Ben Davies.**

- a) Performance of the line continues to improve with very good indicators.
- b) The toilets on the trains are to be refurbished with new pans in the next few months; further refurbishment will take place over the next few months.
- c) ATW offered its support for the survey planned for July/August.
- d) The drivers' dispute has been resolved.
- e) Support for the Machynlleth Comedy Festival continues with the event being a good part of the Mid Wales calendar of events.
- f) The indicators show that in 2005, 80% of trains were on time and in 2015, 92.8% of trains were on time.
- g) There is a need for more trains within the new franchise, this issue needs to be addressed early.

The full report will be posted on the web site in due course.

### **1.9 Cambrian Rail Partnership – Report by Rhydian Mason.**

- a) Filmed by a local company in collaboration with Coleg Derwen to use their expertise, the award-winning film for people with special needs to enable them to travel confidently has been nominated for yet another award. Together with the Cambrian Railways Partnership, Arriva Trains Wales, Virgin Trains and Network Rail have also been involved.
- b) There are discussions to locate a Shop-ability base at Aberystwyth for those using mobility scooters.
- c) The focus over the next few months will be on tourism with two new brochures planned.

The full report will be posted on the Web Site in due course.

### **1.10 Network Rail.**

No report received.

### **1.11 British Transport Police.**

No report received.

**1.12 Consultation and Franchise 2018.**

The meeting considered the following:

Rail Franchise Consultation by Welsh Government.

Rail Franchise Presentation Document prepared last autumn.

Both documents were discussed in detail and were approved with alterations. The documents are to be posted on the web site.

**(Councillors please note that, directly under this report, I've included the Committee's response to the Rail Franchise Consultation in full).**

**1.13 Carno Station.**

The meeting received an update as follows:

- a) Timetables have been submitted and further versions have been issued to Welsh Government. These show how a service can be provided within the existing timetable
- b) The crossing points near Talerddig were of concern as there appears to be budget Issues.
- c) Matters continue with regard to the possible reopening of the station.

**1.14 Date of Next Meeting.**

It was agreed to hold the next meeting on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in Welshpool Town Hall at 11.15am.

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**Welsh Government Consultation Document: Setting the Direction for Wales and Borders Rail.**

Responses were required by 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016 to: The Rail Policy Team, Transport – Policy, Planning and Partnerships, Department for Economy, Science and Transport, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ. E-mail: [railpolicy@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:railpolicy@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

**Response (in italics) from the Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee**

**Question 1:** Do you agree with the Welsh Government's high level outcomes for rail in the Wales and Borders area? Are there any others we should consider?

*The Committee supports the overarching objectives of the Welsh Government as set out below.*

- a) *Reduced overall journey times by providing faster and more frequent services, and better interchanges between modes.*
- b) *Increased people using public transport through the provision of new and improved passenger services.*
- c) *Reduced operating and maintenance costs by making greater efficiencies, and by greater use of services.*
- d) *Having the capacity to meet demand during peak periods and special events. Improved accessibility and compliance with the Equalities Act 2010 by co-ordinating services and improving station design.*
- e) *Reduced emissions through lower road vehicle use.*
- f) *Direct services between main residential areas and economic centres.*
- g) *Improved service quality by providing newer vehicles and better integration between services.*
- h) *Improved punctuality.*

*The Committee does have some reservations with regard to increased passenger traffic. There are many overcrowded trains (in particular the Cambrian Lines) and therefore any increased use would require longer and or more regular train services.*

**Question 2:** Do you agree with the top 5 priorities' improvements for rail passengers identified by Transport Focus? How would you rank these priorities? If you do not agree, are there others that should take precedence?

*The Committee generally supports the improvements suggested. They are similar in result to the Cambrian rail Surveys completed in 2013 and 2015.*

1. *Price of train tickets offers better value for money.*
2. *Passengers always able to get a seat on the train.*
3. *Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel.*
4. *Train Company keeps passengers informed about delays.*

*However, the condition of trains (particularly toilets) is an issue on the Cambrian Lines. Also a ticket system of fares which is common and easily managed is needed.*

**Question 3:** Are there changes to the range and frequency of services currently operated, as set out at Annex A that you would consider necessary?

*The Committee is supportive of a better rail frequency of trains on all lines. However, there are two particular areas which could be enhanced.*

- a) *An extra train on the Cambrian Lines to provide a full hourly train service including earlier trains on a Sunday. The Cambrian Lines Rail surveys 2013 and 2015 offer justification for these alterations.*
- b) *Extra trains along the Cambrian Coast to improve the single train per day on Sundays (winter months) and 3 trains per day on Sundays (summer months).*
- c) *There should be an aim to create a 7 days a week full service on the Cambrian Main and Coast Lines*

**Question 4:** Are there destinations outside of Wales that should be considered for inclusion in the next Wales and Borders franchise?

*The current Cambrian Rail Services run from Aberystwyth through Shrewsbury to Birmingham International. There is also a need to take some trains through to Crewe for connections to Manchester Airport. The retention of these links to the West Midlands are considered essential for the economy of Mid Wales.*

**Question 5:** Can better use be made of existing train capacity? What is an acceptable limit for standing times on rail journeys?

*The eventual aim should be to remove standing in carriages on all rail journeys. It is recognised that this may not be achievable. A good target is a maximum of 20 minutes standing time on any long distance journey undertaken.*

*The standing times on some Cambrian Lines services from Birmingham International to Welshpool are extensive in busy periods and when several exhibitions are taking place at the International Centre.*

*This would be helped by longer trains (certainly 2-car to 4-car units as a minimum.*

**Question 6:** What standards for performance should the Welsh Government consider setting when awarding a franchise for rail services?

*The standards for performance should include those identified as follows:*

- *Cleanliness of the trains and stations.*
- *Customer Service.*
- *Information Provision (including during disruption).*
- *Facilities for passengers.*

*And also include for more rolling stock to give more space for the increased passenger loads expected.*

**Question 7:** How could arrangements for dealing with disruption be improved upon and how should these be prioritised?

*To continue good liaison between the Company and the Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee reporting on customer care aspects.*

*The measure to be used for improvements can be measured by customer satisfaction surveys on a line by line or station by station basis.*

**Question 8:** How should the cost improvements in service be met? Will the Welsh Government approach provide the best value for money for passengers?

*The railway and buses should be treated as a public service and financing should be secondary to the production of those services to a good standard. This will support industry, jobs and create a better quality of life for all.*

*Best value for money is not necessarily provided by 'not for profit' companies, both methods of delivery (private company and not for profit company) should be considered and measured side by side.*

**Question 9:** Would you prefer to not use a paper-based ticket and, if so, what ticket type would you like to have available?

*The use of web sites and computer tickets ordered via the internet are a very useful tool. However, in many areas of Wales the population is 30% aged over 65 years. Many of the older people do not have a computer, nor do they want one. It is too early to go totally web or computer based. Over a period of time this can be achieved but not in the short term. The next franchise should include for both paperless and paper ticketing.*

**Question 10:** How important to you is the availability of a combined ticket for public transport in Wales? Do you have examples of good practice?

*The Committee supports this initiative. There is no evidence offered of good practice.*

**Question 11:** Are there other quality characteristics you would wish to see? How would you prioritise the quality characteristics for the Wales and Borders franchise? What additional quality improvements to rolling stock should the Welsh Government prioritise for Commuter routes? Rural routes? Long distance routes?

*The quality characteristics in order of priority would be:*

- *A good regular and comfortable train service with trains fit for purpose.*
- *Good car parking at stations.*
- *Improved station facilities.*
- *Good information.*
- *Good connections at key hub stations.*

*The improvements in rural routes should include more friendly stations (with adequate car parking, shelters and access) and improved timetables to meet rising demand. In particular along the Cambrian Lines.*

**Question 12:** Do you think the catering provision available in the current franchise is adequate for longer journeys? If not, how should the Welsh Government consider influencing changes to catering services available at stations and on trains?

*The Committee is aware of the balance between provision of catering and the cost of that provision.*

*However, the need for a good trolley service on all services (except commuter lines leading into Cardiff and Swansea – short journeys) is recognised.*

*Such service needs to be extended into the evening services.*

*Food for sale should be good wholesome and locally provided where possible.*

**Question 13:** Which station facilities do you consider to be most in need of improvement and where?

*The Cambrian Lines need station improvements as identified by the Cambrian Lines' Surveys of 2013 and 2015 as follows:*

1. *Welshpool – further shelter provision, improved access for disabled.*
2. *Caersws – car parking provision urgently needed.*
3. *Machynlleth – car parking needed urgently.*

4. *Dovey Junction – car parking provision, better shelter provision and extension of electronic signage.*
5. *Bow Street and Carno Stations – reopening to support that area with rail provision as long as such reopening of stations does not affect a full hourly service on the Cambrian Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Line.*
6. *Aberystwyth – provision of on platform catering, extension of canopy to cover an area for 4-car trains and addressing of car parking issues.*

**Question 14:** Where would you like to see investment in station buildings and how might the Welsh Government encourage this?

*Welshpool station needs improvements as noted above. This is the busiest station on the Cambrian Lines and the current station is now not suitable for such activity.*

*The improved passenger traffic has also shown a great need for extra car parking at Caersws Station.*

*Using local councils (where they are proactive), Community Rail Partnerships or the Liaison Committees could aid delivery of improvements with Welsh Government support.*

**Question 15:** What information should the Welsh Government consider requiring an operator to publish as a priority, and in what format(s)?

*Information provision has been good. However, there are some areas of improvement which are:*

1. *On board train display boards are not always correct on the Cambrian Lines.*
2. *Information at station car parks needs to be more visible.*
3. *Information should be bi-lingual.*

**Question 16:** Are there any additional requirements in respect of the Welsh language that the Welsh Government should consider in relation to train operating companies and the services that they provide?

*Whatever approach is taken it should be common on all Welsh lines.*

*The Committee would seek bi-lingual information starting at the last station in England (before entering Wales) and at every Welsh station.*

**Question 17:** What should the Welsh Government consider doing to strengthen community rail activity?

*The Community would like to see the Welsh Government adopt a policy similar to that in England adopted by the DFT.*

**Question 18:** Which organisations should the Welsh Government consider requiring the Wales and Borders franchise operator to co-operate with, and in what ways?

*The Wales and Borders lines should liaise with their local or line liaison groups. For example it should be a requirement to liaise with the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee, Cambrian Coast Conference etc. These committees would include local groups such as the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association (SARPA), Community Rail Partnerships and Passenger Focus etc. and give the railway a single line of contact.*

**Question 19:** What can the operator of the Wales and Borders franchise do in order to improve safety and security, and the perception of safety and security?

*The current provision of fencing to lines, signage, CCTV etc. is considered adequate. In some cases better lighting to station platforms would help.*

*Later in the evening it is always reassuring to see station staff on the platform including a Transport police presence.*

*To continue the programme to include private crossing safety measures on the Cambrian Line (i.e. around Talerddig).*

**Question 20:** Are there other matters in respect of sustainable development which it will be important for the Wales and Borders franchise operator to be required or encouraged to focus on?

*The Committee feels that the current provisions are sustainable with the improvements noted in the response with regard to the Cambrian lines.*

**Question 21:** What steps should the Welsh Government consider taking as part of the next rail franchise to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation on our railways?

*The Committee has no evidence of this.*

Your name/organisation and postal/email address.

*Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee, Triangle House, Union Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7PG. Tel: 01938 553142. Email: [wtcouncil@btinternet.com](mailto:wtcouncil@btinternet.com)*

*The document presented here was discussed in full and is the collective views of the Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee members which includes many transport organisations, interest groups and councillors.*

*The Committee is willing to give oral evidence to the relevant Committee of the Welsh Government if it were felt to be of value.*

*The Committee has been very much involved in the Cambrian Lines and has taken a very active part in the surveys carried out in 2013 2015 with the Shrewsbury – Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee.*