

# MINUTES

Of a meeting held on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 3pm  
By Microsoft Teams Video Conference  
North Wales Coast and Cambrian Rail Lines

## 1. Present were

Those present were:

Dave Thomas – Welsh Government  
James Arden – Welsh Government  
Carol Willgoose – Welsh Government  
Cllr Peter Morton – North & Mid Wales Association of Local Councils  
Cllr Trevor Roberts – Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee  
Robert Robinson – Secretary (to the N&MWALC and SARLC)

## 2. Introductions

Each member present introduced themselves.

## 3. Joint meeting Status

3.1 The meeting was held in response to a letter to the Minister from the North & Mid Wales Association of Local Councils. As the subject was in common with the Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee both parties agreed it would be best if they worked together on these issues.

3.2 The organisations details are:

### **North & Mid Wales Association of Local Councils (The Association)**

The Association has been in existence for over 40 years and represents approx. 35 larger Town and Community Councils in their area (mainly along the North Coast). The Association discusses and raises issues that affect their area and which affect their communities.

### **Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee (SARLC)**

The Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee works with the Cambrian Coast Conference in seeking to liaise with Transport for Wales, Network Rail, Cambrian Railways Partnership and British Transport Police. The aims and objectives being to provide a forum for discussion on common issues between its membership regarding the main line between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth and jointly with the Cambrian Coast Conference the Coast Line from Machynlleth to Pwllheli. Review of meeting held in February 2019

## 4. Letter from the North and Mid Wales Association of Councils

4.1 The issues discussed are those in the attached letter at appendix A. The Welsh Government accepted that it was a well presented letter.

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4.2 The points addressed in the letter of 29th May from the Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee and the reply dated 5th August were also discussed.

Robert Robinson referred to the Wales Transport Strategy Scoping Study and the Transport for Wales objectives. TfW Rail Services had announced an increase of 65% in rail capacity by 2023, with 95% of journeys on new trains.

4.3 Transport for Wales announced in January 2020 (reported on the BBC web site) as follows:

*"Customers can expect to see a transformation of services from 2022-23 after the arrival of our new rolling stock, which will allow us to provide faster, greener, more frequent services, and **65% more capacity across our entire network**," he said.*

*"In the meantime, we're currently introducing more modern trains in south Wales, providing space for 6,500 extra customers every week on our busiest services."*

*More trains will arrive later this year, putting the oldest out of service and increasing capacity further.*

The reference in the Network Rail: Wales Route Strategic Plan set out at appendix C should be noted.

4.4 The main issues of concern by both the Association and SARLC were:

Reduction in seating capacity on trains.  
Reduction in the number of toilets provided on trains.

4.5 The main points discussed and covered were:

- i) There was a balance between providing well thought out disabled toilets, access and seating in the design of the new trains.
- ii) Some new trains will be 3 car and some 2 car. They are to be class 197.
- iii) There will be an increased capacity on the Cambrian Lines with a full hourly train service.
- iv) The new trains are due to be in service in December 2022.
- v) There are 77 new trains (replacing 24 class 158 and 27 class 175 units).

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- vi) The ETCS system replacing the ERTMS system is to be fitted to 21 x 2 car units. There was a discussion of the ETCS being fitted to some of the 3 car units which potentially could answer the concerns over toilets and lack of seating capacity. WG agreed to raise this with Transport for Wales.

## 5 Timetables

The subject of train cancellations and bus replacements was discussed.  
The main points under this heading were:

- a) Confirmation was given that a full hourly service will be provided to all North Wales Main Line Stations.
- b) The 06.30 ex Aberystwyth College Special has been re-instated in the morning on the Cambrian Line.
- c) The issue of staffing due to Covid 19 was noted.
- d) The reduced staffing which came over when the franchise ended in 2018 did not help the situation.

## 6 Future Trains and Climate Change

Cllr P Morton asked about electrification on the North Coast Line.  
The Welsh Government referred to the long term (by 2050) Climate Change Strategy and said that Network Rail has recently published a Traction Deconarbonisation Network Strategy which sets out proposals for electrification of the North Coast Line and elsewhere and that trains along the Cambrian Line would be hydrogen powered. However it was pointed out that the DFT needs to accept the proposals and funding has to be provided. The Welsh Government supports the proposals but not the programme – which should be accelerated.

## 7 Covid 19

Transport for Wales has been through (and is still going through) a difficult time with Covid 19 and has lost a significant sum of money in lost revenue this year and this will continue into 2021.

What affect Covid 19 will have longer term has yet to be identified.

## 8 Representation

Dave Thomas suggested that both the Association and SARLC would be well advised to keep pushing for changes and that this is often best achieved by being involved with and raising issues with TfW's stakeholder liaison groups.  
Dave Thomas agreed to pass the contact details to Robert Robinson post meeting.  
Lowri Joyce is the contact at Transport for Wales.

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## 9 Minutes

Robert Robinson is to produce the minutes of the meeting. These are to be circulated to all those present for comment and approval before releasing to the Membership of both the N&MWALC and SARLC.

## 10 Carno Station

Reference was made to the re-opening of Carno Station. This has now moved to seeking approval from the Westminster Government and to how any funding is allocated. The result is awaited.

## 11 Actions to be taken forward

The actions to be taken forward from the meeting are:

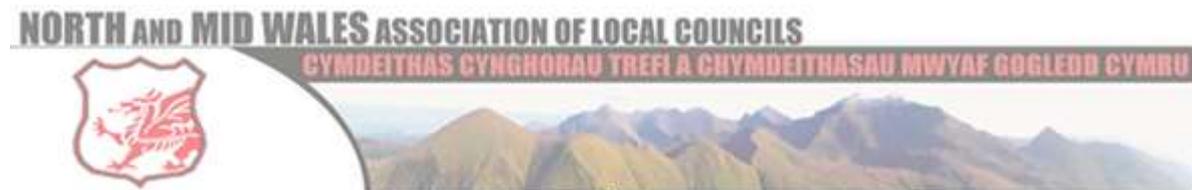
| No | Action   | Action by       |
|----|--|-----------------|
| 1  | Minutes of the meeting to be prepared, circulated for comment and approval by those present.                     | Robert Robinson |
| 2  | Copy of last TfW update on actions agreed at the February 2019 meeting to be attached to the minutes.            | Robert Robinson |
| 3  | WG to take up outstanding items noted with TfW.  | Dave Thomas.    |
| 4  | WG to issue to Robert Robinson a copy of the details of who to liaise with on the operating side.                | Dave Thomas.    |
| 5  | WG to confirm if they would like to Association and SARLC to prepared a detailed Dementia Report for both lines. | Dave Thomas.    |
| 6  | WG agreed to raise the subject of the ETRMS system being fitted to a number of 3 car units.                      | James Arden     |

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Appendix A

## Letter from the Association to the Welsh Government



Cllr Joan Butterfield MBE Cllr Peter Morton Chair Robert Robinson FRICS Secretary  
Crown House High Street Llanfair Caereinion SY21 0QY  
Tel 01938 811378 or 07767 267830 Email [supercommuter@mail.com](mailto:supercommuter@mail.com)

14<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Ken Skate  
Minister for Economy,  
Transport and North Wales  
Welsh Government  
5th Floor  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Dear Ken

### North Wales Coast Lines – new rolling stock 2022

Good morning, I hope this letter finds you well.

I have been asked to write to you with the serious concerns that the North and Mid Wales Association have regarding the delivery of the new rolling stock due to be in place in December 2022.

I can perhaps summarise our concerns as follows:

#### **Current services**

Currently the main line from Chester to Holyhead and branches to Llandudno and Blaenau Ffestiniog has a reasonable service which has reduced in effectiveness at the last timetable change.

In general the services are based on a 2 hourly timetable.

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## **Proposes services**

From what we can see there is no improvement planned to increase the 2 hourly train services along the North Coast. This needs to be hourly in line with other lines such as the Cambrian.

## **Number of 2 car units**

The number of two car unit trains is currently unacceptable. The new trains which have less seats per carriage will not be an improvement on the current situation and therefore need to be 3 car units on all services.

## **Design of new units**

The designs of the new units have some significant defects which are:

- a) There is only one toilet per two car unit for a journey of over 4 hours. (currently there are 2)
- b) The number of seats per carriage is reduced by approx. 10 seats and therefore provides less passenger space.

There appears to be more luggage space and cycle space.

The number of passengers using the lines is substantially more since the original franchise awarded to Arriva Trains and indicates strongly that 3 car units should be used where they are replacing 2 car units on the specification proposed by TFW.

## **Passenger numbers**

The passenger numbers have increased with further increases expected into the future.

The need for more passenger space has been identified now and should be provided for at this stage.

It is noted that the new non-executive directors along with many other senior staff in TFW are not railway experienced and this may be a factor in what is being decided.

The views of the Association are supported by the various surveys and reports issued by the rail operators and other organisations from time to time.

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There is a need to provide a current survey by an independent organisation and not by the operators. The Association can do this if it were your wish, our secretary has extensive experience in completing such surveys for rail users. The cost of providing a comprehensive survey would be around £4,000.

We would welcome a meeting (by Zoom in these current times of the Coronavirus restrictions) with you and or a senior rail official from the Welsh Government to discuss the above and seek a workable solution to address the issues raised. Please do ask if we can be of any help with regards to the situation outlined above.

I would be pleased if you could consider the above and confirm that we can meet up in the very near future (virtually of course).

Kind regards.

Robert A Robinson  
Robert A Robinson FRICS  
Secretary

CC Russell George  
Dyfedd Ellis-Thomas  
Tim James TFW

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## Appendix B

### Update from Transport for Wales – Cambrian Lines

| No | Heading   | Action   | Status  |
|----|---|--|---|
| 1  | Station Audits  | A copy of the revised station audit to be provided to SARLC  | Still awaited.  |
| 2  | Welshpool Station shelter   | A new shelter to be considered in station audit review.  | No further news received.   |
| 3  | Dementia & publicity<br>Publicity to be altered to be visually impaired and dementia friendly in next issues. | Dementia & publicity Publicity to be altered to be visually impaired and dementia friendly in next issues.               | No action noted to date.  |
| 4  | Train designs   | A mock up being prepared, details to be provided to SARLC when ready.  | Covid 19 affected this. Meeting with Welsh Government taking place on 18 <sup>th</sup> September. |
| 5  | Indicator boards in car parks   | Indicator boards in car parks at Welshpool and Caersws to be taken forward through the station audit.                    | No action noted to date.  |
| 6  | Indicator boards on platforms   | Indicator board at the Aberystwyth end of the Dovey Junction platform to be taken forward through the station audit.     | No action noted to date.  |
| 7  | Machynlleth-Barmouth  | Further consideration to be given to Re-enforcing the seating provision during summer months along this stretch of line. | This item being taken up with Welsh Government on 18 <sup>th</sup> September.                     |
| 8  | Survey/Evaluation work  | TfW to come back to SALC regarding this work in time for the summer months.  | Still awaiting contact from TfW, however Covid 19 has affected any work on this.                  |
| 9  | Events List   | A list of major events to be provided by SARLC to TfW.   | A revised list of events will be required for 2021.   |
| 12 | Ticket sales  | Passengers having difficulty getting tickets before travel and then be told they may be fined.                           | Issue to be taken up with TfW and revenue inspectors.   |
| 11 | Reservations  | Reservations and their relationship with carriage numbering to be investigated.  | Awaiting update.  |

Those marked in red are requiring actions

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## Appendix C

### Extract from the Network Rail: Wales Route Strategic Plan:

Growing Almost 50% more passenger journeys are made to, from and within Wales than a decade ago. Between now and 2023 we forecast:

- Growth in the number of commuters travelling to Cardiff and in the number of customers using the North Wales Coast Line to North West England#
- Long distance markets from major centres across Wales into London are also expected to grow over the same period The Wales Route also services a number of significant freight sectors, both within Wales and across the Welsh Border area, for example from the Bristol ports to the Midlands. We anticipate significantly increased passenger service performance in the new franchise and additional capacity to accommodate the expected continued long-term growth in demand for rail services.