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SARPA Meeting

Tuesday 5th March in the Chester Suite Shrewsbury Station

Present:

Sheila Dee, Angus Eickoff, Philip Ellison, Roger Goodhew, A.P. Harvey, Sarah Harvey, Stephen Hughes, Ivor Morris, Bill Redfern, Jeff Smith, Richard White - Newtown Town Council, Roger Whitehouse

Apologies:

David Collington, Peter King – until July, Robert Knight, Gareth Marston, Cllr Michael Williams

Sheila Dee Community Rail Officer Chester Shrewsbury Rail Partnership began the meeting by discussing the new franchise as it has affected the Chester line. She told members that the line did not suffer as other services did. Despite a few problems at Chester the transition was fairly painless. She said there is a huge dialogue between Tfw which could include buses and Tfw Rail Services and that although there is dialogue there is no stakeholder management in place. As there is no replacement for Ben Davies in post all questions should be addressed to Hugh Evans.

Ms Dee told members that Liverpool services are now advertised and there are direct services between Liverpool and Wrexham. She said more will be asked for. Connexions to Chester coincide which is good news.

Sheila Dee said Liverpool Airport is popular for short breaks. Leeds services which are poor would improve in the future Ms Dee said.

Jeff asked about Gobowen and Ms Dee told members she is part of a group (Gobowen Area Improvement Group) which purchased all the

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buildings 18 months ago. The group, working with a trust (Oswestry Station Building Trust) received a Lottery loan. There has been a meeting with the Heritage Trust and Network Rail are in negotiation with Ms Dee. Work on the building has begun with an internal refit. Derwen College are involved and it is hoped the café they run will be refurbished in the style of the Centenary Café at B'ham Moor St. Angus asked if Plaid Cymru had been in touch regarding reopening the Gobowen – Welshpool line; Ms Dee said no one had. Ivor said there are too many obstructions and the line has been built on. Ms Dee said there is discussion about the railway going to Llangollen; a light rail link between the station and the hospital is being promoted. Angus said this is where the future lies for the Heritage lines.

Minutes of the last meeting:

Correction: Roger Whitehouse had made the comment that our line would be best in the North Wales Unit. Tony asked about bringing 2 areas together; the rumour isn't true. Sheila Dee said that Network Rail routes Wales and Western are being brought together. There was discussion about borders.

Roger Whitehouse said he could find out about Ben Davis' successor. The post of responsibility for West Wales is vacant. Ms Dee said the name of the interim lady is Eluned Parrot. Johann Jenkins is assessing the needs of North Wales and its stakeholders. She told Roger W that Hugh Evans is the best contact.

Re: Facebook Angus said it is going well and asked Bill for a membership form. Angus said another group has a Facebook Page but members are welcome to use ours. Roger W said it is good to

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have more people involved. Angus said it is possible to have too many groups e.g. Marches Line. He asked about the Shrewsbury Rail Users Federation and Roger G replied he was hopeful about it and planned to visit church Stretton and Ludlow. These groups have been useful. Cllr Mansell was much missed. Sheila Dee said SARPA meetings are important. She has so many meetings it is impossible to attend all but SARPA should be part of the consultation process.

Jeff reported from the Line Liaison Meeting the bad news that contracts have been signed for 21 units to be fitted with ERTMS. He read an e-mail from Tristan Guyard. Capacity in the new units will be less than the 158s. Roger W reported from Cambrian Coast Conference Meeting that Ben Davies had said All units would be fitted with ERTMS. Angus asked if this is the case what is their capacity for growth. There are not enough units. Sheila Dee presented members with a slide of seating capacity. This will fall. Roger W referred to the bulge in traffic at holiday times. He informed members that at the October Line Liaison Meeting it was stated that peak times would be catered for and he is considering writing to ask why this has not happened. Sheila Dee asked if another ERTMS unit could be added. Bill said extra wiring would have to be fitted to a new coach and changing 3 coach ETCS would cause problems. Angus said the group should keep up the pressure. Bill said it is difficult to know who to pressurise. Ms Dee responded that it is the politicians. Tfw Rail Services are the delivery company. Bill said that now is the time to send something carefully worded to politicians so as not to offend but show concerns. Ms Dee advised being helpful not to criticising. Bill thought we should ask assembly members to ask Tfw and Ms Dee suggested we say, "We are trying to understand," and ask to meet Hugh Evans and others.

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Roger W talked of a scheme for 2 car trains; he spoke of 18 diagrams being basic core services some running at commuter times. He also spoke of trains being taken out of service and shortage of units.

Treasurer's Report:

Bill reported that banking was in the process of being transferred from Tony. There are now 49 paid up members and £1,295 in the Community Fund. Tony said it usually takes the whole year to get all payments in.

Publicity:

Angus said Facebook has attracted members but no one is joining SARPA. Tony said Denis has pieces ready for the Newsletter but is waiting for Jeff's contributions and recommended writing an article on Ben Davies.

Performance on the Cambrian:

Angus read publicity about cancelled trains. He said the early morning trains are very important for workers. Tony also referred to cancellations and bus times not coinciding. Tony said our staff are not good at communicating. Sheila Dee said they should aim to please passengers. Bill said things are improving with crews.

Roger W spoke of trains splitting and said there should be a clearly visible sign on the train showing its destination. Tony said tickets should show more information. Stephen Hughes said 1 person should be in charge of train splitting.

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Jeff asked if he should express members' concerns to Hugh. Tony agreed in particular about communications and Bill about poor performance.

Sarah referred to a second e-mail from Patrick Adams about connections to Crewe and Jeff summarised the contents. There was a very short discussion. Members had to leave and the meeting concluded at 7.15pm.