

Sarpa Meeting

Saturday 7th December 2019 Aberystwyth

Present: Denis Bates, James Davies, Angus Eickhoff, Roger Goodhew, Sarah Harvey, Robert Knight, Viv Skerm, Jeff Smith, Dave Taylor, Thomas Wheeler, Peter White

Apologies: Phil Ellison, Stephen Hughes, Rod Jones, Simon Pilkington, Bill Redfern, Roger Whitehouse, Michael Williams

Corrections to the November Minutes:

Page 2 last paragraph SMCF solutions should read SNCF

Page 3 fifth paragraph for Roger G read Roger W

Page 5 second paragraph Roger W asked about 130s read 230s.

Roger G has been on the 195 which seemed like the 198 for 198 read 158.

Officer Reports:

Denis informed the members that the Newsletter will be finalised as soon as the Chairman's message is ready.

Angus reported meeting Lowri Joyce who will come to a Sarpa meeting. Russell George will come to Machynlleth or Welshpool.

Gareth has agreed to host an exhibition at Newtown Station of entries to the logo competition. Facebook is continuing.

Angus has transferred the Sarpa Archive to Jeff. Roger has booked Shrewsbury venue for 3rd March at 17.45. Sheila Dee may come to this meeting.

There was discussion about Welsh pronunciation. It was decided that Jeff should write to Lowri about it as it was agreed it must be improved.

Jeff spoke about the Minutes of the Line Liaison Committee and the inclusion of a report from the Transport Police.

Dave Taylor referred to discussion about the hub in Machynlleth. Angus said there would be no new trains for some time. He continued that many people in TfW Management have no railway experience.

Design of Trains: Angus likes the layout of the proposed trains with a bay at the end. James asked if concerns about change were addressed. Jeff said they were regarding luggage racks, tables and comfort.

Thomas asked if Sarpa think it wise that new trains are diesel powered and will last for 30 years in view of the Climate Emergency. Angus thought this a good point and suggested wind power e.g above Carno. Roger did not think electric was necessarily the answer. He would need more persuading. Electric trains run by GWR are having diesel put in and we should not slate diesel prematurely. He said we cannot go all the way to carbon neutral but hybrid cars are good. Electric is not totally carbon neutral. Thomas said carbon neutral won't be immediate but even if power is generated by a power station it is better than diesel. There are steep gradients on the Cambrian line and the fact of many stops: for these reasons electric would be suitable. Angus suggested a dedicated wind farm providing a special power station for the line. Robert said that electrification from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth should be easy: the coast less so. Roger asked about the signalling system on the new trains.

There was discussion about trains going to Coventry which Robert said would require a new timetable. Dave asked about at what stage of construction are the new units. Some discussion followed.

Thomas asked about the power source and Angus responded that he might raise this at the Climate talks.

Thomas made the point that the design for the new trains has only one toilet on a 2-car unit of 116 seats. It was agreed that this was far from adequate especially on the coast where many stations have no facilities. Angus said members need to see a plan, Thomas that the specifications of trains are on the final tender documents on the TFW website. These show the seats in current and proposed trains. James said people expect to use laptops. Thomas added that the trains are not designed around the consumer's needs. It was suggested that designers probably did not use trains. Angus said a face to face discussion is needed based on the drawings and involving the Line Liaison Committee. A high standard of seating and catering is needed. Sarah asked how much influence Sarpa can have. Robert repeated that plans need study and Angus thought Lowri Joyce would be the most helpful contact. Thomas added that this must be done quickly.

Jeff informed members that Claire Williams cannot attend meetings unless a specific item of relevance is discussed.

Angus summarised the Transport for Wales Timetable Workshop he attended in Cardiff.

Regarding gauge clearance the Mk4 coaches TfW are proposing for the "Gerald" services await gauge clearance for the Marches lines; they are being used on the North Wales Coast to Manchester trains.

Vivarail 230s are proposed for Wrexham to Bidston; they are not ready yet. The 230s have 400hp per car and the 158s 350hp. 769s are proposed from Rhymney to Penarth but are not ready either.

It is hoped that Landore, Swansea will be opening soon.

As an interim measure extra Class 153s will be obtained. A dispensation to continue with Pacers, Mk2 and Mk3 rolling stock will be sought.

Class 170s from Greater Anglia will need remedial work before being deployed on the Cheltenham – Maesteg service hopefully releasing Class 158s for the Cambrian.

Loco hauled trains have returned to the Rhymney Line.

Timetabling:

Extra Sunday Services are promised dependent on signal box opening hours and NR maintenance requirements. South Western services will need to be retimed. No major changes are proposed for the May timetable.

A degree of bus replacement will occur from December on the Marches line and Salop to Chester to replace stops missed by new Cardiff -Holyhead and return. This was not well received nor was the lack of a good connection between the morning southbound “Gerald” and the Cambrian.

Delegates proposed an on-line portal for draft timetable consultations. The event was considered useful though some felt NR should have been challenged more on its proposed timings and the fact that trains will be hired.

A.O.B.

It was asked who regulates trains at Shrewsbury as there has been evidence of confusion e.g. trains not continuing but going back to Birmingham; passengers having to go under the subway to change trains. Shortage of rolling stock was mentioned.

James had been informed that replacement buses were not going to Borth. Jeff will report this to Lowri. Buses from Shrewsbury are on the winter timetable.

Sarah will advertise meetings in the County Times. It is hoped that Michael will advertise Machynlleth. James offered to cover Borth and Jeff Aberystwyth.