

Sarpa Meeting 7th January 2020 the Royal Oak Hotel Welshpool

Present: James Davies, Angus Eickhoff, Phil Ellison, Roger Goodhew, A.P.Harvey, Sarah Harvey, Stephen Hughes, Lowri Joyce, Ken Law, Ivor Morris, Susan Morris, Bill Redfern, Peter White, Roger Whitehouse, Michael Williams

Apologies: Denis Bates, Robert Knight, Trevor Roberts, Jeff Smith, Thomas Wheeler

Angus chaired the meeting in the absence of Jeff. He welcomed those attending and thanked Lowri Joyce for taking the time to come and address them.

Lowri Joyce apologised for not coming before. She explained that she is a stakeholder working with the Welsh government and covers the North West coast from Anglesey and the Cambrian Line up the coast. Lowri said she is committed to attend meetings 3-4 times a year as well as Trevor Roberts' Line Liaison meetings. Lowri told the group that anyone may phone or e-mail her.

Lowri spoke of a consultation meeting in November the report of which is being finalised. There was a lot of feedback about Cardiff services going north and solutions are being worked out. The next meeting will be in Shrewsbury. At present TfW is working on concessionary passes. There are over 5,000 applications and the deadline for applying has been extended.

Regarding buses Lowri said there are problems because drivers lack knowledge and there is lack of communication. Lowri has asked for feedback of the problems. Service quality is a big aspect for TfW she said. Inspectors are doing reviews of stations covering such things as information, litter disposal, colours used, customer behaviour. At present there are 5 inspectors working out of Shrewsbury and 5 from Flint. In the future they will be able to sell tickets but not at the moment.

Jeff's questions were introduced. Firstly Lowri said that information about low carbon impact and sustainability is on the website and she will send links for these. There was a query about toilets and tables. Lowri said 2 carriages would have 120 seats and 1 toilet. Tables would be 6 and 4 for 2 carriages. Lowri will see if she can distribute diagrams as requested. When James asked how "set in stone" the toilet arrangements are Lowri replied that she will investigate. Elderly passengers need more availability; Bill said there are peak times of travel for the elderly.

Lowri referred to spaces on the network which could be utilised. TfW are looking at the possibilities of stations on the Cambrian. Tywyn is a good example. Roger W said a toilet at Tywyn would be very welcome; Michael praised the standard of toilets at Machynlleth. The toilet at Aberystwyth is locked at 5pm. Lowri explained that Dovey junction and Machynlleth are the first stations on the improvement plan; she will forward details of that.

Angus wants to know the design of trains in respect of the alignment of tables and windows. Stephen reported that passengers waiting at Newtown are in a "wind tunnel". Roger W referred to the need for separate indicators for different trains at Dovey junction. There is confusion as to which train is which. Angus asked who is responsible for regulating trains at Shrewsbury. He gave the example of passengers having to rush to platform 3 to change trains. Lowri responded that there is a station manager. She told the meeting that an App is being trialled to make sure staff have information. Roger W highlighted the issue of getting information to conductors on the train. Tony referred to a journey abroad on varied forms of transport covering 17,000 miles; the only delay was at Shrewsbury. Tony continued mentioning problems with buses: drivers need to know where stations are. Passengers don't know where to find the bus replacement. James raised the problem of buses not going to Borth. Lowri said additional signage has been introduced. Angus

asked if there is any chance of getting TfW staff to ride on the buses. Roger W said briefing drivers is not sufficient. Bill explained that TfW is different from Network Rail. Lowri said they had all learned from Bow St. She apologised for leaving the meeting early.

The meeting continued with apologies and Thomas Wheeler's request that Sarpa write to Rail Future about design of new trains. Ronald Pickard is a member and it was suggested that he be contacted.

The Minutes of the December meeting were read and signed.

Roger G explained that because of the shortage of the right units passengers were turned off trains at Shrewsbury. Bill responded that TfW are trying to make it easier to change there. Roger W referred to the extra West Midlands trains on platforms 5 and 6 making it necessary to use platform 3 for the Cambrian.

Treasurer's Report:

Balances

December Community Account	799.07
January Income Received	58.00
Total	<u>857.07</u>
Savings Account	277.344

Bill informed the meeting that there is no digitisation. You can pay electronically but has no digital access to the account. That needs sorting. We don't want to incur charges. Angus asked about Pay pal. James said the money is held for 60 days. Electronic transfer is perfectly possible. Angus said the website is up to date. James is helping with computer problems.

Michael said that although it should not be complacent Sarpa should be pleased with the strength of its committee. The Heart of Wales group has over 1,000 members but cannot fill positions needed.

Performance on the Cambrian:

Roger Whitehouse thought things had been better than a year ago apart from difficulties at Shrewsbury (see above) also a train being too full to allow passengers to board at Wellington and Telford. He reported that the delays he encountered had been due to other operators. He and Ken Law both gave instances in which the authorities had refused a request to hold a train; in Roger's case it was the last train to Aberystwyth.

Susan Morris told how she uses Train Line to check whether a train is coming. Roger said it was essential at Tywyn to check on the first train. Susan said that it isn't recognised how "out of the loop" we are. Roger Goodhew informed the meeting that the last trains from Birmingham International to Aberystwyth are 20.09 and to the coast 19.05. Roger W said the train times for Crewe in the TfW timetable are a fiction. Bill said there used to be different rules about holding the last train; Ken said the Charter says it should be held.

There was discussion about the railway being split into smaller and smaller bits also about cancellations over the holiday. Roger W said staff had booked holidays and did not expect to work on Sunday.

Sarah mentioned the letter of apology she had received with vouchers after a train was delayed at Shrewsbury and no explanation as to why. Ken added that some announcements are inaudible. Bill said the announcers are being trained but Angus thought TfW are very poor.

Ken asked what checks are done to make sure speakers are working properly. Tony said he knew some staff on the trains who reported that TfW was not doing well. He did not think Lowri Joyce had given a straight answer when asked about design of trains. TfW must be held to what they are saying. Sarah echoed Tony's points quoting the driver of the replacement bus she caught after the December meeting who said the situation has never been so bad; all the

coaches were out. She also read from the December minutes where Angus and Thomas had both stressed the need for discussion based on the proposed design of the new trains.

Ken recounted that people had been refused travel on buses with pushchairs and prams nor would they take bikes. Tony said trains are too unreliable and are putting people off. Susan described how she had bought a ticket with one franchise but when the train was cancelled was not allowed to use it with another which meant she had to wait 2 hours.

There was some discussion about communication. Ken said it is not difficult to fix. Angus referred to German trains which had a sign on the outside saying where they were going. Ken said Virgin do that. Tony said booking doesn't work. Ken said it worked going to Birmingham but not back. Tony cited an instance when his booked seat was in a carriage that didn't exist.