

SARPA Meeting 2nd July Council Chambers Newtown

Present: Patrick Adams, Martin Bemment, James Davies, Angus Eickoff, Roger Goodhew, Sarah Harvey, Ioan Jenkins, Rod Jones, Robert Knight, Gareth Marston, Bill Redfern, Jeff Smith, Mary Wheeler, Thomas Wheeler, Peter White, Richard White, Claire Williams

Apologies: Denis Bates, Glyn Cook, Tony Harvey, Tony Swift, Roger Whitehouse, Michael Williams

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting. He thanked Councillor Richard White for enabling Sarpa to use the Council chambers and asked Councillor White to explain the Escape Procedure which he did. Jeff then welcomed the guests

Ioan Jenkins Director for TfW Rail Services

Claire Williams Development Officer Cambrian Rail Partnership

The Meeting began with questions to Ioan Jenkins. He referred to Jeff's e-mail to Hugh Evans and Jeff stated that 21 units is not enough. Gareth suggested that either Hugh Evans didn't understand or didn't want to consider it. Gareth spoke of Open Access running through to Coventry which would cut down on units; the idea might be to save money on ETCS. Ioan asked if he could go back and discuss this. Jeff stressed that we want the same capacity.

Angus asked if ETCS on the Cambrian is still in its trial period so that more rolling stock could be fitted with ETCS equipment. The trial period has ended.

Jeff referred to Hugh Evans' e-mail response regarding stranded passengers at Welshpool. He said that the apparent emphasis on the use of smart-phones to discover train delays excluded some railway users. The issue of information on the CIS screens on platforms was

raised. Claire Williams said they are maintained by Network Rail. She will feed information back to Network Rail.

Bill said people get stranded on stations. Ms Williams said that there is no parking facility at Caersws but a big sign outside the pub. Bill explained that there is a problem for people on the platform. A public address system might do the job; Ms Williams said the announcements are automatic. Gareth said they can be overridden at the station. Ms Williams responded that there is no facility at unmanned stations, ad hoc announcements are difficult and there is no one on buses to direct passengers. Better signage is needed. Gareth explained that flooding in June produced a multiplicity of information on screen. He gave an example of a student who missed an exam as the app showed a train running and no one was in place in Cardiff to override it because of the flood. It was stated the TfW journey check is the most accurate. The other organisations are less reliable. Network Rail uses other people's information: it is a third party website. James expressed surprise that this is not a priority as climate change makes extreme weather possible; the point of view of the passenger should be considered. Ioan Jenkins said it is a priority as is safety and satisfaction. He continued saying there is a rota and timetable for the Services Team visiting stations. James said the situation reflects the disjointed nature of the railways. Bill said staff on the Cambrian are very good and helpful. Angus asked if groups are monitored. Claire Williams responded that information is on Twitter not Facebook: Angus said he would sign up to Twitter. Martin added that a lot of people don't use the internet or smartphone.

Ms Williams read from a long list of responses from Network Rail which she intends to forward to Jeff. Angus asked if Sarpa feels it is appropriate will pressure from the group produce results? He continued by asking if it is possible to sell more than one product ie different types of transport. Gareth informed the meeting that the

M4 relief road had been cancelled: this plan had affected the original contract. There was a transformation of things in the agreement. Gareth referred to the 2 inclines at Bow St station. Claire Williams stated that the TfW and TfW Rail Services Senior Stakeholder Manager is Lois Park e-mail: lois.park@tfw.wales. This is the first port of call. Patrick said the Welsh government has looked at the possibility of using rail for timber; there are a lot of good reasons for using rail to take freight off the roads. Peter said freight operation from Aberystwyth was killed by the haulage contractors. He thought that carrying timber worked well and rail would take tankers off the road. The rail industry needs to show what it has to offer. Roger G also thought rail transport good for timber going east. Angus asked about TfW integrating transport. Ioan Jenkins stated that the plan is to integrate. Traws Cymru buses are being taken over by TfW. Angus pointed out the opportunity there. It was stated that a group in Llanidloes is campaigning for buses to get to train services. TfW needs to look at integrated transport in rural Wales.

Jeff referred to trains being diesel powered and asked if new engines are going to be more efficient. South Wales trains are electrified and electric trains are being extended also battery. He asked how much CO₂ is produced by 158s. Robert referred to regenerative braking and it was asked how much energy is needed to start a stopped train.

Peter said the provision of car parking space is appalling. He suggested car parks with charging points: rural places cannot be accessed by train. The situation could be mitigated. Angus said that in Machynlleth local services are run by the local authority which is governed by the needs of schools. There could be an All-Wales travel card.

Jeff asked if TfW have estimates for new opening or new lines. Claire Williams said there are no plans to reopen Carno. Ioan Jenkins said he is not aware of any. Angus spoke of the possibility of Aberystwyth

to Carmarthen happening. Network Rail have had income enhancements. Jeff asked if Ioan Jenkins could raise the subject: Wales is not getting its fair share. Angus said the infrastructure is missing for freight trains.

Patrick raised the question of connections between Aberystwyth and Crewe suggesting that alternate trains go to Crewe rather than Birmingham. Gareth said people won't catch trains that terminate at Shrewsbury. Peter knew of people who change at Crewe for London and said there is a demand for trains to Crewe. It was mentioned that tickets by that route are more expensive. Peter said you can go via Wolverhampton or get to Crewe in the same time. Thomas had studied the timetable which show it doesn't work coming back.

Peter asked for a survey of Aberystwyth student demand to Manchester Airport etc. Gareth raised the importance of links to Birmingham Airport, the NEC and London.

Jeff asked if TfW could revise the fare structure on the Marches line. He explained that high fares are a disincentive to travel from Cambrian stations to Cardiff and many prospective passengers from Aberystwyth use the megabus or the T1 and GWR, thus depriving TfW of custom. Ioan said that TfW are constantly looking at fare structures. Gareth said that quotations for Newtown to Cardiff tickets statistically have a much lower transfer into sales than other destinations, demonstrating suppressed demand.

Angus asked if a Catch the Train to Take the Plane campaign could be worthwhile. Patrick said that the last train from Manchester Airport to Aberystwyth leaves at 19.10. Peter said that overcrowding between Telford and Birmingham New Street suppresses demand. Angus talked about developing the north-west England market via the Halton Curve. Gareth said people who leave from and arrive back to different airports are penalised by the fare system.

Martin raised the issue of luggage space particularly between seats. Claire said that with the hourly service (which Ioan said will start in 2022) this was the big thing. Disabled access was also raised and TfW sees this as important.

Angus proposed that committee members meet with Claire Hickman of Network Rail. Claire will forward details. TfW are amenable to sending a representative to future SARPA meetings but stressed that they cannot attend on the same night as any politician. TfW and Claire are happy to attend our Newtown meeting in November; Richard White to obtain use of the Council Chamber.

Thomas asked how doubling the width of doors was consistent with commitments to increasing seating capacity and having less standees. He said that vestibule doors would increase comfort for passengers. Sarah Wheeler expressed concerns that new units as designed would be a commuter train rather than a regional express. The journey length was cited. She was concerned that toilets would open into the passenger saloon. She said that lack of order with wider doors could be problematic for people on the autistic spectrum.

Angus said the Chiltern units are comfortable.

Ioan will take questions back.

Angus raised the ratio of toilets to seats which will worsen. For instance a 3-car 175 has 3 toilets but a 3-car Civity DMU will only have 2. Claire said that the Accessibility Panel would have signed off the design of the new units. Martin said that there were problems with misuse of the toilets. Claire said that all trains will have a guard. Sarah Wheeler praised the proactivity of the staff.

With time running out the minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed, all other agenda items were deferred and Ioan and Claire were thanked for their attendance and contribution to discussions.

