

SARPA Meeting 3rd March 2020 at Shrewsbury Railway Station

Present: Steve Boulding (Hon Secretary SCRUA), Angus Eickhoff, Roger Goodhew, Sarah Harvey, Stephen Hughes, Ivor Morris, Bill Redfern, Jeff Smith, Cllr Richard White, Roger Whitehouse

Apologies: Martin Bemment, Phil Ellison, Tony Harvey, Lowri Joyce, Thomas Wheeler, Michael Williams

Jeff suggested that in future Shrewsbury meetings should start at 17.30 to avoid time spent waiting. This was accepted. He relayed apologies from Lowri Joyce who could not attend but had sent an update which he read out. Jeff will go to the Timetabling meeting.

Minutes of the Last Meeting held 4th February at Caersws

Paragraph 5) fifth line Class 195s should read 197s

Roger G referred to the Cambrian Coast Committee Questionnaire saying it is a blank form apart from four headings: 1. TfW 2. Network Rail 3. Committee 4. Partnership. Members can raise anything that requires an answer by any of these.

Steve Boulding explained that TfW Rail Services is Keolis-Amey, whilst TfW is an arm of Welsh Government. Lowri works for TfW to engage with people since TfW took over stakeholder consultation. Steve described SCRUA's campaign to improve Shrewsbury – Wrexham transport which had included lobbying Ken Skates. Roger W agreed that having stops is important but making stops earlier is no good. Angus said connexions need attention. The Prestige service must connect with the other train. Roger W said people couldn't trust the timetable. Jeff signed the minutes.

Treasurer's Report: As at 31st January

Current £811.07 (now estimate £937.80). Deposit £277.34

There are 43 paid up members and 20 "expected," 63 in total of which 4 are new members.

Bill reported that Denis had received a quotation for the Newsletter from a new printer in Welshpool which appears to be cheaper. He said typically we order 170; the membership is a small proportion of those printed. Ivor added that there should be at least 190. Several people were sorry the latest issue had no colour. Angus thought it was important. Sarah said the font has shrunk to pre-Issue No 76 size making it difficult for older people. Roger W attributed this to constraints of space. It was agreed that the font should be larger in future. Angus to message Facebook Members to join Sarpa.

Steve Boulting described himself as Honorary Secretary of SCRUA, representative of West Midlands Rail Future and a member of Ready Travel. He has been involved in preservation and campaigning but will not be standing for re-election as he is emigrating. He informed the group that Martin Bond is trying to reconvene the Shrewsbury Association. New ventures at Chester and Wrexham are doing well. There is the possibility of a connexion from Gobowen station to the Orthopaedic hospital but more likely to Oswestry town. Steve also mentioned interest in Oswestry to Buttington and there is huge pressure for connexion between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen as this would improve services for other towns e.g. Lampeter. Steve continued by saying that pressure is on because of climate crisis. Re-openings will be going up the agenda. Small strategic links are important. He said we must fight our corner. Battery power can be extended from Chester to Wrexham and he is pushing for Oswestry as a destination from Northern cities. He thanked the group for their participation; Angus wished him well with Shrewsbury- Chester action and Rail Future. Steve described how Italy and Spain had invested in high speed rail after the crash of 2008. It brings huge economic benefits as well as reducing damage to the planet.

Angus said Wales gets nothing from HS2 while other countries in the UK do. Steve said if other services improve it will help Wales.

Roger G said that the Midlands and Scotland were quick to take advantage but Wales did not. Steve said legislation to cut CO2 will have to be quick and aviation needs to be reined in. High speed trains are the best replacement; Roger W said better rail transport reduces aviation. The recent ruling against government's decision to build a third runway at Heathrow is very significant.

Angus reported sensationalist weather reports on Welshpool Rail Users' Facebook site which he took issue with.

Performance on the Cambrian:

Jeff said that given recent conditions TfW can't really be blamed for disruption. Angus asked what the view is re the sea level rise. Steve B said Fairbourne will be decommissioned. Angus thought we need a debate about the resilience of the railway. Public perception could see it as an unreliable means of transport. How do we build resilience and convey this? Roger G compared this year's rainfall with that of 2014 when there were mid Atlantic surges. He said that spring tides are expected next week and could be at the same time as line closure in April. Roger W said that although the railway was badly affected by storms he was astonished at the rapidity by which the coastline came back. But the website was poor e.g. TfW said there was a bus service when the line was running. Also the website contradicted itself. There was lack of information as to when trains were running and he said the replacement bus service was diabolical. He continued by saying there was no separate journey planner. Previously there had been an explanation as to why a train was cancelled: now it says, "Resource Availability". He had contacted Lowri Joyce. He informed members that there would be a closure of the entire coastline from 4th-11th April inclusive because of repairs to Dovey Junction Bridge.

Jeff asked why there cannot be 2 units running either side. Roger W replied that each unit must have a full inspection and this is not

possible. There was discussion about inspection pits. Stephen Hughes asked whether we can get an answer from Network Rail about future proofing. Roger G said the viaduct was closed at Shrewsbury during recent floods when Cross Street was full of water. Roger W referred to Machynlleth and the Black Bridge saying engineers were supposed to be looking at it during the last 6 months. Roger G said that we should be thankful to Dawlish (*for showing what could be achieved*). Roger W said footfall figures for Dovey Junction are fictional. He will find out about ordinary (not replacement) bus services during closure.

Angus reported that Thomas Wheeler has requested that the group put pressure on TfW to stop production to meet our requirements. He said this is not realistic but there are issues e.g. 2 car units instead of 4 car units, 1 toilet on a 2 car train, 120 seats instead of 140 and less units with ETCS. Roger W reiterated these points saying trains are already overcrowded. Angus asked whether we should be talking to Russell George, Elin Jones and elected representatives for places on the coast; Stephen said address Assembly Members for mid-Wales; Jeff offered to write to Assembly Members. Roger W will approach the MP for Tywyn. Angus said that as the Welsh government were part of the consultation process they need to be tackled. Steve said TfW is a company and Ken Skates is in charge. Stock is being produced that does not meet the requirements. Bill thought the theme should be "Politicians' promised improvements," which is not what we are getting. Angus referred to the proposed units' inability to couple and the need to keep 158s. There was concern about the seats' lack of comfort. Jeff said that although the Welsh government has found money for new seats they are only a bit better. Steve said that as TfW is an agency of government Sarpa should go to Ken Skates as well as Russell George. Angus asked whether he could convene a committee meeting and invite Russell George. This was agreed. The meeting closed at 19.15.