

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association

**Newsletter
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Two trains at Aberystwyth: the 0850 arrival from Machynlleth is stabled in the loop, as the 0633 from Birmingham arrives (24th February 2005).

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

A question the Welsh Assembly Government should be looking at, now it's in charge of rail matters: Is it getting value for money out of the current franchise systems arrangements? The recent announcement that Arriva's UK Rail division made a profit of £15 million last year has raised a few eyebrows, bearing in mind Arriva Trains Wales is their only UK rail operation and that they got £141 million last year in Government subsidy! That's the same Arriva Trains Wales that struggles to find coaches to alleviate well-known and long standing overcrowding issues, and the same Arriva Trains Wales which many people have a whole host of issues with. The vast majority of people can think of a lot of things to make the railway better than giving Arriva's shareholders £15 million a year.

The difference between what the privatised railway has got from government and what BR was getting, assuming BR received the same amount as it did in the early 1990's has been calculated at c£15 Billion – that's £15 Billion which sadly has not been used to improve the railway. On a pro-rata basis based on footfall that's an extra £19 million for the Cambrian or if route miles is your preferred measurement £120 million. Would we still be talking about the hourly service and moaning about the cost of it had BR been given that money?

Yes I'm concerned about cost too, but my solution is not to moan and cry and only offer cuts as a solution. Until the day that the rail industry is organised in a logical and sensible manner passengers (and the nation) will not get the railway they deserve and need. It's been suggested that groups like SARPA stick to arguing the case for improvements to services and not venture into the structural debate. That's nonsense, as everything comes back to the catastrophic mistake that was the 1993 Railways Act: until that is rectified passengers may as well whistle in the wind as the financial squeeze triggered by privatisation overshadows everything.

Back in the real world away from moaning about "carting fresh air around the countryside", Arriva Trains Wales coughs up about £15 million a year on leasing rolling stock bought and paid for by BR. So between shareholder profit and erroneous ROSCO leasing charges there's £30 million a year in savings which is far more than will ever be saved by closing the Heart of Wales, Cambrian Coast and Pembrokeshire branches.

The phrase common sense was uttered at the National Rail conference in London, wouldn't it be nice if common sense was actually applied?

Gareth Marston
Newtown, March 2006

A little puzzle - where and what
is this part of?
Answer in the next issue.



NEWS IN BRIEF

New trains for Arriva

It is reported that Arriva is planning to order a fleet of new trains, costing at least £50 million for its Welsh rail franchise. UK and continental European train manufacturers have been invited to tender for the contract, for about 50 new carriages worth about a million pounds each. It appears that they will replace Arriva's fleet of Pacer trains in South Wales. Arriva has been in talks with a number of manufacturers, including Canadian rail and aerospace group Bombardier Inc, which has its main UK plant in Derby and is Britain's only remaining train manufacturer.

For the Cambrian lines, as well as other routes, Arriva hope to obtain a significant number of ex-Trans Pennine Express Class 158's. This should enable further provision of 4-car trains, to alleviate overcrowding. This mainly occurs on the 0932 ex-Aberystwyth on Saturdays (the Editor is writing this on the 0932 on Friday 24th February, which was standing only from Newtown).

Birmingham

City councillors and the rail industry have announced a desperately needed £500 million redevelopment of New St station with extra platforms, improved access, more lighting and vastly improved facilities. The downside appears to be it is partly reliant on funding from central government, as ever the silence from the DfT is deafening. It has been suggested that a helicopter landing pad and mini city airport be built on the roof as this will unlock funding from government, as all air travel expansion schemes appear to get the green light and funds.

Wellington

The SRA-conceived withdrawal of the hourly Walsall to Wellington stopper is hoped to improve the punctuality of other services between Wolverhampton and Wellington. However there are fears that the reduction of services on the Wellington to Wolverhampton corridor by a third will result in increased overcrowding on the remaining services. The current hourly semi fast Central Trains service from Shrewsbury to Birmingham will become an all stations service between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton, and then non stop to New St from June. ATW will contrary to expectation continue to run the 0517 from Aberystwyth as an all stations stopper between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton.

Shrewsbury

Permanent fixed ticket barriers with staff present went live in early February. No feedback has yet been received about how much revenue has gone up by. The barriers are in the tunnel so therefore passengers wishing to use Platform 3 which sees all Holyhead bound services use it (which connect with arrivals from Aberystwyth) have to remember to show their tickets to staff rather than use the barriers in case of swallowing!

Arriva Trains Wales are cooperating with the proposed Marylebone service operator: discussions have already taken place regarding depot facility sharing and even giving up paths into Birmingham.

A meet-the-Arriva-manager session will be held on the **26 September at Shrewsbury Railway Station**. Arriva employees will be on hand between 7.30am and 9.30am and 4.30pm and 6.00pm on these dates.

Welshpool

Arriva Trains Wales have given the contract for looking after their car parks to private firm National Car Parks. It's hoped this will have an effect on misuse of the station car park which is endemic. NCP have a reputation for aggressive policing.

Talerddig

37425 returning from north of Barmouth with a train of Network Rail Ballast Hoppers failed in the loop at Talerddig on the morning of Thursday 2nd March. Services on the line were disrupted for several hours until a rescue locomotive was dispatched, UP trains used the DOWN side of the loop and service trains crossed at Newtown instead of Talerddig. A grey Network Rail liveried Class 67, 67029, arrived and hauled 37425 and the ballast wagons away, passing through Caersws at 1325.

More Network Rail shenanigans on the 13th March as a Stoneblower arrived. It was hoped that it would take refuge in the head shunt off the UP loop; unfortunately the crew had forgotten to bring the key to unlock the ground frame. Queue disruption and chaos as it was decided to terminate trains and swap units at Shrewsbury.

Machynlleth

Preliminary works for the upgraded maintenance depot were seen to have taken place in February with the cliff face cleared of loose debris by an abseiling team and JCB's levelling and clearing a raised strip between the tracks and the cliff face. The roof on the Network Rail building was rebuilt in early March. Eventually the depot will have a new refuelling point, a carriage washer and enhanced maintenance facilities. A fleet of 15/16 Class 158 units will be based here. As well as Cambrian services, Chester to Birmingham, Crewe-Chester-N Wales and some Holyhead to Cardiff diagrams will be serviced from Machynlleth, meaning the possibility of empty stock movements and additional units being moved on the back of service trains increasing.

The Royal train arrived carrying the Duke of Edinburgh on the 1st March for an engagement in Aberdovey.

Summer steam specials

No firm details yet, but talk is of two locomotives being based at Machynlleth for six weeks - akin to the set up that took place in the summer of 1987 (was it really 19 years ago?).

Freight trials

More foot dragging and delay in Wales but Scotland have raced ahead and will have Freight Multiple Units running on a permanent basis this year. Scottish rail users also have several new/reopened lines and stations to look forward to, a modern fleet of ever increasing rolling stock and the build up of services around important regional centres such as the Invernet network around Inverness. There's even a light rail scheme in Edinburgh.

If Scotland can do it why can't we?

Dovey Junction

Transport Wales are consulting for the long awaited (by some) widening of the A487 road at Glandyfi. There's been a suggestion that TraCC are looking at a park and ride scheme for Dovey Junction as delays on the road will be widespread.

Aberystwyth

The 0932 departure especially on a Saturday continues to be a problem with overcrowding. Prior to the December change the service on a Saturday was regularly a 4 car train, but is now only 2. Arriva have got their hands on an extra unit sponsored by the Welsh Assembly Government to be used specifically on strengthening Cambrian services for this summer. In the meantime rail users play squash on the 0932.

Cambrian Coast

Much track relaying activity has taken place over the winter with many reports of loco hauled engineering trains on the coast, a Class 66 locomotive making it as far as Aberdyfi. Track replaced appears to have been predominantly laid in GWR days 'making it at least 59 years old!

Through portion working to beyond Machynlleth has been abandoned to aid punctuality. Plans are afoot to make the service a regular two hourly service all the way from Machynlleth to Pwllheli. From 21/07/06 the weekday timetable will alter radically with all Pwllheli services running to a pattern that will connect with Shrewsbury trains at Machynlleth. Harlech High School will be operating a continental system from September.

Newtown

Café Loco is now only open for special occasions.

Caersws

Powys County Council has rejected a planning application to turn the goods yard area into industrial and retail units. The fear was that Lorries would be turning too close to the level crossing.

Passengers could be catching direct trains between Wrexham and Marylebone station in London if plans announced by a new rail company go ahead.

The newly formed Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway Company (WSMR) plans to run five trains a day between north-east Wales and London from 2007. The company said the journey time would be cut to three hours 15 minutes. Travellers currently have to change trains in Chester, Crewe or Birmingham for a train into London Euston. The planned service would stop in Ruabon, Chirk and Gobowen as well as Shrewsbury, Telford, Cosford and Wolverhampton. A spokesperson for WSMR said the company - a joint venture formed by Renaissance Trains Ltd and Laing Rail - had been negotiating with Network Rail for some time.

Renaissance currently operates Hull Trains and Laing has the Chiltern Railways franchise. Director of Renaissance Mike Jones said plans for the service were "well underway". "We have an agreed timetable - not yet with Network Rail - but with train planners at Laing rail who own Chiltern Railways. "They have identified five paths to run services from Shrewsbury and we believe it will be possible to extend those to Wrexham," he said.

He added that the fares being offered to passengers travelling on the route would be competitive. "On the basis of our business plan, we would expect the average fare to be £25 return - that would be the average fare we would expect people to pay to make the service viable," he said. Transport experts have welcomed the proposals saying that the new service could compete with the bigger rail companies including Virgin Rail.

Professor Stuart Cole, director of Wales Transport Research Centre at the University of Glamorgan said: "Anything that adds to the number of trains going from north Wales into the Midlands of England and into London is to be welcomed." Hull

Letter

From Chris Hackworth, Saturday, January 21, 2006

I have long been a member of SARPA and an enthusiast of Mid-Wales and the Cambrian Coast line. Our family have spent many holidays along the coast and over the years travelled along the line from the West Midlands to Pwllheli. Some time ago we moved to the East Midlands which has curtailed our visits although we usually come to Wales at least once a year.

Earlier in the month I had to attend a conference in Caersws. I jumped at the opportunity to travel by train from Loughborough in Leicestershire. My outward late evening journey was to Birmingham on Central Trains via Leicester (Midland Mainline) followed by the last evening train on Arriva to Caersws. My return was the 16:35 Arriva train from Caersws to Birmingham with connections at Derby (Virgin Trains) onto the Midland Mainline to Loughborough.

The journey overall went well in both directions. I arrived in Caersws five minutes behind schedule and on the return the train from Caersws was on time and I arrived at Loughborough on time at 19:52. The service on the Arriva train was good in both directions. The signalman at Caersws kept us well up-to-date with the progress of the up and down trains! The price of the ticket was £32.10 which I think represents good value for money for one person although for two the total cost would be over £60 which is less cost effective.

I thought you may be interested in some reflections on the visit:

- The Arriva rolling stock was drab and generally very uninspiring, especially when travelling in the evening when you are unable to see the wonderful scenery of mid-Wales.
- The train was fairly busy from Birmingham to Shrewsbury with many passengers changing at Shrewsbury to catch the train to Holyhead. Our train was a few minutes late and Arriva Trains delayed the departure of the Holyhead train until our train arrived which was very helpful. The number of passengers after Shrewsbury was more limited with some local traffic and longer distance travellers to Aberystwyth. I was struck that Arriva has a captive market with the West Midland traffic. However, there seemed to be very limited publicity about the services beyond Shrewsbury. There is potential for displays on the train together with magazines and pamphlets which describes the travel opportunities in mid-Wales together with the train services available to realise the opportunities.

- I stayed at an excellent hotel in Caersws very near to the station. The publicity information about the hotel makes no reference to the Cambrian line. There is a road map on the hotel brochure, but no reference to the railway line nor station at Caersws. What a missed opportunity!
- The literature in the hotel displaying the attractions of the area did not include any information about the local rail services.
- Finally, would it be worth considering how travelling with a partner can be made more attractive. There are arrangements for family travel and senior citizens, but none for travelling in a party of two!

I hope these few reflections are helpful to the work of SARPA. I really enjoyed reading your last newsletter. The article on Branch Line Added Value was very interesting. Also the figures for the busiest stations was fascinating. My subscription for 2006 is in the post!



Warsaw: A single driver tank engine in the Railway Museum, 26th March 2006

Delivering an integrated transport policy Jan 7 2006

Professor Stuart Cole writes for the Western Mail

Considerable discussion surrounds the term an integrated transport policy, which is used frequently by politicians, other decision makers and commentators. But what does it mean and how and where can it best be applied? Most EU countries have similar patterns of spatial development and population distribution, with clearly definable areas. Wales is no exception. It has major urban areas in Cardiff/ Newport, Llanelli/Swansea/Port Talbot and Wrexham. It also has urban "ribbon" development along valleys floors like Rhondda.

In the rural arena it has affluent commuter areas - referred to as urban shadow - like Gower and the Vale of Glamorgan and rural market towns like Aberteifi, Rhaeadr, Builth Wells, Dolgellau. There is also deep rural - often remote areas - Ceredigion, Meirionydd, Powys. Each of these area types has particular transport needs so the future aspirations for transport service provision in each area type need to be explicitly set out. Consequently while an urban integrated transport policy requires different detailed actions to a rural policy the relationships which we are trying to integrate in such strategies are the same.

There are four areas:

1. Integration within and between different types of transport - public and private, motorised and non-motorised (walking, cycling) or within public transport - with easier interchange between car/ bus/rail/plane/ferry, with good information on services and availability of integrated tickets.
2. Integration between transport and the environment and selecting the most environmentally friendly solution.
3. Integration with land use planning - to reduce need for travel and to ensure new developments can be reached by public transport.
4. Integration with policies on social welfare, education, health and wealth creation so that cross-cutting policies on issues such as social inclusion, school travel, cycling and walking, and the profitability of business work together rather than against each other.

Initially at least, it is in the urban journey to work or leisure/shopping movements where the most dramatic changes can occur. However, without addressing these journeys through an integrated transport policy, it is unlikely that other aspects will deliver the generally accepted long-term (30-40 years time span) solution to the energy and pollution consequences of the motor car in Europe. Wales is a microcosm of these problems.

An integrated transport policy is not anti-road nor is it pro-public transport. It means getting best value for the investment made but bearing in mind the long-term consequences which personal travel and movement of freight has on the environment, health and quality of life. It is not a low- cost policy nor need it be unaffordable.

To develop an integrated transport policy best suited to a country's needs certain key functions have to be in place, such as: a national rail network; a national road network; bus policy (regulation); regional public transport policies; local roads; land use planning; bus quality partnerships; traffic management.

In terms of government structures a national/regional model offers benefits in terms of a framework for policies to be consistent in all areas of a country to fund and deliver public transport. Such structures exist in most member states of the European



The railhead treatment (leaf fall) train at Welshpool, topped by Class 20 20301 and tailed by Class 37 37602. 1Z96 13.24 from Crewe Gresty Lane, 18th October 2005. Photograph courtesy of Richard Jones. ©Richard Jones

Union where high investment levels, with co-ordination policies of services, fares and infrastructure developments, may be found in major centres as well as in less populated areas.

The regional councils in France, (whose populations approximate to that of Wales) have responsibility for local railway services, and the municipalities for bus operations. In Sweden regional public transport bodies run local bus and rail services in a largely rural country, with a small population (eight million) and a concentration of people in a small part of the total land area. The Netherlands has a national ticketing system for local public transport (the Nationale Strippenkaart).

The suggested structure will achieve all the requirements of an integrated transport policy, but the concerns that it will lead to a top down approach from a central government, although understandable, can be overcome if the functions of the national and regional bodies are clearly set out. This Wales has created through the National Assembly's Government and the existing regional transport consortia (which could become joint transport authorities).

The provision for bottom up decision-making by county council consortia will ensure that the distinctive need characteristics of urban and rural areas are provided for.

Decisions on the national road and rail network have to be made nationally or internationally; decisions on local roads, bus and associated public transport (including taxis) have to be made regionally, with the operations integrated into one total journey network.

RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPROVED PASSENGER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Selected parts of ATW's submission only. The full submission can be found on the Welsh Assembly Governments website under the Committee section.

Part Two– Additional Improvements you would like to make if there were no constraints

We are currently undertaking detailed work on a rolling stock strategy at the request of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Services

Within the SPT as just implemented, we were unable to provide the full pattern of services we would have wished because infrastructure was not available and/or funding would not permit. Our suggested enhancements to address inconsistencies in service levels and imbalances of supply and demand on existing urban and interurban services are as follows.

- Aberystwyth-Birmingham hourly

Generic Aspirations

Beyond the immediate priorities outlined above we have detailed below our generic aspirations within a no constraints context below which are in no particular priority order:-

- Double track where we currently operate intensive services over single lines. Single lines are both a restraint on the development of railways in Wales and a significant performance problem as delays are transmitted from one train to many others. The best value solution in some cases will be double track and in others more or longer passing loops.
- New train-based GPS system which would enable us to deliver real-time information to all our customer information systems We would seek then to extend where appropriate the CIS to car parks and to town centres to improve the trail to the train.
- Stations across our network fully accessible to persons with a wide range of disabilities.
- Platform rebuilt where these are currently out of current standards (usually too low). This will provide easier and improved access to trains
- New shelters, seating and lighting to enhance both convenience and security.
- We would look to introduce a minimum standard specification for all our stations which could include heated waiting rooms/ shelter, C.I.S and CCTV.
- Expand staffed stations hours or provide staffing for perhaps the top 100 stations to staffing between first and last train.
- Expand ticket barrier and ticket vending machine installation to top 30 stations to improve revenue capture and reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Extend Police Community Support Officers and security guards for perhaps the top 30 stations and to cover all late night services.

- Increase platform staff to provide customer assistance and the provision of information during disruption along with improving accessibility to impaired people.
- GPRS for train monitoring across the network failing this an increase in the level of automatic train reporting points.
- Improve the infrastructure which could lead to enhanced usage of the railway. For example line speed improvements.
- Consider a list of stations for total rebuild with a blank sheet of paper approach. We would use a range of examples from across the totality of the network which we serve.

Arriva Trains Wales Aspirations February 2006

Mid Wales – Improvements

Cambrian Line Frequency

Infrastructure (additional and extended loops, signalling and line speed improvements) required for an hourly service on Cambrian Line. Awaiting Network Rail feasibility study. This will give an hourly service between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury. ERTMS will assist in this project by taking away the signalling restraints.

Signalling / line speed enhancements

Increase line speed to 90mph between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton North with increased capacity. Signalling enhancements would complement the increase in line speeds which would assist with timetable opportunities.

Cambrian

Review timetable to enhance customer and performance opportunities.

Assets

Axle counters and motorised points - Enhance to provide improved reliability.

TSRs/PSRs

Remove Aberdovey speed restriction.

Cambrian Linespeeds

- Shrewsbury – Machynlleth increase to 90mph where possible and on to Pwllheli / Aberystwyth increase as feasible

Strata Florida, early 60s.
A Hymek on a Car-marthen-bound train.



ARRIVA TRAINS WALES PSR CONSULTATION

(Public Service Requirement)

From the Association to DfT Rail Group, Department of Transport, Feb. 24th 2006

We very much welcome the chance to contribute towards the above consultation we will comment on the following routes **C3MACHYNLLETH TO PWLLHELI** and **C2 SHREWSBURY TO ABERYSTWYTH**.

We note the scope of the consultation “proposed drafting changes to the PSR to accommodate the new timetable. It does not seek views on the new timetable itself...”. We will not comment upon Arriva’s timetable at all but upon the PSR and the proposed changes to it. Seeking only to comment upon proposed changes to the PSR is meaningless unless the whole scope of the PSR is commented upon.

Critical questions that should always be asked of a PSR are:

- Does it ensure the railway is relevant to travel needs of the population in the area it covers?
- Does it ensure that public money (invariably any regional line will require public subsidy though pinning down an answer as to how much the Cambrian receives is nigh impossible) is spent in the most efficient way to produce the maximum benefit to the population i.e. does it ensure “value for money”?
- Does the PSR live in the real world where circumstances change and need to be accommodated and is it flexible enough to cope?
- Does the PSR relate to and work toward wider government policy objectives?

All the above are true for any PSR and should be true for any proposed changes.

Overall there are two types of PSR: those that had some thought put into them by the Office of the Rail Regulator prior to rail privatisation, and those that were a hasty panic to ensure that private operators provide the level of service that BR happened to be running. Often they were just a copy of the then timetable with no thought whatsoever put into what outputs were being asked for and enshrined. The PSR for the Cambrian lines is such an example.

The timetable for the Cambrian had been made dysfunctional in the early 1990’s by BR following a program of line speed improvements which allowed a two hourly interval service between Aberystwyth and Birmingham: the overriding criterion was to reduce operating cost by trying to reduce the number of units that operated the service. The main impact of this was to destroy connections between the Cambrian Coast line and the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth line, as the Monday to Friday coast timetable was based around school train times that were not compatible with the new two hourly intervals, given the infrastructure constraints on the coast as to passing places. BR recognised this and suggested an additional loop on the coast could address this; alas before anything could be done privatisation intervened. We have now had a decade of the PSR setting in stone this dysfunctional timetable. There are other weaknesses in it also; the proposed revisions in this consultation do absolutely nothing to address them.

The railway is often said to be good at certain things - commuter journeys being one of them. How about on the Cambrian? After all Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council want to introduce congestion charging in Shrewsbury town centre, so bad are

its road traffic problems, the railway station is in the town centre with communities in the upper Severn valley being in commuting distance. Aberystwyth is one of only 20 population centres in Wales with town centre employment in excess of 2000. Again the station is well placed to serve plus the National Assembly is relocating jobs there: an additional 400 civil servants within walking distance of the station. The Assembly also has a policy document called “the spatial plan”, it makes reference about regional centres (such as Aberystwyth) being connected to their hinterlands by good transport links.

Lets consider how the PSR meets the worthy objective of getting people to work:

Into Aberystwyth.

1.4.1 of C2 states “one additional journey shall be provided from Machynlleth to Aberystwyth, departing from Machynlleth between 0745 and 0855”. With journey time from Machynlleth to Aberystwyth being approximately 30 minutes, the operator is compelled to get people into Aberystwyth from 0815 upwards ok for commuting so far but hang on a minute if the operator is so inclined it doesn't have to provide an arrival till 0925!

A service coming through from Shrewsbury would surely do the trick but 1.3.1 of C2 states: “An early departure no later than 0945” so with a “Maximum Journey Time to Aberystwyth 1 hour 57 minutes” don't expect anything from east of Machynlleth till 1142!

Going home after work? Well the operator doesn't have to provide anything. As 1.1.2 of C2 states: “..intervals not exceeding 2 hours 20 minutes...”. A 1620 departure followed by a 1840 one would be PSR acceptable.

How about connections from/to southern Gwynedd after all they're in the hinterland of the regional centre that is Aberystwyth. 1.4.1 of C3 states “..reasonable endeavours..” will do.

Into Shrewsbury

The PSR fails to mention AM or PM commuting times. There's nothing to stop the operator running commuter timed trains will no doubt be the defence, but what if the PSR actually compels the operator to accommodate it by running additional trains beyond the PSR minimum of 8 a day and therefore incur extra cost?

1.1.1 of C2 states: “A two-hourly service shall be provided...” 1.1.2 of C2 states: “For the purposes of this service only “two-hourly” shall mean intervals not exceeding 2 hours 20 minutes provided that four services are provided in any 8 hour 25 minute interval”. 1.2.1 of C2 states: “An early departure no later than 0545”. 1.2.2 of C2 states: “A late departure no earlier than 1940”.

The latest practical departure from Aberystwyth to arrive in Shrewsbury for the AM commute would be c0645. Have a go at fitting that in and still be PSR compliant without using additional resources!

By luck rather than judgement a PM commuter timed departure is possible given the PSR requirements of 1.3.1 of C2 which states: "An early departure no later than 0945" and 1.3.2 of C2: "A late departure no earlier than 2130". The roughly two hourly cycle in-between those times gives a departure between 1700 & 1800.

Let's fit the above into the questions phrased earlier.

Does it ensure the railway is relevant to travel needs of the population in the area is covers?

Evidently not if you want to commute to work without sitting in a traffic jam that already exists in Shrewsbury and soon to be chaotic Aberystwyth.

Does it ensure that public money (invariably any regional line will require public subsidy though pinning down an answer as to how much the Cambrian receives is nigh impossible) is spent in the most efficient way to produce the maximum benefit to the population i.e. does ensure "value for money"?

Many would question how providing public money to support the railway is value for money when it can't meet basic travel needs like being able to commute to work.

Does the PSR live in the real world where circumstances change and need to be accommodated and is it flexible enough to cope?

The very scope of this consultation demonstrates not in that we are invited to comment upon essentially minor revisions despite the fact the whole thing is flawed and takes no account of changes in the wider world.

Does the PSR relate to and work toward wider government policy objectives?

The fact that it neither fits well with WAG's "spatial plan" for regional centres at its western end nor DfT's own pilot trial areas for congestion charging at its eastern end clearly shows not.

So there we have it the PSR is a complete and utter nonsense in relevance to the questions we phrased about what a PSR should achieve. Without compelling the operator to find and fund extra resources to the line which will no doubt be dismissed as not having a "business case".

The SRA liked to tell everyone how it was an intelligent public sector buyer is DfT rail? Having a minimum level of service is something acceptable but can we please have an intelligent minimum level of service that allows basic transport objectives to be met and demonstrate that public money is being spent to give value?,

ORR and the SRA of course had these points made to them many a time; falling on deaf ears - will DfT rail be any better?

Meet the Manager

Arriva Trains Wales customers will be given the opportunity to have their say at stations and on board trains across the network over the coming months.

Managers from the rail company, which operates services in Wales and the border counties, will be out and about listening to customer's views and concerns and explaining the company's plans. Arriva Managers will also travel on certain train services meeting customers and asking their views.

Helen Davies, Arriva Trains Wales's Head of Customer Relations said: "Our Meet the Manager sessions are a regular feature in the diary and help us discuss rail services with our customers and get valuable feedback on a number of issues from timetables to punctuality, station cleanliness and facilities. People can get one-to-one responses to issues raised at these sessions and gain an insight into the running of our business. Feedback gained at these sessions is also used by us to implement strategies to improve the services and facilities we offer our customers."

The 'Have your say' sessions with Arriva Trains Wales will be held on the following dates:

26 April	Newport Railway Station
16 May	Chester Railway Station
17 May	Bangor Railway Station
04 July	Swansea Railway Station
26 September	Shrewsbury Railway Station

Arriva employees will be on hand between 7.30am and 9.30am and 4.30pm and 6.00pm on these dates.

Posters reminding customers when they can have a say will go on display at relevant stations. More information about the sessions can be obtained by contacting Arriva Trains Wales customer relations team on 0845 6061 660

Strange Occurrence on the Cambrian From *The County Times* July 15th 1911

An accident occurred on Thursday on the Cambrian Railways. A heavily-loaded train bearing passengers for Aberystwyth, was descending Brow Bank near Whittington Station when the inner workings of the engine fell out. The train was running at a speed of about 25 miles an hour and the driver at once applied the brakes. Those attached to the engine broke with the sudden strain but those on the train which included two heavy London and North Western coaches were equal to the test and the train was pulled up in its own length. A message was despatched to Whittington Station and a breakdown gang was soon on the spot. But it was found impossible to move the engine either forwards or backwards until all the working parts had been removed. The passengers were taken on to Oswestry by relief train, arriving two hours late. Amongst those waiting at Oswestry Station were the Marquis of Londonderry who was on his way to Machynlleth to meet the Royal Family.

From Rachel Jones

THE VIEW FROM MILEPOST 62

with Brigadier John Faviell

Well done Alistair! Yes he confirmed his reputation as the worst Transport Minister the country has ever seen with his speech at the National Rail conference in March. Uncosted super jam tomorrow (for business travellers and commuters in the metropolitan areas anyway) with no delivery timescale, whilst his minions in the DfT continue to attack the railways. No one is fooled by it. The Editorial in The Times summed it all up nicely; of course the real irony of the situation is that the man who would be Chancellor in a Brown premiership would love to be seen as a man you could trust with the nation's economy. The trouble is his tenure at transport has seen a catalogue of mismanagement and inaction whilst the nation's transport has suffered even more and the economy of the nation has been held back. No wonder the Conservative shadow Transport Minister Chris Grayling thinks he's received a free bunk up the greasy pole as he can score points with his eyes closed, against the inept Labour administration disastrous transport policies.

Enough of Tweedle Dum in Westminster: how about Tweedle Dee in Cardiff Bay, Andrew Davies? He's kept his head down recently; clearly the merest mention of the word transport gives him the willies. After all he's completely out of his depth with the subject, and hides behind his civil servants who manufacture misinformation and Orwellian type spin to hide the deficiencies. The latest wheeze is a Stalinist attempt at making Transport a non subject, after the end of the financial year, gone is the Department for Economic Development and Transport, and instead we have the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks!

As we all are constantly told everything is fine in the Welsh transport garden - after all the top civil servant in Wales in charge of transport - Robin Shaw was wheeled out before the Assembly Committee on Rail Infrastructure and Improved Passenger Services, and what a tissue of old twaddle he told. Transport Wales presented a list of significant improvements to station facilities across Wales funded by Transport Wales including our own Welshpool. The trouble was it was a complete fabrication, a revised list of more modest proportions that had actually taken place was eventually submitted following a protest from SARPA. I doubt SARPA will get a Christmas card from Transport Wales.

More red faces were found down at Cardiff Bay over European funding. Our chums in Labour thought it would be a jolly good idea to use the Euro funds for 2007 to 2013 to upgrade north to south road links, a number of a factors combined to ruin their plans. Up stood the much maligned civil servants and pointed out that firstly most of the north to south roads in Wales ran through what's defined as "East Wales" and don't qualify for the euro assistance, and secondly the entire budget would have to be used up on the hoped for road schemes, such is the huge cost of road schemes. In addition the European Commission blew a huge raspberry at it as well.

Now given that the priority for structural funds assistance in 2007 to 2013 is economic growth and job creation, you would have thought that investing it all in "magic roads" would hit the mark as we would all live happily ever after on the economic boom provided by new/improved roads. Could it be that the European Commission does not agree with the magic road theory?

The upshot is that there will be euro money for transport and that most of it is likely to be spent on the rail network. Apparently the funds will be allocated and decisions made on priorities by the regional transport consortia backed up by match funding from Transport Wales. SEWTA has a stack of plans in the pipeline, I hope TraCC do. Now things definitely start getting interesting talking of TraCC - the Mid Wales consortium that

covers Ceredigion, Powys and Southern Gwynedd. For a start Powys is in "East Wales" and doesn't qualify for euro assistance. With major road schemes out and the most likely candidate for non mega buck spend the A487 Dyfi bends scheme already under foot, there's a serious shortage of stuff in Ceredigion and southern Gwynedd to spend money on. Remember Traws Cambria is already up and running and the local bus network in Gwynedd and to a degree around Aberystwyth is as developed as it's likely to get. That realistically leaves TraCC with the railway.

Food for thought?

The running of the 0633 ex-Birmingham

From Arriva Trains

This train isn't performing as we would like, however over the last few weeks the service has improved and has passed PPM on 17 of the last 25 occasions. In no way however is that good enough.

As with all new services it does take time to iron out the problems, I appreciate it has been nearly ten weeks but effective solutions take time.

There are number of reasons why this train has performed below expectations and responsibility falls equally between ourselves and Network Rail. I would make the following points regarding our actions which will deliver improvements.

- Time delays should be improved by a token exchange point moving to Shrewsbury coupled with line speed improvements by raising the permanent speed restrictions at Sutton Bridge, due for implementation later this year. A number of level crossings have been closed and the permanent speed restrictions imposed to improve safety whilst open are being removed. We are also reviewing all other speed restrictions as this will improve timekeeping for all our services.

- Under our new regulation policy, which will enable us to manage our services more effectively to PPM, we are looking into the possibly of implementing a Traffic Management system for services running at xx01 if running up to 5 minutes late should precede the Virgin Trains xx05 service at Wolverhampton, in the Birmingham direction.

- The 06.33 Birmingham New Street to Aberystwyth service occasionally crosses at Newtown if either this service or the 0517 Aberystwyth to Birmingham New Street is running more than 21 minutes late. This decision is taken as part of our regulation policy, due to single lines with minimal crossing points, rather than holding one train at Talerigg for an inordinate amount of time to allow the late train through.

We meet regularly with our colleagues at Network Rail regarding ECS' from Oxley and late running freight into Wolverhampton Steel Terminal, constantly re-affirming the importance of our Cambrian performance. To this extent Cambrian performance will improve overall with the industry decision taken to remove the Wellington-Walsall stopper west of Wolverhampton in June.

TRIO OF STATIONS ADOPTED

From Arriva's Press Release:

A group working to promote rail travel between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth has taken a trio of railway stations under its wing to ensure they are well looked after.

Welshpool, Newtown and Caersws railway stations, between Machynlleth and Shrewsbury, are being 'adopted' by the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association (SARPA) under the Arriva Trains Wales 'Adopt a Station' scheme. The scheme aims to involve communities in caring for and taking pride in their local railway station.

Martin Bennett, a former computer programmer from Newtown, is a member of the SARPA team 'adopting' Newtown Railway Station.

Martin, who lives close to the station and can keep a watchful eye on the facilities, said: "As a member of SARPA I am keen to encourage more people to use local rail services. By keeping an eye on the station for Arriva we can let the local station manager know if there are any issues that require action and ensure that it is a welcoming gateway for travellers."

Welshpool Station has been taken on by another enthusiastic and community-spirited SARPA team. Ivor Morris, a retired electrician and SARPA Treasurer, shares the responsibility with two other members of the group.

As a young lad Ivor spent much of his time at the Pool Quay Signal Box between Welshpool and Oswestry. He said: "The railway was practically my second home when I was growing up so I've always had a soft spot for trains. SARPA is working hard to promote rail travel between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth and helping to care for some of the stations along this route can only help us in this aim."

Tony O' Donovan, station manager for Arriva Trains Wales, said: "We are looking forward to working with the teams from SARPA on this project. It's all about encouraging local people to take an interest in their local station and we are grateful to all of the volunteers for their time and enthusiasm."

He continued: "The 'adoptions' will help us keep the stations in the best possible condition for local people and visitors alike. When locals get involved like this, it creates pride in the facilities and people don't want to see others littering and vandalising their station," he said.

Station 'adopters' carry out regular spot checks relating to the tidiness and cleanliness of the station, in addition to those already undertaken by Arriva Trains Wales. Any issues that may need addressing are then passed on to the local station manager. In return, 'adopters' are offered travel vouchers for use on the Arriva Trains Wales network.

The scheme has already been successful at over 90 stations throughout the Arriva Trains Wales network with the British Transport Police reporting a drop in anti-social behaviour at some stations.

Anyone wishing to find out more about the 'Adopt a Station' scheme can call Arriva Trains Wales customer relations team on 0845 6061 660 or visit www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk

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WEBSITES

We now have a new website, hosted by Angus Eichhoff:

www.anguseickhoff.co.uk/sarpa/index.html

Other sites of interest:

Arriva Trains Wales

www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/

National Rail Enquiries

www.nationalrail.co.uk/

Train and Bus Information Midlands

www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp

Central Trains

www.centraltrains.co.uk/

Virgin Trains

www.virgintrains.co.uk/default.aspx

Chiltern Railways

www.chilternrailways.co.uk/

Network Rail

www.networkrail.co.uk/

Railfuture/Railway Development Society

www.railfuture.org.uk/

Cambrian Rail Partnership

www.thecambrianline.co.uk/

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)

www.acorp.uk.com

It is the 200th Anniversary of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. His works in Wales are on these websites

www.ice.org.uk

www.swie.org.uk

Events are listed on the HERIAN website at

www/herian.org

and the Brunel website at

www.brunel200.com

SARPA Meeting dates and venues 2006

May	2 nd	Tuesday 1900	Welshpool	Pinewood Tavern
June	6 th	Tuesday 1930	Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury Hotel
July	1 st	Saturday	1200 Aberystwyth	RAFA Club
August	1 st	Tuesday 1845	Caersws	Red Lion
September	5 th	Tuesday 1900	Newtown	Bell Hotel
October	7 th	Saturday 1130	Welshpool	Raven Inn
AGM till 1400 followed by trip on Welshpool & Llanfair Railway.				
November	7 th	Tuesday 1900	Machynlleth	Railway Station

Useful addresses

Arriva Trains Wales:

St Mary's House, 47 Penarth Road, Cardiff CF10 5DJ. Tel 0845 6061 660
Email: customer.services@arrivatrainswales.co.uk

Network Rail:

Community Relations, Railtrack House, Euston Square, London NW1 2EE

The Association of Train Operating Companies:

ATOC, 3rd Floor, 40 Bernard Street, London [WC1N 1BY](#)

Central Trains Limited

Central Trains Limited, PO Box 4323, Birmingham B2 4JB

Tel. 0121 654 1200

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

Rail & River Centre, Canal Side, Civic Hall, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield HD7 5AB

Virgin Trains

Virgin Trains, Customer Relations, PO Box 713, Birmingham, B5 4HH

Tel. 0870 789 1234

Traveline Cymru for all public transport information

www.traveline-cymru.org.uk Tel.0870-6082608

For Train Times and Fares Call:

08457 48 49 50 (24hrs)

0845 60 40 500 (Welsh Language Service)

0845 60 50 600 (Textphone)

For ticket reservations please call: 0870 9000 773

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