

Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association

Saturday 20th April 2024

Railway Inn, Borth.

Present: Martin Bemment^(R), James Davies, Angus Eickhoff, Roger Goodhew, Sarah Harvey, Stephen Hughes^(R), Gareth Marston, Bill Redfern, Cllr Meryl Roberts^(R).

Apologies: Dennis Bates, Jim Honeybill, Robert Knight, Dennis Onions, David Purdon, Cllr Jeff Smith, Roger Whitehouse, Thomas Wheeler, Cllr Michael Williams.

Meeting was chaired by Angus Eickhoff.

Officer's Reports:

The Chair provided the following written report:

I would like to suggest an action point which is to ask me to write to town and community councils all along the coast line in particular making them aware of the cuts and encouraging them to answer the consultation. I think this would raise our profile with a target group as well as producing a strong response. I already have the details from my membership drive a while ago. [It was agreed that the Chair should write to Coast Line Councils. It was also agreed that strong letters should be sent to Gwynedd County Council, Transport for Wales and Ken Skates.](#)

I will now share some information from the Transport Liaison Group meeting.

TfW had offered the status quo and 3 cutback plans to WG. They chose the "softest" cutback plan. They have some strange ideas: bustitution on HoWL, fewer trains in the winter to "increase resilience" (i.e. cover for units with wheel flats etc) - hence the lack of trains at a reasonable time on the coast in January and February. They say that their plans will reduce staff requirements and thus save money (when they've just done a huge recruitment drive...) and reduce mileage.

Anyway, you'll be aware of the proposed cuts on the Cambrian, particularly on the coast. Other news on the Cambrian is that the 197s will be quite significantly delayed again (which is probably good news as they tacitly acknowledge that they'd be pretty disastrous on the Cambrian).

Birmingham - Holyhead services are also being diverted to Llandudno (or Junction, can't remember which) which should increase unit availability on the Cambrian.

I had the opportunity to ask some questions and sent Gail away with some others to ask officials. Face to face (well, virtually) she was great and managed to get responses for me very efficiently. Here's the answers (except for the inaudible announcements, she's still chasing that one):

Rolling stock

1) Announcements on the Cambrian 158s are frequently inaudible. What steps are you taking to rectify this? We've heard that they're staying for a while yet (obviously not complaining regarding that!)

Still waiting answer.

2) There were lots of problems with wheel flats on the 197s last autumn/winter due to leaf fall. This reduced availability drastically even on lines that don't use 197s. What steps are you taking to avoid this coming autumn?

Oral answer said that their engineers were looking into it and working very hard.

Stations

1) When can we see separate platform indicators for platforms 2a and 2b at Dyfi Junction? At present, one platform CIS operates for the 2 platforms when they send trains in opposite directions? Either people get on the wrong train or delays accrue whilst people make their way to the other end of the platform. This will need some design and investment and may take time, I'll ask locally for some feedback.

2) When will all station CIS indicators in Wales be bilingual? Bow St is monolingual English for instance despite being a very recent opening? As the rollout of removal progresses this will be completed, almost all stations have now been done. Bow Street should be bi-lingual and may be a fault. We will take a look.

Timetabling

Removal of the early train from Barmouth will have major network effects. How will people from Barmouth-Aberdyfi stations get to Shrewsbury before 9 and further afield at a reasonable time?

Usage figures show that very few people are making these journeys. This service was removed to protect other services, which if cut we believe would impact far more people.

How can people leave from further afield at a reasonable time and arrive at coast stations that night if the last train is retimed? First and last trains are essential.

Again, these services are very poorly used, the local managers believe a slightly earlier service will carry more people. We have decided to try that out, rather than remove these services as well.

How will connections at Dyfi Junction work under the new timetable? There's a handy cross-platform interchange and the Pwllheli train never arrives before the train from Aberystwyth due to the system, but if the connection is less than 5 minutes in the timetable this will not appear on journey planners as an official connection?

As a general rule we much prefer customers to interchange at Mach not Dovey due to the facilities/isolated nature of the jct. We will endeavour to retain as many connections as possible and could intervene to allow less than 5 min interchanges where that makes sense. This would be a useful piece of feedback to add to the consultation.

4) Recently a railtour to Pwllheli resulted in some of the regular services being cancelled. We like railtours but how will you make people more aware of the cancellations before they set off to the station in the future?

The arrangement with railtours is run by NR's charters team and more could be done by them to give more notice, we are taking that up with them. Although the charter in question was not on Maundy Thursday, but the Thursday after that, the services did mean around 100+customers had to take replacement buses. Those are paid for by the charter company. However, we have decided not to amend our services during Easter school holidays next year for charters, to reduce the impact seen on that Thursday.

Finally, I asked Gail where the timetables were for our line on the consultation page and she has ensured that they have been added to the page.

The Treasurer reported that subscription renewals are coming in steadily. The compliance issues with Barclays Bank may have been resolved since there hasn't been any further correspondence.

Future Timetable

Transport for Wales proposed future timetable resulted in a lively discussion.

It was agreed that the proposed service cuts are far more damaging than the delay in enhanced services. We should encourage everyone to complete the survey and write to politicians.

Bill suggested that we propose an emergency meeting of the Cambrian Coast Liaison Conference. It was agreed that Bill should make this proposal.