

Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association

11:45 Saturday 7th December 2024

ONLINE.

Due to the severe weather the meeting was changed to online only. The Chair (Jeff Smith) was unable to join the meeting due to the weather affecting power and internet.

Present: Dennis Bates^(r), Rob Edwards(Penryndeudraeth)^(r), Sarah Harvey^(r), Stephen Hughes^(r), Bill Redfern^(r), Thomas Wheeler^(r), Roger Whitehouse^(r).

Apologies: James Davies, Roger Goodhew, Tony Harvey, Robert Knight, Cllr Jeff Smith.

Bill Redfern chaired the meeting.

Bill welcomed members to the meeting and said that it was a good attendance under difficult circumstances.

Since the last meeting Bill with Angus Eickhoff had attended an engagement event with TfW in Cardiff. Bill arrived half way through the meeting due to the failure of the locomotive hauled service from Shrewsbury, arriving as they were presenting how reliable they are! TfW seem to be in denial on everything their message being that the world is wonderful! Bill did get in a question about the cuts being made to the Cambrian Coast, but all you get back is the standard line about very low usage.

Digging into things Bill is concerned about the structure of TfW. There is the obvious TfW rail services (operator of last resort). The rest is more obscure, his understanding that isn't definitive is that there is a layer bring rail and bus together and then a layer that is TfW government. All layers use the name Transport for Wales. James Price seems to be the chief executive for all of it, no independence.

Thomas said that the contract is with the Welsh Government Ministers.

Bill, with others, have been doing all that we can to fight the cuts including writing to Eluned Morgan (First Minister) and Ken Skates (Member for Transport) but these get passed to TfW 'since timetables are an operational matter' but the cuts are not, they are about the need for services and impact of withdrawal, i.e. a matter for politicians.

It was agreed that our Chair make a press release stating SARPA's opposition to the cuts and that they are very damaging (the point we are failing to get through to them).

Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer reported that we have incurred expenditure this month due to printing and postage of Newsletter 94. Postage was reduced by the earlier pre-purchase of stamps but the stocks have now run out. With payment slips sent out with the Newsletter subscription renewals have started to come in.

Cambrian Lines News and Issues:

Roger Whitehouse refereed to a trip that Bill had taken to Manchester. With no 07:14 from Tywyn the 08:17 was used to Machynlleth which should connect with the 09:06 to Shrewsbury. This was cancelled, an event that seems to be common since it is an 'extra' hourly service train. We will need to keep an eye on this since it is now the first east bound service from the coast line.

Bill said that he gets the impression that TfW do not understand that a lot of coast line users travel beyond Machynlleth.

Stephen will try contact Ken Skates via the Labour Party.

Sarah said that she had had a couple of responses back from Ken Skates, totally unsatisfactory about lack of passengers. Her reading is that they are all about finances reducing subsidy but it is nonsense they should be looking to build the services up. The services are very unreliable, you cannot rely on the train.

Stephen said it was the Dr Beeching approach.

Roger said the the savings are chicken feed.

Stephen said that where you have a system like rail with big infrastructure the only sensible approach is to maximise use.

Bill said that there is irony that Network Rail controlled by Westminster is looking after coast line infrastructure like Barmouth Bridge well, while Welsh Government is cutting services. Never thought that we would be saying come back Arriva trains!

Stephen said that it seems to be down to Ken Skates preferances.

AOB:

Stephen said that the Tallerdig crash will not have made rolling stock availability any better. Roger said that if our 158 units aren't needed for the Marches line anymore Machynlleth should have enough units. Bill said it's not known if the units in the collision can/will be repaired but it's understood they are in quarantine for investigation which is likely the case for some time.

Bill said that TfW do have some plans to ease the lack of available rolling stock on the Cambrian and are aiming to bring forward into January plans to use 197 units between Shrewsbury and Birmingham. This will mean changing at Shrewsbury but should make stock captive to the Cambrian.

Bill said that, re the cuts, that he'd urge everybody to keep pushing the petition and spreading the word about the cuts. TfW/WG think that it will go away now cuts have been implemented, but it won't go away and we need to keep fighting to get the services back.