

Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association

11:15 Saturday 18th January 2025

Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool.

Present: Angus Eickhoff, Barbara Fuller, Sarah Harvey, Stephen Hughes, Dennis Onions, Bill Redfern, Cllr Jeff Smith, Thomas Wheeler^(r), Roger Whitehouse^(r).

Apologies: John Appleford, Dennis Bates, James Davies, Roger Goodhew, Tony Harvey, Robert Knight, Gareth Marston.

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and wished them a happy new year.

Minutes of December Meeting:

It was confirmed that everyone was happy with the minutes of the December meeting.

Jeff stated that he had not had chance to carry out his action points. Similarly Stephen stated he had not contacted Ken Skates.

Officer's Reports:

The Chair stated that he had attended the North Wales Liaison Meeting, along with Angus.

Newtown station lifts are coming on well including bilingual messages. There is a shortage of units available for service. Half of North Wales services are arriving on time (+/- 3 minutes). 70% arriving within fifteen minutes.

The Treasurer stated that it was pleasing to see subscription renewals coming in. He had been informed that Robert Knight intends to step down as distribution officer at the AGM.

Roger Whitehouse stated it was difficult to follow the meeting due to the background chatter. Bill suggested we consider using the upstairs function room provided that it was a reasonable charge.

Referring to a draft article for the Newsletter from Gareth Marston, Roger said that the effect of split ticketing including concessionary travel meant that through journeys from the coast were underestimated, noting large footfall at Dovey Junction. He will email comments to Gareth.

Angus stated re digital that we have many more on Facebook than actual members.

With Bill he attended a meeting with TfW in Cardiff.

Future Timetable/Cuts:

Bill stated that he now considers the coast line Winter service to be inadequate. TfW must have a low opinion of the Cambrian it seems everywhere else is given priority. Looks like Cardiff would close it if they could. An actual example today is that Roger Whitehouse's wife is in York and will need Roger to pick her up by car from Machynlleth due to the cutting of the late train. The damaging cuts preclude such a lot of journey opportunities. You can't go out in the evening to meet friends, eat out etc. Angus said it must be effecting businesses. Bill continued it's effecting the Talylyn Railway with volunteers no longer able to come up Friday night and return Monday morning.

Barbara Fuller said that the petition is being updated. The Cambrian Coast Line is a gem to be proud of, people have been fighting for it for years. At a meeting fifteen odd years ago at a meeting she made a point that too many guards were not collecting fares and inaccurate low numbers will lead to problems. It's a sad day when the whole of the coast line timetable fits on 2/3 of A4 sheet. Barbara is collecting impact statements. She's just heard of a group of 5 ladies from Fairbourne who used to go for an evening out in Barmouth spending over £30, but now they can't do that.

Reliability has also been a problem. Low usage keeps coming up. TfW won't give figures because of commercial confidentiality! The line has been closed and disrupted for over 3 years. The local Senedd member has been contacted and is supportive and up to speed. Angus suggested Cefin Campbell MS because of Machynlleth. He thought there may be over provision at Shrewsbury giving TfW some room to manoeuvre without losing connectivity which is what the cuts have done to the Cambrian. Bill said the issue is that when budgets get squeezed where do you make the cuts and its political rather than technical where tax payers money should be spent. The journeys they have cut or not about convenience, they remove journey opportunities. It's all about impact. Low usage doesn't mean low impact.

Bill said that to be effective it's probably best we stop talking about the cuts and now talk about inadequate service. Has Gareth said in Newtown Labour government resists changing decisions with their hands over their ears so this way we would start a new 'different' argument.

Barbara said she understands that TfW are going to do a consultation on our line in the Spring.

Bill said that in his opinion in no way do the so called improvements: extending trains in Summer (that they had to do for capacity anyway), the hourly service on mainline just for summer, in no way compensate for the damage that the cuts have done. It's important that we get the cuts fixed before they fob us off with anything else because that route will ultimately lead to more service losses.

2025 Meetings:

The 2025 meeting programme was drafted based on the 2024 schedule. It was agreed to move Aberystwyth meeting, normally December, to November to fall in University term. Venues to be confirmed.

Saturday 15th February 2025 11:15 at the Wynnstay Hotel, Machynlleth.

Saturday 15th March 2025 11:30 at the Monty Club, 11 Broad Street, Newtown, SY16 2LU.

Saturday 12th April 2025 12:30 at the Railway Inn, High Street, Borth, SY24 5GE.

Saturday 17th May 2025 11:45 AGM at the Talylyn Railway, Wharf Station, Tywyn.

Saturday 14th June 2025 at 11:15 and will be held at the Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool.

Saturday 12th July 2025 11:45 at the Town Council Offices, The Presbytery, Queens Road, ABERYSTWYTH, SY23 2HS.

Thursday 21st August 2025 19:00 at the Monty Club, 11 Broad Street, Newtown, SY16 2LU.

Saturday 20st September 2025 11:15 at the Wynnstay Hotel, Machynlleth.

Saturday 18th October 2025, 11:30 at the Vestry, Capel Y Traeth, Criccieth.

Saturday 15th November 2025 11:45 at the Town Council Offices, The Presbytery, Queens Road, ABERYSTWYTH, SY23 2HS.

Saturday 6th December 2025 11:30 at the HIVE, 5 Belmont, Shrewsbury, SY1 1TE.