

**Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association**

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 11:45**

**Talyllyn Railway, Tywyn.**

**Present:** Angus Eickhoff, Roger Goodhew, Sarah Harvey<sup>(r)</sup>, Stephen Hughes<sup>(r)</sup>, Robert Knight, Bill Redfern, Jeff Smith<sup>(r)</sup>, Thomas Wheeler, Roger Whitehouse, Cllr Michael Williams<sup>(r)</sup>.

<sup>(r)</sup> – remote.

**Apologies:** Dennis Bates, Martin Bemment, Tony Harvey, Gareth Marston, Ivor Morris, Trevor Roberts.

Angus chaired the meeting until the Chairman joined.

**Minutes of Last Meeting (13<sup>th</sup> August):**

Roger Whitehouse proposed and Robert Knight seconded approval of the minutes with minor corrections which was agreed by the meeting.

**Matters Arising from the Minutes:**

Roger Whitehouse stated that he had received a letter regarding the closure of the Coast Line for Barmouth Bridge engineering works. It contained new dates with the line now open over the half term holiday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of October now being the last day of closure. Its pleasing that they have taken notice of the effect of a long closure on a line that is important for tourism. Robert Knight said that he had enquired about the reason for not providing a service south of the bridge and received the response that there aren't enough mess facilities for the train crews at Tywyn, which surprised the meeting when it appears that there would only be about a 10 minute layover!

Angus asked if the group thought that the railway was less resilient than it used to be. Bill said it was probably a matter of resource, lack of diversionary routes, spare trains and train crew. An example would be, with less local staff these days, the travelling time taken for a bridge inspector to arrive after a bridge strike. When we had RETB signalling, in the event of a points failure, the train driver could clip and scotch

(operate) the points, but that isn't now possible because of the complexity of power operated points; but ETCS has given us advantages.

### **Officers Reports:**

The Chairman said the event to view a new 197 train at Machynlleth had been cancelled and is being rearranged for early September at Shrewsbury. Jeff suggested we should request more places. Angus said he would be interested but couldn't be polite about the new trains. With other members interested Jeff will seek clarification on the numbers that can attend and if travel tickets will be provided.

The web master said that there was nothing to report regarding the web site. Gareth Marston is the most frequent Facebook poster. Robert said that he was missing Gareth's contributions to the railway press.

The Treasurer reported that the labels had been printed for the distribution of the Newsletter. Roger Whitehouse said that increasing the signatories was progressing slowly.

Roger Goodhew reported that the Chester Suite was booked at Shrewsbury Station for our November meeting (11:30 12/11/22). Roger Whitehouse said it was good that it was just in, the last day, of the Coast Line running. It was agreed that Angus would invite Sheila Dee to attend.

### **Discussion:**

Angus noted that it appeared that 18 people were needed to replace Ben Davis. He had heard a comment that a lot of people without railway experience were being brought in from outside and needed a lot of training.

Roger Goodhew noted that we had a new Transport Secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan. It's good that she is based outside London (constituency Berwick-upon-Tweed).

### **Cambrian Lines News:**

Jeff confirmed that the West Midlands Trains semi-fast Shrewbury – Birmingham services had been curtailed. The presence of those trains had been used as a reason for Cambrian services not needing additional trains. He had emailed TfW (Gail) regarding unit numbers, but had heard nothing back. It was agreed that if nothing was heard after a fortnight he should take it further. Roger Whitehouse noted that this was an example that if extra services don't immediately succeed they are withdrawn.

Roger Goodhew noted an item in the latest (6<sup>th</sup> September) Rail Magazine that a new UK based company will take over Abellio via a management buy out. Avanti have been trying to withdraw services from Shrewbury. This will not be allowed for weekdays but weekends are in doubt.

### **AOB:**

Angus noted that the Marches Line is getting loco hauled trains but we aren't getting much at all – hourly service with less seats and toilets. Roger Whitehouse said that there are not going to be enough new trains to strengthen anything. Bill said that they should be buying more now, e.g. to convert the 2 to 3 cars.

Thomas noted that restoration of services post Covid only applies to trains, bus cuts are still in place e.g. the T1 and T5 from Aberystwyth.

It was noted from rail forum that there are believed to be proposals to change the intermediate stop between Wolverhampton and Birmingham from Smethwick Galton Bridge to Sandwell and Dudley. Smethwick Galton Bridge is important for Snow Hill connections. Thomas said that we should complain about this.

Thomas said that there had been a discussion on the forum that 21 197 units is enough for increasing capacity. It would need separation of Holyhead services. It would involve attaching and detaching Wrexham units and a need to use Shrewsbury platform 3. Roger Whitehouse stated that 19, not 17 units were needed for a total of 18 diagrams ( 2 cars used Holyhead – Shrewsbury; 4 cars on Birmingham and the Cambrian). Independent Cambrian services had been shown not to work with Arriva terminating at Wolverhampton. It is the 20 minute layover at International

that makes it work. Of note the trains pass around Galton Bridge which would otherwise require capacity at Birmingham New Street that it doesn't have. Angus asked about the additional hour services going to Crewe. Thomas said it was assumed that the extra services would terminate at Shrewsbury.