

SARPA Newsletter No.32

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Arriva Wales 'station adoption' conference

Arriva Trains Wales hosted a well attended conference for its station adopters, in Cardiff on December 4th. Undisputed star of the show was Kaylee John, a pupil at Mountain Ash Comprehensive which has sponsored its local station on the Aberdare Line. She spoke with passion, enthusiasm and conviction. She's a real credit to her school and her community. Pupils at the school have been working with Arriva and the British Transport police on a project which combines physical improvements at the station with course work on the history and role for the railway in the local community.

Arriva Trains Wales now has 65 stations formally adopted and many of the adopters made their way from as far afield as Runcorn and Helsby to attend the event. Chief Inspector Paul Richard of the BTP spoke together with David Edwards of the Heart of Wales Line Forum and ACoRP's very own Paul Salveson. Managing Director Peter Strachan introduced the event and fielded questions and comments from adopters. Martyn Brennan, ATW driver manager who looks after the programme, took part in the discussion and introduced the speakers.

[From ACoRP's *Train on Line No.21*, December 2004]

Rail Re-openings Toolkit

The Countryside Agency has recently published ***Rail Re-opening Toolkit***, a complete guide to the process of re-opening a disused railway. This is the culmination of several years of detailed research by the Independent Rail Consultancy Group. The toolkit comes under five headings: Process, Making the Case, Making it Happen, Case Studies and Appendices. It is available at £5, including post and packing, from ACoRP at Brian Jackson Centre, New North Parade, Huddersfield HD1 5JP.

[The Editor has a copy, and can send it to anyone interested.]

News of the Line

Freight from Aberystwyth

The experimental movement of timber from Aberystwyth to Chirk got under way on Thursday 3rd March. The train, which can carry 200 tonnes, was formed of two MPV's with four-wheeled timber trucks between. On the first day, the train included Class 37 37427, included to provide backup power should the MPV's be



unable to cope. The train was only half loaded, the weight of the 37 being equivalent to 100 tonnes. In the event, the units coped well, and the 37 was not used again.

The train was scheduled to arrive in Aber at 0922—just three minutes before the departure of the 0925 up passenger, and depart at 1150. As the unit can run at up to 60mph, it could be fitted into the passenger schedule.

The **Daily** Post of 18th April reported that the trial was a great success. During the period 4,500 tonnes of timber were taken from Aberystwyth to the Kronospan wood mill 75 miles away, equivalent to 180 lorry-loads. The Forestry Enterprise is now considering a five to 10-year contract for rail haulage which would remove an estimated 4,000 timber lorry journeys from Wales' roads. Consultants overseeing the project will now meet Welsh Assembly and Forestry Enterprise managers to seek grants for two new specially-designed trains, each with a 200-tonne carrying capacity. Each new train will cost an estimated £1.3m, with private money coming from railway leasing specialists HSBC. It is hoped all Welsh timber will be carried by rail from sidings built near their forests of origin. Forestry Enterprise also aim to run rail timber services to the Shotton paper mill on Deeside.

Bradley Manor visits Aberystwyth

Steam returned to the Cambrian, for the first time in 2005, on Saturday 12th March.

Bus connections

A new X40 Aberystwyth to Carmarthen schedule, with an hourly frequency (Monday to Saturday daytimes), is giving additional opportunities for bus/rail connections at either end. To find out more about the new services including times, fares, and rail connections please contact Traveline Cymru on 0870 608 2 608 (between 7am and 10pm daily) or www.traveline-cymru.org.uk

From Rhodri Clark—Western Mail 19th April 2005

NEW questions about Labour's transport policy were raised yesterday as it emerged that officials in London blocked 22 new trains for South Wales. Documents released to the Western Mail show rail firm Arriva proposed to order new Turbostar trains worth £45m, which would have started service in May last year. The proposal was rejected, but now the Welsh Assembly Government has agreed to spend £50m leasing just seven old Sprinter trains discarded by Scotland. The documents also show the Valley Lines are stuck with old trains because scrapping them would have upset financial institutions - and other parts of Britain would pay more for their new trains.

Other rail improvements refused by the Government include:

- Hourly trains from Aberystwyth and Newtown to Shrewsbury;
- Trains every hour from Milford Haven and Haverfordwest to Carmarthen;
- Trains to Manchester and Liverpool airports from Wales;
- A new track and service from Caernarfon to Bangor;
- A new service over a disused track from Llangefni to Bangor;
- Station improvements;
- Concessionary travel for pensioners;
- A network of express road coaches integrated with trains.

Each bidder produced a suggested list of upgrades which would not have increased subsidy by more than 10%. One bidder, Serco, said it could replace the entire Valley Lines rolling stock with new trains without exceeding "the 10% cost limitation". But most of the suggested upgrades were dropped - and bidders were told to draw up plans for a 10% subsidy cut. Even on the urgent issue of overcrowding on the Valley Lines, officials refused to sanction the bidders' modest proposals.

Arriva recommended 22 new two-coach Turbostar trains but its eventual franchise deal included only seven old Sprinter trains to replace even older Valleys trains. The Sprinters were spare because Scotland had ordered new Turbostars for its commuters. This was such an inadequate response to Valleys overcrowding that in January the Welsh Assembly Government stepped in with £50m to fund seven more Sprinter trains for the rest of Arriva's 15-year franchise.

Mike German, leader of the Liberal Democrats at the National Assembly, said the situation was "staggering" and called for the auditor general to investigate. Had the WAG's £50m been on the table when the franchise was arranged, Wales would now have a fleet of new trains, he claimed.

Simon Thomas MP, Plaid Cymru's transport spokesman in Westminster, said the Government should have provided the extra 10% subsidy for the im-

provements listed by Arriva and other bidders. "Not spending that small extra amount means a disaster in the end, because we won't have a rail system that answers the needs of Wales."

A Welsh Labour spokesman said, "Labour has worked hard to deliver our commitment to a single rail franchise for Wales. "Now we are reopening passenger rail services on the Ebbw Valley and Vale of Glamorgan routes for the first time since the Beeching cuts of 40 years ago. In addition we are investing in increased capacity on the Valley lines and have increased the number of direct north-south trains within Wales. The choice is between Labour's sustained investment in transport or a return to the failed policies of the Tories."

Some options for an enhanced service—A summary

Ken Rushen

This is an abridged version of a paper prepared by Ken Rushen, giving a number of options for development of service the Cambrian main line and

The development of the present service

Until 1994 it was not possible to run a clockface 2-hourly service. In any 2-hourly service a train must be able to pass one coming the other way every 60 minutes *or less*. The problem was that the running time from Shrewsbury to the passing loop at Talerddig was about 66 minutes. To achieve a 60 minute schedule curves were recanted and realigned so that the line speed could be increased from 60 to 80 mph; but this was not enough on its own. By removing the loop at Westbury the speed there could be increased from 20 to 80 mph and that tipped the balance. The loop was not necessary for the 2-hourly service anyway. There was no need to make any infrastructure improvements beyond Talerddig because a train could easily get from there to Aberystwyth, have a 15-20 minute layover, and back within 2 hours. So the principal of today's service was established and has not changed for 11 years.

The full hourly service to Aberystwyth

It has often been implied in railway journals that the provision of a loop at Dovey Junc is the entire additional infrastructure that is necessary to facilitate an hourly service from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth. It has also been stated that an hourly service could run as far west as Machynlleth with the present infrastructure. This is not the case.

An hourly service must, of course, pass a train in the opposite direction every 30 minutes *or less*. Dovey Junc to Talerddig works well at just under 30 minutes, but the running time from Talerddig to Welshpool is about 34 minutes so trains would need to pass at about 4 minutes (or 3 miles) west of Welshpool on what is now single track. So it will be necessary to build either a short loop at that point (which will mean a stop and 2 or 3 minutes extra running time) or better still to reinstate the double track from Welshpool to Forden and create a dynamic loop with a high speed turnout at Forden.

All the options presented build on Arriva Trains Wales proposed December 2005 Standard Pattern Timetable. They are ideas presented to facilitate discussion. They are the personal opinions of the author and not official policy of SARPA.

No.	Infrastructure Improvements	Extra train Diagrams*	Extra services	Deliverables
1	None	1	Two hourly shuttle from Shrewsbury to Newtown or Caersws passing SPT services at Welshpool with a 7-minute timing stagger.	Greatly improved commuting and shopping service from the Upper Severn Valley to Shrewsbury and the West Midlands. Does not provide any improvement further west.
2	Dovey Junc loop	2	3 Down, 4 Up extra trains/day throughout from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury plus some extra fill-in workings along the Upper Severn Valley and from Machynlleth to Aberystwyth	Provides connections with all the existing Coast Line services at Machynlleth. Greatly improves the connections at Dovey Junc from the Coast to Aberystwyth. Provides commuter services into Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth. Does not provide a full all-day hourly service.
3S/H	Welshpool to Forden Double Track	1	A 2-hourly direct service from Shrewsbury to Pwllheli which replaces the existing service on the coast line. Separate Schoolday and Holiday# versions	Provides an hourly service from Shrewsbury as far as Machynlleth and a radical new timetable on the Coast line. Gives good connections at Dovey Junc between the Coast and Aberystwyth every two hours throughout the day. A Sunday service option is included in 3H. Does not provide a morning commuter service into Aberystwyth.
4	Welshpool to Kilkewydd Viaduct double track. Loop and Station at Carno replacing the loop at Talerddig	1	Similar to Option 3 but timetable translated 2-3 minutes later westbound and 2-3 earlier eastbound. Reduced layover at Aberystwyth compensated by additional dwell time at Shrewsbury	Similar to Option 3
5	Welshpool to Forden double track and Dovey Junc loop	2	A full hourly service between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth with a connection every 2 hours to the Coast	Solves all the perceived aspirations for the route. Short turnaround time at Shrewsbury for the additional trains unless these are extended to Birmingham

* One more train diagram will be required in all options if the *additional* services are extended to Birmingham.

"Holiday" is defined as every day of the year which is not a school day at Harlech.

The main deficiencies of ATW's proposed SPT and their solutions

- No suitable morning commuter train from the Upper Severn Valley to Shrewsbury and Telford. Remedied in Option 1 and all higher options with an 08.17 arrival at Shrewsbury.
- No suitable morning commuter train from Machynlleth and the Coast line into Aberystwyth. Remedied with an 08.23 arrival in Options 2 & 5 facilitated by a new passing loop at Dovey Junc.
- Extremely poor connections between the Coast line and Aberystwyth. This is mostly remedied in Option 2, and completely in Options 3 - 5.
- Overcrowding on some services will be remedied by all Options, but Option 1 will have only limited effect.

Some further thoughts

Up to now there is no predominately single line in Britain of a similar length to Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth which supports an hourly service in both directions simultaneously. If we succeed with the Cambrian line it will be a first.

Any additional trains run the risk of reduced reliability. At present the 2-hourly service passes just one train in the opposite direction – at Talerddig. An hourly service will need to pass *three* other trains and each one is a potential cause of delay. However, it works well on the Rhätische Bahn in Switzerland!

The Sunday service, even in the winter, needs to be radically improved. Basically it should be the same as the weekday “holiday” version except for a later morning start-up and earlier evening finish. But is this excessive?

Each additional train diagram will require three additional sets of train crew and probably additional maintenance staff at Machynlleth. Is there enough space at Machynlleth depot to stable the extra units at night?

In Options 2 and above good connections are available at Dovey Junc between the Coast line and Aberystwyth. Much improved station facilities are required – at the very least a heated enclosed waiting room and reliable information services.

NEW JOURNEY OPPORTUNITIES

MARCHES/CARDIGAN BA Y CIRCULAR

The integration of the Wales & Borders franchise held by Arriva Trains Wales is beginning to offer some new journey opportunities. Here is one for you to try .

1. Train for first leg is the 07:33 Birmingham New Street to Bangor via Telford, Shrewsbury & Wrexham

Departs Telford Central 08:06 then all stops to Chester via Gobowen & Wrexham; Departs Chester 09:32, stops Shotton, Flint, Prestatyn, Rhyl, Colwyn Bay arr 10:17; Arrives Llandudno Junction at 10:22 [it departs at 10:24 fast to Bangor arr 10:42].

On the day of my journey, Friday 22nd October 2004, the smooth running 'Coradia' train (Class 175) pulled into Shrewsbury platform 4 from the Wolverhampton line and departed on time onto the Chester line arriving in Chester station at platform 4. Here the train reversed and lost some time as it threaded its way along the coast. Time was picked up after Abergele so we arrived at Llandudno Junction with a possibility of making the next connection.

2. Train for the second leg is the 10:21 Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog via Llandudno Junction, Llanrwst & Betws-y-Coed

This train departs from Llandudno but we pick it up at Llandudno Junction platform 1. It is scheduled to depart Llandudno Junction at 10:39 with arrival at Blaenau Ffestiniog at 11:38.

On the day of my journey, the single carriage Sprinter (Class 153) was waiting in platform 1 as we pulled into Llandudno Junction on platform 4. A sprint across the bridge was called for, but we needn't have worried; the train was several minutes at the platform before the doors were fully closed.

We set off up the valley of the Afon Conwy in the pouring rain with low cloud cloaking the slopes on the far (western) side of the valley. Most halts were approached slowly to check for request stop passengers. Some windows were leaking. The river was in spate and could be seen to be very lively as we crossed it near Bettws.

The line becomes steeper and the rain became heavier as we ascended above Bettws, with both sides of the valley exhibiting silver cascades of water - a

sight to remember . After passing through several short tunnels, we levelled out and entered a long straight tunnel - the Ffestiniog tunnel - which lasts for over two miles before emerging onto the surface of the moon. Blaenau Ffestiniog is unique; a slate town which lies at the head of the Vale of Ffestiniog which is to take us down to the shores of Cardigan Bay.

3. Train for the third leg is the 11:55 Blaenau Ffestiniog to Porthmadog via Tan-y-Bwlch and Minffordd

The steam train was waiting on the adjacent, but lower, line for our slightly delayed ATW carriage as it pulled into Blaenau. Some of us crossed on the barrow crossing just beyond the terminal stop; others used the footbridge. The short carriages are set very low on small wheels and are open at the ends to the elements. The train set off at a fair crack and we tumbled carelessly downward past stone cottages, reservoirs, steep lanes and massive rock abutments.

We bought our tickets on the train and were requested to name our catering needs by the on-board steward as he visited each carriage. These were promptly brought to us at our seats.

We descended steeply from Tan-y-Grisiau to Tan-y-Bwlch - even looping the loop at one point. The train passed between myriads of waterfalls; water was everywhere out there, but we were dry and, although slightly shaken at times, we levelled out to arrive at Minffordd (for Port Meirion) and then across the Traeth causeway to Porthmadog.

We arrived on the harbour front at Porthmadog soon after 1 o'clock - in the pouring rain and during a southerly gale. This enabled me to attend a meeting starting at 13:30 in the nearby meetings centre of y Ganolfan. I could see the steam train across the harbour re-filling with water for the return journey.

4. Train for the fourth leg is the 14:59 PwUheli to MachynUeth via Criccieth, Porthmadog, Minffordd, Harlech, Barmouth, Tywyn & Aberdyfi

This train departs 15:21 from Porthmadog's Cambrian Coast main station: down Stryd Fawr near the leisure centre. It arrived as a two-car Super Sprinter (Class 158).

The journey to Machynlleth was punctuated by breathtaking views of a rough sea, cautious progress round the Ffridd cliffs in the teeth of a gale, the company of a carriageload of boisterous schoolchildren from Harlech to Barmouth and the sight of a full Dyfi estuary as we wended our way through Aberdyfi and across the bridge to Dyfi Junction station.

The expectation was of an hour to spend at Machynlleth with time to look in on y Tabernacle Museum of Modern Art and perhaps some home-made soup in the local pub.

In the event, nature intervened. The heavy rain and gales had caused the Afon Dyfi to rise very high. The railway line east of Mach was not negotiable at Black Bridge; the Afon Dyfi was flooding the A487 to the north of the town railway bridge; the 522 bus to Newtown due to depart at 17:10 was cancelled. So my evening plans were on ice. . .

5. Train for the fifth leg is the 17:34 Aberystwyth to Birmingham New Street via Machynlleth, Newtown, Shrewsbury, Telford & Wolverhampton

This train was stopped westbound at Caersws (scheduled time 16:18). Passengers were transferred to coaches - which arrived in Mach at about 17:30. [It is not known whether this train crossed the divide at Talerddig in order to reach Machynlleth].

Two trains were due out westbound from Mach into which the coach-based passengers were transferred (scheduled 16:50 ex-Mach for Aber; scheduled 17:06 ex-Mach for Pwllheli). In the event, the Aber bound passengers left Mach at about 18:06; the same returning train from Aber (scheduled dep 17:34) - which is full of students on their way home for their first half-term - arrived back at Mach at about 19:30.

All this time it was raining cats and dogs in Machynlleth.

The station staff at Mach had their hands full. Firstly, they dealt with the people whose eastbound train (scheduled 18:06 ex Mach) was cancelled. They had to await coaches which would arrive later. Secondly, they dealt with the people whose westbound train had stopped at Caersws and who had to be transferred to trains at Mach - either Aber or Pwllheli bound.

Thirdly, they had to deal with the eastbound passengers who had boarded the train at Aberystwyth - expecting a straightforward journey to Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton or Birmingham for onward connections - but who were de-trained at Mach onto the two coaches: already holding the first eastbound group from the Cambrian Coast line.

These coaches eventually got away from Mach at about 19:45 and drove directly to Newtown where a train was waiting to continue the eastbound journey onward to Shrewsbury and/or Birmingham. The coaches were originally expected only to go to Caersws, but this had to be changed because the continuing rain had caused the river Severn to rise to such a level that trains could no longer

cross the bridge at Caersws.

So, although my evening plans were a case of 'rain stopped play', it is worth recording that the train company Arriva Trains Wales did very well to arrange onward travel at short notice under very adverse conditions. The coach company were excellent with both drivers knowing well the local twisting roads and driving to a good standard. [The coach company were Lloyds Coaches of Penegoes just east of Machynlleth on A489] .

[As a footnote it is worth mentioning that train transits over bridges across swollen rivers in Britain have been subject to reasonable restriction ever since a train went into a swollen river from a dodgy bridge on the Heart of Wales line, in late October 1987].

Roger Goodhew

For information on circular tours Dave Sallery has posted a website (www.penmorfa.com/Cambrian), which gives all the information needed: an introduction to the tour, timetable information, fares information, a guide to the route, and a map of Porthmadog. In addition there's a comments and ideas page, and links are given to other sites.

The North and Mid Wales Day Ranger ticket can be used for the tour: it covers rail from Holyhead to Chester, Llandudno Junction to Llandudno, Llandudno Junction to Blaenau Ffestiniog, Chester to Shrewsbury, Wrexham to Shotton, Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and Pwllheli, and Arriva Cymru buses, Bws Gwynedd and the Ffestiniog Railway.

Prices (taken from the website): Adult: £20.00, Child: £13.20, Under 5 free, Family: £37.00 (valid for one or two adults and up to 4 children). Railcard: £13.20 - only available with Senior, Young Persons and Disabled Railcards. Dogs are free (except £2.50 on Ffestiniog Railway). Bicycles are, but reservations are essential on all trains and are charged £2.50 on the Ffestiniog Railway.

Tickets are valid after 09.00 Monday to Friday and any time weekends and Bank Holidays by rail. Valid any time by bus.

Ministers back community railways

Transport Minister Tony McNulty visited Whitby on March 10th, and gave strong backing for the development of the country's community railways. 'I'm no Dr Beeching,' the Minister said. 'I want to see rural lines becoming vibrant, well-used services for the community.'

The Minister was in Whitby at the invitation of local MP Lawrie Quinn who has been a strong supporter of the Esk Valley Railway Development Company. At a meeting with community representatives, the MP and Minister re-stated their support for the development of Britain's rural railways. The Esk Valley Line, from Middlesbrough to Whitby, is one of the seven national demonstration projects forming part of the Strategic Rail Authority's Community Rail Development Strategy. Network Rail recently completed relaying two miles of track into Whitby, at a cost of £2.5 million.

From the National Assembly of Wales

Lisa Francis: What discussions has the Welsh Assembly Government had with Network Rail about installing two passing loops on the Cambrian Coast Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury railway line in the area of Dyfi Junction? (WAQ41830)

Andrew Davies: I have had no discussions regarding the construction of two passing loops with Network Rail or the Strategic Rail Authority, but I funded a study managed by Powys County Council to examine the costs of introducing an hourly service. Funding for a passing loop at Dyfi Junction had been allocated for transport grant in 2001, but the outcome of the study indicated that an additional one would be necessary, together with a significant revenue subsidy, to introduce an hourly service. This subsidy could not be afforded by the SRA.

I announced in January 2005 that I have agreed that the SRA should undertake a further study on the infrastructure works required for an hourly service in conjunction with the works required to implement the European rail traffic management system pilot scheme. A decision to go ahead will depend on value for money being achieved and the availability of funding.

SARPA MONTHLY MEETINGS. 2005

Meetings for 2005

Please double check. Dates, venues, times correct as of going to print (January 2005).

May be subject to change.

Month	Day & Date	Time	Town	Venue
April	Saturday 2 nd	1200	Aberystwyth	To Be Confirmed
May	Tuesday 3 rd	1900	Newtown	Bell Hotel
June	Tuesday 7 th	1900	Caersws	Red Lion
July	Saturday 2 nd	1200	Borth	Railway Hotel
August	Tuesday 2 nd	1900	Newtown	Bell Hotel
September	Tuesday 6 th	1900	Machynlleth	Y Tabernacle
October	Saturday 8 th	1200	Aberystwyth	To be Confirmed AGM
November	Tuesday 1 st	1930	Shrewsbury	Library
December	Tuesday 6 th	1900	Welshpool	Pinewood Tavern

Contributions from people who can't attend are more than welcome.

Want to help?

As well as adopting your local unstaffed station we could desperately do with the following help in the following areas in 2005:

A Secretary to take minutes and book venues.

Someone with the time and inclination to update our website.

More contributions for our newsletter.

Please see any of the officers if you can help in those areas. Many hands make light work!

SARPA: www.paradox-it.co.uk/sarpa

Useful Addresses

Arriva Trains Wales:

WB4, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Road, Cardiff CF24 0SU
Tel 0845 6061 660
Email: customer.services@arrivatrainswales.co.uk

RPC Wales:

Secretary, St. David's House, Wood Street, Cardiff CF10 1ES
Tel 029 2022 7247
Email: info.wales@railpassengers.org.uk

Networkrail:

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

Virgin Trains

Virgin Trains, Customer Relations, PO Box 713, Birmingham, B5 4HH
Tel. 0870 789 1234

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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The position of secretary is currently vacant,

if anyone wishes to fulfil that role or become active within the committee please contact Gareth Marston.