

Shrewsbury
Aberystwyth
Rail
Passengers'
Association



Newsletter
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January 2015



The new Aberystwyth sign in place (see item on p.7). Appropriately, as the sign was refurbished jointly by the contractors for the station, and the Vale of Rheidol Railway, it has two faces: this one visible to VofR passengers.

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This is the quarterly newsletter of the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association. Contributions are welcomed from members and non-members about the mid Wales rail scene. Views expressed in it are those of contributors and not necessarily representative of the Association and its Officers as a whole. Information provided is published in good faith, but the Association cannot accept responsibility for any loss or damage arising therefrom. The Editor reserves the right to abridge or amend copy.

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The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2015) £8.00 per annum for individuals and for organisations. Please make any cheques payable to SARPA. Donations are of course welcome.

- SARPA will lobby for better rail services.
- Act as a watchdog to safeguard the lines future.
- Meet in public once a month.
- All members will receive our quarterly Newsletter free of charge.
- Members with access to e-mail can be included in our electronic network if they so desire.

The majority of our expenditure goes towards the cost of publishing and distributing our newsletters. We occasionally pay for room hire. Any surplus is held as an emergency fund for the future. None of the officers gains financially in any way from SARPA.

Please send cheques, payable to SARPA, to:

SARPA Membership Secretary: 23 High Street, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7JP. Make sure to include full name, address and telephone number and also e-mail address if you wish to become part of our electronic network.

Chairman's Message

Elsewhere, at last the message about the benefits of rail may be starting to get through to some authorities, hitherto wedded to transport solutions involving roads. It would be difficult to have avoided hearing about the plans to improve rail links across the North of England as part of the £15bn "One North" transport plan. Nevertheless, under the scheme as it is at present, there will still be significant gaps. For instance, there does not yet appear to be any scheme to revive the direct link between the East Midlands and Manchester which was removed in 1968.

The same cannot be said here in Wales just yet. The Welsh Government has still to initiate any plans to replace any of the internal Welsh rail network which was being so ravaged by the Beeching Cuts 50 years ago. All the same, what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander and the principles of connectivity apply here in Wales as much as in the North of England or around the South East. Indeed, because road communications are so sub-standard throughout much of Wales, the railway has the potential competitive advantage in terms of speed, so investing in new railways makes economic sense.

Meanwhile, the project to "Improve" the A465 "Heads of the Valleys Road" continues to swallow money at an alarming rate. We hear from sources near to the Welsh Government that it has now been dubbed "The Black Hole", such has been its appetite for additional cash. Originally priced at around £800m for 25 miles, it compares poorly with rail, where in Scotland, 30 miles of the Waverley Route are being rebuilt from dereliction for substantially less than half this amount.

In the rush for High Speed rail we wonder if the alternative viewpoint has been overlooked? Examining connectivity across the existing network would reveal a number of distinct gaps and anomalies given the relative importance of various towns. Why do Berney Arms (1054 passengers in 2013), Ascott Under Wychwood (2484), Llangynllo (958) and Aberech (1214) have railway stations but Consett, Lutterworth, Denbigh and Brecon do not? What benefits to the development of the local economy would be provided by replacing these links? Has the road alternative, so much beloved of successive governments since 1963, really delivered?

The answers to some of these questions come from councillors in the far north of Scotland. Stephen Smith, SNP councillor for Peterhead South said in an interview with that wonderful regional newspaper, "The Press and Journal" (P & J); "Peterhead cannot rely on the Aberdeen bypass to make it more attractive as a location for new businesses" and added "I am more and more coming to the view that a rail link will be a vital component of how the town develops in the next 20-30 years."

Meanwhile his counterpart in Peterhead North, independent councillor Alan Gardiner commented "The Borders railway is due to be completed next summer and I expect we will see in the Borders what we have come to expect from every other re-opening of a railway track or station in the last 30 years: an economic boost to the area and a well used, modern facility."

There we have it. Railways are modern, help the economy and people want to use them. Moreover, the train does not go where nothing happens.

It is of course, generally illegal to use so much as a mobile telephone whilst driving a motor vehicle. On the railway, you can use whatever device you like whilst you speed along. This means that people who use the train for work have the potential to be much more productive than their road bound colleagues, making rail linked locations much more attractive for business development.

I well remember the weekend in 1968 when swathes of the old Great North of Scotland Railway were wiped from the network, seemingly forever; the P & J ran a large feature. Now it seems that the Buchan section, part of which survived for freight until as late as 1979 could be reopened to provide proper connectivity for the region.

So this is a lesson which should be well learned here. If the Welsh economy is to develop in a sustainable way, then new internal rail links warrant serious attention.

Angus Eickhoff
Llidiart Wood,
Welshpool,
August 2014
November 2014

News in brief

Acorp Community Rail Awards

Students at Coleg Ceredigion have been commended on their community project at the Acorp national awards ceremony. Vocational Access students from the College's Aberystwyth campus were shortlisted for the award, which recognises ordinary people doing extraordinary things on behalf of the railway and the community. They gained third place in the "Involving Young People" category.

Their project, entitled "Confident Traveller", was run in partnership with Arriva Trains Wales, and was aimed at increasing their confidence. The group of people, all with differing learning needs, were shown how to plan and undertake rail journeys, with learning taking place in the classroom and railway environments.

These young people now regularly travel by train between two local stations in their role as official adopters for ATW, part of which includes tending and creating gardens on station platforms.

The judges noted that the project was very innovative and thoroughly inspiring, with clear objectives, educational and personal benefits.

[From the *Cambrian News*, 30th October 2014]

Vale of Rheidol Railway

It has been a busy autumn on the railway, with a Hallowe'en themed train, Sunday Autumn Colour specials (tied with lunch at Devil's Bridge), and Santa Specials, running to Capel Bangor

A cattle wagon, built by the GWR for the railway, has recently been repatriated to the line, from the Welsh Highland/Ffestiniog Railways. It saw little use on the VoR; was transferred to the Welshpool and Llanfair Railway; and on closure of the W&L was bought for the Ffestiniog.

It is hoped that it will form part of a vintage goods train on the VoR.

Caersws Station House



Photograph Owain Betts for Morris, Marshall and Poole, Newtown

This, the former Stationmaster's house, and a Grade 2 listed property, is currently for sale through Morris Marshall & Poole, Newtown. The premises have been previously used as an office for BASC, and have been granted planning permission for a hostel and cafe.. A change of use to residential permission would have to be sought if a prospective purchaser wishes to reside at the property. The asking price is £125,000.

Like other buildings on the Moat Lane to Machynlleth section, the substantial stonework probably came from the cutting at Talerddig.

The middle or freight road at Shrewsbury

We have heard, via "Sources from within the industry" that the centre freight road through the station is to remain out of use for the time being. We understand that part of it will be lifted to allow access for bridge repairs beneath, within the station area. The intention is to replace the track at the conclusion of the engineering work.

Appointment

Rhydian Mason has been appointed as Line Development Manager at the Cambrian Railways Partnership. A large part of his job will be ensuring that the public are fully aware of the incoming improved services. He is looking forward to working with Arriva Trains Wales, the Welsh Government and partner members of CRP.

Aberystwyth

Station refurbishment? Well some men turned up did a little and put some screens up and then cleared off for weeks on end before coming back doing a little more then going again. However, work is now ongoing - and see the separate item on the station nameboard.

Aberystwyth-Lampeter- Carmarthen

The TrawsLink campaigners have been promised a meeting by Secretary of State for Wales Stephen Crabb. SARPA's Committee can remember meeting then SoS Peter Hain in 2003 the outstanding memory was of him yawning!

Machynlleth

You guessed it: there been no follow up to the white lines drawn on the platform for the Access for All lift shafts.

Bow St & Carno stations

Yet more studies seem to have been promised in the Welsh Governments Draft National Transport plan. SARPA's full response will appear in the next issue. The consultation is open till March 2015.

Newtown

The preferred route for the fabled bypass shows that a road bridge over the Cambrian line to the East of Newtown is the preferred option, hopefully minimising any disruption if built, which is still far from certain despite what the local newspaper the County Times thinks. Predicted traffic counts also show that if built the bypass will result in a 20% increase in traffic on the A483 to the north of the town and the A489 to the south of it. With journey times and journey time reliability getting worse due to this "induced" traffic any benefit of journey times savings from the bypass will automatically be eroded.

Forden

Trains now pass through the old station site at maximum permitted line speed following the abolition of the level crossing.

Shrewsbury

The privatised railways' practice of making train miss connections by a few minutes continues with Virgin Trains new London service from Shrewsbury. The first departure @ 0639 is some half an hour before the first arrival from the Cambrian and the second weekday departure @1524 conspires to leave 2 minutes before the 1330 from Aberystwyth arrives. On the return direction there are arrivals @ 1256 & 2056 giving waits of 31 minutes for the 1327 to Aberystwyth & Pwllheli and 46 minutes to the 2142 to Aberystwyth. Figures from the Office of Rail Regulator shows that journeys from the Cambrian to London and the South East are around 130,000 per year, around 3,500 a week, and passengers still have to change in the West Midlands.

Regional Rail usage

Latest figures from the Rail Regulator show that journeys on franchised Regional TOC's (such as ATW) were up 5% in April to June 2014 compared to the same period in 2013.

Split Ticketing

A new website has appeared that purports to do the donkey work for you. However it charges a percentage of your "savings" and you can only order online and have the tickets posted to you. SARPA's advice is to avoid websites offering savings as they always charge for tickets you can buy yourself on the day. There is not anything in the National Conditions of Carriage that prevents you purchasing multiple tickets from the same seller at your local ticket office or on-board off the conductor. As a general rule of thumb split ticketing is usually a better option if you travel over a longer distance returning on the same day but this is not strictly true for all journeys. We recommended some prior research and this website which lists all fares in the database. <http://www.brfares.com/>

Peter Compton of Newtown Station Travel is adept at finding these fares, and the Booking Office in Aberystwyth Station will also find them.



A Virgin Voyager having arrived at Shrewsbury @ 1256 waits for its scheduled 1524 return at somewhat cold and desolate Shrewsbury station on Tuesday 16th December. The 1330 from Aberystwyth was held on the signals at English Bridge Junction for the platform to clear.

Photograph: Gareth Marston.

The Aberystwyth Station Sign

The “Aberystwyth” Sign post, along the mainline Aberystwyth Station has been looking a bit dilapidated for a good few years.

Simon Cowan, Painter at The Vale of Rheidol Railway, has taken on the project to restore the old and aging sign to its original appearance in a partnership with Griffiths. Griffiths is a Civil Engineering firm based in Wales and have been recently working on their “Aberystwyth Transport Gateway Project” which includes renovation of the Aberystwyth Mainline Station. As part of their project they decided to restore the old railway sign, due to its large role in the heritage of the area. Griffiths approached the Vale of Rheidol Railway in the beginning of November to see if we would be able to help them in recreating the sign.

In about 1950, there was a large sign, presumably dating from GWR days. During the BR era of the station totems, the sign, found on both island platforms, was an enamel one in chocolate with cream letters of the Western Region. The current one dates from about the time of privatisation, and the new one is a replica of this.



Left: the new station signs, after painting, in the new VoR shed (note the inset rails in the floor).

Photograph: Vale of Rheidol Railway.

The sign in position is shown on p.1.

Below: the British Railways enamelled sign, in the early 1960s. The loco waiting to depart, blowing off as she does so, is 2-6-2T 82009. 82009 was allocated to 89C from 25/02/61 to 03/04/65. 89C being Machynlleth but also its sub sheds Aberystwyth, Dolgelly, Portmadoc

and Pwllheli. The BR Standard Class 3 Tanks were brought in from elsewhere usually as they had been replaced on suburban work by DMU's to replace the ex GWR Prairie tanks of the 45xx and 4575 classes on the Cambrian and were used mainly on Class 2 Passenger workings up the coast or between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth only. They were well liked by crews but suffered from a lack of water and coal capacity on longer turns.

Photograph: Denis Bates





Above: Shrewsbury. An extra two carriages awaiting on Platform 4 for the train from Holyhead before going on to Birmingham whilst the Holyhead bound train uses Platform 3.

Below: Aberystwyth Sunday 30 November and the 1330 to Birmingham International awaits departure. The winter Sunday timetable has no coast connection for this train so the 2 extra cars ran down all the way from Shrewsbury. The milepost 95 3/4 is of course the distance from Whitchurch (Shrops) via the old Cambrian Mainline through Oswestry.

Both photographs: Gareth Marston.



The new Wales and Borders franchise

It's still some four years away but as you've no doubt seen on the news the current Welsh Labour Administration in Cardiff Bay is intent on an experiment in a not for profit franchise. Already the word on the rails is that Welsh Government officials don't think they have the capacity or ability to organise this by December 2018 and will have to offer Arriva an extension to their no growth contract beyond December 2018 till they've figured out how to organise Not For Profit. Stagnation to the 2020's simply isn't good enough. The franchise has to be influenced early, and passenger needs, the economy and environment taken into account, not just political ideology. Some years of hard campaigning are ahead of us.

SARPA sent out a press release in early December outlining our ideas for the new Wales and Border franchise: it's reproduced below. We will regularly keep hammering home on these points and an expand further on them. However, to get the ball rolling:

Rail users start campaign for new Wales and Borders franchise

Mid Wales Rail User Group SARPA which represents rail users and town councils from Ceredigion, Gwynedd, Montgomeryshire, Shropshire and further afield has started its campaign to influence the specification of the new Wales and Border rail franchise, due to be let in 2018.

SARPA Chairman Angus Eickhoff said "Since the early 1990's there has been a radical shift in how we travel in the UK, with the average distance travelled each year per person by motor vehicle falling by 13%, whilst distance travelled by rail has gone up by a staggering 80% per person each year. Rail is a real success story and a growth area that is set to continue.

The running of extra trains on the Cambrian Mainline from May 2015 announced by the Welsh Government is a big step forward in recognising this trend. However, the unique structure of the UK rail industry means that the franchise changeover point in 2018 provides the real opportunity to influence and secure long term improvements. SARPA is looking for the new Wales and Border franchise to achieve at least the levels of improvement promised for the ScotRail franchise, recently awarded to the Dutch operator, Abellio".

On the Cambrian, SARPA will want to see the new franchise increase the number of carriages on existing services, with free Wifi installed on all trains. A timetable that makes commuting for work or education opportunities viable at both ends of the line is of the utmost importance, together with the retention of through trains to Birmingham International.

The group is also seeking improvements to connections at Shrewsbury towards the North West of England, and the introduction of extra trains from Aberystwyth to Pwllheli in the tourist season, with a user friendly zonal fare structure. Improvements to waiting facilities at Welshpool and Tywyn stations are also sought, along with better provision for car parking at Welshpool, Machynlleth and Aberystwyth stations.

In the medium term, a new fleet of trains suitable for scenic lines like the Cambrian Coast should be purchased to replace existing stock by 2022 and a station reopening programme which examines the possibilities for Hanwood, Abermule, Carno and Bow St should be implemented.

Further into the future, SARPA looks forward to the HS2 hub at Crewe and the running of through trains there from the Cambrian by 2027. The electrification of the line from Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury should happen by 2024 and will present the opportunity for through InterCity trains from London returning to the Cambrian, whilst keeping the vital through link to Birmingham.

Government corner

Edwina Hart, Minister for Economy, Science and Technology, issued the following statement on 25 September, intended as 'an update on improvements to rail services in North Wales':

Following the UK Government's announcement in July about the upgrade to the Halton Curve railway line, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport seeking further information on the project. In response the Secretary of State for Transport has confirmed that the Government is providing £10.4 million in support of the Liverpool City Region Growth Deal to fund the reinstatement of the Halton Curve. This will enable passenger services from North Wales and West Cheshire to directly access Liverpool City Centre and Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

The scheme is currently being developed by Network Rail and detailed proposals are expected to be available early next year. Subject to sign off, the UK Government has indicated that the scheme will be delivered in 2016/17.

The scheme has been identified as a priority by the Ministerial Task Force on North Wales Transport and is likely to make a significant difference to travellers on both sides of the border. The reintroduction of the Halton Curve will allow for more flexibility in rail services in that area and we have commissioned a study in conjunction with Merseytravel to assess demand and MerseyTravel have separately commissioned further work to develop options.

Furthermore, over the summer I responded to the UK Government's consultation on the TransPennine Express and Northern Rail Franchises. Good connectivity between Wales and the North of England is very important to sustaining and developing regional economies, and I am keen that all opportunities are taken to strengthen this connectivity during the process of renewing the franchises. My response raised issues around connectivity with services to and from Wales, the Wales and Borders services to and from Manchester, the TransPennine Express services, security and safety, passenger experience and Active Travel.

'Active Travel', we are informed, refers to walking and cycling which is now part of the Minister's responsibility. There is apparently still no information available about what train services will operate the revived Halton Curve to create the 'significant difference.' It will be interesting to see what is devised, and which train company gets the job of running the trains.

[From Charlie Hulme's North Wales Coast Railway website]

Shrewsbury to London

The December timetable, as included in Realtime Trains, includes the planned direct Virgin Trains services between Shrewsbury and London. The diagram on Mondays - Fridays appears as:

5J21 04:30 Barton-under-Needwood depot - Shrewsbury 06:17 [empty stock]
 1R21 06:39 Shrewsbury - London Euston 09:13
 9J14 10:23 London Euston - Shrewsbury 12:58 [stables at Coton Hill sidings]
 1B68 15:24 Shrewsbury - London Euston 17:56
 9J38 18:23 London Euston - Shrewsbury 20:55
 5D38 21:14 Shrewsbury - Barton-under-Needwood depot 22:55 [empty stock]

The diagram is slightly different on Saturdays, and on Sundays there is just one Shrewsbury - London return train.

The route is direct via Wolverhampton, eschewing the odd idea of reversal at Stafford which has been mooted in the past. However running times look somewhat relaxed: the 06:39 from Shrewsbury is allowed 23 minutes from Wolverhampton to Birmingham, presumably for pathing reasons; it departs Shrewsbury just 6 minutes after an Arriva Trains Wales service from Chester to Birmingham.

[From Charlie Hulme's North Wales Coast Railway website]

The View from milepost 62 with the Brigadier

As promised here is mine and Dusty's vision of what our railways should be organised like. They undoubtedly need reform, but why?

- **To control costs** – we all know we have a £10 Billion railway costing nearly £13 Billion leading to high fares and lower investment return.
- **To have accountability** – everyone blames each other in the split-up railway and Government tries to hide behind the TOC's. Once there is a clear Fat Controller progress can be made.
- **To free it from the shackles of short termism** – set franchise terms are the enemy of forward long term planning.
- **To end Balkanisation** – standards and facilities vary greatly across the network depending on franchise holder/area.
- **To end institutionalised discrimination against regional networks** – Two thirds of the UK population does not live in London and the South East.
- **To align the purpose of the railway with that of the economy, our health and the environment** – more passengers and freight on rail is great for the economy, our health and the environment as road dependency and congestion are reduced and we become less obese and lose the attendant health problems, but we have no goal to increase usage. Rail's value lies off its own balance sheet in benefits to other sectors – a simple concept but one that is struggled with by neo-liberals obsessed with £ profit and loss.

So how do we do achieve the above? Underpinning the first four problems are undoubtedly the fragmentation and franchise system created by the 1993 Railways Act. Government thought it could wash its hands of the rail system back in the early 1990's until it found out its bodge up was falling apart and has taken the reigns over, however this has been done with no clear objective as what our railway is for on a strategic level and how it should achieve it. Let's start here and set some objectives. What is a railway best at?

- Long Distance Passenger movements (50 miles plus) where it has a high share of the market already.
- Commuter markets/mass transit into centralised urban work, retail and leisure centres where constrained urban road networks fail under volume of traffic.
- Moving freight: most of the damage to Britain's roads is caused by HGV's and a fair share of road congestion on trunk roads: rail can help reduce this.
- Connecting peripheral regions to the centre, Britain may have spent decades building Motorways, bypasses and dual carriageways but many rural areas have been forced to depend on single track tarmac cart tracks that are dangerous, slow and crumbling under the weight of HGV's and other traffic.

The European railways that 2010 McNulty Report reported on were 30-40% cheaper than the UK, but all had one big theme in common – they were all vertically integrated national networks with the exception of some minor regional lines. We need a single national network to achieve those savings, and the rest becomes easier. The core principles should be focussed on growing passenger and freight usage, treating all regions equally, national uniform standards and accountability.

Let's base our passenger network on the geography and economy of the nation now, not in the past or on franchise boundaries or where services were historically cut back too. The Office of National Statistics lists 70 areas of continuous urbanisation in England and Wales with a population over 100,000. There are 14 over 400,000 which along with their hinterlands are now becoming known as City Regions powering our economy;

City Regions

London	Brighton and Hove	South Hampshire
Bournemouth/Poole	Bristol	Cardiff
West Midlands	Nottingham	Leicester
Liverpool	Greater Manchester	Sheffield
West Yorkshire	Tyneside	

A long distance national passenger network

The 70 continuous urban areas are the basis of our national long distance network in that they should all have a direct regular express service to the capital London and be on a cross country network that connects them to each other on the basis of no more than one change of train. City Region centres should ideally be directly linked if within 100 miles of each. Let's call this our InterCity network. **InterCity** trains will have First Class and refreshment facilities, with no more than 20% of accommodation on trains First Class, and consistent catering standards. Ideally it will eventually be an all electric network with an off the wires and formation split/join capability for some services. They should have end doors, plenty of luggage space and 60% seating at tables. However it is a national network, therefore it will stretch to all counties and connect to ports, holiday areas and include the sleeper services. A degree of common sense is needed – look at the map it can stretch a few more miles to a larger town or holiday area than the designated urban area. It will encompass the High Speed lines, existing mainlines, what are now regional expresses and some low frequency movements to peripheral areas.

Transport within Urban Areas

Stick a protractor on a map of the UK and then draw circles around our 14 city regions above at a 25-30 miles radius, and it's surprising how much of the UK is covered. Think of the current Transport for London and the PTE's. We should create mini Transport for London areas/ modern PTE's zones around these city regions with local democratic control of them with an equal funding regime basis per head of population. One only has to look at London to know much of the Mayor's focus is on public transport and pleasing his voters on the issue to know it works and who is held accountable. 25 to 30 miles is about the distance a stopping service can cover in around an hour, but use some sense on where the line is going it could be that a larger town/railway junction is say 35 miles away and a more natural break point. Ideally these **Metro** services will be integrated with local buses and trams within the zone. In fact in many areas these PTE zones will butt up against each other and even overlap. **Metro** trains will ideally have wide 1/3 and 2/3 doors with plenty of standing room and one class only. These urban networks should be totally electrified.

Transport to Urban Areas from their wider region

Let's think of our map and put a 50-60 mile radius circle from the centre of the PTE areas: these are the commuting zones around them and will cover market towns and villages still lucky enough to have a station and maybe even an International Airport. They will need connecting to the centre of their nearest City Region. Services from further out can run fast once they hit the boundary of the PTE zone. These **Regional** services might even form the link between different urban areas, or InterCity services might perform their role depending on geography. There will be a need for stopping services on mainlines to let InterCity services run fast between the major population centres; also there will be some small gaps between these zones that need filling and can be covered by regional services. Many of the continuous urban areas are close together and covered by Metro services whilst others stand alone and will need some Regional commuter trains into them. These Regional networks perhaps should be organised by Government Office Region i.e. Network South East, Network North West etc., and have input from the shires. **Regional** trains will ideally have 1/3 and 2/3 doors with 50% table seats and units capable of joining up with each other so joining/splitting of services from different destinations can happen. They too have one class only, they will need to be capable in some

instances of 125mph and also have 75 mph versions depending on usage. They will mainly be electric.

Freight

Dusty says ban Lorries travelling on journeys over 50 miles and de clog our roads, improve the environment and our health. I agree. Needless to say our railway will have a lot more freight on it of all sorts, and will need a lot more funding to boost capacity and maintain lines to carry the extra traffic. I won't go into blow by blow detail here but there will have to be some trade off on passenger train frequency and accommodating freight.

Peripheral Rural Areas

By now you will have realised that there will be some areas that don't fit in with Regional Networks or Metro areas, being too far away to be in commuting distance of major population centres. These deep rural areas are however part of the national network, and are not third rate areas whose supposed cost of maintaining is to be grizzled about by clueless pen pushers. We have a commitment to connect them to the national **InterCity** network, maybe by a handful of services a day but there will be need for other trains as well running in these areas. By their remote nature, separate **Rural** business units just for running services in these areas will exist; they are unlikely to ever be electrified and will have to have in all likelihood diesel powered services, and will often run in scenic areas that see tourists, so will have to have good visibility out of the windows and luggage space with 50% table seating.

No doubt there's grizzling about how this is affordable or has a business case but remember I have a national vertically integrated railway that is 30% cheaper meaning I can invest the £2-3 Billion per annum savings into making these things happen. The network will attract more passengers and more revenue in the long run and will head it towards covering its operational costs leaving Government money for investment not revenue support. You will notice I haven't said privatise or nationalise, but designed a network for the long term benefit of the nation, not tomorrow's profits for the TOC's or pretending that privatisation has worked or for the triumph of international socialism. The rail network is not for ideology, unions or politicians, but the benefit of the nation. I've designed national goals and we can work out how best to achieve them within a framework of one national vertically integrated operator, with the possibility of other operators in certain areas.

There's no one size fits all scenario and plans by routes will have to be developed. So how will this effect Mid Wales? Well were certainly not in a City Region and even Welshpool is more than 60 rail miles from any City Region centre zone, nor are we in-between any City Regions so we're not going to be in a Regional service area either. This suggests we're in a peripheral rural area. However Merioneth, Cardiganshire and Montgomeryshire do have a commitment for being connected to the **InterCity** network, and of course we are a holiday area. Passenger services are likely to be a mix of a small number of through trains a day to Birmingham and London in the winter and on weekdays, with maybe some extra services for the peak times in summer, plus local services going as far as Shrewsbury operated by a Rural Business unit. Adding re-regulated rural bus services to this unit is probably most sensible. Shock horror: I've recreated the Cambrian Coast Express – a number of times a day – and the Cambrian Railways, but my railway isn't about nostalgia, profit making or franchise agreements but aligning our railway with our economy using the savings from having a proper vertically integrated railway. Our line is across two Government Office Regions, but our rural business unit status suggests that the local authorities along the route will have a greater responsibility and accountability toward it rather than Cardiff or Birmingham. The distance we are from the main freight distribution areas suggests a railfreight revival to keep lorries off our roads. Common sense and simple. Of course I'm not hamstrung by trying to shoe horn ideology into reality and pretending that my predecessors never made mistakes!

When does it start says Dusty!

Three Cocks Cottage October 2014

Vale of Rheidol developments

Further Progress has been made on the installation of the vintage Edwardian Gas Lighting at the Vale of Rheidol Railway with the addition of the lamp head to the gas columns. The is working with Suggs lighting; the UK's only gas light company. This company holds significance as they supplied gas lighting all across the rail network in the 1900, which will add to the heritage of the Vale of Rheidol Railway. Suggs have made all the lamp heads which are to be fitted to all of the gas lamp columns at each station. Devil's Bridge station will be the first of the stations to have the heads fitted and will be working in the new year. The lights at Devil's Bridge will be run on gas just as they did in the Edwardian era and will be powered by LPG gas bottles.

A new lantern roof has been fitted in the centre of the roof of the Workshop (the ex-mainline locomotive shed). This will not only provide a better shelter for the carriages and engines within the workshop but also make the appearance of the historic building a lot more appreciable. The workshop now is no longer an eyesore, appearing as a historic building which is well taken care of and can be appreciated by all that see it, complementing the railway's heritage. As part of the repairs, other work has been carried out on the workshop. The lean-to part of the workshop is to be removed. The roofing has already been removed and everything within has been moved to the new workshop. Another plan for the Old Workshop is the addition of Solar roofing in 2015.



Sunday 28th December: The 1130 to Birmingham International awaits departure. The canopy has been freshly painted, as part of the refurbishment of the station. Photograph: Denis Bates.

SARPA Meetings in 2015

January	Saturday 10th	11.30	Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool
February	Tuesday 3rd	18.30	The Unicorn, Caersws
March	Saturday 14th	11.45	Cambrian Hotel, Aberystwyth
April	Saturday 11th	11.45	Railway Hotel, Borth
May	Tuesday 5th	18.45	The Sportsman, Severn Street, Newtown
June	Tuesday 2nd	17.45	Railway Station, Shrewsbury
July	Saturday 11th	11.45	Tywyn. Wharf Station, Talyllyn Railway
August	Tuesday 4th	18.55	The White Lion, Machynlleth
September	Tuesday 1st	19.20	Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool
October	Saturday 10th	11.00	AGM. Machynlleth, White Lion
November	Tuesday 3rd	18.45	The Sportsman, Severn Street, Newtown
December	Saturday 12th	11.45	Cambrian Hotel, Aberystwyth

Websites

Our website <http://sarpa.info>

Webmaster Angus Eickhoff. Website host is <http://www.redboxinternet.com/>

Other sites of interest:

A useful alternative to the National Rail Enquiries site
traintimes.org.uk/

Arriva Trains Wales
www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/

National Rail Enquiries
www.nationalrail.co.uk/

Train and Bus Information Midlands
www.centro.org.uk/wwwroot/HomePage.asp

LondonMidland
www.londonmidland.com/index.html

Virgin Trains
www.virgintrains.co.uk/default.aspx

Chiltern Railways
www.chilternrailways.co.uk/

Network Rail
www.networkrail.co.uk/

Railfuture/Railway Development Society
www.railfuture.org.uk/

Cambrian Rail Partnership
www.thecambrianline.co.uk/

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)
www.acorp.uk.com

Passenger Focus
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/>

North Wales Coast Railway
www.nwrail.org.uk/

Circular tour of North Wales by rail
www.penmorfa.com/Cambrian/

Ffestiniog Railway timetable
www.ffestiniograilway.co.uk/timetable.htm

Vale of Rheidol Railway timetable
www.rheidolrailway.co.uk/timetable.htm

Talyllyn Railway
www.talyllyn.co.uk/

Welshpool and Llanfair Railway timetable
www.wllr.org.uk/timetable.htm

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway
www.whr.co.uk/index.php?pid=51

Fairbourne Railway
www.fairbournerrailway.com/index.htm

Borth Station Museum
www.borthstationmuseum.co.uk

Rail Photographs by Richard Jones including many of the modern Cambrian scene
<http://railphotos.fourecord.com/index.php>

Useful addresses

Arriva Trains Wales:

St Mary's House, 47 Penarth Road, Cardiff CF10 5DJ. Tel 0845 6061 660
Email: customer.services@arrivatrainswales.co.uk

Network Rail:

Community Relations, Railtrack House, Euston Square, London NW1 2EE

Newtown Station Travel

The Railway Station, Old Kerry Road, Newtown, Powys SY16 1BP. Fax. 01686 621966
E-mail newtownstation@btclick.com

The Association of Train Operating Companies:

ATOC, 3rd Floor, 40 Bernard Street, London WC1N 1BY

London Midland

London Midland, PO Box 4323, Birmingham B2 4JB. Tel. 0121 6342040

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

The Old Water Tower, Huddersfield Railway Station, St George's Square, Huddersfield HD1 1JF

Virgin Trains

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

Traveline Cymru for all public transport information

www.traveline-cymru.org.uk Tel.0870-6082608

Rail Franchise Performance Manager Rail and New Roads Division, Transport Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ. Direct Line (029) 2082 6849

Public Transport Users' Committee for Wales Secretariat

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ. E-mail ptucwales@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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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