
Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association

Newsletter No. 77

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In advance of the handover this 175 unit, in the new Transport for Wales livery, is departing from Shrewsbury on October 8 heading south. Photo: Sam Compton.

THE NEW FRANCHISE HAS LANDED

The Transport for Wales Rail Service, operated by Keolis Amey, commenced operations on October 14, 2018. SARPA wish Transport for Wales and Keolis Amey all good fortune in the coming years, and hope that their aspirational plans will be realised according to the timetable they have published.

As *Transport User Voice* Nov. 2018 states “Starting with stormy weather and severe flooding Transport for Wales had its work cut out—as it will continue to do if it is to meet passenger expectations” “The key to building trust will be the delivery of reliable journeys on a daily basis.” With these sentiments SARPA would agree.

There are strong indications that TfW is doing its best to liaise directly with stakeholders and in particular passengers, and this is to be welcomed. SARPA attended the stakeholder meeting in Shrewsbury and there is a report on the meeting below under the heading “Plans,

Promises and Stakeholders". A number of roadshows are planned for November throughout Wales with the aim of getting people "to find out more about TfW [and their] exciting plans". In our area the places and dates are the stations at: Aberystwyth, November 18; Machynlleth, November 19; and Shrewsbury, November 22. They also invite people to connect via their social channels by searching #JourneyBegins @tfwrail and facebook.com/ tfwrail

It is good also to see the new system keeping the station adopters on board, albeit with a slightly more formal reporting system. Also Geraint Morgan, who has done such good work, remains as Community Affairs Manager but at Transport for Wales. Clearly the new franchise is also anxious to address the railway built heritage that it has taken over. Jim Cornell, in his Chairman's statement in the latest *Annual Report and Accounts of the Railway Heritage Trust* writes "Wales has seen another pretty flat year, but we are making more grants in 2018/2019, and the new Wales and Border Franchise is looking to do much more heritage work, so we hope to see an upturn here as well".

At SARPA's November Meeting Claire Williams, the Cambrian Railway Partnership Development Officer, gave more information showing TfW's commitment to create stronger links with the communities it serves:

"TfW are committed to Community Rail, and to enable better communication and to enable them to work more closely with stakeholders and the communities, there will now be four Stakeholder Liaison Managers that will cover Wales and the Borders."



The areas and their representatives are currently: North Wales – Ben Davies, Mid and South West Wales – Hugh Evans, The Borders – Steve Whitely and South East Wales which will include the Metro is yet to be announced.

TfW will also be increasing the number of Community Rail Partnerships (CRP) in Wales and Borders from 5 at present, to 12 within the next five years. The current ones are: The Chester to Shrewsbury CRP (Chester, Wrexham, Shrewsbury); The Cambrian Railway CRP, (Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and Pwllheli); The Conwy Valley CRP, (Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog); The Borderlands CRP (Wrexham to Bidston); The Heart of Wales Line Dev Co (Shrewsbury to Swansea via Llandrindod). A picture of the current and new ones is shown opposite.

All CRP's will receive funding from Transport for Wales Rail Services and will have a Community Rail Officer like Claire Williams on the Cambrian, and there will be service level agreements each partnership will need to agree to. More about Claire's meeting with SARPA will be found under the heading *SARPA Meetings* below.

Transport for Wales will certainly have to work very hard to fulfil its objectives but its commitment to the communities it serves is already apparent. Additionally, it must be given time because so many challenges have been inherited.

Nevertheless the start, so far as Mid Wales and the Coast line is concerned, has seen a continuation of problems largely due to cancelled and altered trains. To take two random occasions. Firstly, Saturday, November 3, 2018. A look at *TfW Journey Check* (and it is very good to see TfW continuing this innovation) early in the morning showed 75 cancellations throughout the network. And this wasn't all because some of the cancellations under the special heading at the commencement of the site were not included within the heading "cancellations". Some were not included at all, for example, the replacement of all trains between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth by buses. This last was not helped by, at least at Welshpool, the failure to put up the poster for November showing engineering work. A second example is on October 21, 2018 when a bus replaced the train from Welshpool to Shrewsbury; said bus arrived at its destination two minutes after the connecting train to Birmingham had left. Passengers were not amused by this and even less happy to arrive on the platform to be greeted by announcements such as "Transport for Wales—welcome to the new franchise—a railway you deserve". The two commonest reasons given for these cancellations and changes are more trains than usual needing repairs and no available staff. However, let it be said that the crews, particularly from Machynlleth, really do go the extra mile to help and calm their passengers---well done and congratulations to them.

The failure of the train operator to effectively communicate has been a constant theme in these *Newsletters*. Let us hope that once Transport for Wales is well established they will reverse this state of affairs. Communication is the key to keeping passengers content, even more so when things are going wrong. Central to good communication is a strong corporate identity. Unfortunately all companies (large and small) seem to fall into the same trap in that their first frenetic activity is to ensure their corporate identity is emblazoned on everything which they control, in this case from the coaches to the note paper and the website. Implementation in this way offers many opportunities for an organisation to get "egg on its face". In this Transport for Wales is no exception, not for what it has done but for what it hasn't. It was for good reason not possible to deal with the matter of uniforms before the transfer of the franchise, so it was a case of utilise what you have. But apparently the instruction to staff has been to cut off labels and remove anything which says "Arriva". This also results, in cold

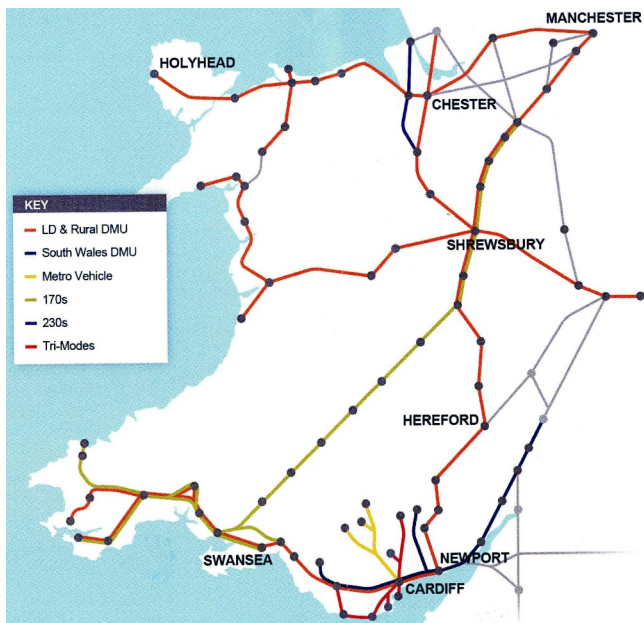
weather, of staff wearing a high visibility jacket over their winter coats so as to obliterate Arriva Trains Wales. Whether this is correct or not it is out there in the parishes and does nothing to help the image of TfW.

Also the first rule of the use of corporate identity is that it must be consistent and used consistently. Therefore it is a pity that the logo is a red "T" as shown below, but the ties worn by the staff have a black "T". And overall why "T" and not "TfW" as the latter is often used by the organisation itself as an abbreviation? The branding of stations outside Wales with the Transport for Wales logo caused a mild flurry of concern. Goodness knows why as the same stations were formerly branded Arriva Trains Wales.



Once Transport for Wales are well established such matters won't, hopefully matter. Meanwhile TfW need to remember that whilst the travelling public perhaps just about notice the changes brought about by the implementation of a new corporate identity, they often see it as unnecessary (it isn't) and expensive

(it is) and they are quick to comment that trains can be repainted and stations rebranded but what about actually providing an efficient, effective and economical service? TfW need to explain the necessity and importance of corporate identity (and what it means) in their communications and at their roadshows.



One of SARPA's concerns is the new coaching stock. Amongst other matters the Association wants to see tables and seats which line up with windows to take full benefit of the magnificent scenery that Cambrian lines pass through, and to recognise the lines as an important tourist destination. It is therefore interesting to read that Montgomeryshire AM Russell George has suggested observation cars for Mid Wales. He is reported to have said "I'm pleased that the Cabinet Secretary was receptive to my suggestion for observation carriages to be included as part of the new rolling stock to be introduced on the Cambrian and Heart of Wales Railway lines". Well absolutely excellent, but let us make sure that the "ordinary" everyday rolling stock is fit for purpose. As an indication of what is proposed to happen the diagram opposite shows what stock is going to run where.

NEGES GAN Y CADEIRYDD

Roedd yn wych weld gymaint o bobl yn ein Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol yn Machynlleth ar ddechrau mis Hydref. Hoffwn estyn llongyfarchiadau gwresog i ddau swyddog newydd, sef Sarah Harvey, ein Hysgrifenydd, a Bill Redfern ein Hysgrifenydd Aelodaeth a Thrysorydd. Dwi'n sicr bydd y ddau ohonynt yn gwneud cyfraniad werthfawr iawn. Trafodwyd hefyd, wrth gwrs, ein gobeithion a phryderon am Reilffyrdd y Cambrian.

Mewn amser sy'n llawn addewidion i'r dyfodol ond sydd hefyd yn llawn problemau cyfredol, mae'n bur amlwg fod SARPA yn fwy berthnasol nag erioed o'r blaen.

Ar yr un llaw, mae trenau newydd ar eu ffordd (mewn 4 blynedd), ac mae hynny yn ei hunan yn addawol. Yn wir, mae'n wych gennyf weld Trafnidiaeth Cymru yn addo pethau fel llawer o fyrddau ar y trenau a raciau i gêsys – pethau rydym ni wedi bod yn brwydro amdanynt – gan gyfeirio at yr adborth mae nhw wedi cael gan raddeiliaid. Trwy barhau i bwyso am ddyluniad mewnol i'r trenau sy'n adlewyrchu dyheadau teithwyr ar y Cambrian, gallem sicrhau welliannau mawr ar y lein.

Ar y llaw arall, mae perfformiad yn gyffredinol yn ddiweddar wedi bod yn ofnadwy. Mae diffygion staff wedi bod ac mae diffygion cerbydau tra bod llawer ohonynt yn cael eu haddasu i safonau hygrychedd a gyhoeddwyd tua 20 mlynedd yn ôl. Er fod angen gwneud trenau'n hygrych i deithwyr anabl, byddai hyn wedi achosi llai o drafferth pe fyddai Arriva wedi cychwyn ar y gwaith ynghynt. Ond ta waeth am hynny – mae llawer o deithwyr wedi cwyno am safon y gwasanaeth ar hyn o bryd. Enghraifft gwych oedd gwyl y banc mis Awst – adeg brysur iawn ar reilffordd fel y Cambrian - lle cafodd llawer o drenau eu canslo a'r lleill yn dueddu fod yn rhy fyr. Mae'r fath beth i'w gweld yn rheolaidd ers sawl fis.

Yn sicr mae angen i ni barhau i bwyso am nodweddion megis byrddau, seddi sy'n cyd-fynd â lleoliadau'r ffenestri, raciau i fagiau mawr ac ati ar y trenau newydd, ond ni allem anwybyddu'r angen i bwyso am welliannau i'r gwasanaethau dros y 4 blynedd nesaf. Mae canslo trenau neu rhedeg trenau sy'n rhy fyr yn anfantais mawr i'r defnyddwyr ac i'r economi lleol, ac mae'n gallu troi pobl i ffordd o'r rheilffordd. Felly byddem yn codi'r pwnc yn eithaf gyson dros y misoedd nesaf o leiaf.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It was great to see so many people at our Annual General Meeting in Machynlleth at the beginning of October. I'd like to extend warm congratulations to two new officers: Sarah Harvey, our Secretary, and Bill Redfern, our Membership Secretary and Treasurer. I'm sure both of them will make a valuable contribution. Of course, we also discussed our hopes and fears for the Cambrian Lines.

At a time which is full of promises for the future, but which is also full of current difficulties, it's clear that SARPA is more relevant than ever before.

On the one hand, new trains are on the way (in 4 years), and this in itself is promising. Certainly, it's great to see Transport for Wales promising things like lots of tables on the trains and luggage racks – things that we have been fighting for – citing the feedback that they have received from stakeholders. By continuing to push for an internal layout on the trains which reflects the aspirations of passengers on the Cambrian, we can ensure major improvements on the line.

On the other hand, the recent performance in general has been appalling. There have been staff shortages, and there are shortages of carriages whilst many of them are being modified to accessibility standards that were announced about 20 years ago. Although trains need to be made accessible to disabled passengers, much less trouble would have been caused if Arriva had begun this work before.

But anyway – many passengers have complained about the current standards of service. A great example of this was the August bank holiday – a very busy time on a railway like the Cambrian – where many trains were cancelled and the rest tended to be short formed. This kind of thing has been seen for several months.

Certainly we need to continue to push for features such as tables, seats that align with windows, luggage racks and so on in the new trains, but we cannot ignore the need to push for improvements to the services over the next 4 years. Cancelled or short-formed trains are a huge disadvantage for passengers and for the local economy, and it can turn people away from the railway. Therefore we will raise the subject fairly regularly over at least the months to come.

Jeff Smith, Chair, October 2018



Vale of Rheidol Railway

The last departure from the present station, the 1100 on 11th November 2018, with No.8 carrying two wreaths of poppies. This was the Centenary of the Armistice in 1918.

A carriage shed is to be built on this area, and work has already begun on removing the existing platform.

If the proposal to rebuild the Carmarthen line does go ahead, it is possible that this area could be returned to mainline use.

SARPA MEETINGS

Since the last Newsletter SARPA has held meetings in Welshpool, Tywyn, Machynlleth (the AGM) and Newtown. The AGM was well attended and received and approved the financial report for 2018-2019. The changes to the officers and committee are listed at the end of this issue along with the meetings arranged for 2019. At all the meetings concern has been expressed over the poor service level with cancellations and delays which are completely unacceptable.

At the November meeting we were joined by Claire Williams, Cambrian Railway Partnership Development Officer. Claire gave an interesting and informative talk and was happy to answer some queries we had.

Claire explained some of the requirements of her role, and explained that due to grant funding being received from Welsh Government, historically a business plan was produced each year which included service level agreements and that she has to report on these every quarter. Claire has kindly submitted the 2018/2019 Business plan for us to see.

The Cambrian Railway Partnership decided this year to really use the Visit Wales Marketing Campaign for 2018 Year of the Sea. In order to help with the promotion of the lines on social media and the website, an invitation to tender was placed on Sell to Wales for a Media and Communications Company to manage and develop the social media marketing plans on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and also to re-brand the website in order to make it easier to navigate and more appealing to visitors. Equinox Communications were awarded the contract in January 2018

In May, The Great Little Trains of Wales in conjunction with the Community Rail Officers of Wales, designed and delivered an event at Birmingham New Street Station for the Community Rail in the City Day, entitled "Taking the Beach to Birmingham". The event also coincided with Wales Tourism Week and was part of a promotional package by GLTW to raise the profile of the constituent railways in Wales. This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.

The build team could only get access at 6am on Sunday morning and the stand was ready to be manned from 8am and was then staffed by volunteers from the eleven railways from 8am to 6pm for the next seven days – 55 staff slots being rostered.

The eye-catching display came complete with a Welsh beach situated beside a small seaside narrow gauge railway halt. The background was the iconic Barmouth Bridge with views up the Mawddach estuary and an Arriva Trains Wales unit crossing the bridge. 2018 is Visit Wales' themed 'Year of the Sea' and this theme was at the heart of the promotion.

The event was awarded second place in the 'Best Marketing or Communications Campaign' at the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (AcoRP) Community Rail Awards ceremony, being praised for the high engagement rate with the travelling public – many of them not realising that the beach was just a train journey away via the Cambrian line.

In July 2018, a marketing promotion was created in partnership with SKY TV and created a 20 second TV advert that was targeted at certain postcodes. More than half a million people have been reached to date through that marketing campaign alone.

Claire is also working hard on a five year plan to establish the Cambrian Railway Lines as a Dementia Friendly Community, and is working with the various towns along the line which

already have gained this status. She offered SARPA the opportunity to send a delegate to the Cambrian Rail Partnership Dementia Group which would involve a meeting every eight weeks.” “Regarding the future Claire also discussed with us the plans and visions the TfW Rail Services have for the next 5 years, and confirmed the information that has previously been publicised advising that the Cambrian will be receiving new DMU’s that will replace the 158’s and that these could be in any formation, i.e. 2+2, 2+3 or 3+3 units.”

Regarding the projects for more effective interfacing between TfW and its stakeholders Claire’s comments are included in the lead article in this *Newsletter*.

SARPA COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman wrote as follows to Ken Skates AM, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, on September 15:

“We’re disappointed to see so many problems on the Cambrian Lines fairly recently. A large number of services have been cancelled and a number of services which are still running have been short-formed.

An even bigger surprise was that the problem, if anything, increased over the August bank holiday. This is one of the busiest times on lines such as the Cambrian, where many passengers are travelling to the towns and villages of Cardigan Bay.

Although we understand that a number of units are undergoing work at the moment, a situation that is likely to continue until the end of 2019, a service with so many cancellations and short formed trains is unsatisfactory. We worry that such a situation will turn people away from the railway, which in turn would cause congestion, pollution, negative effects on towns and village whose economy depends on tourism, and damage to the sustainability and revenue of the railway itself.

We hope that the service will improve very soon, for the sake of both passengers and the railway, and we would urge you to make further efforts to ensure that works to the trains do not interfere so much with the service the railway is supposed to provide”

In response Mr Skates responded, *inter alia*, as follows:

“Thank you for your letter dated 15 September about disruptions to services on the Cambrian line. The fact that trains have been cancelled have been short formed during busy summer months has been a matter of concern for me. My office will send your comments to Transport for Wales in the hope that lessons can be learned from the situation you describe.

On Sunday 14 October TfW Rail Services took over Wales and Border Rail Services from ATW. To ensure that fewer trains are cancelled on the Cambrian line TfW intend to tackle the driver shortage at Shrewsbury as soon as possible. Amongst the other improvements that will be made to the Cambrian Line, new DMUs will be introduced to replace the whole fleet of 158s during 2022 and to provide additional seats at the busiest times. One train will be provided on the line between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth every hour. Additionally, additional services

will run on summer Sundays from May 2023 between Tywyn and Pwllheli – including a faster 1tph service between large centres by 2025. WG is investing in a new station in Bow Street. Track preparation work for the new station will begin this year and we envisage project completion by 2020.

TfW have comprehensive plans to ensure that services are more punctual and dependable. The aim of these plans is to get rid of the current main causes of disruption. TfW envisage that customers will start to see improvements within the first 6 months and they will run the services more carefully in order to ensure that the trains arrive at each station on time, ending the practice of measuring performance at the end of the journey only.

TfW will invest £10m in new technology during the first 3 years in order to try to understand, plan and mitigate possible disruption if things go wrong, ensuring that passengers are informed immediately. This new technology will allow TfW to analyse in real time the times and locations and also identify and solve the causes of delays. This new control software which allows analysis will ensure better understanding of performance matters, and will allow effective and proactive improvements in performance across the entire network. Every member of staff will receive 'right time' training. This should ensure that everyone is aiming for the same target – achieving real performance improvements in order to ensure that all trains arrive all stations on time."

On November 13, 2018 the SARPA Chairman responded as follows to Brian Smith at Keolis regarding their consultation on penalty fares:

"I apologise for the delay in producing this response, but as I explained it was essential for me to consult with the group I represent, given the strength of feeling on this issue. I hope therefore that you will consider our response, and I'd like to thank you again for inviting me to respond.

Although SARPA recognises the need to collect fares, in terms of recording full usage of the line and making it more sustainable, past heavy-handed approaches have been a cause for major concern amongst many of our members. I enclose copies of 2 newsletter articles from our newsletter, both of which made the front page, showing the importance of this issue.

It is important to note that half the TfW trains on the Shrewsbury - Birmingham corridor run through from the Cambrian Lines. The Cambrian lines are largely a pay-train system: many stations have no ticket purchasing facilities, some only have ticket offices (which aren't open from the first to last train of the day) and no machines; Welshpool has a ticket machine which does not take cash and is frequently vandalised. This last station is of course the last station before the penalty fare zone and it is feasible that a passenger could have been unable to purchase a ticket from the machine with cash and not have seen a ticket/fares collector between Welshpool and Shrewsbury. It is completely normal to buy a ticket on the train on the Cambrian and the vast majority of people courteously and willingly do so when the conductor comes down the train.

In our last meeting, it was mooted by members that people travelling from the Cambrian should be excluded from the penalty fare scheme. It was noted that even if a traveller from Telford to Birmingham falsely claimed to have travelled from Welshpool, he/she would pay a much higher fare than he/she would have paid through buying a ticket at Telford station.

Another important aspect of this is the possible publicity for the scheme. As can readily be seen from the attached newsletter articles, Arriva Trains Wales' ill-administered "Buy Before

You Board" campaign saw threatening posters make their way up the Cambrian lines even to stations with no/inadequate ticket-buying facilities! This caused much anxiety for passengers, especially the elderly and the vulnerable. Administration on the trains was also seen as heavy-handed, with passengers who'd boarded where there were inadequate ticket-buying facilities being threatened with fines on their next "offence". Such behaviour drives passengers off the rails and is liable to create a greater financial loss for the train operator than the lost revenue they hope to capture.

To conclude, the Cambrian Line is essentially a rural, friendly railway which relies to a large extent on on-train revenue collection; trains off the Cambrian make up half the TfW traffic on the Shrewsbury - Birmingham corridor and this must be taken fully into account when deciding on the implementation and publicity for any penalty fare scheme. There must be no penalising or intimidation of honest passengers who are quite happy to pay up when the conductor reaches them. TfW promised a new and better relationship with passengers: a heavy-handed approach would undermine these promises."

RAIL FARES

A SARPA member wrote in August to Montgomeryshire MP Glyn Davies on the matter of rail fares as follows. ***A reply is still awaited.***

"Dear Glyn,

I'm writing to protest against the decision by the Secretary of State for Transport to raise regulated rail fares by the current Retail Price Index rate of 3.2% in January 2019.

The policy of screwing passengers and businesses by successive Labour, Coalition and Conservative Governments for the financial problems of the rail industry precipitated by the 1993 Railway Act has gone on long enough, and is now past the point where people trust the railway to provide value for money and is deterring people from travel by rail.

Initially we were told that the rises were to re balance the amount the railway cost between fare payers and taxpayers - though nobody sorted out the causes of costs going up in the first place. The target figure of 75/25 Farepayer/Taxpayer has already been reached and seemingly forgotten about by Government.

We are now glibly told that it's to pay for investment - this rings hollow with the vast majority of passengers who see little difference in their daily journeys. Lets not forget that the Southern/Thameslink fiasco this year was part of investment specified and planned by the Department of Transport and its underpinning causes involve decisions made by both the Department for Transport and the Office of Rail & Road. The Department of Transport have also initiated industrial unrest by trying to push through Driver Only Operating. Asking passengers to pay yet more for Government caused mass disruption is not on.

I can go on and mention the franchise system where the Department for Transport has accepted unrealistic and undeliverable bids, as we've seen with Virgin and the East Coast Mainline - its all smiles and pats on the back at franchise award time but everybody goes missing when it all goes belly up don't they? Just what are people getting for the money?

The Secretary of State for Transport hinting at changes to using CPI instead of RPI is a total smokescreen, when he actually announces that it will be RPI again shortly afterward.

Here in Montgomeryshire whilst regulated fares "owned" by the Wales and Border franchise are determined by the Welsh Government, many people travel to destinations in England and Scotland that are not. The open return from Welshpool to London Euston will be increasing from £68.40 to £70.60. However road users at the same time have enjoyed a several years long holiday from paying any increases in fuel duty - no debate about RPI/CPI here and its noted that the Newtown Bypass and Work around the Mile End Roundabout/ Maesbury Road junction in Oswestry have all managed to take place without asking road users to pay more for them....

If the Government has an ounce of decency about it it would be cutting rail fares by 3.2% as compensation for the pain rail users have suffered as a consequence of its decisions".

GENERAL NEWS

TRANSPORT FOR WALES

It is well worth while keeping an eye on their web site-

<http://tfw.gov.wales/projects/wales-and-borders-rail-service>

or better still sign up to receive the latest news electronically. Currently under the documents section of the site is a redacted version of the Invitation to Submit Final Tender (ITSFT) that was issued to bidders for the Wales and Borders Rail Service and South Wales Metro. The ITSFT sets out the requirements for the Wales and Borders Rail Service and South Wales Metro. It was issued to bidders on 28 September 2017. The ITSFT formally detailed the requirements, provided guidance to bidders on how to respond, and outlines how responses were to be evaluated. What can be downloaded runs to more than 1200 pages.

FROM AM RUSSELL GEORGE'S NEWSLETTER FOR NOVEMBER 2018 ON *TRANSPORT FOR WALES*

October marked a huge milestone for transport in Wales as the running of rail services was handed over from Arriva Trains Wales to the new Welsh Government owned not-for-profit company, Transport for Wales, and the new franchise operator, KeolisAmey.

Rail passengers may not see much of a difference straight away as the majority of the benefits will not take effect for a few years, but given the scale of the public investment - about £5 billion over 15 years - it is clear that rail passengers here in Mid Wales are also justifiably expecting the franchise to deliver improved value for money and put right the shortcomings in services that have afflicted rail users in Mid Wales for years. As such, it is vital that we see rapid and significant improvements here in Powys on the both the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines.

Transport for Wales has confirmed that there will be one train per hour between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth and that the operator will replace the entire fleet of its trains by 2022, providing extra seats on the busiest services; and after fears to the contrary, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport has confirmed that direct services to Birmingham will continue.

However, as well as better trains, more capacity and better fare and ticketing options, we must see a rail service which integrates effectively with the other modes of transport we use on a daily basis and a transport system which isn't viewed in isolation but contributes to economic growth and better supports other public services.

I would like to see an “opportunities pipeline”, which makes clear to all businesses in Powys every commercial opportunity over the next 5 years to ensure that the franchise supports Mid Wales businesses to win new work.

Enhanced services; enhanced comfort and service quality; a transformed experience on the train; improved ticketing, technology and fares; improved stations; and environmental benefits is a tall order by anyone's standards and we will have to wait to see whether or not the end result will match our needs here in Mid Wales and whether the Welsh Government's ambition becomes a reality.

HELP FOR THOSE WITH SIGHT LOSS

In the last days of the franchise Arriva Trains Wales announced that an audio guide designed to assist customers with sight loss is now available to download. The bilingual guide, which is available to download from Arriva Trains Wales' desktop website as a series of mp3 files, provides customers with information about what assistance can be provided at stations and on trains, advice on how to check what facilities are available at stations and how to buy tickets. The guide can also be listened to on their mobile internet platform.

The full story can be found here - <https://bit.ly/2IDi4A7> - but there is the need to log on with an email address and password. The guide can be downloaded/listened to at <https://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/audio-guide/> Or listened to on the mobile site - <https://m.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/audio-guide/>

PROPOSED RAIL OPENINGS

News continues to filter out about the hoped for reinstatement of the Aberystwyth to Carmarthen line. When in Aberystwyth in the summer Carwyn Jones said funding the line would “be difficult and would be expensive” and at the same time pointed out that there were to be improvements to the rail service between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury. A really excellent example of a *non sequitur* if there ever was one. However, he did make it clear that his priority was ensuring that Traws Cymru bus network provided a good quality service. In July it was announced that a report on the reopening of the line was soon to be considered by the Welsh Government. This follows a £300,000 feasibility study.

Now comes the proposal to reopen the Welshpool (Buttington Junction) to Gobowen line via Oswestry. The idea is promoted by Powys County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan and welcomed by the Mayor of Welshpool Cllr. Steve Kaye. The current call is for a feasibility study to be carried out either by the Welsh Government or as part of the Mid Wales Growth Deal. The proposal has been put to Ken Skates AM Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport. Mr Skates said the line would be looked at as part of a strategy to reopen lines across the country.

PROFITS

Under the heading “All the money Arriva Trains Wales has made from the Welsh railways as profit . Arriva Trains Wales' profits have quadrupled since it took over the franchise” *WalesOnline* (<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/money-arriva-trains-wales-profit-15262528>) examines the financial aspects of the Arriva Trains Wales franchise, stating that the company began by making around £6m a year but this has increased to a pre-tax amount of £27.7m in

2017. It records that "Arriva Trains Wales' profit margin is now more than twice as big as similar rail operators in the north of England and Scotland". The total paid in dividends is £173m. In the fourteen years of published accounts the company has received more than £1.8 billion in subsidy. The article includes some pertinent comments by Professor Stuart Cole of the University of South Wales. WalesonLine, politicians and a passengers' group have expressed concern after it emerged that Arriva Trains Wales' pre-tax profits rose by 18.6% last year to an all-time high of £28.2m. In contrast to this the Summer edition of the *Cotswold & Malvern Line News* notes that "The operator [of the Wales and Borders Franchise] is committed to not paying dividends to shareholders for the first five years with any profits being reinvested in a profit capping and sharing arrangement".

THE MID CHESHIRE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership has produced an excellent guide to the Mid Cheshire Line called *Marvellous Days Out*. This beautifully produced guide with excellent illustrations including recreated iconic railway posters which have been developed to market the line which runs from Chester to Manchester Piccadilly. Excellent specially drawn illustrations complement the posters and the text is most engaging. Think how such a guide could benefit the Cambrian Lines passing as they do through magnificent scenery and built heritage, inviting towns and villages and so many attractions. The Cambrian Railways Partnership should take a look at this guide and then try to do something similar.

RAILFUTURE WALES

The latest Railfuture Wales *Newsletter* contains the following: "An important first meeting between Railfuture and senior Transport for Wales officers took place in August 2018. This focussed on clarifying the role of TfW, particularly in relation to rail matters which have not been devolved and therefore remain the responsibility of the Department of Transport, such as Great Western services and Network Rail. The role of Transport Focus in Wales was also raised". All Railfuture Wales members are welcome to attend the branch committee meetings as observers. The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 10, 2019 in Cathays, Cardiff at 4pm. Contact the organisation for venue details.

SHREWSBURY ABERYSTWYTH RAIL LIAISON COMMITTEE

(formerly Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Liaison Committee)

There have been two meetings since our last *Newsletter*. One was the joint meeting with The Cambrian Coast Line Conference on July 13, 2018. Actions to be taken forward include: meeting with the Minister's Office in Cardiff; Welshpool Access for All Plan to be passed to Claire Williams; Financing of the Committee to be placed on the next agenda; re-arrange presentation on freight; and a meeting with Ben Davies to be arranged over service delivery issues.

The Committee also met on October 19, 2018 in Welshpool. Matters dealt with included: a report on meeting with Welsh Government and some of the main points are: The through services to Birmingham International as at present are to remain in place; confirmation of the programme of planned activity under Transport for Wales; level of investment planned is extensive. Ben Davies (Transport for Wales Rail Services) presented the following information: aim is to make Cambrian Lines accessible to all 7 days a week; ticketing availability to be

extended to make it easier; £200m investment over 5 years in addition to Valley Lines; £40m for station improvements; all stations to be given an overhaul including a deep clean; money allocated for better parking at stations; use of redundant buildings for community uses; £10m allocated for WiFi on all stations (including Sugar Loaf); a fund has been set up to support the arts; new rolling stock for the Cambrian Lines in 2022/2023; Class 170's will be refurbished for the Heart of Wales Line; Heart of Wales Line will be extended towards Crewe; the Shrewsbury Crewe service is to be doubled; improved rail services on the Cambrian Coast lines as follows: Sundays increase from 1 to 3 services per day in 2019, Weekdays increase from 3 to 5 services per day in 2019, aim is to provide 9 trains per day from 2022/2023; improved rail services on the Main Line as follows: Sunday service to be hourly from 2019, full hourly train service 7 days a week from 2022/2023, All new trains will be ETRMS fitted so that interchange of trains to meet services demands is easier; the North Coast will have some class 230's in the interim (Old class D London Underground stock); the trains in the interim will be various colours until new stock arrives; new station at Bow Street opens in 2020; all Cambrian Line class 158 stock will be refurbished for the short term including accessible toilets and tanks to take toilet -- the trains to also include better Air Conditioning, more electric plugs etc.; there will be spare class 158 stock available for support as stock movements are completed; there has been an extensive order of new trains placed so that the train replacements can meet the programme outlined; all new information will be bilingual; link from Dovey Junction to the Dovey Osprey Project being considered; CCTV and cycle racks are to be provided at all stations; new services will be provided including a Cardiff to Liverpool route and more trains from Cardiff to Chester. Transport for Wales wants to work with the Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Committee to gain their views and work together to achieve the objectives.

Wales and Borders Railways are now operated as follows:

Tracks: Network Rail and another company

Trains and infrastructure: Transport for Wales

Staffing and Operational: Keolis

Maintenance: Amey

The next meeting of the Committee is February 8, 2019. Their web site contains full information on all activities of the Committee and Minutes of their Meetings.

CAMBRIAN RAIL PARTNERSHIP

The website for the Partnership is www.walesonrails.com and it contains promotional information. A report by the Rail Development Officer delivered in February 2018 with the title "Improving links with Local Communities and their Railways", will be found at

<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/.../Shrewsbury%20to%20Aberystwyth%20Railway%2...>

Claire Williams meeting with SARPA is described above.

UP AND DOWN THE LINE

ABERYSTWYTH

The Cambrian main line has been subjected to many cancellations and changes over recent weeks often with the need for a bus replacement service. Unfortunately it is not always easy for passengers to know where the bus is going to depart from. A typical example is at

Aberystwyth where a casual observation of passengers entering the station shows that the majority enter through the “Wetherspoon’s” entrance, i.e. at the front of the station and not on the car park/ taxi rank side. Unfortunately the only indicator of where replacement buses depart from is on a pillar which faces this side entrance as the illustration shows.

Why can’t there be one on, at least, the other side of the pillar and why can’t the train information displays indicate that buses go from the bus station which is fifty yards outside the front of the station.

This is not the only station which suffers from passengers confused about where replacement buses go from. Welshpool is another example where the platforms are a long way from where the buses pull up at the Old Station. Many people have failed to realise this and have missed the bus quite literally. On Saturday November 3 the bus replacement didn’t go into the station approach at Borth (as is usual) causing consternation to travellers. In the “old days” a railway official travelled with the bus and these problems were avoided but, of course, this sensible response has long gone.



ABERYSTWYTH (Vale of Rheidol)

The Vale of Rheidol Railway benefitting from EU funding under the Welsh Government’s Tourist Attractor Destination Programme. Relocation of the terminus, to alongside the 1930s GWR engine shed, is underway over the winter closure of the line. The engine shed will be converted to a multi-function display and entertainment facility and new café. A new carriage shed is also to be built on the site of former station (the old Carmarthen line platforms).

BISHOP'S CASTLE RAILWAY (closed 1935)

The Weighbridge Project continues to advance with Bishop's Castle Town Council awarding it £1000. It is hoped that subsequent to their visit the Architectural Heritage Fund might be able to provide modest financial support but this will be dependent on the granting of Heritage Lottery Funding. The two deck plates of the weighbridge platform have been freed and the site is being cleared and tied up with the compressor shed having been demolished and removed. Protective work is being carried out on the buildings to stop further deterioration during the winter.

BOW STREET (reopening)

Work has started on the new Bow Street interchange, no doubt why there were no trains between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth on the weekend of November 3 and 4. The track is being realigned and made level through the station area. The date for completion of the works is March 2020. For further comment see "The View from Milepost 62" in this issue and Newsletter no. 76, July 2018.

CARNO (proposed reopening)

At a SARPA meeting there was some discussion on how the reopening of Carno had lost out to the reopening of Bow Street where a new station is currently being built. A quick look at the Local Development Plan for Powys doesn't seem to show any land earmarked for the development of the station. In fairness the text hasn't been checked. However the *Ceredigion Local Development Plan 2007-2022 Volume 2A Settlement Group Statements*, Section 9.1 Settlement Group Overview clearly states "Transport requirements—Bow Street Railway Station and Parking—3.12ha—Specific land allocations to meet identified requirement and needs are detailed in the Allocated Sites Schedule Table 09.02". On the interactive map it is clearly identified as "Transport" use.

DOVEY JUNCTION

This must be one of the most unusual signs anywhere on the rail network.

PENHELIG

The scaffolding is still in place to support the pedestrian access. However, there is no doubt that the station can see a lot of customers, especially walkers. On a Tuesday in October some sixteen people alighted from the 08:52 from Machynlleth while about 14 boarded the 15:37 from Pwllheli on the same day---and they were not the same group!

SHREWSBURY

Phase two of the work at Shrewsbury station will commence in late November with the canopies over platforms 4,5,6 and 7 being repaired. In December the Dana Footbridge refurbishment begins and it will be



closed. On November 8 Network Rail held a drop-in event at the Prince Rupert Hotel in the town, so that people could find out more about the building programme. Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Town Council and Shrewsbury BID have been working since 2017 on a vision for the town. The Big Shrewsbury Town Plan has now been issued and one of the areas cited to receive attention is the forecourt of the station, creating a new square immediately outside the station which would entail moving the car parking and taxis.

WELSHPOOL

The October meeting of the Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee reported as follows: "here is no movement on the provision of the shelters which have been purchased. They are 'rotting' in a yard..."

FAIR SHARES?

The continuing scandal of underinvestment in the railway infrastructure of Wales and the borders

One of the fundamental problems of how the UK has functioned for at least the past century is the huge degree of centralisation and lack of investment in the "provinces", which has perhaps intensified in recent decades. This has led to a stagnating/declining economy and poor service levels outside London and south-east England. One attempt to solve the problem was the much-maligned Barnett formula, which attempted to distribute government spending to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland by population (5% in the case of Wales). There is an argument that Barnett underfunds Wales – but the crisis of underfunding in rail infrastructure,, where Barnett does not apply, is even more acute, both in Wales and in the English border counties.

Statistics from the Office of Road and Rail Regulation indicate that the Wales Route, despite being 11% of the UK railway network (route miles), received only 1% of the UK rail infrastructure enhancement spending in the years 2011-2016 (£198m out of £12.2bn). This was included in a report by Professor Mark Barry of Cardiff University and has been raised by AMs in the Senedd in Cardiff. Clearly, this doesn't appear to be fair in terms of route miles. Now let's consider population.

Estimating the population served by the Wales and Borders franchise is more difficult, but a rough and conservative estimate involves adding the population of Wales to half the population of Shropshire, Herefordshire, Chester city, Nantwich town, Gloucester city and Crewe town (given that they are also served by other rail routes). This indicates 5.5% of the UK population being served by the Wales route. A less conservative estimate could reach 6%. Comparison with the 1% infrastructure share clearly shows extreme regional inequality within the UK, regarding how different countries and indeed areas are treated.

Enhancements are the lifeblood of a living growing railway and an embodiment of governments' commitment to rail transport. They are also essential for allowing more, better and greener trains. Given that passenger numbers increased by something like 65% over the life of the Arriva Trains Wales franchise, our railways deserve the infrastructure improvements to reflect this, such as redoubling, additional passing loops, line speed improvements,

electrification and station improvements. Certainly some of this has happened in recent years, allowing for instance an hourly service on the Cambrian line – but imagine what improvements we'd see on our railways with at least 5 times the investment!

Time after time, rail campaigners are told that their demands are unrealistic, that money is limited and that they are dreaming. Yet if the Wales route was simply allocated a population proportional share of infrastructure funding, we'd have (based on 2011-2016 spending) over £160m extra each year to spend on passing loops, redoubling, even new lines! With Scotland and Northern Ireland – but not Wales – receiving Barnett consequentials (i.e. extra rail money) as a consequence of HS2, it's time the Wales route got its fair share.

TRACKING THE CHANGES: THE OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD AND FUTURE RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS

In July, I attended a meeting organised by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) which aimed to engage stakeholders and make them aware of the process for Network Rail's budget settlement.

My first impression was of a very complicated set of processes! Over the past few months, Network Rail and ORR have been discussing NR's draft plans for spending on rail infrastructure in CP6 (2019 – 2024). However, in simple terms ORR is an oversight body for NR. Besides this, some interesting information was given which is worth sharing.

A significant amount of devolution is occurring in terms of what NR call "routes" (*llwybrau* in Welsh). The Wales route covers much of the area served by Transport for Wales – all of Wales and significant amounts of the English border counties. As part of this, better engagement with stakeholders is expected, which is certainly very welcome.

ORR have ordered NR to move £1bn extra into renewals – rebuilding assets and so on. This is due to concern about the long-term future of railway assets given that the focus in the previous 5 years had been on maintenance. £600m of this is expected to come from unidentified efficiency savings, which I'm somewhat sceptical about! They have also ordered more of the contingency funding to be devolved to route level, presumably to provide extra incentives to local managers not to overrun – unspent contingency funds can be spent on projects near the end of the Control Period.

The much-hyped Digital Railway (which we already have on the Cambrian) has no specific capital funding: it is expected to be rolled out as part of enhancement projects.

The ORR have asked NR to eliminate more level crossings. Similar works are allowing line speed increases in the Talerddig area so perhaps we could see more line speed increases on the Cambrian, improving reliability and potentially shortening journey times.

In CP6, there will be less focus on the five-year time frame and NR will agree the a work programme with Transport for Wales one year at a time. This is designed to make NR more agile and tailor work to current challenges.

A major issue is the underfunding of the Wales route over a number of years. It was confirmed that funding will not be allocated on a proportional basis, and therefore the percentage of infrastructure funding allocated to the Wales route is unlikely to change significantly. It was said that special permission would be required to take away further funding

from the Wales route within CP6 – however this has already been done in the previous period with the cancellation of electrification to Swansea!

My conclusions are that although the new system is likely to be an improvement, it is unlikely to be as transformational as suggested. Furthermore, the Wales route deserves a fair share of rail infrastructure investment, rather than the current situation of 5-6% of the population and 11% of the railway route miles receiving 1% of the rail infrastructure investment! We still have a long way to go in demanding fair play.

Jeff Smith

PLANS, PROMISES AND STAKEHOLDERS

Transport for Wales and KeolisAmey arranged a series of stakeholder meetings around Wales and the borders, and I was pleased to be invited, as Chair of SARPA. At the well-attended Shrewsbury meeting, 4 managers addressed and answered questions from perhaps over 70 stakeholders. The details from the last newsletter were included in their presentation, but there were some very interesting new developments and newly revealed details.

Some of the key developments are in the design of the new trains. The number of carriages available for services outside the core valley lines will increase by approximately 2/3. Although there were questions raised in the last newsletter regarding the internal design of the new trains, TfW appear to have listened. For instance, it was confirmed that there will be “lots” of tables, which will be important for long journeys. Similarly they've looked to increase luggage space. They've also promised not to use the infamously uncomfortable “ironing board” seat design, and have endeavoured to make more seats line up with the windows. Bike spaces will treble on the new trains. So there's still work to be done in influencing the interior design, but we're on track.

One of the less fortunate consequences of this attention to detail (at first glance) is a change in seating capacity. Whereas a 2-car class 158 unit (the current trains) has 144 seats, a 2-car Civity unit (the new trains) will have 123 seats. However, the increased number of carriages will allow the number of seats to increase: provided of course that groups like SARPA ensure that the trains on the Cambrian are long enough. Hopefully more passengers will be able to ride in increased comfort in the future.

Of course, although extra carriages are welcome, the 66% increase only covers the astronomical growth that occurred since Arriva took over the franchise back in 2003. To that end, I asked how TfW would plan to expand their fleet further in the future. It was explained that the announced trains are a base case, and that the agreement between the Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and KeolisAmey allows the Welsh Government to ask for fleet expansion in the future. Given the improvements which are on their way, I think the time to order extra trains will be upon us sooner than anyone expects.

Although a full hourly service all week on the Cambrian mainline will begin by the end of 2022, an hourly service will operate on Sunday from the end of next year! This will make the Sunday service more frequent than the weekday service, but I'm not complaining!

Other news regarding the Cambrian includes a promise of extra marketing and promotional support for the line, the inclusion of Machynlleth as a flagship station, and, very encouragingly,

the promise that Cambrian trains will work through to Birmingham International on an hourly basis once the service becomes hourly; this will involve coupling to a train from Holyhead every 2 hours.

Promises were made that Welsh language service will improve significantly, with full bilingual announcements (in a new format to reduce the length of the announcements) on the new rolling stock, courses for staff and a target for 50% of staff to be able to provide basic service in Welsh. There will be a dedicated art & green fund as well as support for community use of old station buildings. Arriva have already been recruiting new staff members to tackle staff shortages.

So the future looks bright. However, we can't take our eye off the ball, and must continue to argue for improved trains and services.

Jeff Smith

ALL TICKETS PLEASE WITH NEWTOWN STATION TRAVEL

Catch Up Time - Big Time

My daughter has recently started at University: she's just turned 19. back when she was just a few weeks old I went to a meeting in the Oriel Davies Gallery in Newtown, where an hourly train service between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth was announced, and I'm still waiting! Now the latest promise is by December 2022 – she will have graduated before then.... People who were at that meeting in December 1999 are sadly no longer with us – it's a poor commentary on our country that something so simple has taken so long. One hopes that the new franchise holder and Transport for Wales are efficient and quick at catching up for the all the lost time of the Arriva deal....

Fly, Fly away

Something that has cropped up on a regular basis this summer are people flying from Birmingham Airport on a Sunday morning/early afternoon. They've booked their cheap (hidden subsidy) flight, decided not to drive due to the ever increasing cost of airport parking, and then found out the first train from the Cambrian does not arrive @ International till 1300 on Sunday when they come to buy their train ticket. Please remember to plan your whole journey before booking that cheap flight!

Birmingham International's attractiveness is of course based on it being a direct service and cheaper than the alternatives: £29.10 for a Saver Return with no time restrictions is a very good deal. When Manchester Airport is £42.30 for a Saver Return with two changes thrown in from Newtown, and a journey time just over 3 hours compared to just 2 hours to Birmingham International, despite both airports being similar distances from Newtown, it's a clear winner. Liverpool John Lennon in contrast is £45.90 for a nearly 3 hours trip, and then you have to pay for a separate bus journey to the terminal! Of course you can always try and get a cheap Advance Purchase deal, but beware if your plane is late on the way back....we would only advise

doing this and not open returns if you're staying overnight before completing your journey back to Mid Wales.

For London Airports, Heathrow has the option of going via central London or going to Reading and using the RailAir bus link from there. Cross Country's blanket pre 0930 on weekdays peak pricing can catch people out, however there are ways round it. The Off-Peak Return is £100.20. Going via central London into Euston and using the tube (walk up to Kings Cross/St Pancras and then you're on the Piccadilly line the whole way with no changes) Off Peak Return is £80.20. I have got people to Heathrow via London Marylebone for £65.00 if the timings are right and you're travelling light! For Gatwick an Off Peak Return is £82.90 via Birmingham and Euston and the tube/Thameslink; or you can go round the houses via Reading and Redhill or Milton Keynes to Croydon via Olympia avoiding central London; £57.50 is possible at the right times via Marylebone.

However the best advice we can give is to properly plan your journey. Once we get a train running late here we invariably get somebody (who hasn't bought their ticket from us) come in the office in a state of anxiety as they're worried their train will be late arriving at International or miss a connection. Its amazing how little margin people leave – we've seen people expect to catch a flight whose last check in is 11 minutes after their scheduled arrival at International station! The phrase setting yourself up to fail springs to mind. Always aim to arrive somewhere where an hour's delay will not cause any problems.

Patting road users on the head is the worst thing for everybody including the road users

So, the Tories have frozen fuel duty for the 9th year run on the run, whilst insisting rail fares must go up and up! They have also announced some more dinosaur big road schemes dusted off the shelf of their early 1990's Roads to Prosperity plan. It makes grim reading on many levels. All this road building was supposed to be a jolly good thing all round, and so convinced was Government they asked for an official report to back up their beliefs. The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Appraisal (SACTRA) duly produced the report in 1996 (See <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20050304041634> http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_econappr/documents/pdf/dft_econappr_pdf_02512.pdf)

However the report concluded that building new roads simply created extra traffic which caused more problems, the believed magic economic development effect of new road building was also found not to exist.

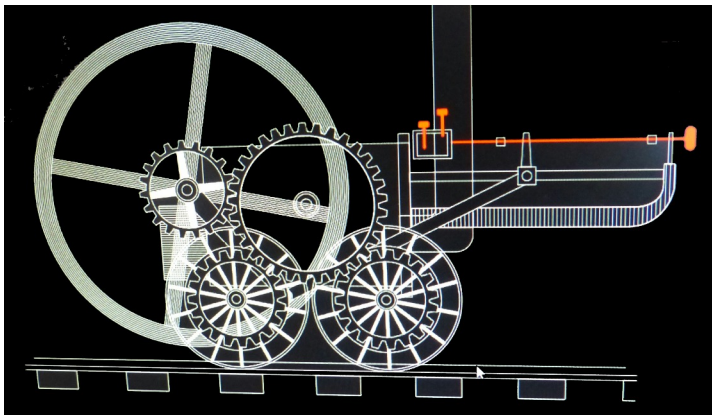
So why, when the evidence base (repeated reports over the years here and abroad) says that more roads and more traffic just cause more problems rather than solve them, do they continue to want to build them?

The High Priestess of the Free Market Margaret Thatcher viewed car ownership and use as some sort of virility symbol of capitalism – the entrepreneur drives down a road that is always uncongested and the parking is free – maybe they're still wedded to this fantasy view point based on what they want rather than the reality of it. Recognising that more traffic on more roads is counterproductive to the economy (as well as everything else) does not emasculate the free market. However, the argument that is always spun now is that there are lots of road users who pay car tax so they must be looked after! It's all about appeasing road users'

perceptions rather than telling them the truth and providing solutions that work. Pat them on the head and tell them what they want to hear. It's very condescending to them and just stores up more problems. In the meantime, alternatives that could make a massive difference to road user's experience of travel are starved of funding and cannot fully help. So jacking up your rail fare and failing to provide enough carriages not only aggravates and deters rail users but makes the roads worse for road users!

We must stop patting road users on the head and address and solve real problems, which means investing in alternatives which means they have to be funded from vehicle taxation.

Gareth Marsden
Newtown October 2018



<http://tfw.gov.wales/>

This is the url for the Transport for Wales page on the Welsh Government website.

It features an interesting diagram of Richard Trevithick's Penydarren locomotive in action: the connecting rod expanding and contracting, and the crank moving to and fro, rather than rotating.

We hope this doesn't reflect the Welsh Government's expertise in this field....

THE VIEW FROM MILEPOST 62 SPECIAL WITH THE BRIGADIER AND HIS SMALL CAT DUSTY

Thankfully our application was approved by Saint Peter (he's got a soft spot for GWR Broad Gauge), and Dusty and I have been allowed to view and comment on the start of the new Wales and Border franchise: in case you're wondering where we've been, we are on the other side following an incident involving an online delivery white van, an extension cable and a hosepipe! Needless to say things are organised far better here, ex-Politicians and ex-Senior Civil Servants have a very useful function in spreading muck on the All-Powerful one's farm....

Anyway, back to the matter in hand. We, like many, found the announcements and self-congratulation nauseating, a 15 year journey they say. Do these people at Welsh Government not realise that they're **at least 15 years late?** Whilst there is much to commend in aspects of the replacement franchise plan, it's chronically frustrating knowing that the Welsh Government has taken close on the 20 years of its existence to finally start to wake up and address issues that were known about at its creation. Since 1999 road congestion has got worse, pollution levels have increased, link roads and bypasses have continued to not produce economic miracles, car dependency and its associated health and social exclusion consequences have increased - in fact we've managed to dig ourselves a deeper hole to try and get out of. The Wales and Borders franchise should be a different and better place by 2023 but we could have and should have had what's promised to be delivered now before the world economic crash in 2007. It's time for all concerned with delivering rail services in Wales and the Borders to knuckle down and play catch up – not congratulate oneself.

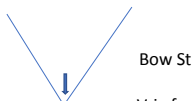
No one is going to give them any kudos until we get things vastly improved and sooner rather than later - however it's clear from the published franchise plans it's going to be later rather than sooner. Their buzzphrase is expectations need to be managed; however let's look at the record of the civil servant they have put in charge of Transport for Wales. The person is called James Price; my sources close to the Welsh Government tell me that he is an ex-Welsh Development Agency employee whom when he left to work for Yorkshire Forward his colleagues cheered, and when he came back to work for Welsh Government a few years later they groaned. Having once considered himself a candidate to be Permanent Secretary – the top civil service job in Wales – his star has waned due to his association with, shall we say, economic development projects which didn't do any developing. Internally by all accounts his move to Transport for Wales has been viewed as a demotion: hardly the world class transformational leader to match the rhetoric – one does wonder what will go wrong on his watch – expectations are not high!

Part of the agenda is to have half the new trains “made in Wales” – well final assembly in a factory that has yet to be built near Newport. Have you wondered why it's taking over 4 years to get new rolling stock when everyone else gets theirs more quickly – that's right, so it can be “made in Wales”. Dusty is waving a screw driver with a Welsh flag attached to it, and it also has “Lucky Goldstar” written on it...

However the aspect that has tickled us most is the prospect of free travel for under 16's at Off Peak times (and half price travel for 16-18 year olds). This is all very well and good in say Cardiff on a Saturday – though one suspects that the local fare dodging sport will change from short faring to claiming to be younger than you are. However in English towns and cities served

by other operators, none of whom of course have the same scheme, this sounds a recipe for absolute chaos. Will the barriers at Birmingham New St/Manchester Piccadilly and Liverpool Lime St all be rushed by the local youths claiming free travel as they have allegedly arrived on Transport for Wales services? I'm sure the solution will be to issue zero fare tickets – which comes with its own ticket issuing capacity issues, but of course like any other Welsh Government “free” scheme, people who wouldn't otherwise have travelled will be out in force to take advantage of it – I hear that Pensioners fight each other for seats on the Heart of Wales line – “I've had two knee replacements not just one so my need is greater”. So back to the perennial problem of Arriva Trains Wales – overcrowding. There hasn't been a magic fleet of extra trains arrive on day one of the new franchise, so how do they think they will cope with extra numbers when this scheme is introduced in 2020 and the big capacity improvements are all planned for 2022? Incidentally the planned changes by the end of 2019 amount to a just c.6% increase in the overall length of the franchise fleet – this barely scratches the surface of today's problem, and certainly won't be able to cope with hordes of free travellers.

So having hatched a cunning plan to make overcrowding worse rather than better we then find that having announced delay repay for trains running over 15 minutes late they've cooked up a scheme to make punctuality worse on the Cambrian! You couldn't make it up. As SARPA has been pointing out all those extra minutes needed to call at the reopened station at Bow St will just eat up all the already tight 12 minute turnaround that our trains have at Aberystwyth. I'm sure it will all be fun and smiles with a big carnival atmosphere as the dignitaries attend the official opening, and then after they clear off the rest of us will have to put up with their incompetence. Dusty has drawn a not very to scale diagram of the new station as a you can see it sits at the bottom of a steep incline of 1 in 75 either side of it.



Bow St

V is for Victory says Dusty but I somehow think Transport for Wales could have a penchant for snatching defeat from the jaws of Victory.

The Pearly Gates October 2018



0915 on 24th March last.

There are plenty of passengers (sorry, customers) waiting for the 0930 departure.

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

The last two *Newsletters* have carried interesting letters from Adrian Thornton. Many of the points raised, especially about SARPA being too introspective, I would entirely agree with. And no one could dispute that we have insufficient members, which is made worse by another decline this year. He draws attention to the Cotswold Line Promotion Group. Having family in that area I have to say it is very different from rural (and lightly populated) Powys and Ceredigion and not just in numbers. The Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association line also has an excellent membership but it is like a charity which has a strong emotional appeal. He also, rightly, calls for constructive campaigning rather than being negative. The point is that real and sustainable action demands resources, mainly human and that is something we haven't got and can't seem to acquire. There are so many knowledgeable people in the Association but to get volunteers really involved is extremely difficult. This is not being defeatist: it is merely reflecting on what a small group of us have laboured on continually for many years. Perhaps Mr Thornton would like to make some constructive suggestions as what our action plan and actions should be and how we get more volunteer involvement? Maybe he would like to become active in SARPA?

Tony Harvey



The old order passes

The last Arriva Trains Wales Service preparing to depart from Aberystwyth on Saturday 13th October 2018. It is the 2331 departure to Machynlleth, with 158 unit 158827.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

2018

December	Saturday 1st	1145	Royal Naval Club, Market Street, Aberystwyth
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2019

January	Tuesday 8th	1915	Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool
February	Tuesday 5th	1845	The Unicorn, Caersws
March	Tuesday 5th	1745	Railway Station, Shrewsbury
April	Saturday 6th	1145	Royal Naval Club, Market Street, Aberystwyth
May	Saturday 18th	1145	Wharf Station, Talyllyn Railway, Tywyn
June	Saturday 8th	1415	White Lion, Machynlleth
July	Tuesday 2nd	1900	The Sportsman, Severn Street, Newtown
August	Tuesday 6th	1915	Royal Oak Hotel, Welshpool
September	Saturday 7th	1215	Railway Hotel, Borth
October	Saturday 5th	1415	White Lion, Machynlleth

AGM

November	Tuesday 12th	1900	The Sportsman, Severn Street, Newtown
December	Saturday 7th	1145	Royal Naval Club, Market Street, Aberystwyth



The new order arrives

The first Transport for Wales service arrives on Sunday 14th October in Aberystwyth to form the 0930 departure to Machynlleth. It is again unit 158827.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Transport for Wales:

Network Rail:

Community Relations, Kings Place, 99, York Way, London. N1 9AG

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, 2nd Floor, 200, Aldersgate Street,, London. EC14 4HD

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

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION CONTACT POINTS

Contact by post: c/o Newtown Station Travel, The Railway Station, Old Kerry Road, Newtown, Powys, SY16 1BP. **Email:** sarpa@sarpa.info

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman: Jeff Smith, 17 Marine Terrace, Aberystwyth, SY23 2AZ. Telephone 07964 179 799.

Email abergogledd@gmail.com

Vice-Chairman: Ivor Morris, 2 Dingle Road, Welshpool, SY21 7QB. Telephone 01938 554463.

Treasurer & Membership Secretary: Bill Redfern, 8 Plas Edwards, Tywyn, Gwynedd, LL36 0AS.

Telephone 07769 685117. Email: bill.sarpa@outlook.com

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Newsletter Editor: Denis Bates, 86 Maesceinion, Waun Fawr, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3QQ. Telephone: 01970 617667. Email: denisbates@uwclub.net

Webmaster: Angus Eickhoff. Contact by email angus@anguseickhoff.co.uk

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Robert Knight, 8 Tanrallt Street, Machynlleth, Powys, SY20 8BE.

WANT TO JOIN SARPA?

The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2019) £10.00 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.

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:

Transport for Wales

National Rail Enquiries

London Northwestern Railway

West Midlands Railway

Virgin Trains

Chiltern Railways

Network Rail

Railfuture/Railway Development Society

Cambrian Rail Partnership

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)

Passenger Focus

North Wales Coast Railway

Circular tour of North Wales by rail

Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways

Vale of Rheidol Railway

Talyllyn Railway

Welshpool and Llanfair Railway

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway

Fairbourne Railway

Borth Station Museum

Rail Photographs by Richard Jones including many of the modern Cambrian scene

traintimes.org.uk/

tfwrail.wales/

www.nationalrail.co.uk/

www.journeycheck.com/londonnorthwesternrailway/

www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk

www.virgintrains.co.uk

www.chilternrailways.co.uk/

www.networkrail.co.uk/

www.railfuture.org.uk/

www.walesonrails.com

www.acorp.uk.com

www.passengerfocus.org.uk/

www.nwrail.org.uk/

www.penmorfa.com/Cambrian/

www.festrail.co.uk/

www.rheidolrailway.co.uk

www.talyllyn.co.uk/

www.wllr.org.uk/

www.whr.co.uk/

www.fairbournerrailway.com/

www.borthstationmuseum.co.uk

www.mylordz.com

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22nd January 2019