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*Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association*

# Newsletter No. 84

APRIL 2021

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## BOW STREET STATION NOW ON THE NETWORK



The first service to arrive at Bow Street, was the 9.12 am to Aberystwyth on Sunday 14th February. Photograph: Transport for Wales.

### NEGES GAN Y CADEIRYDD

Rydym yn sefyll ar drothwy mewn sawl ffordd ar hyn o bryd. Gallem edrych ymlaen at lai o achosion Covid a rhyw fath o ddychwelyd at ryw fath o normal yn ystod y misoedd i fod (croesi bysedd!). Mae'n bur bosibl bydd mwy o resymau a chyfleoedd i deithio ar y trên erbyn diwedd yr haf, gyda chyfleoedd i weld hen ffrindiau ar ôl saib hir.

Rydym yn sefyll ar drothwy hefyd ynglŷn â'r trenau sy'n gweithio ar y lein. Mae'r rhai cyntaf o'r trenau newydd wedi bod yn cael eu cwblhau ac wrthi'n cael eu profi yn ddiweddar. Bydd manteision i hyn wrth reswm: bydd y trenau newydd yn gallu cyflymu'n well, bydd y system awyru yn well o lawer a bydd darpariaeth dda iawn ar gyfer bagiau a beiciau. Fodd bynnag, mae SARPA dal i ddadlau dros welliannau fel ail dŷ bach mewn uned 2-gerbyd a'r gallu i fynd yn "bi-mode" pan fydd y gwifrau'n cyrraedd Amwythig. Y perygl yw y bydd yn fwy costus a thrafferthus i fynd i'r afael â'r fath materion unwaith y bydd y trenau wedi cychwyn mewn gwasanaeth felly rydym dal i bwyso!

Newyddion arall yw bod gwaith eisoes wedi bod ar y gweill ar nifer o bontydd ar hyd y rhwydwaith, gyda gwaith mawr i godi'r Bont Ddu i'r dwyrain o Fachynlleth ym mis Mai a mis Mehefin. Bydd hyn yn helpu cynnal y lein a gwasanaethau i'r dyfodol mewn byd sy'n dioddef newidiadau i batrymau tywydd.

Mae sôn am batrymau tywydd hefyd yn fy atgoffa am ddogfen Llywodraeth Cymru "Llwybr Newydd" sy'n gosod sail i strategaeth Llywodraeth Cymru ynglŷn â thrafnidiaeth i'r dyfodol. Mae llawer o syniadau gwych fel cynyddu defnydd y rheilffyrdd ac ehangu capasiti er mwyn lleihau allyriadau carbon. Wrth reswm, bu SARPA yn pwysleisio mewn ymateb i'r ymgynghoriad yr angen am dargedau a chamau pendant wrth geisio hyn. Wrth fynd ymlaen, bydd rhaid i SARPA sicrhau eu bod yn cadw at eu gair gan fuddsoddi'n fawr yn ein rheilffyrdd a gwella gwasanaethau.

Jeff Smith, Cadeirydd SARPA

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

We stand on a threshold in a number of ways at the moment. We can look forward to fewer Covid cases and some kind of a return to some kind of normal in the months to come (fingers crossed!). It's quite possible that there will be more reasons and opportunities to travel by train by the end of the summer, with opportunities to see old friends after a long pause.

We also stand on a threshold regarding the trains that work the line. The first of the new trains have been completed and in testing recently. This will bring benefits of course: the new trains will have better acceleration, much better air conditioning, and there will be very good provision for luggage and bicycles. That having been said, SARPA is still arguing for improvements such as an extra toilet in a 2-car unit and the ability to go bi-mode when the wires reach Shrewsbury. The danger is that it will cost more and cause more inconvenience to get to grips with these issues once the trains are in service so we are still lobbying!

More good news is that work has been underway on a number of bridges across the network, with major work to raise the Black Bridge to the east of Machynlleth planned for May and June. This will help sustain the line and its services into the future in a world which suffers from changing weather patterns.

Speaking of changing weather patterns, I am reminded of the Welsh Government's document "Llwybr Newydd" which sets the foundations for the Welsh Government's future strategy regarding transport. There are lots of great ideas such as increasing the use of railways and increasing capacity in order to reduce carbon emissions. As you might expect, in response to the consultation SARPA emphasised the need for definite targets and milestones in this. Going forwards, SARPA will need to ensure that they keep to their word and invest heavily in our railways and improve services.

Jeff Smith, SARPA Chair

## **BOW STREET STATION OPENS**

**Danny Longhorn**

Transport for Wales is delighted to announce the opening of the new Bow Street station. The first train stopped at the station in Ceredigion, mid Wales, at 9.12am on Sunday 14th February, providing a link to the national rail network for the community of Bow Street for the first time since the former station was closed in 1965.

It is the first station to open in Wales since Pye Corner in December 2014 and Transport for Wales' first since taking over the Wales and Borders network franchise in 2018. The development has been funded by the Welsh Government and the Department for Transport, having first been identified in 2010 as an opportunity offering value for money and with strong local support.

It is anticipated the new station will generate more than 30,000 new trips per year (based on pre-COVID levels), reduce congestion and parking issues in Aberystwyth, while also opening-up new employment and education opportunities for local residents.

Ken Skates, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, commented: "This is great news for passengers and the local area. The station will bring social and economic benefits to the area, which alongside the nearby active travel routes will make it easier for people to travel in a sustainable way. The funding we have provided is a sign of our ongoing commitment to improving the railway in Wales and giving more choice to passengers."

UK Government Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: "It is fantastic that vital rail links have been restored for the Bow Street community for the first time in more than 50 years. Our investment in new stations is focused on improving journeys, boosting access to jobs and education and kick-starting economic growth as we build back better from COVID-19."

The station will be served by trains on the Cambrian Line between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury and from 2022 will benefit from the introduction of brand-new trains and an hourly weekday service.

James Price, Transport for Wales CEO, said: "It's an exciting and important milestone for us to complete the first new station since taking over the Wales and Borders rail service. It is testament to the skill and hard work of our teams that they have been able to deliver this new station despite the many challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic over the last year. Public transport is currently open to those making essential journeys only, but we look forward to welcoming residents and visitors to Bow Street when lockdown restrictions have changed and it is safe to do."

Bow Street features a 100m long single platform with a passenger waiting shelter, real-time information point and ticket machine. It also features a 70-space park and ride car park, bus drop-off and pick-up point, access to local cycle routes and a covered cycle shelter. It also benefits from easy access thanks to improvements to the existing A415 junction with the A487(T).

Bill Kelly, Network Rail Wales route director, said: "We are delighted to have been able to support TfW in the development and delivery of the new Bow Street station. It will have a hugely positive impact on the local community and the wider region as it will be easier than ever for people to connect with employment, education, health and other vital services."

Councillor Dafydd Edwards, Ceredigion County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services, Housing and Customer Contact, said: "On behalf of Ceredigion County Council, I am very pleased Transport for Wales has now completed the new Public Transport Interchange at Bow Street.

"None of this would have happened without the vision, hard work and dedication of many individuals and organisations working together over the last 10 years on this project. Make no mistake this is a big step forward for Ceredigion and Mid Wales – the Interchange will provide a much-needed boost for the local economy and help to improve the availability of sustainable travel opportunities as part of our efforts to de-carbonise the transport sector."

## NEWS OF THE LINE

### Coast line halts

The Coast Line halts are temporarily closed. However, work has been taking place on at three of them.

Llanaber. The platform has been resurfaced; a new TfW style shelter erected, and a small amount of security fencing emplaced.

Llandanwg. The platform has been resurfaced. The old shelter remains, and there is some new fencing.

Tygwyn. The halt has been completely renewed, in TfW style.

### Porthmadog

Both shelters have been replaced by TfW style ones. The pedestrian crossing to the Welsh Highland Heritage Railway has been resurfaced and provided with self-closing wicket gates (in place of the previous stiles).

### Track replacement

Between Machynlleth and Dovey Junction bullhead jointed track is being replaced by flat bottom welded track, and by the end of March had almost reached the junction. [The editor remembers timing trains when the track was in 60 foot lengths: 22 in a quarter miles.]

### Bow Street Station

The new Bow Street Station opened, without ceremony, with the arrival of the 0912 to Aberystwyth on Sunday 14th February (see article above).

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## **SARPA SUBMISSION ON RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE IN WALES**

### **The current situation – rail ownership**

SARPA notes that decisions affecting rail services in Wales are made in Cardiff, but decisions affecting rail infrastructure in Wales (Core Valley Lines excluded) are made in London. This disconnect poses some obstacles to the improvement of rail services (which the Welsh Government claims to be keen to carry out). For instance, if politicians in Cardiff are keen for the frequency of a service on a single track line to be enhanced, it is politicians in London who would be expected to invest in additional passing loops, unless the Welsh Government pay for such loops out of their general budget. The Welsh Government has done this on many occasions, however since Wales receives no Barnett grant for rail infrastructure spending, this spending effectively comes from other budgets like health. This makes rail infrastructure improvements on a large scale rather difficult politically and appears to be one of the reasons why the Welsh Government is spending much of its infrastructure spending on roads instead. We hope that powers to enhance rail services will increase ambition in Cardiff Bay and we wish to see the spending balance tip from road to rail.

However, there would need to be close cooperation to ensure good service and connections to and within England. In particular, SARPA strongly insist that Cambrian services must continue to Birmingham International.

### **Intergovernmental cooperation presently**

Intergovernmental cooperation is vitally important but often lacking. This is particularly evident when there are different political parties governing in Cardiff and London. Issues such as the cancelled electrification to Swansea, lack of infrastructure enhancements spending relative to population and so on have become a point of friction. There is little evidence of Westminster spending on infrastructure enhancements in Wales; on the other hand most of the Welsh Government funded Wrexham-Chester redoubling was in England! The fact that control for services and infrastructure resides with different governments allows politicians to blame each other for inaction.

It doesn't have to be this way. There are seamless rail services across many borders in Europe, and the governments on either side cooperate to provide the best possible service. After all, connectivity is important from an economic standpoint and also from an environmental standpoint (modal shift).

### **Devolution of Railways**

In answer to question 3, SARPA is broadly supportive of the devolution of rail infrastructure, subject to certain conditions:

- WG spending on railway infrastructure should be at least equal to the grant they receive for this purpose – it would be sad to see the money disappearing into the general pot.
- A panel of representatives from the English border areas should be a statutory

consultee for any planned infrastructure enhancements/changes on cross-border routes.

- Network Rail should be empowered to work with WG to deliver projects.
- Wales should have a similar formula to Scotland regarding HS2, with a Barnett consequential, adjusted according to the rail benefit of HS2 to Wales. We note that Scotland will at least have through services on HS2, whereas Wales will not.

We note that Network Rail generally undertakes the work on the Scottish rail network. Presumably this model could also be used in Wales to provide expertise and economies of scale.

The other concern raised is whether a Welsh railway network could recover from landslides, storms, floods etc. This should be considered with perhaps the earmarking of reserves for rail network emergencies.

It is a shame that the Welsh Government didn't express any interest in taking these powers in 2005 and we hope they'll now be more proactive and show ambition for improving the railway.

## **Investment Share**

The Wales route serves 5-6% of the UK population. The percentage of renewals and maintenance investments carried out on the Wales route are roughly in line with population share according to our calculations. However, the percentage of enhancements spending that occurs on the Wales route is incredibly low, at something in the order of 1%. This situation is fundamentally unjust, and condemns passengers to a second-rate service and the Welsh economy and environmental efforts to underachievement. We feel that if there was more investment in infrastructure, such as additional passing loops for more frequent services, rail use would increase, which would bring economic, environmental and social benefits. It is worth noting that passenger number increased phenomenally on the Cambrian following the enhanced service frequency; this was made possible by the installation of a passing loop and a dynamic loop. Enhancements spending increases the usability, reliability and ultimately patronage of the railway.

## **Regional Development**

Wales has been seen as a region requiring help since at least the 1960s. During this time, the rail network in Wales has been mutilated and not enough work has been put into enhancing what remains. Improving connectivity requires infrastructure improvements such as extra passing loops and tracks, line speed improvements and possibly new lines. Many parts of the rail system are slow, including the Cambrian west of Talerddig.

As noted above, infrastructure spending increases passenger numbers and boosts the economy, as well as providing modal shift with the associated environmental benefits. Better connectivity would also help struggling economies such as in Ceredigion and Gwynedd.

## **Covid effects**

Traffic on the Cambrian has seen a major decrease due to covid, in line with the rest of the UK rail network. However, strong passenger growth prior to the pandemic, a full hourly service on the way and lots of leisure travel on the line suggest a good recovery. The leisure travel aspect of the line will probably increase passenger numbers quite significantly when people are able to travel freely again. We note that many Welsh lines, such as the Cambrian, serve a number of holiday resorts and seaside communities. Infrastructure should be improved to support this.

## **Union Connectivity Review**

As mentioned earlier, we are keen to see cross-border links enhanced and maintained, for the benefit of all. This is primarily a rail service/franchising issue; however enhanced infrastructure allows the enhancement of services.

We also note the proposal to build a rail tunnel between Stranraer and the Belfast area. This is surprising, since the traditional route to destinations on the island of Ireland is via Wales. We would therefore welcome investment in railway lines between England and the Welsh ports. There is already a frequent service from Dublin on to Belfast and thus Northern Ireland.

Dr Jeff Smith, SARPA Chair



Dave Linton has pointed out that the concrete viaduct at Barmouth replaced the old wooden one in 1953, not the 1930's as stated in the last newsletter.

**BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER:**

£3.6m bridge lift to reduce passenger flood delays



The Black Bridge in flood. Photograph: Network Rail.

Network Rail engineers will be raising Black Bridge, near Machynlleth, by one metre to lift it out of the flood zone. This will protect the bridge from high river levels and significantly reduce disruption for passengers. During periods of heavy rainfall, the bridge is repeatedly flooded, causing regular closures on the Machynlleth to Shrewsbury route, leaving large sections of the Cambrian lines in central Wales isolated.

The railway will be closed from 15 May to 28 June so that the main work to raise the bridge and reprofile the track can be carried out safely. Transport for Wales will be providing rail replacement services between Machynlleth and Shrewsbury during this time. Lockdown travel restrictions are currently in place in Wales. Please check the latest Government guidance before travelling.

**Kevin Giles, senior asset engineer for Network Rail Wales and Borders, said:** “The flooding at Black Bridge has been a problem for the past 25 to 30 years, but it is happening more frequently now. We want to get this route ready for the future and make it more reliable for our passengers. We will be lifting the structure and track on each side, so that we can keep the line out of the water during the flooded conditions.”

**Alexia Course, Transport for Wales’ director of transport operations, said:** “We’re delighted to see Network Rail taking this vital step in improving the resilience of the Cambrian Line. This sits alongside our own investment in transforming services

throughout the Wales and Borders network, including brand new trains and extra services for the Cambrian Line in the years to come. We're working collaboratively to ensure minimal disruption for our passengers while work is ongoing. As our services will be affected, it's important for anyone travelling on the Cambrian Line to check before you travel, in case of any changes to our timetables. You can do this on the TFW Rail website [www.tfwrail.wales](http://www.tfwrail.wales) or the Tfw app."

**A spokesperson for the Growing Mid Wales Partnership said:** "The Growing Mid Wales Partnership welcomes the investment by Network Rail in the Cambrian Line at Black Bridge, Machynlleth. The Cambrian Main Line is a strategic rail corridor for Mid Wales, and we welcome investments that will help minimise disruption of services and provide a reliable service for residents in the long term."

The bridge goes over the River Dulas in Powys, which is a fish spawning river. This means there is a limited time period when Network Rail can carry out the resilience work. Network Rail is working in collaboration with Natural Resources Wales and ecological specialists, doing everything possible to protect the sensitive local environment. Network Rail's contractors Amco Giffen will begin preparation work from the end of March.

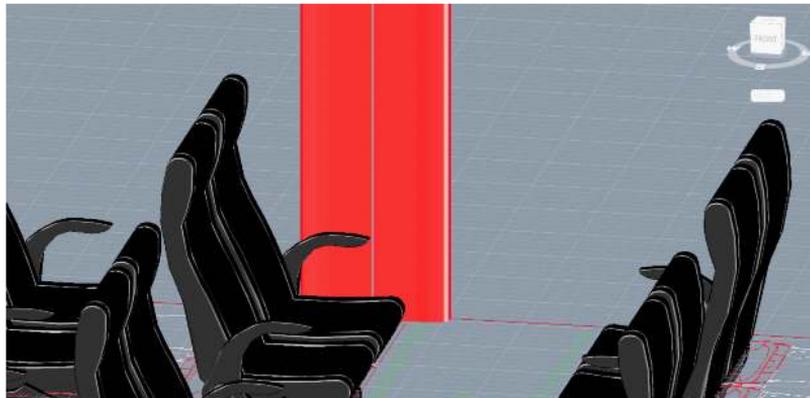
Kathy Peart, Media relations manager, Network Rail

## WILL YOU ENJOY THE VIEW FROM THE NEW TRAINS?

One of our members has produced the drawing below from our current understanding of the interior of the new class 197 trains, expected to appear on the Cambrian next year. Neither the colour scheme nor the seats are actual representations.

There are six table bays like this, with poor window alignment, planned for the 2-car units; the other four bays are actually quite well aligned, but this compares poorly with the 158s which have 16 bays virtually all of which are aligned thanks to SARPA. The number of the units that will be fitted with ERTMS signalling to run on our lines is currently uncertain!

Class 197 Coach A pillar bay.



## RAILFUTURE CAMPAIGNS FOR A NEW TYPE OF TICKET

Neil Middleton

Director, Railfuture [neil.middleton@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:neil.middleton@railfuture.org.uk)

I am emailing to bring you up to date with Railfuture's campaign for changes to fares in readiness for the return to the workplace later in the year and to ask for your help in publicising our ideas.

Many of us have now worked mainly or exclusively at home for the best part of a year and there are now signs that at some point we will start to return to the workplace – but only for some of the time. “Hybrid working”, where working time is split between the home and the workplace is wanted by many (including some employers) – for cost savings, for better work life balance and for time savings. As part of encouraging us to return to the workplace – to allow us to get together with colleagues, to meet customers and suppliers in person – and to work together more efficiently at work, it is essential that the rail fares system adds another ticket – a “flexible season” - that meets the needs of those going to the workplace some of the time.

The existing season ticket remains an essential part of the range – there are many that need to go to work daily and the season ticket meets their needs and thus needs to remain in existence. The railway already regularly offers Carnet tickets – in return for buying a bundle of tickets in advance, a small discount is given (typically 5% or 10%) and all the tickets need to be used within a set period (often two or three months). Our idea is for an additional type of Carnet ticket, with a bigger discount, where the bundle must be used much more quickly. Priced at the cost of a weekly season, it would offer five return journeys that must be used within two weeks. Aimed at the five to six times a fortnight workplace attender, it would often benefit a two days a week attender as well.

Full details of the Railfuture Passenger Group's proposal are set out on our website - <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1872-Creating-a-flexible-season-ticket-for-2021>.

We have issued press releases, posted on it on social media – and written to TOCs, the RDG and Government – and used contacts to reach out to Rail Ministers.

We now ask for your help in publicising this – in particular, to write to your MP – and anyone else you feel might be able to help. We have a toolkit to help :

- An outline letter for you to edit, localise and despatch to your MP:  
<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Flexi+Season+Tickets+2021+-+Outline+letter>
- A survey to be completed – please ask as many as you can – who are currently working – to complete this:  
<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Commuting+after+COVID>
- Social media posts for you to like, retweet etc:  
e.g. [twitter.com](https://twitter.com), [facebook.com](https://facebook.com) & [LinkedIn.com](https://linkedin.com)
- An accompanying FAQ:  
<https://railfuture.org.uk/Flexi+Season+Tickets+2021+-+FAQ>

## THOUGHTS ON BEING FIFTY

Gareth Marston

This year is a big year for me, as I turned 50 in April! 1971 was also a big year for other events: my Top 5 pick of them, in no particular order, are the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) started, the Cambrian Coast Line Action Group helped draw a line in the sand on rail closures, our currency went decimal, Britain withdrew from "east of Suez", and Wales won the first grand slam of their 1970's golden era. I have spent close on 30 of those years campaigning for improved railways in various forms and ways, and have studied a lot and learnt a lot about transport in the UK with its successes - and its failures.

If I were granted 5 big birthday wishes about transport on a genie's lamp, what would they be?

### **That we listen to and learn from experience, not base policies on emotion and ideology**

Of course, everyone knows the narrative that roads and motor traffic are good for the economy, and accommodating them should be a priority as they're ...wait for it... vital! This is perhaps one of the biggest myths and distortions peddled in the UK today. It causes all sorts of problems as scarce resources and funding are funnelled into accommodating road enhancements at the expense of other areas. Look at the evidence and a different picture emerges.

When should we have challenged this "new roads are good for economic development" fallacy?

1. In the mid 1970's, when after a partly coerced transition to a roads-based economy that had been peddled as the future and the path to riches, the country nearly went bankrupt and people voted in their droves to join the EU to access the single market as a remedy?
2. In 1989 when the economy plunged into deep recession once more, despite the then premier extolling the virtues of the "great car economy" after building lots of roads?
3. In 1994 when Government commissioned what is still the largest and most comprehensive review and report about the impact of road building from its own experts on the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA)? Expecting it to say that road building was a jolly good idea and the right thing to do they dropped a bombshell: In fact new roads generated new traffic that then made congestion worse on adjoining existing roads.... they struggled to find any evidence of a link with economic growth and declared that traffic growth was decoupled from economic growth which was a widely held "truism" at the time?
4. From 1992 to 2007 when we experienced the longest continuous period of economic growth for two centuries? The Major Government had paused the road construction programme in 1992 for financial reasons, and then the Blair Govern-

ment cancelled it completely in 1997. Economic growth without a bulldozer or tarmac lorry in sight!

When you look at the evidence then the wider macroeconomic picture is clear - at the very least lots and lots of other stuff goes on in the economy that far outweighs anything that new roads and increased traffic can conjure up. In today's, globalised, digital world the notion that a few hundred vehicles a day gaining time savings of a minute or two can have an impact that unlocks economic growth is ludicrous; however, it is deeply ingrained in many people's belief systems that it can. The consequences of globalisation and the 2008 banking crisis would all have been ameliorated if only the long-discussed bypass around Dunny-On-The-Wold had been built.... It's what our transatlantic cousins call a "mom and apple pie policy" It's all so nostalgic and comfortable with those brought up being told the car was the future, road enhancements are a firm favourite with focus groups of over 50 year olds in non urban areas. The trouble is Joe Public has never been told the truth that it turned out that roads were not the economic magic bullets they had been told they were, and many politicians are unaware of this evidence or not wanting to believe it. Transport Campaigners need to make it clear there is no linkage between economic growth and investment in road transport and therefore any attempt to play economy v environment is a false argument.

### **That we have a voting system based on proportional representation not first past the post**

Nearly every democracy in the world uses a form of proportional representation, and not first past the post. Turn-out at elections is higher as more people feel that their voice counts, and political parties and leaders have accepted that winning an outright majority is unlikely and that compromise and cooperating with other parties is the norm where a consensus on policy areas is sought. In the last 3 general elections in the UK the consensus on transport has been toward heavily increased investment in public transport, as parties offering these policies have polled the majority of votes. But we have not been given that. In that last 20 years Governments have been elected with vote shares as low as 35% of the vote, on declining turn outs of less than two thirds, meaning the views of less than 30% of the adult population are effectively imposed on the majority.

The counter argument to PR is that FPTP produces strong government and other systems see political chaos. The last several years here in the UK and in the USA - the last two major democracies that use FPTP - have destroyed that argument. Trump came second to Hilary Clinton in 2016 in terms of votes cast but the peculiarities of the electoral college system saw the USA plunged into their most chaotic Presidency ever. Here the winner takes all mentality has underpinned the Brexit process and the subsequent chaos. FPTP is one of the last vestiges of feudalism (as well as the over centralised state in the UK) and belongs in the history books.

## **That the impact of covid and decarbonisation are used as the big opportunity to create a modern fully functioning mixed traffic railway for the whole country**

Covid is giving us a chance to reassess and reset what the railway does. Despite predicted working from home utopia/hysteria last year, the reality is that the numbers of people who will actually do it on a regular basis long term are relatively low versus the size of the working population. The London commuter market was already saturated pre-covid; a drop in numbers here relieves pressure not only for those that remain commuting in the peaks but on the need to invest in London and the South East. A source of levelling up funds for elsewhere on the UK rail network? Outside London a drop in rail commuters is more likely to make space for new customers in a market that is relatively discretionary and nowhere near as developed. People in the North of England and Greater Anglia will be finding that the Pacer/Sprinter railway has been replaced by new rolling stock that has been introduced during lock-down. Thinning out a few services here and there will relieve network congestion and make the remaining trains run better to time and therefore become more attractive.

So far, we've not found a way to decarbonise Heavy Good Vehicles, but have for smaller lorries: you can get 15 tonne payloads with a range of about 100 miles. This will have a massive impact on the logistics chain in the UK. The 44 tonne behemoths are scrap metal in a truly decarbonised world. Rail is going to have to shoulder a larger share of longer distance movements.

Back in the first lock-down the postman and no fewer than 3 parcel delivery vans turned up at our house almost simultaneously one lunchtime. The parcel drivers all had West Midlands accents: a bit of basic research showed they were all driving vans on runs of a couple of hundred miles a day from depots in the West Midlands – moving longer distance parcels by rail is on the cards again using county level hub and spoke models of distribution.

## **That we implement a programme of rail electrification**

The Swiss electrified their entire rail network before the end of the 1920's - there's no hand wringing in the Alps about how to decarbonise their rail network! Failing to electrify the UK rail network was all part of the late 20th century agenda to coerce the transition to a road-based transport system and to keep it starved of investment whilst declaring it a dying Victorian mode of transportation.

Implementing a hydrogen powered railway as an alternative is not credible. It is not a sign of British exceptionalism using cutting edge technology and world beating - in fact quite the opposite. The basic facts are that "green" hydrogen is chronically thermally inefficient with two thirds of the electricity generated by clean sources like off-shore wind farms being lost in creating storage and re- converting the hydrogen before a train wheel is turned, and hydrogen can't power heavy freight trains, only electricity can. Apart for in some niche areas, railways overseas that are not already electrified are wiring up. We know what we need to know about the limitations of hydrogen already, you can find hydrogen trains working in small numbers of the continent: they're not new wonder toys where we will lead the world. Electric wires to power trains are a mature technology that works well. Just get on with it!

## That we finally run our railways in an efficient manner

Count the number of reviews we've had into rail or aspects of rail since the 1993 Railways Act, the 30 plus of them tell you what you need to know: that somethings gone wrong, but no one can find a magic solution aligned to the prescribed starting point of all these studies – that of making rail privatisation work and not admitting fault. Can we not at long last just accept the fact that the rail privatisation model chosen has been a disaster from a cost/ value for money perspective and move on?

As I've said many times before over the last 25 years, railways are run most efficiently as vertically integrated entities. We can't keep wasting a few £Billion each year.

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

Until the CoviD-19 Pandemic is over, monthly meetings will be held by video links.

The next SARPA meeting will be held via Google Meet at 11:00 on Saturday 22nd May 2021.

You are invited to join the meeting using the link:

[meet.google.com/mox-ydhz-dov](https://meet.google.com/mox-ydhz-dov)

Or you can join by phone: 020 3957 1014# PIN: 462 570 569#

## WANT TO JOIN SARPA?

The membership fee is currently (for membership up to 31 December 2021) £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 line's 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.

To join please send your details, making sure to include full name, address and telephone number (and also email address if you wish to become part of our electronic network) to:

Bill redfern, SARPA Membership Secretary, 8 Plas Edwards, Tywyn, Gwynedd, LL36 0AS, along with cheque for the membership fee, or, and preferably, you can pay directly into our bank account: Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passengers Association: Barclays Bank: sort code 20-61-08: account 201481148, and send your details to

[Bill\\_sarpa@outlook.com](mailto:Bill_sarpa@outlook.com)

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

**Transport for Wales:** Customer Relations, Transport for Wales Rail Services, St. Mary's House , 47 Penarth Road, Cardiff . CF10 5DJ Tel. 0333 3211 202

**Network Rail:**

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

**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](http://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

**Chairman:** Jeff Smith, 17 Marine Terrace, Aberystwyth, SY23 2AZ. Tel. 07964 179 799. Email [abergogledd@gmail.com](mailto:abergogledd@gmail.com)

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

**Treasurer and Membership Officer:** Bill Redfern, 8 Plas Edwards, Tywyn, LL36 0AS. Tel. 07769685117. Email: [bill\\_sarpa@outlook.com](mailto:bill_sarpa@outlook.com)

**Secretary:** position vacant.

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**Committee Members**

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### ASSOCIATION CONTACT POINT

**Email:** [sarpa@sarpa.info](mailto:sarpa@sarpa.info)

Newtown station footbridge was refurbished in 2020, just as it was announced in the March 2020 budget that Newtown was on the list to have a DDA compliant footbridge (news of which has gone strangely quiet since).



## WEBSITES

Our website <http://sarpa.info>

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

### Other sites of interest:

Newtown Station Travel

<https://www.newtownstationtravel.co.uk/>

A useful alternative to the National Rail Enquiries site:

[www.traintimes.org.uk/](http://www.traintimes.org.uk/)

Transport for Wales

[www.tfwrail.wales/](http://www.tfwrail.wales/)

National Rail Enquiries

[www.nationalrail.co.uk/](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/)

London Northwestern Railway

[www.journeycheck.com/londonnorthwesternrailway/](http://www.journeycheck.com/londonnorthwesternrailway/)

West Midlands Railway

[www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk](http://www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk)

Virgin Trains

[www.virgintrains.co.uk](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk)

Chiltern Railways

[www.chilternrailways.co.uk/](http://www.chilternrailways.co.uk/)

Network Rail

[www.networkrail.co.uk/](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/)

Railfuture/Railway Development Society

[www.railfuture.org.uk/](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/)

Cambrian Rail Partnership

[www.walesonrails.com](http://www.walesonrails.com)

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)

[www.acorp.uk.com](http://www.acorp.uk.com)

Passenger Focus

[www.passengerfocus.org.uk/](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/)

North Wales Coast Railway

[www.nwrail.org.uk/](http://www.nwrail.org.uk/)

Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways

[www.festrail.co.uk/](http://www.festrail.co.uk/)

Vale of Rheidol Railway

[www.rheidolrailway.co.uk](http://www.rheidolrailway.co.uk)

Talyllyn Railway

[www.talyllyn.co.uk/](http://www.talyllyn.co.uk/)

Welshpool and Llanfair Railway

[www.wlfr.org.uk/](http://www.wlfr.org.uk/)

Welsh Highland Heritage Railway

[www.whr.co.uk/](http://www.whr.co.uk/)

Fairbourne Railway

[www.fairbournerrailway.com/](http://www.fairbournerrailway.com/)

Borth Station Museum

[www.borthstationmuseum.co.uk](http://www.borthstationmuseum.co.uk)

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

[www.mylordz.com](http://www.mylordz.com)

**Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021**