

SARPA Meeting

Saturday 8th June White Lion, Machynlleth

Present: Denis Bates, Dave Collington, James Davies, Angus Eickoff, Philip Ellison, Roger Goodhew, John Harken, Sarah Harvey, Robert Knight, Bill Redfern, Viv Skerm, Jeff Smith, Dave Taylor, Mary Wheeler, Thomas Wheeler, Peter White, Roger Whitehouse, Michael Williams

Apologies: Glyn Cook, Tony Harvey, Ivor Morris

Jeff welcomed everyone and praised the turn out. The Minutes of the meeting at Tywyn on 18th May were discussed.

As it had been decided to have 3 Newsletters a year Denis is working to produce issues in July, November and March. He asked for copy for the July issue which will be available from 1st August. Sarah mentioned none available at Aberystwyth library and Robert explained they are taken quickly. Joining slips are inside each one and details about joining are on the back cover.

Michael had publicised the meeting in the “Cambrian News” and the “County Times”. Angus informed the group that Ben Lake MP for Ceredigion would like to attend a meeting and hoped to come to Borth. It was suggested that other politicians could be invited to meetings.

The section on Public Transport sentence one should read, “train fares are set by Central Government”. The penultimate sentence about free ticketing could not be explained and the final sentence about bus and train times being brought in line is an ideal rather than a fact.

Michael said the report on the proposed Machynlleth interchange will be published in mid-July and that Powys County Council is likely to resurrect the stakeholder group.

There was discussion about problems faced travelling to and from the North. Dave Taylor referred to the impossibility of getting from Aberystwyth to Manchester airport on a Sunday as the train arrives at Manchester Piccadilly too late. It was decided that Jeff should raise this point with Hugh Evans. Peter White said connections to the North West are terrible. He referred to Crewe as the key saying it is a critical hub and many people change there. Angus said address this with TfW in July. Bill said ask for better connections but don't upset other trains. He agreed with Denis that staff may challenge passengers who travel earlier than they should in order to mitigate problems. Roger Whitehouse pointed out that the timetable has to work when there are delays. Michael said that the model used must suit today's needs and Angus that operational flexibility is needed.

It was agreed that Jeff should lobby the appropriate people on this subject.

Angus informed the group that for the July meeting in Newtown Councillor Richard White has kindly arranged for Sarpa to use the Council Chambers. As TfW and Claire Williams are attending there could be a big turn-out.

Robert referred to the Sarpa Archive as he has every copy of the Newsletter except No 11 which Denis explained may never have existed.

Officers' Reports:

Jeff has made contact with Hugh Evans who is collating answers from different people. He read a letter from Mr Evans in which he accounted for problems in the service in December 2018. With regard to deficiencies in information systems the only solution offered appeared to be a smartphone! Roger W said TfW are working with their inheritance but questioned why trains have to be refurbished. He added that they have reduced units and Angus said the problem is there is no spare rolling stock.

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The meeting requested that Jeff send a response and Denis offered to put some of the points made by Mr Evans in the Newsletter.

Dave Taylor introduced the subject of replacement buses and the idea that someone at a station could explain where to catch them. Bill advocated writing to TfW to say we expect signs at Welshpool to indicate buses. Roger W pointed out that the same applies at other stations in addition to Welshpool: there can be a problem at Newtown and Caersws. Philip Ellison said a station Adopter could be sent to the station to give information. Bill said it is Sarpa's job to emphasise the problem not find a solution and make it clear that people are being stranded. It was agreed that there should be a protocol for all stations.

Treasurer's Report:

The transfer of banking is almost complete.

Community Account: £1078.78

Savings Account: £276.92

New members have joined and there has been a good response to subscription reminders.

James said the idea of paying subscriptions with Pay pal looks promising. He would like a meeting with Angus and Bill to discuss this. Pay pal has a system for automatic renewal which would be of benefit to officers and reduce their work.

Performance on the Cambrian:

There were reports of only 2 carriages running on some services that morning. Bill said there had been a recent deterioration. James said the railway crossing at Borth had failed more frequently this year and questioned whether there is an underlying problem. Peter reported information on both the screen and the announcement had been wrong at Aberystwyth.

Sarah had found that the announcement at Welshpool tells passengers travelling West to get in the wrong sections of the train. This was explained because of the way the train enters and leaves Shrewsbury station.

Roger W said it must be made clear that the terms front and rear should not be used. He also made a point about arrival and departure times at Tywyn and information at Aberystwyth saying that indicators don't work because the system does not react until it is too late.

Publicity:

Angus will e-mail NPTC Group this week about launching a design competition for a Sarpa logo with students.

He reported that the website is up to date and Facebook is doing well. Bill has given him the joining slip to put on both. He asked James to keep him informed about Pay pal.

Denis appealed for copy for the Newsletter by July; Robert asked if it could be left till the 1st August. It was agreed to include a tribute to Peter King; Michael suggested asking Mrs King if she would like to write about him.

The success of the Heart of Wales group was mentioned with Michael saying they have up to 1,000 members and £16,000 in two accounts. James asked if we have contacts in the most successful groups who could advise how they achieved this and added that he will look at their websites. Michael informed those present that on the Heart of Wales line much work is done to enhance stations.

Design of Trains:

Angus relayed a request from the Machynlleth Action Group that there should be more space for bicycles and more van space. He suggested this should be raised with TfW.

Robert pointed out it will take seating out. The meeting was reminded that in the past seats could be removed creating a dual purpose space.

Dave asked whether doors could be reduced but Angus said they are needed. Thomas Wheeler argued in favour of an end-door layout with vestibules for the new units. The meeting had a range of opinions on the subject and the utility of vestibules vs loading times. It was said that points could be raised directly with TfW at the July meeting.

Angus asked who was responsible for monitoring the SARPA e-mail, It was decided that officers should have access to the account to ensure that e-mails are dealt with promptly.

Network Rail's lack of attendance at meetings was noted; local MPs should be contacted regarding this. It was noted that NR is a public body and should therefore be accountable.

John emphasised the increased number of disabled people travelling and Michael referred to the Disability Discrimination Act. Sarah reported that after the subject of disabled access to toilets was raised in the April meeting she had tried without success to contact Disability Powys. Michael had informed Robert Robinson of the problem.

