

Sarpa Minutes 7th September 2019 Borth

Present: Denis Bates, James Davies, Roger Goodhew, John Harken, Sarah Harvey, Roy King, Ivor Morris, Bill Redfern, Viv Skerm, Peter White, Michael Williams

Apologies: Angus Eickoff, Phil Ellison, Tony Harvey, Robert Knight, Jeff Smith, Thomas Wheeler

The meeting began 15 minutes late as a result of one train holding up the rest due to ERTMS failure.

Ivor welcomed everyone and Ray King indicated that he would like to become a member of Sarpa. Bill answered Ray's question about ETRMS. He spoke of the bad service during the winter months attributed to various causes. Since Christmas there has been an improvement but in the last few months a lot of cancellations due to all sorts of problems. On Bank Holiday Monday afternoon almost all trains were cancelled. Bill concluded that we should ask Jeff to make a point. Up until recently there have been no ETRMS problems he said.

The Minutes of the August meeting were accepted as correct.

Officers' Reports:

Treasurer's Report: There is £764.07 in the Current Account.

New Members have joined Sarpa. This was well received.

Newsletter:

The presentation of the current Newsletter was praised.

Denis said the deadline for the deadline for the December Newsletter is 22nd October. Michael said the December issue was an inducement for members to join or rejoin. Sarah mentioned Robert's reported difficulties in December with posting. Bill and Sarah referred to the need for a glossary in the Newsletter to explain acronyms to lay person.

Roger reported the discussion at Borth Station that day when the museum curator, George, had informed members that on one occasion during the holiday period when no train was running there had not been enough buses to collect people from Borth and a lot of travellers were in danger of being stuck there overnight; this showed lack of customer care on the part of TfW George had said. Michael asked how many of these had made an official complaint.

Peter said we should raise the issue of buses as when he was delayed in Shrewsbury a 50 year old bus was supplied unsuitable for the route because of a low bridge. He continued that during August one of the local coach firm's buses were off the road. Modern buses had not complied with regulations in terms of care and maintenance he said and these buses were used for the schools. Peter emphasised that public safety is paramount.

Viv said a train can be cancelled at Borth and the public not told: there are no buses so they have to wait for the next train. James said a train came in which was cancelled according to the board. Roger added that when a number of passengers were stuck at Borth an unexpected train came in and it was only by chance someone spotted it. Bill said TfW would claim they kept Journeycheck up to date.

Roger said we must emphasise to the Chairman the importance of trains in this area at holiday times. Bill identified the difficulty with unmanned stations but said it is not our job to solve problems. Passengers need information about times. Maybe a telephone number is an answer. James repeated that one issue re times is the wrong information given; another is no information about buses. We are asking for accurate information. Michael mentioned incorrect signage on board the train at Borth. Bill said accurate and timely information is needed. James added that on that day 3 websites gave different information. Bill thought that TfW would say Journeycheck is the best site.

Roger asked if there is a serious case for Aberystwyth to have TfW staff member based at the station. Bill said more staff need to be available at other stations not just Aberystwyth. Ray told meeting he had had to use a minibus the previous week. There was discussion about Welshpool station and the replacement bus being some way from the platform. Although Peter said there's a notice Bill replied that people don't know. It was asked if this could be on the sign. Roger said that at Caersws on one occasion there had been a notice which just said "bus".

When there is advance notice of rail replacements, said Bill, there are 2 methods used: timetables and staff made available to help. With unplanned alterations there are usually arrangements with local operators. Ray told the meeting that in his area there was a campaign for standby plans for all possible scenarios and asked if that would be worth asking for. Bill thought we would not get meaningful answers.

Ivor referred to the Adaptors Conference' where this point was raised and they said they will try and sort it out. At present if a bus driver finds no passengers they will drive off. Viv suggested a staff member on the train could check which passengers required bus transport.

Bill proposed that the Chairman write to TfW with the following points:

- a) We are dismayed at the performance of the railway either side of the Bank Holiday weekend with lack of trains, staff shortages and signalling problems.
- b) There is a need for timely and accurate information and a clear way of conveying information. We do not think it works at present.
- c) When there are replacement buses bus staff need to be fully briefed as to a way of contacting passengers

- d) There is an issue with person to person customer care (Peter). Aberystwyth should be staffed on a Sunday.

Bill noted that there are insufficient staff available on the ground. In particular Aberystwyth needs Sunday staff in the summer. Peter noted that it is a busy station and there are 2 booking clerks there in the week. James added that footfall at Borth is concentrated on holiday periods. Bill thought we should not complain about too much at once!

Denis said that he had been on a bus replacement last Monday and a special bus was provided for a disabled lady: a positive result.

Ivor mentioned that he was overpowered by information at Welshpool the day of the meeting which was repeated every minute and updated correctly. Sarah had the same experience but for an earlier train when the repeated announcements ran concurrently with other announcements about delays for some of the time.

There was a question about publicity for meetings. Ray had seen the details in the Newsletter from the library. Denis asked when dates would be available for next year's meetings. Roger responded that he has prepared dates corresponding to 2019 dates bearing in mind that 2020 is a leap year which affects the July meeting. He will give these to Denis.

Roger relayed the following proposed dates for 2020:

January Welshpool 7th, February Caersws 4th, March Shrewsbury 3rd,
April Aberystwyth 4th, May Tywyn 16th, June Machynlleth 6th,
July Newtown 7th, August Welshpool 4th, September Borth 5th,
October Machynlleth 3rd, November Newtown 10th, December
Aberystwyth 5th.

Sarah asked about how meetings are advertised in the papers etc, Michael does Machynlleth meetings. Sarah is willing to put Welshpool and Newtown meetings in the County Times.

Peter asked whether there is a liaison officer at Aberystwyth University as young people have helped other groups and are very active. Bill and Roger said we already have one. We have contact with the NPTC group but an Aber contact is needed.

Viv suggested that a Club 55 ticket with a discount to encourage people to use the train is worth investigating, Bill that it's complicated. The TfW Club 50 was mentioned which runs from 2nd September – 24th November.

Ray asked about the logo and Sarah explained about the competition set by Angus for the NPTC group. James thought we should raise this at the AGM. Ray thought it best to approach students carefully.

John said there was no Councillor at Borth interested in the railway. Peter said that Aberystwyth Council has very limited powers. James pointed out that the Community Councils are represented on Sarpa. Roger said they are on the Liaison Committee. They make a major contribution in particular the late Mansell Williams had done so.

Peter said Councillor Emlyn Williams a Cabinet Member for Aberystwyth had made a big contribution to railway improvements. Ray said that he campaigned for general rail improvements. His daughter is moving to Aberystwyth.

Correspondence: Sarah referred to Angus's e-mail about the website and unanswered Sarpa mail. It was decided that this should be discussed at the A.G.M.

The meeting concluded at c 2pm.

