
Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passengers' Association

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Our Chairman in a mock-up of one of the new trains, on a visit to the Taff's Well Warehouse. See article on p.13.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Who would have thought at the start of the pandemic that we would still be in it on the eve of 2022? But that's the situation as we enter the new year. SARPA meetings have been online since the start of the pandemic and it's unlikely that we will meet face to face again until at least the spring. Passenger numbers on the line are still lower than normal, although leisure trips and holidays have kept Cambrian line numbers quite high compared to many other lines.

The pandemic has also impacted on the consultation process regarding the new trains. At last, I had the opportunity to visit the warehouse in Taff's Well which houses models of the new trains. By now, of course, there is much less of an opportunity for suggestions and requests to be implemented by Transport for Wales; despite this I was still quite vocal! There is a report on the visit in the newspaper. It is also worth noting that the pandemic is one of the reasons given for the delay in introducing the hourly service and the new trains.

On a more positive note, by the time you read this newsletter Barmouth Bridge will have reopened following substantial renovation. Work such as this is very important in securing the long term future of the line.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to wish you a Happier New Year.

NEGES GAN Y CADEIRYDD

Pwy fuasai'n meddwl ar ddechrau'r pandemig y byddem ni dal ynndo ar drothwy 2022? Ond dyna'r sefyllfa wrth i ni fynd i'r flwyddyn newydd. Mae cyfarfodydd SARPA wedi bod arlein ers dechrau'r pandemig ac mae'n annhebyg byddem ni'n cwrrd wyneb i wyneb eto tan y gwanwyn o leiaf. Mae niferoedd teithwyr ar y lein dal yn is na'r arfer, er mae teithiau hamdden a gwyliau wedi cadw'r niferoedd ar y Cambrian yn weddol uchel wrth gymharu â llawer o reilffyrdd eraill.

Mae'r pandemig hefyd wedi tarddu ar y proses o ymgynghori ynglŷn â'r trenau newydd. O'r diwedd, cefais gyfle i ymweld â warws yn Ffynnon Taf lle mae modelau o'r trenau newydd. Erbyn hyn, wrth gwrs, mae llawer llai o gyfle i awgrymiadau a gofynion gael eu cyflawni gan Drafnidiaeth Cymru; serch hynny roeddwn i dal yn eithaf llafar! Mae adroddiad am yr ymweliad tu fewn i'r newyddlen. Mae wrth gwrs yn werth nodi mae'r pandemig ydy un o'r rhesymau a roddir am yr oedi wrth gyflwyno'r gwasanaeth bob awr a'r trenau newydd.

Ar nodyn mwy positif, erbyn i chi ddarllen ein newyddlen bydd Bont y Bermo wedi ailagor wedi gwaith adnewyddu sylweddol. Mae gwaith fel hyn yn bwysig iawn wrth sicrhau dyfodol hirdymor y lein.

Yn olaf, hoffwn gymryd y cyfle hwn i ddymuno Blwyddyn Newydd Well i chi.

Jeff Smith, Cadeirydd

NEWS OF THE LINE

Severn Bridge Junction Signal Box Award

Network Rail has been recognised for the £250,000 restoration of Shrewsbury's Severn Bridge Junction Signal box. The signal box is one of the most striking and famous in the world, and has just won the 'National Rail Heritage Signalling Award' at this year's National Railway Heritage Awards (NRHA). Network Rail has been recognised for the eight months of hard work that went into securing the future of the iconic signal box, which included new double-glazed windows, new timber cladding, repairs to the external walkway gantry and a full exterior paint job – including the famous 'Shrewsbury' signs that greet passengers travelling in and out the historic town by train.

The grade II listed building is an iconic piece of railway history, located on a little island surrounded by a sea of railway tracks at Shrewsbury Station. Still housing its original 180 levers inside, all dating back to 1903, 89 are still in use today, earning it the title of the world's largest operating mechanical signal box.

[Read the full article via Shropshire Live at:

<https://www.shropshirelive.com/news/2021/12/03/shrewsbury-severn-bridge-junction-signal-box-refurbishment-scoops-award/>

Station Usage 2020/2021

The usual annual statistics have been released, and figures show the effect of the pandemic, with Cambrian stations only seeing 20%-25% of their 2019/2020 footfall.

Bow Street

There have been reports of trains losing time struggling to stop and struggling to climb out of the dip where the station is during the 2020 autumn leaf fall season: as predicted by SARPA. The Rail Head Treatment Trains repeated their previous pattern of only coming as far as Machynlleth before turning back to Shrewsbury.

Station Usage figures of a footfall of just 306 were declared for the station in 2020/2021, though it was only opened in mid-February 2021. An average usage of just 50 journeys per week does not bode well.

Barmouth Bridge / Coastline

The coast line reopening was delayed from the 12th December to the 29th. Overrunning of the Barmouth Viaduct work was because a number of additional timbers under the railway and the walkway were found to need replacing due to deterioration.

Many people questioned why the entire line was shut for the works to be done, and why there couldn't have been a shuttle service between Barmouth and Pwllheli and trains running to Tywyn as normal as happened in 1980. The simple answer was rolling stock resources, TfW decided that leaving three units at Pwllheli (2 for the service and 1 spare) was not an option with them being short of units across their franchise. The Class 158's (the type of unit operated on the Cambrian) have been found operating on nearly all lines on the TfW network, except Valley Lines, during 2021.

TfW operations Manager Colin Lea has promised that the rolling stock will be returned to the Cambrian once the bridge is reopened.

As well as work on the bridge itself replacing many timber sections a lot of work was done elsewhere on the rest of the Coast line relaying sections of track and doing work on level crossings.

New Rolling Stock

TfW are still sticking with their plan to fit only 21 two car Class 197 DMU units with ETCS so they can be used on the Cambrian with its unique signalling system. These 21 are also understood to be the last ones to be delivered, which may be toward the end of 2023. Whilst the initial franchise plan was to integrate our services with ones from Holyhead/Chester as per the inherited ATW pattern, it's now dawned on TfW that as the new trains can't be coupled up with the old ones, then introducing new trains whilst the old ones are still in service and maintaining the current timetable is all but impossible. TfW are now trying to work out a plan to separate services from each other, this could well lead to passengers used to through trains being asked to change more often at places like Chester, Cardiff and Shrewsbury.

Delay to the hourly service - well no SARPA newsletter would be complete without reporting on the latest delay

The launch date has been kicked back to May 2024 at the earliest, with TfW claiming a set of generic problems associated with the pandemic for delays with many of their franchise plans. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is often accused of promising things he doesn't deliver, but those of us who heard the then Welsh Government Finance Minister Sue Essex state that the Welsh Government would deliver the hourly service to Aberystwyth back in 2000 and then have listened for nearly a quarter of a century to all the backtracking and excuse making from Cardiff Bay since then, have already got the T-shirt!

TRANSPORT FOR WALLIES?

Gareth Marston

As many feared and expected the Welsh Government has dropped the ball with its takeover of the Wales and Border Rail network

Yet again SARPA's crystal ball has been proved correct. Read what was said in December 2018's newsletter, then read on...

<https://www.sarpa.info/pdf%20archive/sarpa77.pdf> Page 23. The View from Milepost 62.

"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 buzz phrase 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!"

The current dire state of Transport for Wales rail services, not only on the Cambrian but elsewhere across Wales and the Borders, was feared as the outcome of the Welsh Government getting its hands on control over rail services. The consensus is that the service provided is currently at its worst in living memory, worse than the maligned Arriva Trains Wales operation, worse than Central Trains and worse than British Rail's later post sprinterisation years. For all the bluster of a world class Wales and repeated use of phrases like Metro and embarking on journeys; the actual journeys that the public in Wales are finding on their rail network at the end of 2021 are very different. The biggest single complaint of the ATW years revolved around its shortage of rolling

stock. You would have thought addressing that would have been the number one priority - however since taking over from ATW, Tfw have somehow managed to reduce the quantity of rolling stock in use daily! You couldn't make it up. Cambrian-allocated Class 158's have been pinched to plug holes elsewhere in the franchise area. This has meant that we still have the reduced Covid timetable which has an inherent flaw in it in terms of resilience, as train crew must leap out of an arriving service at Shrewsbury and jump straight in a service bound for Aberystwyth with no margin for even slightly late running. Compounding this has been Bow St station; the stop here has been accommodated by stealing turnaround minutes at Aberystwyth, further reducing service resilience. Cambrian passengers have faced a triple whammy of fewer trains with fewer carriages and with less reliability. On top of this, Covid restrictions have caused problems in staff training, maintenance and supply chains, and climate change has brought repeated severe storm events that cause disruption.

For many like our columnist the Brigadier (see above) it was a question of when and how they would screw things up. Few people bought in to the sunlit uplands of a world class transport network they claimed they were leading us on a journey to. The reason people feared this was that the Welsh Government had clearly demonstrated during the duration of Arriva Trains Wales's tenure of the Wales and Border franchise that it just didn't "get it": they didn't understand, or to start with even empathise with, the problems the people of Wales and its economy were having as consequence of the ATW no growth franchise. Anyone with half a brain could see that the ATW deal was not fit for purpose in 2003, yet the Welsh Government, despite heavy lobbying, decided to do nothing meaningful about it for the next 15 years, apart from some minor tinkering. Rail users were left in no doubt where Cardiff Bay's priorities lay, and it wasn't in creating a modern efficient public transport network like you can find in most Western European and Nordic nations, or even having an adequate number of carriages on the network. They were big on excuses why this wasn't happening, and you will have heard a lot of noise from them about not having powers or funding from Westminster or not having the Barnett formula consequential from HS2. This is all smokescreen, as when you have a multibillion-pound budget equivalent to nearly 30% of the Welsh nation's Gross Domestic Product you can make your own choices on what you spend. As has been reported ad nauseum in previous SARPA newsletters, some chronically poor choices costing hundreds of £ millions have been made by the Welsh Government in relation to transport that have failed to deliver the road congestion relief and economic development that were promised.

Alarm bells rang when the bizarre procurement exercise was launched in 2016 for the new franchise as Welsh Government froze stakeholders and the public out of the process. The bidders for the franchise were effectively banned from engaging in any meaningful dialogue with anyone outside Welsh Government, and the whole thing was created in a secret vacuum and presented to the public as a magical world class solution. Cardiff Bay thought they knew best and imposed a top-down plan which soon became obvious had flaws in it and was not the Welsh Government's Number One transport priority. A lot of the fault lies at the door of ex First Minister Carwyn Jones from 2007 to 2018, but many of his Ministers who went along on with his failing plans are still in Government now.

Certainly not helping matters has been the so-called arm's length body Welsh Government has set up to run transport in Wales – Transport for Wales. Those of us

who have had dealings with Transport for Wales have been less than impressed with the quality of the people encountered, who whilst well-meaning seem confused by anything that involves having some knowledge of how railways work. Many view it as a “knowledge lite” organisation out of its depth, and as things currently stand are part of the problem not the solution. In a recent meeting with Welsh Local Authorities about taking powers off them over bus services and giving them to TfW, many Local Authority people pointed out that TfW can’t run the trains in Wales in an acceptable manner and were aghast at the power grab and what it might do to bus services in their areas. TfW Chief Executive James Price accepted there were problems and then proceeded to blame them all on Network Rail – who of course weren’t at the meeting. You may well ask what Train Operating Company staff recruitment issues and rolling stock shortages are to do with the infrastructure provider? His reply was typical of what many see as deep cultural failing within Welsh Government: a refusal to accept legitimate criticism and learn from it, combined with a shallow childish knee jerk reaction to always blame others. This unprofessional “politicians answer” has hardly inspired any confidence that deep seated problems are being addressed in a competent manner. His political master the First Minister Mark Drakeford refused to answer directly questions asked in the Senedd about poor rail services and replied by talking about something else to the legitimate questions asked.

The current Welsh Government like making the right noises about climate change, net zero and improving public transport, but there’s a huge credibility gap between the rhetoric and the reality on the ground. Take their moratorium on road building and review which was headline grabbing but they self-exempted schemes to the value c £2 Billion which they said were already under construction, including a £1.5 Billion 30-year PFI style deal to dual just 10 miles of road in South Wales. Their budget for the next three years just released increases the sums for road building by 2025! Their actions are hardly in line with saying their prioritising the climate emergency they declared! Are they treating the Welsh Public with Boris Jonson like contempt, promising one thing and delivering another? Have there been parties in the Senedd and TfW HQ in Pontypridd whilst rail passengers in Mid Wales have suffered overcrowded, cancelled, and delayed trains?

As this article is written we have Omicron panic and noises about the reimposition of more covid restrictions. No doubt this will discourage rail usage, which was just recovering, and give TfW some breathing space, and questions will be batted away with the usual “jam tomorrow” and “it’s the other boys’ fault”: platitudes we’ve come to know and loathe. However, the cavalry of new rolling stock orders will not be rolling over the hill to the rescue in enough worthwhile numbers for some time, certainly not for the bulk of 2022. Another dire year of performance woes and overcrowding will be meeting passengers when we try and come out of the latest covid woes. Perhaps it’s time for reflection in the Welsh Government, just as many Conservative MP’s are about the Johnson premiership. Questions they may want to reflect on are:

- Is the transport legacy of Carwyn Jones worth defending in an age of climate change? Perhaps better to draw a line underneath and start again?

- Should we deliver what we talk about? That would be a real point of difference with Westminster: see Levelling Up!
- Would we have been better off listening to and engaging with people rather than imposing top-down solutions? Some hubris in bucket loads is certainly needed here.
- Have we got the right team in place who know what they're doing? James Price's record stands in contrast to Transport for Scotland who have brought Chris Gibb in to advise on ScotRail.

And as a parting shot, if the above litany has not stirred you into action, on a visit to Wales a few years ago much maligned Government Minister Chris 'Failing' Grayling when Transport Minister challenged Wales to come up with something to match the Greater Anglia franchise let in October 2016. We suggest a fact-finding trip to East Anglia may be illuminating. After all if Chris Grayling has got one over on you.....



Aberystwyth Bus Station now has a departure board, which covers not only the bus departures, but also the train departures, cycling between the two displays.

FARE REFORM: SOME SIMPLE STEPS

Gareth Marston

The Treasury has showed how hopelessly clueless it is, by forcing regulated rail fares up by 3.8% from March 2022, accompanied by yet again no reform of the discredited privatised railway fare system. With yet another panic away from using public transport caused by Omicron the railways need to attract customers to boost revenue, not have measures in place to drive them away! What was it hoping to achieve? It's more likely to lead to increased government support! Rishi Sunak's rail credentials don't look very promising, with demands for huge savings from the rail industry, cancellation of many projects and the laughable Integrated Rail Review: there doesn't seem to be a plan to get passenger numbers back to 2019 levels let alone the number needed to help achieve net zero. This is the same Treasury that gleefully poured £ Billions upon £ Billions of taxpayers money to maintain the pretence of a successful rail privatisation – which was their idea – but now the industry's back in the public sector it's a different tune.

The fare system is like a stone around the industry's neck, preventing it from growing custom and revenue whilst making it **more reliant** on Government subsidy. It's also chronically unfair and unfriendly for passengers, and makes its own contribution to climate change by forcing people onto the roads. Yet it's relatively simple to reform. Beneath is an updated version of what appeared in SARPA Newsletter 75 in December 2019, see <https://sarpa.info/pdf%20archive/sarpa75.pdf>, Three years on it's still relevant and has been updated to reflect covid. There are five headline areas that will lead us to a fair system for users and one that will grow usage and revenue.

1. Service Quality Weighted Regional Fares

Returning to a national mileage-based rate per distance travelled as existed pre 1968 is a non-starter due to the huge spatial variation in earnings across the UK that exists now. It would also cause a lot of mass upheaval with many winners, but also many losers. However, we can use the regional Gross Added Value (GVA) figures as a basis to set fares: GVA is the average economic output per person in the regions (the 3 devolved nations, London and 8 English regions). Clearly this means that as a base line the affluent South-East pays more than the depressed North-East. Service Quality can also be a determining factor, with weightings for things like train frequency, journey time/speed, age of rolling stock, electric or diesel propulsion with Punctuality/Reliability figures being factored in. Reading to London with very high frequency services including quick InterCity ones with relatively new stock in the affluent South-East will clearly be entitled to charge a lot more than a rural line in Wales with a less than hourly frequency service using 30-year-old DMU's that amble along at average speeds of less than 30 mph.

- Inter Region fares should be determined by the lower destination/start point.
- Passenger Transport Executives, Transport for London, Metro Mayors and other Devolved Government can all have their say as well on fare levels within their boundaries.

- Where different types of service exist between two points, price differentials are allowed, i.e. InterCity and Regional Express trains between destinations like Birmingham and London.

2. A fair and consistent national peak policy.

We must recognise that there is no longer the same captive market of London commuters with no choice but to stump up and pay for season tickets, and Business users on company expense accounts buying peak priced fares. However, working from home for ever more is not an option either: something in between will eventually emerge and needs to be planned for. In the regions there is still room for growth in commuting markets.

Having a consistent restrictions policy will help; you can't just milk a captive market for revenue you don't have any more, you have to encourage use now to boost revenue. Peak Restrictions should be significantly eased and standardised; this will create a large off peak market, at which you need to target growth, as follows:

Into London on InterCity services from the major Metropolitan areas* (except Newcastle & Scotland) applies to all arrivals into central London between 0745 & 0929 and departures from Central London between 1630 & 1829 Mondays to Thursdays only.

Into London from non-Metropolitan areas and on non-InterCity services from the major Metropolitan areas* – applies to all arrivals into central London between 0745 & 0929 and departures from Central London between 1630 & 1829. Mondays to Thursdays only.

- On InterCity/ Regional Express services less than 135 minutes travel time.
- On Regional/Metro services less than 90 minutes travel time.

Into the major Metropolitan Areas* from elsewhere - applies to all arrivals into central areas between 0730 & 0929 and departures from central areas between 1630 & 1829.

- On all services less than 90 minutes travel time.

* The Major Metropolitan areas outside London are: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff & South Hampshire (Portsmouth/Southampton).

Restrictions apply to the service in question, so even if you're alighting short of the major conurbation they apply as you're using peak capacity.

Note that restrictions only apply into in the morning peak and out of in the evening peak. There are no contra flow restrictions. There are no peak restrictions anywhere outside of commuting times into/out of major conurbations.

The limit is set by journey time; the 135 minutes for InterCity trains matches the current journey times from the major conurbations excluding Newcastle/Scotland to London. Places with slow services to London i.e. Shrewsbury & Hereford are not harshly penalised. 90 minutes is beyond the break point for 95% + of commuters, so people having to travel long distance for non-commuting purposes are not penalised.

The price differential between Off Peak and Peak fares must be reasonable and not extortionate: say plus 33% in the regions and plus 75% for London.

3. Single Leg Pricing

Singles should start with being half the price of a current return, then returns abolished. There will be three types of fares only, the Peak Single and Off-Peak Single for journeys involving peak fare zones and an Anytime Single for those that don't. If you travel at a peak time one way and off peak another you're not penalised. Nor are you penalised for staying overnight even if you travel at off peak times.

- The Advance Purchase type tickets must be abolished as they just cause confusion and time-wasting. deterring travellers.
- Season tickets must still exist as there will still be substantial numbers doing 5 days a week regardless of zoom meetings.
- Rover and Ranger tickets will become more important to service the leisure market and need promotion.

4. Zonal Tap and Go Integrated transport facility for all Major Conurbations and their hinterlands.

This "London style ticketing" is a no brainer for ease of use and fairness, no more pissing about on the internet trying to plan a journey of 20 miles searching for "cheap tickets" – tap your contactless bank card or smart card/phone loaded with your railcard on the reader and off you go. The ticket system is fully integrated with local buses/ underground/ light rail: no need for separate tickets. Hinterlands are around 25/30 miles from city centres: you usually find a convenient size town or junction to act as a marker, i.e. Crewe/ Preston for Liverpool & Manchester or Stirling/ Carstairs for Glasgow/Edinburgh. You'll find that if you draw a circle at these distances around our major conurbations then a large percentage of the population is covered, many of the zones will overlap with one another.

5. A National Rail Card for all

Simply put there should be two types of Railcard: a Standard one and a Peak Zone one. The Standard one should be similarly priced to today's national railcards and give a discount on non-peak travel in Peak Zones, and at all times elsewhere for everyone over 16. The Peak Zone card should be premium priced, and give people like part time workers who are non-season ticket holders and regular peak InterCity travellers like business travellers who are regular customers that travel in peak zones a discount. There should also be "Plus" versions for an additional fee. This will allow discount for up to 2 Adults and up to 4 Children travelling after 0930 on weekdays/all day weekends. You do not need to have children travelling with you.

So how would that affect things on the Cambrian?

Fares would still be lower than elsewhere in the UK due to Wales' poor GVA figures. Fares would still be lower again on the Coastline using our quality weighting system, which automatically discounts rural area fares due to low frequency, speed, age of rolling stock etc. So, the current lower Cambrian fares would continue. Having a choice of fares to London would continue with InterCity services to Euston being more highly priced than Regional Express trains into Marylebone. Welshpool is currently just over 90 minutes travel time from Birmingham, so peak pricing wouldn't apply anywhere on the Cambrian. Nonsense fares for travelling long distance starting before 0930, despite being hours away from any major conurbation, would no longer apply. People will pay single leg fares on Anytime Singles. The biggest change will be with railcards, however any loss of benefits is counterbalanced by gaining new ones.

With Shrewsbury the peak zone pricing does kick into Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool but not to London. Shrewsbury is out of any peak pricing for journeys to London due to how relatively slow it is. In contrast Chester with its hourly service and journey time of just over 2 hours to London would have peak pricing. Telford would have peak pricing for direct trains to London but not connecting ones.

Governments both in Westminster and Cardiff need to get it in their heads that a simplified fair fare system is the key to boosting usage and increasing revenue (and therefore decreasing Government subsidy): dumbly sticking % increases on the existing fares every year will not achieve this. The Treasury is going to have the bite the bullet about the loss of fuel tax, as petrol and diesel vehicles are phased out anyway and all the indicators are some form of road pricing will have to be introduced. Fighting modal shift because it's frightened of losing fuel duty revenue has had disastrous consequences on the climate, railway finances and on rail users for too long.

Economists constantly bemoan the lack of productivity in the UK economy. However have they taken a step back and thought about the impact of how British workers get to work and what impact that has on how they perform? Overcrowded commuter trains and congested gridlocked roads with people spending hours per week on them suck energy and therefore productivity out of people. If they were more productive there would be more sales revenue and tax revenue. The nation's transport system must support its economy, not drag it down. Rail fare reform needs to be viewed in this context. Modal shift is probably the single most beneficial thing that can happen to help the economy by reducing road congestion.

SARPA PRESS RELEASE NOVEMBER 2021

RAIL USERS LOOK FORWARD TO A POSITIVE FUTURE

SARPA members have returned from COP26 in Glasgow in a buoyant mood, having heard the latest developments on decarbonisation and rail's role in addressing achieving net zero targets. The key message and consensus worldwide are that we cannot expect electric cars and goods vehicles to allow us to continue as before, active travel and public transport usage rates must be substantially increased, and significantly more freight must be moved by rail especially over longer distances.

SARPA is calling on the Welsh Government to match its rhetoric with action on the ground. SARPA Chair Jeff Smith commented *"It's all very well having 100 pages plus policy documents making the right noises but it's what happens on the ground that counts, freezing and reviewing road projects that haven't started and having a target of increasing active and public transport will mean nothing if nothing then happens. You can't keep saying the phrase metro and publish colourful maps, something actually has to happen."*

SARPA is calling for the implementation of the full hourly service on the Cambrian main line to be the starting point, not the end of the journey. Firstly, we need an equivalent of a Swiss Taktfahrplan implemented; shortly there will be at long last an hourly service between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth albeit operated by brand new diesel trains, onward connections by public transport are currently extremely patchy and hit and miss. Yet in many successful European countries public transport integration is natural without the false barriers invented in this country. The Cambrian Mainline has to be main building bloc of any fully integrated public transport system in Mid Wales with long distance travel by rail connecting with local bus services at all stations.

Secondly, we know that there is no plausible decarbonised solution for Heavy Goods Vehicles that doesn't significantly alter the dynamics of the road haulage sector, a sector that already has a recruitment crisis placing a question mark over its long-term future. An easy win that will remove long distance movements would be to send parcels by rail as a matter of course. This does not need bespoke infrastructure or trains. Smaller electric powered vans can then distribute parcels locally from stations.

Thirdly, despite the pandemic it's expected that rail leisure journeys especially to holiday areas like the Cambrian Coast will see increased demand in the coming few years; we need to have rolling stock in sufficient quantity and quality to attract and retain the new customers to rail. Whilst Transport for Wales are introducing new trains we do not believe these are appropriate to meet the above aim. Unfortunately, they are powered by diesel engines. SARPA members saw plans in France for brand new hybrid electric and hydrogen powered trains which can operate off overhead electric wires on mainlines and then swap to hydrogen power. On lines like the Cambrian that are currently not a priority to be electrified, trains like this could maintain through services to the West Midlands conurbation. These new trains can be designed with appropriate passenger accommodation for long distance rural travel, and have sections set aside to handle parcels and other small palletised goods.

Mid Wales is fortunate that its major rain link is still extant and can be made use of to ensure its competitiveness in a future changing world and we need to make the most of this opportunity.

SARPA - Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association

<https://www.sarpa.info>

CWRDD AR TRENAU NEWYDD / MEETING THE NEW TRAINS

Ar 9 Rhagfyr 2021, cefais y fraint o ymweld â warws Trafnidiaeth Cymru yn Ffynnon Taf. Yno, cefais daith tywys o fodolau maint llawn o'r trenau newydd, yn arbennig y dosbarth 197 fydd yn rhedeg ar y Cambrian erbyn 2024. Rhaid dweud, roedd y modelau yn realistig iawn ac roedd yn anodd credu eu bod wedi'u gwneud o bren!

Tu fewn, roedd y trên yn edrych yn eithaf braf, gyda llawer o le (ond dim llawer o seddi), raciau mawr uwchben y seddi a mwy o le rhwng y seddi nag oeddwn i'n disgwyl. Roedd 2 soced plwg a 2 borth USB i bob pâr o seddi. Eisteddais ar un o'r seddi ac roedd yn weddol gyfforddus. Mae un o'r lluniau yn fy nangos yn y cab ac mae rhaid dweud bod y cab yn llawer gwell nag ar y trenau presennol (dosbarth 158).

Wrth gwrs, roedd y diffyg ail dŷ bach dal yn bryder, yn ogystal â'r diffyg darpariaeth ar gyfer trydaneiddio. Fodd bynnag, roedd yn braf iawn cael gweld y modelau a chael sgwrsio gyda staff sy'n gyfrifol am y strategaeth trenau.

On 9 December 2021, I had the privilege of visiting the Transport for Wales warehouse in Taff's Well. I had a guided tour of full size models of the new trains, in particular the class 197 that will run on the Cambrian by 2024. It has to be said, the models were very realistic and it was difficult to believe that they were made of wood!

Inside, the train looked quite inviting, with a lot of space (though not many seats), large luggage racks above the seats and more legroom than I expected. There were 2 plug sockets and 2 USB ports for each pair of seats. I sat on one of the seats and it was fairly comfortable. One of the pictures shows me in the cab and I have to say the cab is far superior to that of the current class 158 trains.

Of course, the lack of a second toilet was still a concern, as well as the lack of provision for electrification. However, it was great to see the models and talk to the staff who are responsible for rolling stock strategy.

Jeff Smith

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak face to face meetings are cancelled. In the meantime, we are holding monthly online meetings which members are welcome to join. Invitations to the meetings are sent out by email. If you are not receiving emails from us, and wish to do so, please send your up-to-date email details to the membership officer bill_sarpa@outlook.com so that you can be added to the list.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION PROMPTLY

Your annual subscription (£10) to SARPA is due on January 1, 2022.

The simplest, and preferred, method of payment is to pay directly into our bank account:

Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Passenger's Association: Barclays Bank: sort code 20-61-08: account 20148148. An email to indicate that you have done so is useful.

Otherwise you can pay by cheque made out to 'Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Passenger's Association' and sent to Bill Redfern, 8 Plas Edwards, Tywyn, Gwynedd, LL36 0AS

Please let us know of any changes to your contact details by email (to bill_sarpa@outlook.com) or by post.

We are aware that we have lost email contact with some members who have failed to update us with changes to their email address. If you are not receiving regular emails from us and wish to do so, please send me an email and I will update our records.

Our thanks for your continued support for SARPA.

Bill Redfern, Treasurer and Membership Officer

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

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

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

Chairman: Jeff Smith, 17 Marine Terrace, Aberystwyth, SY23 2AZ. Tel. 07964 179 799. Email abergogledd@gmail.com

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

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ASSOCIATION CONTACT POINT

Email: sarpa@sarpa.info

STOP PRESS: MACHYNLLETH BRIDGE STRIKE

A tipping lorry, with its tipping trailer up, hit the railway overbridge at Machynlleth station on Wednesday morning September 1st, resulting in the closure of both the road and railway. The railway was reopened at 3 pm, but with only the down line in use. The bridge will be on single line working for sometime as the repairs might see the whole bridge closed for a week in order to jack it up & fix it. The force of the collision lifted the sleepers on the upline! However a reasonable service going on, but where 2 trains are at the station at the same time passengers will have to change trains by walking along the platform.

This follows on a similar accident at Plymouth on Sunday 29th August, when an articulated lorry hit a road underbridge. The main line just east of Plymouth was temporarily closed, before single line working was resumed. In this case it was an arch bridge, and some of the arch was damaged.

WEBSITES

Our website <https://www.hostinger.co.uk/>

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

Other sites of interest:

A useful alternative to the National Rail Enquiries site:	www.traintimes.org.uk/
Transport for Wales	www.tfwrail.wales/
National Rail Enquiries	www.nationalrail.co.uk/
London Northwestern Railway	www.journeycheck.com/londonnorthwesternrailway/
West Midlands Railway	www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk
Virgin Trains	www.virgintrains.co.uk
Chiltern Railways	www.chilternrailways.co.uk/
Network Rail	www.networkrail.co.uk/
Railfuture/Railway Development Society	www.railfuture.org.uk/
Cambrian Rail Partnership	www.walesonrails.com
The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Acorp)	www.acorp.co.uk
Passenger Focus	www.passengerfocus.org.uk/
North Wales Coast Railway	www.nwrail.org.uk/
Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways	www.festrail.co.uk/
Vale of Rheidol Railway	www.rheidolrailway.co.uk
Talyllyn Railway	www.talyllyn.co.uk/
Welshpool and Llanfair Railway	www.wlir.org.uk/
Welsh Highland Heritage Railway	www.whr.co.uk/
Fairbourne Railway	www.fairbournerrailway.com/
Borth Station Museum	www.borthstationmuseum.co.uk
Rail Photographs by Richard Jones including many of the modern Cambrian scene	www.mylordz.com

Copy deadline for the next newsletter is 22nd March 2022