



Campaigning for a bigger and better railway

Minutes of the Branch Annual General Meeting

Held at Shrewsbury railway station on Saturday 23.04.2022

Present

Committee members: Peter Kingsbury (Chairman), Rhodri Evans, Julian Langston (Treasurer), Lindon Stone and Mike Watson

Steven other members: GB, MC, PL, AP, JV, MW and TW.

Guest speaker: Mike Dalton (Transport for Wales Stakeholder Manager for the Borders)

1. Apologies for absence: were received from six members.

2. Accuracy of minutes of last AGM (02.04.21)

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting: proposed by JL, seconded by LS, unanimous.

3. Address by Mike Dalton (TfW)

1. MD summarised his vary varied career to date, which included working for InterCity West Coast, Railtrack, local government, Royal Mail Group, the LM rail franchise, his own coffee shop business and Cross Country Trains, before his joining TfW as Borders Stakeholder Manager (though imminently he will move to a role relating to the changes to the Cardiff Bay line and Cardiff Central Bus Interchange and railway station improvements), when Nicole Sarra will return from maternity leave)
2. He then outlined TfW's recent and current situation, referring to the:
 - station improvement programme
 - reopening of Bow Street station
 - retirement of Pacer units from the TfW fleet
 - new and refurbished rolling stock
 - impact of covid, including:
 - a lot of high priority projects having to be parked or revised
 - a massive shift in travel patterns towards leisure travel, though commuting may revive to a greater extent in due course
 - December 2022 timetable improvements (following the return to pre-covid timetables on most routes next month), including:
 - Cardiff/Cheltenham Spa hourly service
 - Heart of Wales Line additional through train in each direction
 - Postponement of further improvements, including:
 - introduction of Liverpool/Llandudno service (postponed to May 2023)
 - reintroduction of Manchester Airport/Llandudno (ditto)
 - Aberystwyth/Shrewsbury full hourly service (postponed to May 2024)
 - introduction of Liverpool/Shrewsbury hourly service, extended every two hours to Cardiff (ditto)

- other improvements planned which are specific to the Borders stakeholder area include:
 - hourly service Liverpool/Chester via the Halton Curve
 - in addition to the three locomotive-hauled services now operating Cardiff/Holyhead, there will be further loco-hauled journeys on the Swansea/Manchester route
 - West Wales/Manchester services will be operated by the new class 197 DMUs rather than the existing class 175s
 - class 230 units will be introduced on the Wrexham/Bidston service, though there were “some challenges” regarding this plan at the moment
3. MD said that the Welsh Government wants TfW to be an organisation which takes note of the views of its stakeholders, including local authorities, Railfuture and rail user groups. This is why four stakeholder manager areas have been created, covering North Wales & the Cambrian Lines, the Valley Lines, West Wales & the Heart of Wales Line and the Borders (Manchester/Cardiff, Newport/Cheltenham and Shrewsbury/Birmingham). The Borders stakeholder manager also has a reporting role to the Department for Transport
4. MD then invited questions/comments, which referred to:
- the need to make the TfW website clearer about planned engineering works
 - the continued use of class 153s on the HWL after the class 175s are withdrawn from the Marches Line
 - the number of loco-hauled trains which will operate west of Cardiff and whether any will operate west of Swansea
 - the view that current rolling stock in use west of Swansea is not of a high enough standard for a tourist area
 - poor bus/rail interchange at Newport
5. PK thanked MD for giving up his time on a Saturday afternoon to address the meeting

4. Matters arising from the minutes of the 2021 AGM which would not be covered elsewhere on the agenda

1. There were no actions to be considered
2. It was suggested that the minutes of AGMs could be included with the next edition of “Rail Wales” and on the Rf website, so that members unable to attend the meeting would have earlier information about the meeting rather than having to wait until a year had elapsed

5. Chairman’s report: Rf Cymru in 2021/2022

PK’s report covered:

- The gradual recovery of passenger numbers as covid restrictions have been eased. The surge in leisure traffic and less solid recovery of commuting has presented challenges for TfW. The inadequacy of Sunday services is a particular issue here, made much worse by the fact that Sunday working is not part of train crews’ basic contract
- At Great Britain level, the Rf Board is trying to keep up with major changes within the rail industry, particularly the move to “Great British Railways”
- The Rf Cymru committee has continued to meet roughly every two months via Zoom over the past year. It will be for the new committee to decide about the frequency and types of meetings going forward
- The committee has been kept busy with lobbying on a number of issues, particularly the need for service and infrastructure improvements in North Wales, the South West Wales Metro consultation, and a consultation on bus regulation (our comments regarding the latter emphasised the need for far better rail/bus integration)

- Following the May 2021 Senedd elections, the Branch made contact with the new Welsh Government transport team, which led to a Zoom meeting between three Branch committee members and two senior WG officials
- Activities for all members have been organised, including a Zoom meeting mainly focused on North/South Wales links (though this was not well attended). In addition, a visit to the Taff's Well TfW depot was arranged so that members could see the mock-ups of the new trains which are about to be introduced on the network. It is hoped that a visit to the Cardiff Rail Operating Centre can be organised in the coming few months. Suggestions as to other possible activities for members are always welcome
- "Rail Wales" newsletter has continued to be published twice a year
- Branch membership has seen a slight reduction, from c90 to c85 members. Attracting new members – especially those who are prepared to be active in our campaigning – is a major issue, not just for the Branch but also for Rf at GB level

6. Treasurer's report

JL presented the balance sheet for 2021. The only question from the floor related to whether the Branch is close to the point where subvention from Rf Board will resume, the answer being that this was not likely to happen in 2022/2023.

The report and accounts were adopted: proposed George Bailey, seconded Mike Cornick, unanimous.

7. Questions/comments from members

A member asked about the current situation regarding the reopening of St Clears station on the West Wales Line: no definite information was available in the meeting, although it was thought that work might have started

8. Election of Committee for 2022/2023

Chairman: Peter Kingsbury was re-elected - proposed JL, seconded LS, unanimous

Secretary: Bob Saxby was elected - proposed PK, seconded LE, unanimous

Treasurer: Julian Langston was re-elected - proposed PK, seconded AMW, unanimous

Committee members:

- Peter Clark had told PK that he wished to step down – he was thanked for his many years' work on the Branch's behalf
- The following existing committee members were re-elected en bloc: Rhodri Evans, John Hanahoe, Lindon Stone, Mike Watson, David Watts, Richard Wilcock and Dylan Wilson-Lewis – proposed PK, seconded JL, unanimous
- Jessika Venn put her name forward for election - proposed by PK, seconded JL, unanimous

9. Next committee meeting

It was decided that the first choice would be June 23rd and the alternative June 30th, both via Zoom and starting at 19.00: JL to make the Zoom arrangements

ACTION: JL

10. AOB: no items

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