

Issue 68 Spring 2020

Rail Wales

Newsletter of Railfuture in Wales



The first significant improvement to rail services introduced by the Transport for Wales Rail franchise was the new Wrexham/Chester to Liverpool Lime Street service. Here a class 158 unit awaits departure from Frodsham. Photo: Richard Wilcock

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WELCOME

I am writing the introduction to latest issue of Rail Wales just after the spring 2020 budget in which the new UK government has announced significant increases in infrastructure spending including investment in rail. However, at present it is unclear how this will affect the railways of Wales.

Certainly, it is the fixed infrastructure of Welsh railways, i.e. those parts of the rail system that do not move around, where investment has been lacking in recent times. With the exception of the truncated South Wales main line electrification there has been very limited large-scale capital (i.e. non maintenance) expenditure in Wales by Network Rail in the last few years. Furthermore, this will change little in the current spending control period (CP6), which lasts up to 2024. The promised wiring of the Cardiff Valleys routes north of Cardiff Queen Street is not a Network Rail project being delivered as part of the 2018 Wales and Borders franchise.

Although responsibility for rail passenger services was passed from Westminster to Cardiff Bay in 2018, Network Rail is not a devolved body. Therefore, it is funded by the UK government's Department for Transport and when decisions are made on where to spend its investment budget, Wales, with its relatively less busy routes, tends to be at the back of the queue. A decision to devolve responsibility for Network Rail to the Welsh Government with funding via the block grant sent to Cardiff Bay, based on a proportion of the proposed spend in England, would help correct the current situation.

On a more positive note, the decision of the UK government to proceed with HS2 is to be welcomed in Wales. Whilst the benefits to North Wales with HS2 eventually reaching Crewe are perhaps more obvious, people in mid Wales will have faster journey times to London by changing at Birmingham (as passengers currently need to) and the creation of a new interchange at Old Oak Common in west London between HS2 and the Great Western main line will provide the population of South Wales with convenient access to the new high speed network.

Turning to matters closer to the present time, there has been plenty of negative news about the performance of the new franchise operator in Wales, owned by Keolis Amey. The company has been fined by Transport for Wales for poor performance relating to cancellations and punctuality. However, it is pleasing to note that the wheel slip problems, which

dominated the headlines in autumn 2018, appear to a large extent been avoided last autumn.

There is no doubt that the many of the problems affecting TfW Rail are, to large extent, the result of the business context which all train operating companies find themselves in Britain. This includes the recent welcome growth of passenger numbers and the inability of the rolling stock suppliers to respond quickly to the large number of orders. The separation of responsibility for track and train as part of the franchise system itself is another factor. The UK government's Williams review has been looking at all these issues together with much more. However, its conclusions are awaited and with a different government in place to that which setup the review, it is difficult to know whether its recommendations will be acted on.

Last but not least, since I started to prepare this issue of Rail Wales, a certain virus has gone from being an item affecting people in distant places to the biggest news story in the UK for several decades. I was going to close my Rail Wales welcome by inviting you to the Railfuture Wales AGM on the 18th April where Lee Robinson, a development director at Transport for Wales, was to be a guest speaker. The AGM has been cancelled - see item below. The impact of the public health emergency on the train operators remains to be seen. All are understandably reducing their services. Moreover, forecasting what impact the emergency has on the public finances and future support rail would defeat even the most experienced crystal ball gazer. However, I can assure you that Railfuture will continue to campaign for rail to be a key part of the nation's transport infrastructure.

Peter Kingsbury

RAILFUTURE WALES AGM 2020

The 2020 AGM on Saturday 18th April has been cancelled as a result of the restrictions on people meeting in response to the Coronavirus.

Railfuture branch AGMs are not required to take place, therefore the Wales AGM will not be rescheduled. (In addition, the AGM for Railfuture Ltd, originally to be held in 27th June 2020 in Birmingham, will not take place. The matters for 2020 will be combined with those for 2021, at a date in May or June 2021.)

The Railfuture Cymru/Wales branch accounts that would have been presented at the Wales AGM are set out below for information.

Another AGM function is to elect members to serve on the branch committee for the following year. Members can be co-opted onto the committee so if you have ever thought about joining the committee, or this opportunity is a new strand of thought and you wish to have a chat about the subject, please contact Railfuture Cymru/Wales chair Peter Kingsbury at peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk.

The committee meets four times a year in Shrewsbury and Cardiff. It is not necessary to be able to attend every meeting and there is a range of tasks which are available ranging from liaison with train operators, policy writing and campaigning to press and publicity.

NEW RAILFUTURE WALES MEMBERSHIP LEAFLET

The Wales branch committee has produced a new bilingual leaflet as part of its initiative to attract new members to Railfuture. Lindon Stone managed the project which included commissioning several photos to illustrate the range of rail services in Wales, passenger and freight. The leaflet explains the work of Railfuture and the benefits of membership. The leaflet is shown on the back page of this issue of Rail Wales.

The leaflet is A5 in size so convenient to display in racks in libraries, tourist information centres and the like. If you wish to obtain a supply for display in your locality, at an event you are helping arrange or to distribute to your friends who might be potential members, please email Peter Kingsbury who will send the requested number to you. Address above.

PAUL JEFFRIES

I am sad to report the passing of Paul Jeffries in March 2020. Paul was a long-standing member of Railfuture Wales and had been a key figure in running the rail users' group for travellers in the Cardiff area, the Glamorgan Rail Users Federation, which was active in the 1980s and 90s. More recently, Paul worked for Arriva Trains Wales, specialising in operating matters in the South Wales Valleys. Railfuture Wales wishes to express its sympathy to Paul's family at their loss.

RAILFUTURE WALES ACCOUNTS 2019

The following figures have been prepared by the branch treasurer, Julian Langston. The Wales branch income is provided from central funds and the branch committee decides on how to spend the funds. The several

hundred pound cost of publishing the new membership leaflet will be paid from 2020 funding.

Railfuture Wales Accounts 2019

Revenue Statement

Trading Account

| | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|
| Sales | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Opening stock | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Purchases | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Less Closing stock | £0.00 | £0.00 |
| Cost of Sales | £0.00 | £0.00 |

Gross Profit

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| £0.00 | £0.00 |
|--------------|--------------|

Other Income

| | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| Central funding | 757.00 | 779.00 |
| Sale of literature | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Donations | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Interest on reserve account | 1.41 | 0.63 |
| Regional / Supporters' membership subs | 5.00 | 5.00 |
| Full membership subs | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Development Plan Summary grant | 0.00 | 0.00 |

Income

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 763.41 | 784.63 |
|---------------|---------------|

Total Income

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 763.41 | 784.63 |
|---------------|---------------|

Expenditure

| | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| Admin postage | 13.05 | 0.00 |
| Admin printing / photocopying | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Admin telephone | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Admin stationery | 5.00 | 3.43 |
| Committee meeting room hire | 42.00 | 37.00 |
| Print business cards | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| GWR meeting room hire | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Rail Wales printing | 97.50 | 89.25 |
| Rail Wales post and pack | 175.23 | 206.76 |
| Travel expenses | 440.65 | 365.20 |
| Development Plan Summary translation | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Development Plan Summary - Print | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Development Plan Summary- Post and Pack | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Cambrian admin | 0.00 | 21.20 |
| Conference fee | 78.00 | 0.00 |

The total in the branch account on 31st December 2019 was £1,387.09 compared to £1,475.11 a year earlier.

THE BUSIEST STATIONS IN WALES

The ORR annual station usage figures have been published for 2018/19. Once again these show a marked increase of 9.4% in overall passenger numbers in Wales with stations in SE Wales having the largest increase. The increase is the largest percentage change since 2007/08.

This marked jump in passenger numbers may have not continued in more recent times though. Data for train operator TFW Rail for the calendar year 2019 shows a very slight decline of journey numbers from 33.6m to 33.5m. This is not necessarily inconsistent with the ORR figures as the ORR data covers nine months in 2018 and only the first quarter of 2019 (April to March data).

| Station | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | Annual change (%) (rounded data) |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Cardiff Central | 12,951,746 | 14,200,000 | 9.7 |
| Cardiff Queen St | 2,912,364 | 3,400,000 | 17.8 |
| Newport | 2,696,620 | 2,800,000 | 5.6 |
| Swansea | 2,158,886 | 2,200,000 | 2.1 |
| Bridgend | 1,526,622 | 1,600,000 | 7.2 |
| Cardiff Bay | 1,302,676 | 1,700,000 | 32.1 |
| Cathays | 946,274 | 1,160,000 | 22.5 |
| Pontypridd | 864,294 | 934,000 | 8.1 |
| Neath | 816,748 | 882,000 | 8.0 |
| Caerphilly | 771,930 | 811,000 | 5.2 |
| Barry Island | 753,404 | 867,000 | 15.2 |
| Trefforest | 752,308 | 790,000 | 5.1 |
| Bangor | 662,060 | 667,000 | 0.8 |
| Penarth | 626,950 | 739,000 | 17.9 |
| Aberdare | 571,746 | 581,000 | 1.7 |
| Radyr | 538,692 | 736,000 | 36.6 |
| Barry | 533,732 | 579,000 | 8.6 |
| Rhyl | 520,198 | 520,000 | 0.0 |
| Port Talbot Parkway | 516,610 | 547,000 | 5.9 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 512,754 | 515,000 | 0.6 |
| All Welsh stations | 52,522,204 | 57,400,000 | 9.4 |

The surge in usage in the stations within or close to Cardiff shows the potential for rail to play a more significant role in meeting people's mobility needs in this densely developed region. The SE Wales metro proposal will help consolidate and further increase this growth enabling rail to provide a serious alternative means of transport to the private car. In the parts of Wales with lower population densities, the challenge of attracting more people to use rail are often greater.

ROLLING STOCK CHALLENGES

Thomas Wheeler, a Railfuture member who lives in Ceredigion, has written to present his views on the design of new passenger trains being ordered by TfW Rail.

'Since the last issue of Rail Wales, Transport for Wales Rail Services have revealed that their new 'long-distance' trains will be class 197s.

Other details have also emerged, none of them good. In late 2018, TfW promised to consult with user groups regarding the choice of seats. In July 2019 they reiterated that "There will be an exciting opportunity for customers to provide feedback on our new trains". This 'opportunity' then slipped back to 2020.

More recently, it was revealed that TfW had chosen Fainsa Sophia seats for the class 197. These are the controversial Intercity Express Programme seats. That decision, followed by pictures of the first completed body-shell, makes clear that any consultation would now be worthless. Apparently TfW think they know best and are going it alone.

The class 197s are intended for long-distance routes. The hard seats alone may be enough for some to judge the new fleet unfit for this purpose. Seats though might not be the class 197's greatest flaw. The existing class 158 and 175 DMUs have a toilet in each carriage. A 2-car class 197 unit will only have one toilet. If that is out of action (e.g. because the CET tank is full) there will be no toilet available. The Rail Delivery Group's 'Key Train Requirements' (KTR) recommends a maximum of 85 seats per toilet on inter-urban services. Classes 175 and 158 comfortably meet that spec, but a 2-car class 197 will be 116 seats per toilet. Ten more seats and it would also fail to meet the KTR's recommendations for short-distance commuter services. A 3-car 197 (two toilets) is not be much better, at 93 seats per toilet. In this context, it seems hardly worth mentioning the reduced number of fixed tables, the inferior 'suburban' ambience or even the airline seat-spacing (2cm tighter than on a class 175).

Not only is the fleet not-for-purpose, it is not fit for the future. The Welsh Government is calling for electrification of the north Wales coast line. Class 197s, being diesel-only, are incompatible with this aim meaning investment in electrification will be far less likely.

Surely this combination of flaws is a massive betrayal of passenger's hopes and expectations. We were promised a franchise we could be proud of; widespread

class 197s would be shameful. What is the point of campaigning for improved services if the design of the rolling stock is a deterrent to rail use?

The ban on new diesel cars (now 2035 at the latest) should also be considered. Electric car users will wonder why they are being asked to use trains that are still burning diesel even under the wires. TfW have claimed that a 197 will be 30% more fuel efficient than a class 175, but this is unproven. Even if the claim were correct, it would take several years to offset the emissions from the 197's construction.

I have painted a bleak picture, but despite being side-lined I think we still have a voice and we still have a choice. That choice is a simple one; take it or leave it. Cancellation of the majority of the new fleet should be considered. This would allow retained 158s and 175s, supplemented by more from East Midlands Railway, to operate the longest routes. The uncomfortable 197s could then be confined to 1-2 hour journeys. Unlike a 77-strong fleet, 15-20 class 197s could be cascaded away at a later date (eg. to GWR for the Cornish branches), allowing electrification. This should be among Railfuture Wales' top priorities for the next few months. I am already working on this with others but cancellation of the new trains is a big ask and we need all the help we can get.'

Kind regards,
Thomas J. Wheeler

Do you agree with Thomas's views on the new class 197 trains? Transport for Wales stepped in recently with a grant to enable more comfortable seats to be provided on these trains. Please email peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk or tweet your comments to @RailfutureWales. A further comment on new rolling stock can be found below in 'Riding a Class 195'.

NEWSLINES

M4 Relief Road Alternatives Commission

The South East Wales Transport Commission has been set up by the Welsh Government to examine alternative means of managing transport demand following the decision to cancel the new 10-mile length of motorway to relieve congestion on the M4 at Newport.

Railfuture Wales attended the workshop held in November 2019 as part of the Commission's gathering of evidence. We presented evidence on how the development of better public transport could assist meet the

demand for journeys including the provision of more local rail services on existing routes and the construction of light rail/tram lines.

The Commission's report is not expected until towards the end of 2020.

St Mellons Parkway station

Proposals for this proposed new privately funded station located midway between Cardiff Central and Newport are progressing.

A public exhibition was held in late 2019. This confirmed that a four-platform station is envisaged serving both the fast and relief lines of the four track railway. The station promoter expects most services to call at the station. One exception would be the hourly Swansea to Paddington train which would help ensure that the recently accelerated services to England from stations between Bridgend and Swansea would not be slowed, a potential concern of Railfuture Wales.

The new station would adjoin a proposed large business park. The Welsh Government has promised financial support to the project.

Magor Walkway

On the opposite side of Newport to St Mellons Parkway, a very different new station on the S Wales mainline is planned. A local group has been campaigning for several years to get a new station open at Magor. This would differ from the above St Mellons idea by deliberately discouraging passengers from travel to the station by car, hence the name.

Railfuture Wales gave a talk to the campaign group in January 2020 and learnt that the group was seeking to obtain the significant funds required to complete a GRIP 3 study, the next stage of the lengthy Network Rail process to evaluate investment projects. The Magor campaign has been promised funding from Railfuture's Fighting Fund towards these costs.

WALES FREIGHT & PASSENGER REPORT

The following interesting changes have taken place since my last freight report in autumn 2019

Aggregates

GBRf have worked an occasional train from Cardiff Docks to Crawley. On 24 February this train was diverted to Papworth and on 4th March to Acton. GBRF also works as required stone from Neath Abbey wharf to Stourton Leeds and Hope street Manchester.

Freightliner is working stone from Moreton on Lugg to Days at Hayes and also a weekly train of stone to Radlett. The trains of basic slag run from Grange siding Port Talbot to Days at Hayes with an occasional train to Radlett.

Cement

There is now a weekly train from Penyffodd to Avonmouth. A weekly Clitheroe to Avonmouth cement train continues to run. There are cement trains from Aberthaw to Westbury on Tuesdays and Fridays and to Moorswater on a Wednesday which returns the following day.

Coal

Locomotive 66158 worked the last Gwaun Cae Gurwen to Immingham train. This ran on 12 December 2019 and the branch is now out of use.

Coal trains should have recommenced from Onllwyn to Scunthorpe on 20 February 2020 but the first was cancelled because of flooding on the branch.

The North Blyth to Margam Grange coal trains continue to run.

On 22 February train 66041 worked a Cwmbargoed to Newport ADJ coal train. This went forward the following day to Scunthorpe. The revised working was required following line closures for track work.

There have been recent coal trains from Cwmbargoed to Immingham. On 9 March 66053 worked a 20.54 Margam to Immingham special, the coal having come the previous day from Cwmbargoed.

Scrap

Trains of Northern class 142 Pacers, Anglia mark 4 coaches and former GWR HST coaches have arrived at Sims at Newport Docks for scrap. The class 142 units worked to Sims under their own power.

For over a year there has been a regular Tuesday Saltley to Tidal with scrap. On the 9th March the empty MBA wagons were worked from Cardiff to Saltley EMR, as normal and subsequently they have been used on a series of trains from Saltley to Liverpool Alexandra Dock EMR with scrap.

A further train of contaminated fly ash departed Neath Abbey Wharf for Rossington on 9th January hauled by 60055.

Steel

Locomotive 66001 worked a service that has not run recently on 4 March via the Channel Tunnel to Maubuuge where TATA has a rolling mill.

There is now a regular second train from Margam to Round Oak

Trains with coil from Margam and Llanwern to Birdport have ceased. The last train ran on 8TH November 2019. The traffic has been redirected to Newport Docks

Passenger services

Locomotive 800031 worked the first electric IET from Cardiff which ran on 5th January when it worked 08.50 Cardiff to Paddington. The electric section from Severn Tunnel West to Pilning has been taken out of use because of problems in Severn Tunnel.

Transport for Wales had allocated the following rolling stock for the new timetable which commenced on 16th December 2019: two sets of Mark3 coaches, two sets of Mark2 coaches, 11 two car class 175, 16 three car class 175, 4 two car class 170, 10 three car class 170, 21 class 153, 24 class 158, 36 class 150 and 30 class 142/143.

The December 2019 service requires 17 Pacers class 142/143, 28 class 150, 19 class 153, 6 class 170, 20 class 158, 9 two car class 175 and 12 three car class 175 together with the four sets of coaching stock. It will be noted that over 100 units are needed each day excluding the locomotive hauled stock.

Subsequently 3 class 153 were transferred from GWR, 5 from Anglia and 5 from East Midlands. Some of these are on loan from Porterbrook pending delivery of class 769 and will not receive PRM modifications. The 5 class 230 for the Wrexham to Bidston Borderlands service are heavily delayed. There will be a servicing facility for these units at Wrexham General station. There have been some trial runs between Long Marston and Moreton in the Marsh.

Class 769 units have been at Cardiff since March 2019 and their first venture outside the confines of Cardiff Canton was on 17th March 2020 when 769008 worked to Caerphilly and back. The unit developed a fault at Heath and turned back at Caerphilly instead of going to Rhymney. Also at Cardiff Canton are units 769002 and 769003

Units 142012/79 are at Landore and 142086 at Cardiff Canton providing spare parts.

Ex Anglia class 170 were put in to service on Maesteg to Cheltenham and Bridgend to Ebbw Vale routes from 16th December 2019

The December 2019 timetable had a number of changes. Not all of the changes were seen as improvements by the rail user groups

It is planned to use mark 4 coaches on 07.02 Cardiff to Holyhead, 11.34 Holyhead to Cardiff and 17.17 Cardiff Holyhead, 05.19 Holyhead to Cardiff 11.24 Cardiff to Holyhead and 16.51 Holyhead to Cardiff. The journey times for these trains was reduced. However the removal of stops from the 07.02 Cardiff to Holyhead and 16.51 Holyhead Cardiff raised a great number of protests and Transport for Wales had to reinstate stops, which had been removed between Shrewsbury and Wrexham, on the 07.02 Cardiff to Holyhead which was retimed earlier from Cardiff. It was a pity that there had not been adequate consultation beforehand. Attempts had been made to fill the gaps with advertised bus services but this was not acceptable to commuters.

There were long awaited improvements to Sunday services with the Maesteg branch finally having a Sunday service and the Blaenau Ffestiniog branch and Llandudno all year Sunday services.

It was initially planned to remove all class 150 workings from North Wales which included the Wrexham to Bidston which was to be worked by two pairs of class 153. The Blaenau Ffestiniog service did however become class 153 worked and the Chester Crewe service was allocated a pair of class 153. The new Chester to Liverpool service is booked to be worked by class 175.

In West Wales there is more use of class 153 especially on the Pembroke Dock branch thus releasing class 150 for use in the Cardiff Valleys.

The use of class 37 on 06.10 Rhymney to Cardiff and 17.46 return and 07.43 Rhymney to Cardiff and 1700 return continued into the new timetable. Three class 153 took over the Rhymney to Cardiff service from 20th February when 153325/333 /xxx worked from 17.46 Cardiff to Rhymney. 37418 worked the last northbound service at 17.00 from Cardiff on 5th March and returned with the stock the following day. Locomotive 37025 took the coaches to Landore for storage on 9th March 2020.

With the delayed introduction of the Mark 4 stock, the weekday mark 3 workings have continued on the following: 05.19 Holyhead to Cardiff and 17.16 return, 07.11 Crewe to Chester, 07.38 Chester to Manchester Piccadilly, 09.52 Manchester Piccadilly to Holyhead 13.07 Holyhead to Manchester Piccadilly, 16.54 Manchester Piccadilly to Llandudno and 19.35 Llandudno to Crewe.

The Pacers have been concentrated working in pairs on the Rhymney/Bargoed to Penarth services in anticipation of being replaced by class 769 units later in the year. The remaining Cardiff Valley services are worked by single or pairs of class 150 units.

Rowland Pittard

RIDING A CLASS 195

Recently I had the opportunity to ride a class 195 belonging to Northern as the class is due in Wales in the next few years, I give my thoughts and how it compares to its predecessor the Pacer.

My journey was on the new Northern Chester – Leeds service which allowed me to visit my brother in Halifax without changing in Manchester, the time saving was quite spectacular even with a short change at Chester. Station to station about the same time as it would have taken by car, 2 ½ hours. Excellent.

The class 195 I boarded at Chester was new; clean and tidy. Easy to access with the plug doors, no step up as on the Pacer. Interestingly you can see from one end of the train to the other due to the wide gangways which are wider than the aisle. As the seating is 2+2 against the Pacers 3+2 the passengers carried are about the same but the ambience and comfort is in a different world. A smooth ride against the Pacer's full body massage. The 195 was a little jittery, perhaps the suspension needs fine tuning? Passenger information is good, against the Pacer's none, though the estimated time of arrival screen said we were on time though we were late. Needs working on.

It is air conditioned which makes it an even temperature and as there are no open windows no engine noise. The toilets, only one on both, needless to say the 195 was better. All seats had power points, could not see USB connections. Both are single class.

Clearly the 195 is an improvement, but against a 175 the difference is not as great. The Northern unit is a commuter seat configuration, it will be interesting how the TfW ones are arranged. Will there be dividing doors, areas for bicycles, more standing room or what?

Richard Wilcock

CHESTER STATION: AN OPINION

As a regular user of this station which is managed by Transport for Wales Rail (TfW Rail) I feel that is unfit for purpose. Firstly, it is a busy station, nearly 3 million people a year, more than Newport. Secondly, though the station has been improved this has been piecemeal manner and is showing its limitations.

Here are a few of the issues:

1. Lack of capacity to handle services
2. Platforms too low. The new Stadler class 777 Merseyrail need a consistent platform height. All platforms have a large step down.
3. Platform 3 has a switch to hold two trains, platform 4 has not due to roof supports in the way.
4. The gate line circulation area is too tight both sides.
5. The bridge from platform 3 to 4, 5, 6 and 7 is too narrow.
6. Platform 5 and 6 have a gap in roof cover between them and the rest of the station.
7. Roofing is inconsistent.
8. Small waiting rooms.
9. No First-Class Lounge.
10. Car parking inadequate.
11. Forecourt inadequate at peak times such as arrival of trains from London train.

Network Rail did spend £10 million in 2007 on doing the station up, though this may have had more focus on expanding retail provision rather than improve the passenger experience.

My opinion is the station needs a major make over. I understand Cheshire West and Chester, the local council, is looking at a redevelopment of the area around the station. Though the station is Grade 2 listed which may be a constraint.

Roofing is one issue which if replaced would allow platform 4 to have a crossover allowing to hold two x three-car units increasing capacity. Moving platforms 5 and 6 closer to the main station would save walking time and would require roofing. Another bridge and/or a much wider one, possibly a bridge deck with retail units and waiting areas akin to Reading would relieve the cross-platform issues. Perhaps the unused line next to platform 1 could be covered over to put a bridge over to the gap between platforms 5/6 and the building.

Another idea would be an island platform with a bridge to the North side giving another entrance and access to a multi-story car park. This would take some pressure from the front of the station.

In my view the station needs a radical makeover, which will not come cheap. But after one cheap upgrade it is time to do 'the right thing?' Railfuture and other organisation need to have a say to provide a station the travelling public needs.

Richard Wilcock

Thanks are extended to all who contributed to this issue. In all cases, any opinions expressed are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily represent *Railfuture* policy. Material for the next issue – articles, letters, photos or comments – should be sent to the editor, Peter Kingsbury at peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk or by post to 22 Winchester Avenue, Penylan, Cardiff CF23 9BT, by 28th August for the autumn 2020 issue. The editor may edit letters for publication.

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One of 14 Railfuture regional branches covering the whole of Britain



Photograph courtesy of Lindon Stone

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