



PARTNERIAETH RHEILFFYRDDY
CAMBRIAN
RAILWAYS PARTNERSHIP

ADOLYGIAD BLYNYDDOL

2016

ANNUAL REVIEW



IT HAS truly been a year of working in partnership over the past twelve months, a year which has yielded excellent results, and one that has seen stronger links forged with a number of organisations across Wales.



During the year we have seen a significant change in the running pattern of the trains on the Cambrian Main Line, with an additional 8 services between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury to provide a 'peak' hourly service and an additional service on the Cambrian Coast line giving it a 2-hourly service throughout the day Monday to Friday. This in part is down to the work of the partnership's rail development officer who has worked as part of the Cambrian Rail Implementation Group which was sanctioned by the Minister Edwina Hart (the Heart of Wales Line's equivalent officer also sits on the HOWL Implementation Group as well). The group continues to work on other exciting projects on the line, working closely with Arriva Trains Wales, Network Rail, and the Welsh Government which has in turn afforded community rail in Wales far more exposure at Welsh Government level.

In terms of working with communities the Confident Traveller project – part of a joint effort with ATW's Schools Liaison Officer and the Cambrian Railways Partnership has developed significantly with many more schools and colleges participating in the scheme – helping build bridges with their rail network from a young age.

In this review I hope that it will give you a suitable overview of how this small, but perfectly formed Community Rail Partnership is one of the most innovative and dynamic CRP's in the UK.

Community Rail is far more than simply putting planters on platforms and pretty pictures in pamphlets – though planters and pamphlets are important – to us it is also about making sure that the railway is able to deliver the service that the customers need, and that the customers (whether currently rail users or not) feel confident and able to make use of the rail resource that serves their communities, linking them with other communities across Wales, the UK, and beyond. Only by working integrally with the entire rail industry and the communities which they serve can this be achieved.

I feel that in the past 12 months we have proved that this little partnership has achieved far more than the sum of its parts thanks to the foresight of all funding partners who have actively supported the officer's work programme throughout the year. I hope that the next twelve months sees similar success with the themes that we plan to follow in 2016-17.

*Rhydian Mason
Rail Development Officer
Cambrian Railways Partnership.*

“A Helping Hand”

Our major project in 2015 was the production of our new information resource ‘A Helping Hand.’ This project was a progression from our previous award winning information film ‘First Class Safety’, produced as a direct result of outreach visits made to special needs schools and colleges where the first film was shown to various groups. It soon became apparent that many of those students were simply unaware of how to organise the additional assistance that they might need, and many were unaware that there was additional assistance available on the UK rail network free of charge.



Filming at Borth – Phil Caldwell (ATW) directs Pete (Coleg Ceredigion) whilst Jay (AMP Media) films.

Therefore, and in-line with our aims of encouraging more use and better use of our railway as a public transport resource we decided to expand our own provision to be more inclusive to those with learning difficulties, additional needs and mobility issues. Again, a film based information resource was deemed the best option, and again, with the help of the experienced AMP Media, and with advice and technical expertise from Arriva Trains Wales, Network Rail and ATOC, not to mention practical support from Virgin Trains and British Transport Police, the film project came together. Additional funding for this project was received from ACORP via the Welsh Government Grant scheme.

Working closely with students and lecturers/supporters from both Derwen College in Gobowen (one of the UK’s leading residential colleges for young people with learning difficulties) and the Vocational Access course at Coleg Ceredigion in Aberystwyth, the parameters and requirements of the film were drawn up, ensuring that the finished product’s contents and information was ‘fit for purpose’.



Charles Symons (AMP Media) filming at Euston Station

Following completion of the film, it was entered in the 'Passengers Matter' category at the 2015 ACORP awards which it duly won outright.

The film has also been endorsed by David Sindall, head of Disability and Inclusion at ATOC, and Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas. ASD-info-Wales (an all Wales organisation promoting Autistic Spectrum Disorder resources) is also promoting the film as an excellent resource.

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas sponsored an event at the Senedd in January 2016 where the film was formally launched, along with a campaign to draw attention to the Orange Wallet Scheme which is featured in the film.

We have also heard at the end of January 2016 that the film as part of the wider project (encompassing our previous film – First Class Safety) called 'The Confident Traveller' has been shortlisted as a finalist in the 2016 Welsh Business Awards, as a joint entry with Arriva Trains Wales in the 'Excellence in Community Relations' category.



Students from both colleges with Phil Caldwell (ATW), Rhydian Mason (CRP) and Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas at the official launch of the film earlier this year.



Winners! At the 2015 ACORP Awards held at Torquay, the film won the 'Passengers Matter' Category outright. Seen here are Rhydian Mason (CRP), Phil Caldwell (ATW), Robin (Derwen Colege), Aled (Coleg Ceredigion) receiving their award.

Our Publications

This year has seen something of a shift in terms of the focus of our promotional brochures. Traditionally the CRP has always focussed on the tourism products that a trip on the Cambrian lines can offer, however, this year, to coincide with the introduction of the additional rail services that were introduced in May 2015 we looked at focussing on the local market, highlighting the new opportunities for commuting by train that were afforded by the new 'peak' hourly services. We also looked at capitalising on the positive publicity that emerged from the additional services announcement by launching our 'Connections by Cambrian' campaign which focussed on how easy it is to get to major UK destinations from the Cambrian line.

We have also commissioned two further publications which will take us right back into the heart of tourism related offerings which we will have ready for distribution before the start of this year's tourist season.



"Connections via Cambrian" - completed

One of the misconceptions that are frequently given by non-rail users is that 'you can't get anywhere with our trains without having to change trains all the time'. For destinations north or south of Shrewsbury, or beyond Birmingham this is true – but not to the extent that the misconception carries. The connections leaflet was produced to explain in the simplest possible terms how many connections/changes are required from the Cambrian Lines to get to major destinations in the UK (and abroad via Birmingham International Airport!). This leaflet has proved popular and useful and has proven effective in explaining to people across the UK how easy it is to get to destinations.

"Commuting via Cambrian" - completed

The introduction of 'peak' hourly services on the Cambrian in May 2015 was as a direct response to the recognised latent demand for rail services at peak hours on the Cambrian line identified during the October 2013 rail surveys. As such, this was an opportunity to engage with commuters and job-seekers across the region to introduce them to the concept of travelling to work via train. The surveys conducted during October 2015 showed a marked increase of over 40% in rail use particularly amongst those commuting.

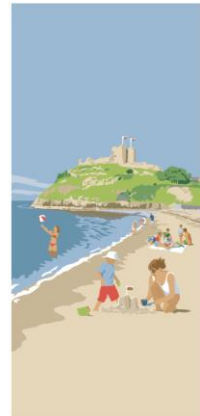


"Beaches and Castles" – commissioned

It has been some years since the CRP last did a traditional 'trip to the beach' type leaflet, and, following sight of a modern, crisp, French variation on this theme entitled '*Les plages et le chateaux*' it was decided that we should once again revisit this concept but with a more modern twist. This has now been commissioned and we are in contact with CADW to see

how we can work with them to encourage visits to Castles by train by offering visitors with a valid train ticket a 20% discount or a '2 for 1' on their entry fee.

The castles featured will of course be Harlech, Criccieth and Caernarfon (the later being only a short ride by WHR away), and mentions will also be made of Aberystwyth and Powis castles which are both iconic locations in their own respects. We are spoilt for choice in terms of beaches all the way from Aberystwyth right up to Pwllheli, therefore this will hopefully be a throwback (but with a modern twist) to the old holiday values of 'heading west by train'.



Work in progress – specially commissioned artwork will form the basis for the beaches and castles brochure. Artwork evokes memories of the 'classic' rail posters of the early 20th century and the idea for this project was inspired by a conversation with

This will be ready well in time for the tourist season.

“Wales on Rails 3” – commissioned

This partnership has often focussed on the Welsh ends of the line, and rarely in comparison has Shrewsbury – the other end of the line – had its fair share of the spoils in terms of tourist information.

Following on from the previous 2 Wales on Rails pamphlets which focussed on short breaks/weekend breaks for families on a budget (WoR1 – Aberystwyth area) and also on romantic breaks for couples (WoR2 Criccieth area), we are now going to be focussing firmly on using Shrewsbury as a base/hub from which to explore locations on 3 different community rail lines – the Cambrian, Heart of Wales, and Shrewsbury-Chester. This will be an opportunity for 3 community rail partnerships (with lines that converge at Shrewsbury) to work together on a joint project that will not only promote our respective lines, but also promote Wales as a whole, as a destination within easy reach of a bustling border town with plenty to do.

This is already underway and will be ready well in time for the tourist season.

Promos in print

We also promote our partnership and our railway from time to time in selected publications such as Mid Wales Tourism's Bedroom Browser (a copy of which is located in every accommodation providing member of MWT residences throughout Mid Wales, Going Places, a popular tourism based newspaper distributed throughout the north west of England and the Midlands, Ceredigion Council's own 'Ceredigion Tourism' brochure (distributed throughout the UK), and occasionally, we will consider advertising in other publications as well. It's all about promoting the Cambrian region as the place to be, and the Cambrian Line as the way in which to get here.



Welsh Government engagement

Over the past 12 months the Cambrian Railways Partnership has become a far more familiar name to Ministers, Members and Officers at Welsh Government. The level of engagement and interaction is the highest it has ever been thanks to a number of factors which have fallen into place at the right time, as well as a positive 'can do' attitude between both sides.

Since the establishment of the Mid Wales Rail Implementation Groups, both on the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines, we have enjoyed a far more productive relationship with our colleagues at Welsh Government which has led to far more opportunities being presented to us on the Cambrian and on the other community rail lines in Wales.



Hosting the first Wales & Borders franchise specification seminar for Rail Interest Groups – May 11th, 2015, City Hall, Cardiff.

In May 2015 I was invited to host a seminar on the future of Wales and Borders franchise specification by Welsh Government at City Hall, Cardiff. Indeed, as a member of the Cambrian Implementation Group I am able to ensure that the Cambrian Railways Partnership now has an opportunity to comment directly on major developments for the line by being a part of that group. To date we have been involved with the hourly service campaign that led to 9 additional services on the line in May 2015, are involved in discussions relating to new and improved infrastructure at existing Cambrian stations and are also involved in discussions about the potential for new stations on the line.

This has emerged thanks to our involvement on the Implementation Group – much as my counterpart on the Heart of Wales Line has been involved in similar projects on his line simultaneously. This has led to a number of significant positives for us, including a far higher 'credibility' for the type of work and projects that our partnership and other Welsh CRPs are able to deliver either on their own or as part of a wider, more regional, co-operative group.

There is no doubt that our involvement on this group has been hugely positive in all aspects, not least of which is the impact on users of the railway line who are experiencing changes for the better in many aspects of their rail experiences.

Cambrian Rail Implementation Group.

As a member of this group the partnership is being given the opportunity to influence high level decisions for the benefit of rail users on the Cambrian, and the opportunity to engage closely with the Minister and her senior civil servants on other issues.



Cakes made by Welshpool Town Council and given to passengers on the first day of new services!

In May 2015 this led to 9 additional services being introduced on the Cambrian Lines as a direct result of work undertaken jointly by the Rail Development Officer. Indeed, the work leading up to the extra services was acknowledged by ACORP (Association for Community Rail Partnerships) with a 'Working In Partnership' Award presented in October 2015 to the Cambrian Rail Implementation Group.

To celebrate the arrival of the additional services, the CRP helped organise a series of hurrah's at stations on the Cambrian, starting with the 'new' 1230 from Aberystwyth (which has proved to be a particularly well used train since it's introduction). A Delegation

of VIP's were invited along including representatives from each of the Local Authorities, Assembly Members, Town Councils and the media. This culminated in a special reception hosted at and by Shrewsbury Town Council who welcomed this enhanced link with Mid Wales.

We were commissioned as a group to undertake a further survey in October 2015 to 'mirror' the October 2013 survey which ultimately led to the introduction of the new services. As part of the survey programme I suggested that we also hold a series of informal focus groups at the main stations on the line to gather further, supplementary information from rail users that wouldn't otherwise be captured. The survey, along with the results from the focus group revealed a hugely positive outcome.

In the first 6 months since the introduction of the additional services, which were supported by 2 mini-PR-campaigns from the Cambrian Railways Partnership, initial results from a further survey undertaken by the Implementation Group suggest and increase in passenger numbers of around 40% - a staggeringly positive outcome for all involved.



Elin Jones AM looks on as an excitable crowd gathers at Aberystwyth for the first ever departure of a 1230 service from the station in recent times.

Partnership working, as part of the Implementation group continues working closely with the Welsh Government on future possibilities, including work to facilitate new stations on the line, station infrastructure improvements, and possibly, further train services!



Mark Williams MP for Ceredigion – a regular Cambrian user caught the 0830 from Aberystwyth on this day, instead of his usual 0730, to be amongst the first to use the 'new' trains.



Members of Machynlleth Town Council greet the train at their station as it comes in.



Russel George AM for Montgomeryshire grabs a commemorative cupcake at Welshpool



Some of the Shrewsbury town council delegation complete with town crier greeting the train on it's arrival.

The CROWs – The Community Rail Officers of Wales.

As the only 'group' of Community Rail Officers in the UK that pro-actively work together regularly it has been a busy year for the 'CROWs' (Community Rail Officers of Wales). Thanks in part to the excellent relationships and bridges that have been built between the Welsh Government and the Cambrian and Heart of Wales Rail Partnerships we as a group have been afforded numerous opportunities by the Minister Edwina Hart herself to engage with various departments within her portfolio including discussions relating to the next rail franchise and how it might integrate community rail as 'part and parcel' of its forthcoming specification. To this end, we have jointly prepared a number of papers and briefing notes for the Minister outlining a vision of how community rail partnerships could be included within part of the next specification. Whilst much of what we envisage mirrors that which the Department for Transport is specifying increasingly in England, we firmly believe that we



would be in a far stronger position than many CRPs in England due to our extensive history of working co-operatively as a group should we be able to benefit from the same support – both financial and otherwise – that will be afforded our English counterparts.

In February this year we were given an opportunity to meet with the new chair of Visit Wales – Margaret Llewellyn. This was an extremely positive meeting during which we as individual development officers were given an impromptu 'soap box' opportunity to 'sell ourselves' in terms of the tourism product, or potential tourism products that we could offer. We firmly believe that we are an asset to be utilised by organisations like VW and initial responses from our meeting with them have been positive.

In terms of the future engagement, we collectively wish to continue what we have started by being integral parts of project based improvement initiatives such as those that are underway on both the Cambrian and Heart of Wales Lines. It is something of a model by which community rail partnerships can get involved far more strategically, making better use of their engagement with the communities they serve.

Events and Promotion



At the 'Re-Freshers' Fair, Aberystwyth University 2016.

Over the past year we taken many opportunities to 'sell ourselves'. We do this by distributing our publications to a wide range of places – from pubs to hotels to caravan parks to schools and places of work. We also visit various locations and events to take our own displays out to the people. This is an important part of what we do in that it gives us the opportunity to talk one to one with interested parties. The comments and conversations vary from discussions on the comfort of seats, to discussions on what to do on a day off by train, all the way to sometimes very intricate and complicated discussions on 'bull head rail' when presented with a bone-fide enthusiast.

We have worked closely with colleagues at Traveline Cymru at numerous events – Freshers Fairs being a prime example. Working with an organisation like Traveline enables us to jointly become a travel and transport hub at that particular event and is an arrangement that works well.

We've also taken displays to related events at locations like Chester Station and also at the Senedd in Cardiff, not to mention attending other smaller events and workplaces.

Recently the focus has been predominantly on the new services, and looking ahead, the focus will be far more on more opportunities to 'promote' tourism and the Cambrian to a wider audience.

ACORP Through ACORP and their 'Community Rail in the City' programme we will be given an opportunity to display the Cambrian at the newly re-built Birmingham New Street Station in May.
New life for local lines

We also have an opportunity to get involved with the Machynlleth Comedy Festival, an event which, despite humble beginnings is now a major part of the UK Comedy scene, and an event which brings people to the area from all over the UK. If we were to be involved we would then focus on working with the organisers to promote the Cambrian lines as a means by which people would get to the festival. It is an excellent high profile opportunity.



One issue that we do have however is making ourselves more prominently seen at our own stations. To this end, we will be procuring a number of standard railway size (Double Royal) poster cases to be erected at our main stations. In order to make sure we make the best of them we will be producing a double royal poster to match each of our brochures, meaning that we can promote the partnership, our website, and a range of our eye-catching publicity materials across our lines.

2016-2017

A project plan for 2016-2017 has already been prepared which outlines how we will make best use of the resources available to us.

I hope that we will continue to work closely with colleagues at Arriva Trains Wales on what has been in the Cambrian's case a most productive and positive 12 months in 2015-2016.

We are now at a stage where stocks of most of our publications are exhausted, which gives us an opportunity to refresh some of them where necessary before re-printing selected items.

I also believe that the time is right to consider venturing into social media advertising/promotion, and to this end I would like to produce a short 30second or 1 minute commercial along with a paid package for showing it on social media and you-tube sites. Using key words, people searching for 'Trains in Wales', Cambrian, Rail holidays, rail tourism etc, would be directed to watch our short film before being taken to their selected video. Likewise, Facebook also has a similar facility. I believe this is the next step up which will once more mark us out as a totally forward thinking and dynamic community rail partnership.

In addition, there are preliminary, informal discussions underway to consider producing a further information film that will answer another problem that we have identified. The incorrect use of occupational crossings (of which there are a few on the Cambrian lines!) is something which can have serious consequences, and a number of incidents and/or 'near misses' over the past few years means that we should consider how we can help facilitate an awareness campaign. With our award winning experience of information film production I believe we could work with the rail industry, and in particular the farming industry representatives (both main unions and the Wales YFC networks) to come up with not only a useful information film, but also the networks by which the film would be distributed and viewed. If we are able to proceed with this I believe it should be shot entirely on the Cambrian (and marketed as such), but be produced in such a way that it would be relevant anywhere in the UK.

Conclusion

I hope that this annual review gives a flavour of how we are evolving as the Cambrian Railways Partnership. I think that the past 12 months has been the most fruitful in the partnership's history in terms of not only achieving tangible results, but also in terms of building bridges.

The challenge now is to capitalise on the past year and make the absolute most of what we can in the year ahead.

My thanks to all who have supported the partnership in any way over the past year. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

