

Issue 65 Autumn 2018

Rail Wales

Newsletter of Railfuture in Wales



Where are the wires? A class 800 bi-mode train has just left Cardiff Central for London in September 2018 and passes under masts awaiting wiring on the main line to Newport in the still to be completed electrification. Photo: Peter Kingsbury

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CYMRU | WALES

WELCOME

It is not difficult to identify the main topic on which this issue of Rail Wales will focus. There has been one overwhelming subject which all those who care for Welsh rail services have been discussing: the Wales and Borders franchise award.

On the 14th October 2018 there will begin what promises to be the largest change in the nature of rail passenger services in Wales over a five-year period since the 1960s. However, do not expect there to be an overnight transformation of the service experienced by the public. This will be phased in with a target of the transformation being completed by 2023 (see details on page 4). Furthermore, in light of delays that affected the delivery of many of the significant rail infrastructure upgrades in England, it will surprise few if there is not some slippage in the proposed timetable as it involves major infrastructure work in the Valleys north of Cardiff Queen Street and the assembly of a large amount of new rolling stock.

The proposal hits a number of long standing Wales wide targets set out in Railfuture's Wales Development Plan 'On Track for the 21st Century', such as renewal of the country's ageing rolling stock (c 90% of services will use new trains by 2023), but it is important that we identify topics where further improvements are necessary and continue to campaign for these measures. Secondly, we need to be vigilant to ensure that the proposals in the franchise award are delivered.

Railfuture Wales issued the following press release following the announcement of the franchise decision.

“The pledge to almost completely renew the ageing rolling stock is welcome although details of the new trains will be carefully evaluated by Railfuture to ensure the passenger experience is enhanced. Proposals for more frequent services on some of the SE Wales Metro routes together with electrification of certain routes are very welcome. It is not yet clear whether integrated ticketing which allows seamless transfer between bus and rail will be introduced. Railfuture considers this vital.

Improvements to Sunday services to remove the disincentive to travel at weekends are welcome as is the service frequency boost to many routes although more could be done to make services more regular on rural routes to make rail more attractive to people in mid and north Wales.

The pledge for direct services to Liverpool from North Wales and Cardiff starting in 2022 is applauded. Last but not least, the pledge to spend £194m on station modernisation will help ensure the improved train services are matched by a better passenger experience at beginning and end of the journey and more importantly at interchanges.

Railfuture Wales looks forward to Transport for Wales proposals to integrate bus services with rail services to give a real integrated transport system for Wales”.

On a less positive note, the ongoing saga of the Paddington-South Wales electrification continues to disappoint. The date for start of the operation of electric trains to Cardiff has been postponed from December 2018 to an unspecified date in the second half of 2019. It will be a surprise if the service begins prior to the December 2019 timetable change. As has been extensively reported elsewhere, the sorry tale of programme delays and cost overruns in the Great Western electrification is an example of how not to manage a large infrastructure project. It is hoped that the electrification of the core Cardiff Valleys lines, which is being coordinated by Amey, will learn from the errors on the Great Western main line.

Peter Kingsbury, chair, Railfuture Cymru/Wales

THE WALES and BORDERS PROPOSAL

Rail Wales readers will probably be very familiar with the contract which operator and development partner Keolis/Amey have entered into with Transport for Wales to provide passenger services over a 15-year period commencing on the 14th October 2018. Therefore, Rail Wales will only provide an outline of the more significant changes as an introduction to the appraisal of the award provided by Railfuture member Jim Maggs on pages 6 - 8.

The most-comprehensive summary of the intended programme was provided in a statement issued by Welsh Government Economy and Transport Minister Ken Skates, set out in the table below. A map on page 8 summaries the changes to be seen in the South Wales Metro area.



Route tpd = train per day tph = train per hour	May 2017 Mon-Fri daytime frequency and calling pattern	Change we will implement
Changes introduced in Dec 2018		
Chester – Liverpool Lime St	None	1tph
Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare Valley – Cardiff Central	n/a	Additional early morning service to Cardiff Central, Monday to Friday
Aberdare – Cardiff	Sunday timetable currently being trialled	Sunday timetable made permanent, and will look at retiming the final service.
North Wales Coast	Sunday service currently has a large gap in the morning	Additional Sunday service between Llandudno Junction and Chester to bridge the gap between services in the morning
Bidston – Wrexham	n/a	Two additional Sunday morning services between Wrexham and Bidston, and two additional Sunday afternoon services between Bidston and Wrexham.
Changes introduced in 2019		
Most routes	n/a	Earlier first trains and more frequent services on Sundays. We will increase Sunday mileage by 22%
Cardiff Central – Bridgend via South Wales mainline (all operators' services)	3 or 4tph	Consistent 4tph
Cardiff Central - Holyhead	0.5tph	3tpd Loco-hauled coaching stock (LHCS) included in 0.5tph; faster journeys
Aberystwyth – Shrewsbury	n/a	Stop at Bow Street from March 2020
Changes introduced in 2021		
Cardiff Central/ Newport - Ebbw Vale Town	1tph Cardiff – Ebbw Vale	Additional 1tph Ebbw Vale – Newport
Wrexham – Bidston (N Wales Metro)	1tph	2tph, 1tph fast, limited stops
Changes introduced in 2022		
Cardiff – Caerphilly	4tph to Caerphilly	6tph to Caerphilly

Route tpd = train per day tph = train per hour	May 2017 Mon-Fri daytime frequency and calling pattern	Change we will implement
Swansea - Shrewsbury (via Heart of Wales)	4tpd (+1tpd on parts of the line)	5tpd
Cardiff Central - Cheltenham	1tph in 2 hours out of 3	Consistent 1tph all hours
Aberystwyth – Shrewsbury	1tph in most hours	Consistent 1tph all hours
Cardiff – Coryton/Caerphilly	n/a	Crwys Road new station opens
Cardiff – Aberdare/ Merthyr Tydfil/Treherbert	2tph each route	4tph each route with 2tph to Bay and 2tph to Central
Cardiff Central – Liverpool via Wrexham General	-	New service 0.5tph Cardiff - Liverpool, 0.5tph Shrewsbury – Cardiff
Crewe/ Liverpool Lime St – Holyhead/ Llandudno and Manchester Airport – Chester	2tph made up of 1tph Manchester Airport – Llandudno; 1tph Crewe – Chester	3tph made up of 1tph Manchester Airport – Bangor; 1tph Liverpool Lime St – Llandudno; 1tph Crewe – Chester
Changes introduced in 2023		
WCB routes	-	Further increase in Sunday journeys
Cardiff – Rhymney	1tph from Rhymney, 4tph only as far as Bargoed	4tph Rhymney - Cardiff Central
Cardiff Queen Street - Cardiff Bay	5tph	6tph. Extension to new station at the Flourish with an additional station at Loudoun Square
Cambrian Coast between Tywyn and Pwllheli on summer Sundays	3 irregular trains per day	1tph with a new express service.
Cardiff – Bridgend via Vale of Glamorgan	1tph	2tph
Changes introduced in 2024		
CVL routes	n/a	2tph on Sundays

THE NEW WALES FRANCHISE: A MEMBER'S VIEW

Overall, says **Jim Maggs**, I'll give the franchise award 6 out of 10.

The Positives are:

- 1) Additional Sunday services.
- 2) Half hourly in the Ebbw Valley.
- 3) 4 trains per hour from Treherbert / Aberdare / Merthyr and Rhymney.
- 4) 2 trains per hour between Wrexham and Bidston.
- 5) A meagre 1 extra train on the Central Wales Line (Heart of Wales).
- 6) 1 extra to / from Fishguard.
- 7) A train every two hours from Cardiff to Liverpool.
- 8) An additional two locomotive hauled services between Cardiff and Holyhead - but we should have done the same as in Scotland and used retired HSTs from London services, as they are removed from front line services and put them to use on Manchester, Holyhead and the proposed Liverpool services.
- 9) 2 trains per hour on the Vale of Glamorgan Line.
- 10) New trains - but will they be any good? Just look at the new Hitachi IEP trains on the London Services - A good train but with awful interiors and no buffet! Also, most new commuter trains introduced recently in the U.K. have awful interiors and seating, the result of dumbing down by the Civil Servants in the Department of Transport, instead of being specified by professional railwaymen!
- 11) Additional services between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury.

The Negatives are:

- 1) No additional services to and from Pembroke Dock or Milford Haven - The people of West Wales deserve far better not only in terms of frequency but in speeded up services. Additional services could operate via the Swansea district line, with new stations at Pontarddulais/ Grovesend Parkway and Morrision Parkway.
- 2) Nothing extra on the Conwy / Lledr Valley line between Llandudno and Blaenau Ffestiniog (except on a Sunday), even in the summer months - and this is a big tourist destination.
- 3) Refurbished ex-London Transport Tube stock for Wrexham-Bidston.
- 4) There does not appear to be any additional services along the North Wales coast to promote commuting and encourage people out of their cars and off the A55 Express way!

- 5) No half-hourly service for the Maesteg branch, although I appreciate, that this may come at some stage, later?
- 6) No extension of services between Aberdare and Hirwaun or reopening to Abertillery in the Ebbw Fach - although again, this may come later?
- 7) Non-continuous electrification of the Valley's network, which I suppose is better than nothing and does not include Barry Island or Penarth (considered part of the existing valley lines services).
- 8) Loss of through services from Treherbert/Aberdare/Merthyr to Penarth and Barry Island. Possibly a loss of through fares to elsewhere on the (former) British Rail Network?
- 9) Hybrid Tram trains from the above parts of the Valley's network, which will have no toilets, little luggage space or space for bikes and maximum speed of 60mph. Yet, the Rhymney Valley, will supposedly have decent new heavy rail rolling stock. Why?

Transport for Wales and Ken Skates have tried to justify this by stating that the tram trains can be used in the future to easily extend the network but this could also be said of the Rhymney valley! We all know that this will never happen and for such places as Hirwaun and Blaenrhondda (or even Blaencwm), could be easily served by heavy rail. Tram trains, should only be used within the confines of Cardiff such as Coryton, Cardiff Bay, Radyr and new extensions proposed within this area - possibly Cregiau etc and into the City Centre.

As for no toilets - this is a really big negative and backward step. They propose as an alternative to have toilets at every railway station - how daft can you get? It will cost a fortune to build these toilets, to clean, repair and maintain them and especially as they will be subject to vandalism. It is must surely be better and more convenient for passengers to have toilets on board proper trains? How would you feel when travelling with friends and family to / fro Cardiff, when you tell them, I'll have to get off to visit the loo and so, I will meet you in Cardiff, later? What if you were on the last train home - you'll get left stranded! In answer to this TfW and Ken Skates said that the final services of the day, would take a toilet break at the halfway point along the way. How laughable is this?

- 10) Whilst I appreciate that we must be patient as far as new rolling stock is concerned, it is nevertheless, disappointing, that we have to wait at least 4 years, for many of the improved frequencies and extra capacity. Surely, there's enough spare stock lying idle, to make things happen within the next year and I mean, in addition to the converted bi modes, class 369s and additional single unit 153s?

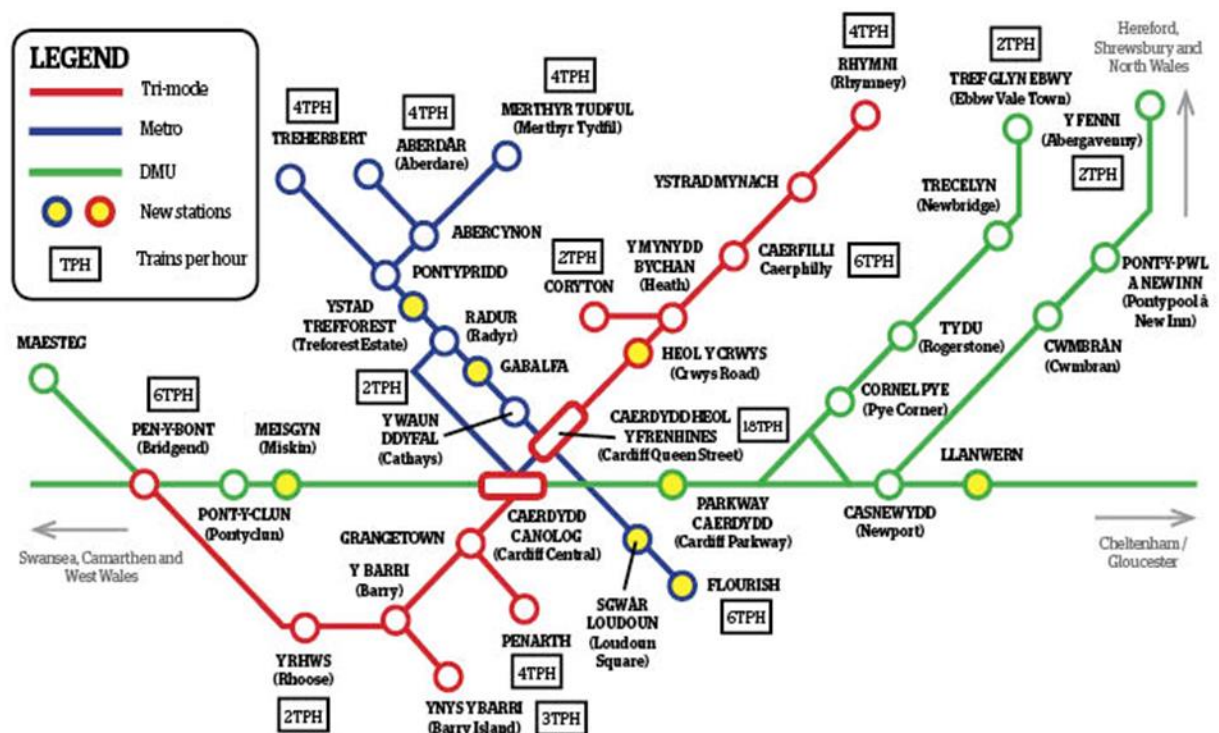
- 11) No Electrification of the North Wales Coast.
- 12) No Electrification to Ebbw Vale.
- 13) No Electrification to Swansea, including the Vale and Maesteg - surely this should be top priority and should seek an innovative and cost-effective way of getting this done and obtaining funding? They seem to be able to do it in Scotland! Why?

I must say that in conclusion, there is a lack of vision and ambition and as far as the Valleys are concerned, these plans are a total hotch potch and not thought through rationally! Also, far too much is still being spent on new roads, which rarely achieve anything but increase traffic!!!

Above comments are by Jim Maggs.

What do you think about Jim's comments? Does the lack of WCs on the new tram/trains matter? It has been said that new WCs will be provided on the platforms to compensate. I grew up living at the end of a line on the London Underground where journeys to central London would take 40 minutes and lack of WCs on the Tube was taken for granted and travellers planned accordingly. If you are bursting to comment, please send me your thoughts- contact details on back page.

Peter Kingsbury



Proposed Cardiff area rail network (above) showing frequencies and new stations. The term Metro (blue routes) refers to services to be provided by Tram/ Trains. Source: Tramways & Urban Transit.

FREIGHT NEWS

There are now five companies with freight contracts in Wales.

Colas continues to work the Aberthaw to Westbury and Moorswater cement trains and the Bridgend Fords to Dagenham car component service departing Bridgend SuTThO and Dagenham MWFO. However, Colas has lost the Cemex gritstone flows from Neath Abbey Wharf to Washwood Heath and Stourton which appear to each run on a monthly basis. Colas continues to work the twice weekly TThO timber train from Baglan Bay to Chirk. Colas also works the Network Rail infrastructure inspection, weed spray and sandite/water cannon trains in Wales.

Freightliner continues to work its long-standing Southampton to Wentloog service and continues to work the chemical flows from Dow Corning Barry to Tilbury MWO and Southampton TThO where loadings have increased. Freightliner's weekly coal train on Mondays from Onllwyn to British Steel at Scunthorpe has ceased but it continues to work the daily SX train from Cwmbargoed to Port Talbot Grange siding. Freightliner also works a twice weekly coal train from North Blyth to Port Talbot Grange and there was a short term weekly contract from Killoch in Scotland which has now ceased. Two Freightliner coal trains from Portbury to Ferrybridge near Liverpool via the Marches have restarted with the empty wagons stored at Newport East Usk yard at weekends. Freightliner is anticipated to move coal from Cwmbargoed to Aberthaw this winter. Freightliner continues to work all steel traffic from Port Talbot and Llanwern to Dee Marsh Shotton with usually a daily train.

GBRf continues to work a weekly fuel train from Port Clarence to Cardiff Docks Greenenergy and the tinsplate flow from Trostre to Tilbury and steel flow from Port Talbot and Llanwern to Thamesport at Grain, Kent both of which run once or twice weekly. GBRf has worked limestone trains as required from Neath Abbey Wharf and has recently taken over the gritstone flows to Washwood Heath and Stourton for CEMEX. I reported earlier a new Jumbo train from Cardiff Docks for CEMEX which was essentially for Day's Aggregates. This has now ceased since GBRf took over the CEMEX contract from DBC which consists of two weekly trains to Acton and one to Crawley from Cardiff Docks with stone from Wenvoe Quarry and a new traffic incinerator ash for Days at Brentford.

This ash comes from the new Cardiff incinerator. GBRf also works loaded cement trains from Clitheroe to Avonmouth. On occasions the empty train has been recessed in Cardiff but recently Gloucester New Yard has been used. This increase in GBRf activity in South Wales can see up to four GBRf locomotive stabled near the CELSA weighbridge alongside Rover Way in Cardiff. Direct Rail Services continue to work two trains into Wales the first to Valley in North Wales with nuclear flasks to and from Sellafield and second the SX container train for Tesco from Daventry to Wentloog. However, DB Cargo still works the majority of the freight trains in Wales as itemised below:

Aggregates There has been an increase in gritstone traffic from Machen with a train running frequently on Saturdays. The train recesses at Westbury and is worked forward to several destinations in the South East of England including Dagenham and Allington. The movement of Welsh igneous and grit stone via the loading point at Moreton on Lugg continues with trains to Elstow, Hayes, Hothfield and Radlett. There is a regular twice weekly train with containerised limestone from Hardendale to CELSA at Port Talbot.

The movement of incinerator ash commenced on Tuesdays from Cardiff Docks to Avonmouth replacing the flow to Brentford. The movement of electric arc furnace slag from CELSA to Rotherham recently restarted.

There has been a considerable increase in the movement of blast furnace slag from Port Talbot Grange following the introduction of a new crusher with up to four weekly trains running. The usual destination is Acton with most trains going forward to Hayes but there have been trains to Bow, Hothfield and West Drayton. A new destination has been added with an occasional train to Kennet in East Anglia.

Coal The main coal flows are now worked by Freightliner but DBC continues to work the Onllwyn to Immingham flow and an occasional one from Cwmbargoed. There is usually a weekly train from Cwmbargoed to British Steel Scunthorpe as well as the long standing usually weekly train to Hope Cement works. The movement of wagon load containerised coal from Onllwyn to Mossend continues.

Iron Ore There has been recently a weekly movement of iron ore from Redcar to Port Talbot.

Petroleum DBC petroleum trains run from Robeston to Westerleigh five a week and Theale twice a week.

Scrap Regular traffic to CELSA continues from Kingsbury WO, Rotherham MWFSO and Swindon FO. Scrap from Saltley, Birmingham has ceased and there have been no recent movements from Beeston to Newport Docks. There is a regular weekly Sunday train from Trostre to Port Talbot Grange siding.

Steel and tinplate The majority of movements are for TATA from Margam and Llanwern and inter works traffic continues with hot rolled steel from Margam to Corby, Hartlepool, Llanwern and Trostre and in covered wagons cold rolled steel to Birdport (Newport), Dee Marsh (Freightliner), Grain (GBRf), Newport Docks, Llanwern and Middlesbrough Dawsons.

The weekly train TO of steel bar from CELSA to Rotherham continues but the now twice weekly flow of wire coil to Burton on Trent has been a recent development. The movement of coil and bar to Mossend Scotland appears to have ceased. These include steel bar and coil traffic from British Steel at Scunthorpe to Birdport and to CELSA. There have also been two trains of slab from Scunthorpe to Port Talbot.

Tar This continues as previously with up to four consignments each week between Port Talbot and Dawsons in Middlesbrough.

Rowland Pittard

RAILFUTURE IN ACTION

Following the Wales and Borders franchise announcement in early June 2018, Railfuture Cymru/Wales committee members have focussed on providing a reaction to the award and laying the foundations for future activities and campaigning in the Keolis/Amey world.

A Railfuture press release was issued after the award was announced and Radio Cardiff interviewed Peter Kingsbury in August. Social media has not been neglected either with tweets to the @RailfutureWales site being posted by Paul Harding.

Comments were provided to the Western Mail and Wales On Line regarding the continued use of the Retail Price Index to decide on the annual revision of regulated fares. Railfuture policy is for the Consumer Price Index to be used which would normally result in a lower increase.

An important first meeting between Railfuture and senior Transport for Wales (TfW) officers took place in August 2018. This focussed on clarifying the role of TfW, particularly in relation to rail matters which have not been devolved and therefore remain the responsibility of the Dept for Transport, such as Great Western services and Network Rail. The role of Transport Focus in Wales was also raised. It is planned to request a second meeting to discuss details of the Wales & Borders franchise award.

Railfuture's Rowland Pittard has been busy over the summer corresponding with other Railfuture branches regarding the renewal of the Cross Country franchise, consultation on which closed in late August 2018 [just weeks later the Westminster government postponed the start of the new franchise in order to conduct a rail review]. The reaching of an agreed position across the Railfuture branches on what is sought from the new franchise is a significant challenge as this franchise affects more branches than any other and different areas seek the best from their local perspective which inevitably do not match.

Membership recruitment

It is vital that Railfuture recruits new members if it is to continue to be an effective voice in the crowded world of opinion relating to rail transport. To this end, Railfuture membership leaflets were displayed at the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railways over the summer and at the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association stand at the Royal Welsh Show in July 2018.

If you would like to receive a supply of this leaflet to display at a local event or site where you consider prospective Railfuture members may be present, please contact Peter Kingsbury (details on back page).

Welsh speaker for media responses

The franchise award in June 2018 resulted in requests being made for Railfuture Wales to provide a Welsh speaker to comment on BBC Radio Cymru. The request had to be declined as we do not currently have anyone able and willing to undertake this role. If you speak Welsh or know of a Welsh speaker who might be interested in this opportunity, please contact Peter Kingsbury.

Railfuture Cymru/Wales Committee Meetings

All Railfuture Wales members are welcome to attend the branch committee meetings as observers. The next meetings will be on Saturday 27th October 2018 in Shrewsbury at 11am and Thursday 10th January 2019 in Cathays, Cardiff at 4pm. Please contact Peter Kingsbury (details on back page) to confirm venue details.

Railfuture Ltd AGM 2019

The Wales branch will be hosting the next national Railfuture Ltd AGM on Saturday 18th May 2019 at the Sports Wales National Centre, Cardiff (note the change of venue from The Old Library). Please make a note in your 2019 diary. This is an all-day event beginning mid-morning. Further details will be provided in Railwatch and on the Railfuture website (where lunch can be booked) – see <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/>

WELSH NEWS LINES

Farewell HSTs and Landore

As more class 800 IET trains are introduced on the Swansea to London route, the end of the much-loved High-Speed Trains (HSTs) in Wales is in sight. It is expected that the final services to be operated by these genuinely iconic trains, which have served the route for a record 40+ years, will be on the weekend of the 3rd/4th November 2018 with the Landore (Swansea) depot closing soon afterwards. The replacement IET trains are maintained from the new Hitachi depot just outside of Swansea station. The quality of the IET trains is still subject to much debate with the summer heat wave resulting a high number of failures as the underfloor engines are more prone to overheating.

Cardiff Central bus station

Revised proposals for the replacement bus interchange outside of Cardiff Central are being assessed by Cardiff Council. The bus station is proposed for the vacant land to the side of the former bus station site. It is intended to provide 14 bus bays which will be situated under a high-rise building containing office space, car parking and residential apartments. A cycle parking area for 150 bikes will be included on the ground floor. Some of these will be available for hire. The number of bus bays will be significantly less than in the previous bus station which closed in 2015.

Details of the development can be seen on Cardiff Council's web site: <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Planning/View-and-track-planning-applications>. Enter application number 18/01705/MJR.

Heart of Wales Line Trail

Good progress has been made in opening further sections of the trail, an ambitious project to provide a designated path to parallel the route of the Heart of Wales railway. The trail is now fully open in Carmarthenshire (Sugar Loaf to Llanelli) and Shropshire (Knighton to Craven Arms). The final section of the route in Powys is targeted to be launched in spring 2019. The trail is an initiative of the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association (HoWLTA) and partner development company to encourage sustainable tourism in a way which encourages more traffic on this rural railway. The line has been celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2018 which included a visit from HRH the Prince of Wales in July.

Halton Curve

Whilst this 2 km section of track is located near Frodsham in Cheshire, it is critical in providing the opportunity for direct services from Wales/Chester to Liverpool Lime Street via Liverpool South Parkway. An upgrade of the curve to allow frequent services to run in both directions was completed in June 2018 at a cost of £18.75m, part of which was met by the Welsh Government and North Wales local authorities. An hourly service from Chester to Liverpool using this route will commence in December 2018 with through services from the Cardiff-Shrewsbury-Wrexham line and North Wales coast scheduled to be provided by Keolis in 2022. STOP PRESS It was announced after the magazine was printed that the new service will begin in May 2019.

Rhondda Tunnel

The ambitious project to reopen the nearly two-mile-long tunnel at the top of the Rhondda valley as a cycle and pedestrian route has taken a step forward with the recent decision by Rhondda Cynon Taff Council to support the scheme. It will seek funding for a full feasibility study of the work required to provide public access. It is anticipated that the tunnel, which links Blaencwm near Treherbert with Blaengwynfi at the top of the Afan Valley, could see cyclists travel through in four years' time. The last train used the tunnel in 1968 when the service from Treherbert to Bridgend ceased. Part of this route reopened in 1992 when passenger services restarted between Bridgend and Maesteg.

Letter to the editor

Railfuture member Graham Lund writes: "I am a long-standing member of Railfuture and travel quite widely. I previously worked at Butlin's, Pwllheli, now a Haven site, and feel there is much to be done to increase usage of Penychain station. One may be to negotiate a fare offer for staff where they could be given a staff discount when travelling on Arriva Trains Wales as the site is one of the bigger employers in the area.

The former Butlin's site at Ayr, now Craig Tara/Haven, was served by Stagecoach buses in 1996, connecting the c. 5,500 capacity site with Ayr's very busy railway station. Part of the deal was that staff were given free bus travel anywhere in Scotland by Stagecoach services for that year and this was not unpopular. An attempt to reopen the rail service into the holiday centre was unsuccessful.

I wish I had pursued the idea of reopening the Afon Wen-Bangor railway line which I was prompted about. Is this still worth pursuing?'

Editor's reply: Railfuture's development plan for Wales states that there could be merit in examining the feasibility of reopening in the longer term the line from Caernarfon to Afon Wen following the highly desirable rebuilding of Caernarfon to Bangor route. However, the section from Caernarfon to Dinas would need to be mixed gauge to allow the Welsh Highland Railway's narrow-gauge service to continue.

ARRIVEDERCI ARRIVA

The 13th October will see the final day of Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) services after a period of 15 years. ATW have provided passenger services in Wales for the majority of time since the privatisation of the railways in 1995 so a brief reflection on the Arriva era is appropriate.

The company has seen its passenger numbers more than double on the back of rising demand for rail travel across Britain. Dozens of additional daily services have been introduced. This has helped the business's headline annual profit figure increase from £6m to £28m. Given the nature of the franchise awarded in 2003, which did not seek to recoup any 'excess' profit, it is not surprising that the company has taken the opportunity to increase the return to its owners. The new Keolis/Amey franchise negotiated by Transport for Wales will no doubt seek to ensure any significant profit increase is shared with the public purse.

ATW might be criticised for the very limited introduction of new rolling stock resulting in the departing company having one of the oldest train fleets in Britain. Again this issue will be dramatically addressed by the new franchise. However, credit must be given to ATW for a number of initiatives to promote increased rail use at off peak times, such as the Club 55 scheme which is enjoying a final hurrah until 1st October 2018. It has also introduced a number of measures to improve links with local communities, such as the Adopt a Station scheme. But perhaps most importantly from the passenger's viewpoint, it has usually performed above average in the train company punctuality and reliability tables. Let's hope that we will be able to say the same about its successor Keolis when we look back in 10 years' time.

Peter Kingsbury



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 February 2019** for the spring 2019 issue. The editor may edit letters for publication.

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