

Issue 66 Spring 2019

Rail Wales

Newsletter of Railfuture in Wales



This January 2019 view from Queen Street station, Cardiff is likely to look very different by 2024 as electric trains and tram/trains replace decades old diesel units in the South Wales valleys as part of the Metro project. A departing Coryton service passes a Penarth bound sprinter.

Photo: Peter Kingsbury

railfuture
CYMRU | WALES

WELCOME

I would like to welcome all readers to this latest issue of Rail Wales, especially those who are visiting the country to attend the Railfuture national AGM in Cardiff on Saturday 18 May 2019.

There is much of interest to observe and discuss in the rail scene in Wales. I hope those attending the AGM enjoy a stimulating day and leave with new ideas and knowledge, which may be applied to the ongoing campaign for bigger and better railways in other parts of Great Britain.

Cardiff hosts the AGM at an important time in the development of rail transport in Wales. Following the devolution of powers to the Welsh Government in 2017, the recent process to select a new operator for the Wales and Borders franchise has followed a different path than in England. The franchise was awarded in June 2018 to a consortium made up of train operator Keolis and infrastructure partner Amey. The requirement for franchise bidders to have an infrastructure partner on board is a result of the introduction of 'vertical integration' in the self-contained part of the Cardiff Valleys rail network. Network Rail is handing over its responsibilities for approximately 70 route miles to Keolis Amey who will be required to electrify this network over the next five years.

Keolis Amey is operating under the title 'Transport for Wales Rail' (TfW Rail) to highlight the close link of services with the Welsh Government. It began operation in October 2018.

So as Railfuture members in Wales will be aware there is much to consider in the afternoon of the AGM when presentations will be made by two of the key players in the Welsh rail scene, Colin Lea from TfW Rail and Professor Mark Barry, the Welsh Government transport minister's external advisor on metro development.

TfW Rail's first few weeks of operation did not cover themselves in glory when the leaf fall season had a more serious impact on rolling stock availability than in previous autumns. The issue of 'wheel flats' caused by brakes locking and wheel slip led to train withdrawals and many cancellations across Wales. The usual pass the blame game ensued with the most popular cause of the problems being attributed to the lack of appropriate maintenance by previous operator Arriva Trains Wales. It is impossible to know where responsibility lay from the outside but TfW Rail

has given an assurance that a problem on this scale will not be repeated next November.

Before the national AGM, Railfuture Wales has its own AGM in Shrewsbury on Saturday 13th April 2019 (see notice below). I hope as many members will be able to attend as possible. The formal business meeting will be followed by a talk on the Traws Link Cymru campaign to reopen the Aberystwyth to Carmarthen line. I am also hoping to arrange a visit later this year to operational rail facilities, such as a signalling control centre, to provide more value for Railfuture members.

Peter Kingsbury

AGM RAILFUTURE WALES 2019

Formal notice for this year's Railfuture Wales/Cymru AGM appears below. As in recent years the AGM is held in Shrewsbury in the early afternoon to allow members from all parts of Wales to attend. Please make an effort to be there and let the committee know your thoughts on what the Wales branch should be doing. Do you have any issues you wish to bring to the attention of other members? What do you think of the branch's new campaign priorities in response to the award of the new franchise?

These are exciting and stimulating times in the evolution of Welsh railways and Railfuture has an important role to play in speaking up for rail users, both existing and potential. Would you consider joining the Railfuture Wales committee? There are plenty of tasks and projects looking for enthusiastic people to help progress ranging from policy development to promotion and beyond. The committee meets four times a year in Cardiff and Shrewsbury and you need not be available to attend all meetings. Travel expenses are paid.

If you are considering joining the committee but wish to discuss what it involves and your potential contribution prior to the AGM, please contact me via email (peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk) or by phone on 07866 551431.

Peter Kingsbury

Full AGM details are:

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019. venue at Shrewsbury railway station (enter by door on far left side of building to left of ticket hall entrance)

11.00-13.00 normal branch committee meeting plus a warm welcome to all members of Railfuture Wales as observers.

13.30-14.30: the AGM. A warm welcome to ALL our members. Minutes of the last AGM; reports from officers [with questions from the floor]; report from the Cambrian Area officers; comments/report on northern matters; election of committee officers & members; a report on Railfuture UK and then an open forum for all. YOUR CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR SAY!

14.30- 15.30 Presentation by the Traws Link Cymru on their campaign to secure the reopening of the line from Aberystwyth to Carmarthen

Our sincere thanks to Transport for Wales Rail for facilitating the use of this excellent venue.

Peter Kingsbury, chairman: peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk

CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL BLYNYDDOL 2019

SADWRN, EBRILL 13, 2019. Gorsaf reilffordd Yr Amwythig; mynediad trwy`r drws ar y chwith o`r mynediad i`r swyddfa tocynnau.

11.00-13.00: cyfarfod pwyllgor y cangen ond croeso cynnes i bob aelod o Railfuture Cymru fel sylwedyddion.

13.30-14.30: y cyfarfod blynyddol... CROESO cynnes i BOB aelod o Railfuture Cymru. Cofnodion y cyfarfod diwethaf;. Adroddiadau gan swyddogion [gyda cwestiynau];; adroddiad gan Rhanbarth y Cambrian; sylwadau/adroddiad gan aelodau y gogledd; etholiadau i`r pwyllgor; adroddiad ar Railfuture [y Deyrnas Gyfunol];; fforwm agored i bob aelod, . EICH CYFLE I GAEL EICH DWEUD!

14.30-15.30: adroddiad gan `Traws Link Cymru` ar yr ymgyrch I ail-agor y lein rhwng Aberystwyth a Chaerfyrddin.

Diolch yn fawr i Trafnidiath Cymru am yr hawl I ddefnyddio yr ystafelloedd ardderchog yma.

Peter Kingsbury, cadeirydd: peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk

BETTER RAILWAYS IN WALES: WAY FORWARD

The announcement of the Wales and Borders franchise award has required Railfuture Cymru/Wales to review its campaign priorities. This has been necessary as a number of our longstanding objectives will be achieved as the various changes are rolled out by TfW Rail over the next five years. The committee considered this challenge at its recent meetings including looking at what targets remained unfulfilled from its development plan 'On Track for the 21st Century' last updated in 2013.

Three broad targets have been agreed, one relating to travel times and two relating to service frequencies in very different parts of Wales.

1 Faster journeys between Cardiff and Swansea; the two largest cities in Wales and between Cardiff and North Wales.

For Cardiff to Swansea, a distance by rail of 45 miles, a target time of 45 minutes (currently 55 minutes) for the faster services could be sought. This might be delivered by track and signalling improvements to allow higher line speeds. The greater acceleration provided by new rolling stock, including the Great Western IET, units will also assist. The called for quicker journeys will help compensate for the axing of the electrification.

Cardiff to North Wales: a target of Cardiff to Bangor in under four hours, which at present is only achieved by the Welsh Government sponsored Monday to Friday service, is feasible. Running at maximum line speeds on the Marches line with elimination of some station stops could contribute to this acceleration. Station stops lost could be replaced by the new Cardiff to Liverpool service. The additional loco hauled services on this route may assist.

2 A minimum two hourly frequency on all lines. This objective is carried forward from 'On Track for the 21st Century'. Three routes will still not provide this frequency after the roll out of the TfW Rail upgrade: Heart of Wales (one additional train each way proposed by 2024), the Conwy Valley branch (service remains three hourly) and the Fishguard branch.

3 A 15-minute frequency on the entire SE Wales metro. A true metro operates a 'turn up and go' frequency yet whilst the lines north of Cardiff Queen Street and to Barry and Penarth will enjoy four trains per hour, Barry- Bridgend, and the Maesteg and Ebbw Vale branches will not.

Railfuture Wales wishes to see 15-minute frequencies on all parts of the Metro.

THE NEW FRANCHISE: FURTHER MEMBERS' VIEWS

In the last issue of Rail Wales, Jim Maggs provided a comprehensive assessment of the new franchise proposals. Readers were invited to comment and Peter Robins's thoughts appear below:

'In the recent newsletter, you ask for comments on the new franchise. Something that's arisen since the newsletter is of course the delay in introducing Halton Curve services. You comment that delays are likely, which is true, and I think we must expect glitches. Nevertheless, it means TfW have fallen at the first fence before the franchise has even started! What confidence can we have in any of their other promises?

In general, though, I think that Jim Maggs is being unnecessarily negative. One positive thing I notice that he doesn't mention is the money being spent on renovating stations, particularly the commitment to making all stations energy efficient and environmentally friendly. I'm not sure what exactly is planned here, but this should be phased, as there are several new technologies coming along which should be incorporated such as solar glazing, used in the recently opened Cambridge North.

Railway stations tend to have lots of canopies which could use this to generate electricity. Probably doesn't make financial sense to replace the existing canopies on their own, but if they're renovating the stations anyway ... Catering for electric cars in station car parks is another option, which similarly could at least partly be done with solar-glazed car-port structures

I also think Jim is missing the point with Vivarail's new units to be used in N Wales, which is that they are battery hybrids. The batteries can be used for storing energy from regenerative braking, and mean that diesel engines can be switched off in stations and urban areas. This is clearly an improvement. The power systems are also designed to be swappable, so for example improved batteries could be installed relatively easily. On the Chester-Crewe route, the overhead wires at Crewe (and conceivably the 3rd rail at Chester) could be used to recharge the batteries whilst the trains are at the station. Similarly 3rd rail at Bidston, and conceivably a new 3rd rail at Wrexham, could remove the need for diesel altogether.

My main concern though is that this does not go far enough. Why stop with just this small number of Vivarail units? Such hybrids are increasingly being used in buses, but the rail industry seems to be lagging behind. Surely everyone knows by now that diesel is bad for both the environment and people's health, so what is TfWRail's plan for phasing it out? Why are they ordering large numbers of outdated diesel trains? As a minimum, all new trains should include batteries like Vivarail's. And most of Wales (N Wales, borders line, mid-Wales, Heart of Wales, SW Wales) would seem to me ideal for hydrogen. Alstom's iLint is now in commercial operation in Germany - so the technology is proven - and Alstom was reported last year to be keen to trial their British-loading-gauge-compatible version on the Halton Curve route, using excess hydrogen from Merseyside's chemical industry.

So why is TfW Rail not going along with this? Alstom have said that their trains will have a range of 1000 miles, and one wind turbine can produce enough hydrogen for

4--5 trains. Agreed, this can't all be built and installed overnight and will have to be phased in, but without a plan I fear the length of the new franchise means that Wales will be lumbered with outdated technology for years to come, whilst road vehicles are increasingly replaced with electric.'

'PS 'On my main complaint of still using diesel, I have just re-read various announcements on the franchise, and see that some of the Stadler Flirts on order will, like the Vivarail units, be battery hybrids. Their use of this to remove the need for electrification of tunnels/bridges - which caused much expense and disruption in e.g. Bath - seems very sensible to me and to be welcomed. If the batteries can be swapped for improved ones as these become available, then even better.'

Peter Robins

RAILFUTURE WALES IN ACTION

The Railfuture Cymru/Wales committee has been called upon to comment on topical rail news during recent months reflecting the organisation's position as a respected independent source of knowledge.

Peter Kingsbury took part in a live BBC Radio Wales interview outside Cardiff Central station at the height of the autumn leaf fall difficulties when he explained the reasons for the significant number of cancellations that were occurring.

At the beginning of the year, Rowland Pittard prepared a response to the Welsh Assembly's Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's inquiry into the future development of Transport for Wales. Prior to that Rowland sent comments to TfW on its proposed penalty fare policy.

Then, at short notice Railfuture Wales sent comments to the Assembly committee to assist its investigation into the autumn leaf fall problems. The submission focussed on the poor communications of TfW Rail with passengers which exacerbated the inevitable problems that arose from the service cancellations.

A new bilingual Railfuture Wales membership leaflet is under preparation with the aim of help recruit new people. If you would like to receive copies of this for distribution at events or sites where potential members will see them, Peter Kingsbury will be pleased to send you a supply – email: peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk

THE BUSIEST STATIONS IN WALES

The ORR annual station usage figures have recently been published. The latest data for entries and exits shows an overall increase in station usage in Wales compared to the previous year, up 1.7 %.

Station	2016/17	2017/18	Annual change (%)
Cardiff Central	12,534,884	12,951,746	3.3
Cardiff Queen St	2,850,984	2,912,364	2.2
Newport	2,614,150	2,696,620	3.2
Swansea	2,130,154	2,158,886	1.3
Bridgend	1,524,162	1,526,622	0.2
Cardiff Bay	1,242,214	1,302,676	4.9
Cathays	954,372	946,274	-0.8
Pontypridd	801,850	864,294	7.8
Neath	818,584	816,748	-0.2
Caerphilly	757,094	771,930	2.0
Barry Island	711,812	753,404	5.8
Trefforest	809,930	752,308	-7.1
Bangor	657,050	662,060	0.8
Penarth	633,412	626,950	1.0
Aberdare	569,364	571,746	0.4
Radyr	501,696	538,692	7.4
Barry	532,602	533,732	0.2
Rhyl	534,460	520,198	-2.7
Port Talbot Parkway	504,524	516,610	2.4
Merthyr Tydfil	550,216	512,754	-6.8
All Welsh stations	51,668,830	52,522,204	1.7

There are two new stations in the top 20: Port Talbot and Radyr, whilst Wrexham and Treherbert have dropped out of the list. The rise in numbers at Radyr is largely due to a significant expansion of the station car park illustrating the importance of car parking in driving passenger numbers at some locations.

NEWSLINES

Cardiff (St Mellons) Parkway

Whilst the announcement of a new station would normally be welcome by Railfuture, the recent fanfare accorded for the prospect of a new stop midway between Cardiff and Newport to be served by all services, local and long distance, has set certain alarm bells ringing. Railfuture Wales

has long sought a station in this location to be served by local trains/light rail to provide a facility for the large population of eastern Cardiff with no local rail service. However, the aim of the station promoters, a private company developing a neighbouring business park, for services travelling to England to call there will potentially result in longer journey times from Cardiff and stations westwards, to destinations such as Paddington and Manchester. As trains currently pass this spot at 70mph plus, the acceleration of journey times resulting from the electrification of the Great Western mainline will be partly lost. The issue will be discussed at the Railfuture Wales committee on the 13th April 2019.

Abertillery to rejoin rail system?

An announcement was made as this issue of Rail Wales went to press that the first round of funding to the SE Wales Metro Plus projects will include payment for the reopening of the 4 mile long line from Abertillery to Aberbeeg on the Ebbw Vale branch, including a 100 space park and ride facility. Other projects covered by the £30m funding include the creation of new rail/bus interchanges and park & ride facilities at Caerphilly, Barry, Porth, Pyle and Merthyr.

Heart of Wales Trail Opens

The formal opening of the final link in the Heart of Wales Trail, a new waymarked footpath paralleling this scenic line in mid and west Wales, was due to open on the 28th March 2019. The 141-mile-long route has been created to encourage use of this rail route which traverses some very remote and beautiful countryside far from the centres of population in rural Wales. A trail guide has been published to accompany the opening. 'The Heart of Wales Trail' by Les Lumsdon is available locally and from Kittiwake Books price £10.95.

CARDIFF RAIL LINK NEEDS A RETHINK

Plans to improve the rail link between Cardiff Bay and the city centre don't go far enough according to Professor Mark Barry of Cardiff University. He is disappointed that the existing railway will not be converted to a tramway.

Last year Transport for Wales published its vision for rail in Wales, including the South Wales Metro area, to be carried out by the winning franchisee: Keolis / Amey. In Cardiff, the existing rail link between Queen Street and Cardiff Bay will be electrified and extended to a new terminus

at 'The Flourish', serving the Millennium Centre. An additional station is planned for Loudoun Square. It will remain a conventional railway to cater for trains from the Rhymney Valley, though tram-trains from Pontypridd and beyond will also use it.

Prof Barry, who is credited with coming up with the idea of the South Wales Metro, is disappointed that the plans are not more ambitious. He believes the existing line forms a physical and psychological barrier between Bute Street and Lloyd George Avenue and thinks the western carriageway of the avenue should be closed with a tramway provided in its place. Being at road level this would allow much freer access between the very different communities on either side, especially if enhanced by imaginative landscaping. Some mixed-use development is also suggested.

Other ideas he has for the line are:

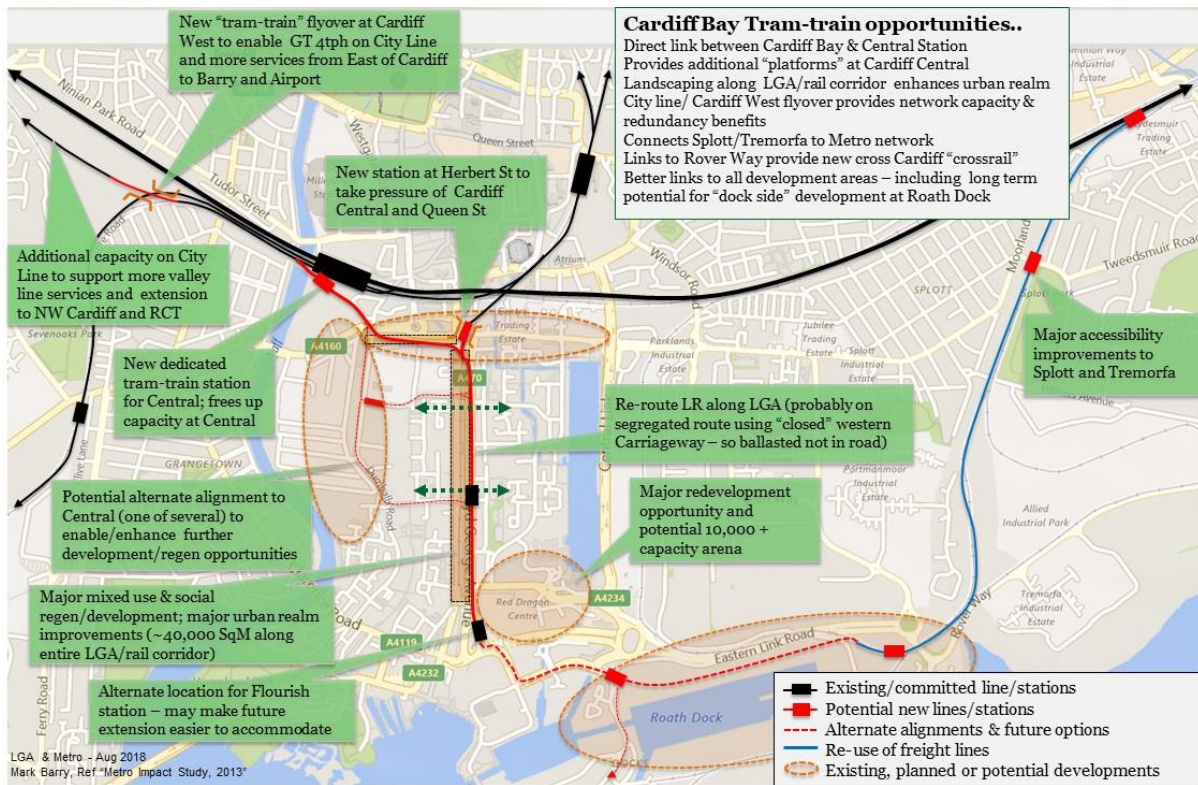
- A stop at Herbert Street, providing access to that part of the city;
- An extension from The Flourish to serve Splott and Tremorfa, largely using existing rail alignments;
- A branch from just south of Herbert Street onto the western part of the City Line via Cardiff Central Station. This would provide a light rail connection between west Cardiff and Cardiff Bay via Cardiff Central.

There will be a chance to hear the views of Prof Barry (pictured right) about the South Wales Metro and the Welsh franchise on 18th May, where he will be addressing the Railfuture national AGM. Full details of this are in the March 2019 issue of 'Railwatch'.



Julian Langston

Please see the map on the next page, which shows the tram-train opportunities for Cardiff Bay



WALES FREIGHT UPDATE

There are five companies with freight contracts in Wales.

Colas continues to work the Aberthaw to Westbury and Moorswater cement trains and the Bridgend Ford to Dagenham car component service departing Bridgend Sun T ThO and Dagenham MWFO. 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 some of the 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 has diverted its Felixstowe to Bristol intermodal train to Wentloog from 8th January 2019. Reasons given for the diversion were that is more cost effective, no Severn Bridge tolls, and quicker transfer times to serve the warehouses in Avonmouth from Wentloog rather than from South Bristol. A new motorway connection is also being built from the M49 to north Avonmouth. Freightliner has discontinued its weekly coal

train on Mondays from Onllwyn to British Steel at Scunthorpe but continues to work a daily SX train from Cwmbargoed to Port Talbot Grange siding with an additional service added on Tuesdays. Freightliner also works a weekly sometimes twice weekly coal train from North Blyth to Port Talbot Grange. Two SX Freightliner coal trains from Portbury to Ferrybridge near Liverpool via the Marches recommenced operating on 30th July and have continued to run throughout the winter. Freightliner operated six trains this winter with coal from Cwmbargoed to Aberthaw two in September and four in October. Freightliner continues to work all steel traffic from Port Talbot and Llanwern to Dee Marsh Shotton with usually a daily train including Sundays. Freightliner is expected to take over the stone flows from Moreton on Lugg and slag flows from Port Talbot Grange siding later this year.

GB Railfreight (GBRf) continues to work a weekly fuel train from Port Clarence to Cardiff Docks Greenenergy usually arriving on Mondays, the tinplate flow from Trostre to Tilbury and steel flow from Port Talbot and Llanwern to Thamesport at Grain south east of London 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. A new gritstone flow has been introduced in March to Padworth siding near Ely. GBRf continues to operate infrequent stone trains to Acton and Crawley from Cardiff Docks with stone from Wenvoe Quarry. The incinerator ash for from the new Cardiff incinerator has been diverted to Avonmouth since 31st July and is now worked by DBC. GBRf also works loaded cement trains from Clitheroe to Avonmouth.

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 DBC still works the majority of the freight trains in Wales as itemised below.

Aggregates There have been no recent trains conveying gritstone or limestone from Machen, the last ran on 8th December 2018 although there were infrequent trains on Saturdays in 2018. 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 TATA at Port Talbot.

The movement of incinerator ash commenced on Tuesdays from 31st July 2018 from Cardiff Docks to Days Avonmouth replacing the flow to Brentford. It is used for the manufacture of concrete. The movement of electric arc furnace slag from CELSA to Rotherham continues and has increased to twice weekly from 12th December 2018.

There has been a further increase in the movement of blast furnace slag from Port Talbot Grange now five weekly trains running. The usual destination is Acton with the trains going forward to Hayes. A weekly WO train continues to Kennet with the empties coming from Acton or Wembley combined with those for the Acton service. The combined empty train consists of 44 wagons hauled by a pair of class 66 locomotives. A new service commenced on Sundays from 27th January to Radlett.

Coal The main coal flows are now worked by Freightliner but DBC continues to work the Onllwyn to Immingham flow with infrequent trains from Cwmbargoed and Gwaun Cae Gurwen. There are now two weekly coal trains 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 as does the movement of coal in the smaller MEA box wagons from Gwaun Cae Gurwen to Onllwyn for processing.

Iron Ore The movement of Iron Ore from Redcar ceased after 26th November 2018.

Petroleum DBC worked petroleum trains from Robeston have increased following the closure of Puma Energy's storage facility at Immingham. There are now eight/nine weekly trains to Westerleigh and five weekly to Theale.

Scrap Scrap from EMR Saltley, Birmingham recommenced to CELSA in October 2018. Regular traffic to CELSA continues from EMR Saltley MO, EMR Kingsbury WO, Booth Rotherham MWFSO and EMR Swindon FO. There is also a regular weekly Sunday train from Trostre to Port Talbot Grange siding.

Surplus HTAwagons (bogie coal hoppers) have been moving out of South Wales for scrapping at EMR Liverpool.

Steel and tinplate During the latter part of 2018 the number 5 blast furnace at Port Talbot received a major overhaul. To compensate for the reduced production steel slab was imported intermittently from the

Netherlands through Newport Docks between October and 9th February. Slab was acquired from British Steel at Scunthorpe in October and November 2018. Steel coil was also imported from the Netherlands in December and January for use at Corby, Llanwern and Trostre. The furnace was formally brought back into use on 29th December 2018.

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, Swindon and Middlesbrough Dawsons.

The occasional trains of tinplate from Trostre to Birdport have been diverted to Newport Docks and are in addition to those to Tilbury worked by GBRf. Birdport continues to receive coil from Port Talbot and Llanwern for export but in reduced amounts. Birdport saw some increased activity while the number 5 blast furnace at Port Talbot was closed with imported slab for Port Talbot and coil for Trostre.

The weekly train TO of steel bar from CELSA to Rotherham continues as does the twice weekly flow of wire coil to Burton on Trent. The movement of coil and bar from CELSA to Mossend, Scotland has recommenced FO usually on a weekly basis.

There are occasional block train or wagon load workings with steel bar from British Steel at Scunthorpe to Birdport and to CELSA.

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

Rowland Pittard

WALES INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The Mystery Photograph: Transport for Wales published a leaflet and poster at 'the start of the journey' entitled TRANSPORT FOR WALES IS YOUR NEW OPERATOR which are still to be seen at stations. The photo shows a single line with a footpath crossing from a road which runs to the right of the railway. In the background there are barren hills. There is no sign of movement or life except for a timbered house on the right hand side of the photograph. The photo does not have a caption.

The question is where was the photograph taken? The single line section and barren mountains suggest a Snowdonia scene. This narrows the

location down to either the Cambrian Coast line north of Barmouth or the lower section of the Conwy Valley line. The section of line must be adjacent to a road. The A 496 and the Cambrian Coast line are adjacent north of Barmouth near the National Park boundary OS 124 while the Conwy Valley line has the A470 adjacent in the Talycafn area OS 115. There must be a member with infrastructure rail and road knowledge who can identify the location.

Signalling

The North Wales Coast resignalling Phase 1 was commissioned on 26th March 2018 and covered the section west from Chester to Llysfaen. It was subsequently announced that the Phase 2 to Llandudno had been postponed. This has been accompanied by £50 million of track upgrading work between Chester and Llandudno.

Port Talbot West phase 1 resignalling was commissioned on 4th March 2019 and covered the tracks from Baglan to Cockett and Swansea station. Port Talbot panel had three workstations. The newest is panel A covering east of Baglan to Llanharan which will eventually move to Cardiff Wales Rail Operating Centre (WROC) in 2022/3. Panel B is the oldest panel and this resignalling resulted in panel B together with parts of panel C moving to the new Swansea workstation at Cardiff WROC. Panel C remains to control the Swansea District Line together with the lines to Swansea Burrows sidings and Cockett to Llandeilo Junction. Panel C interfaces with Pembrey, Neath (Neath and Brecon) and Pantyffynnon signal boxes. There are tentative plans to extend panel C to Carmarthen and move the extended panel to Cardiff WROC.

The main track changes have included the reduction of facilities at Briton Ferry yard to a run round loop with a single access line at the east end to provide access to the timber loading facility at Baglan Bay. The two former through lines have been used to create the run round loop and the sidings on either side have been disconnected. The west end connections of the yard have been taken out of use. At Landore the south end connection from the up main to the depot maintenance road has been removed after being clipped out of use for many years and was said to be last used by a TPO train. On the down side at Landore the carriage wash line has been put out of use until the wash plant is taken out of use. It was formally used by HSTs which had stabled at Landore.

New retractable buffers have been installed at Swansea station giving an additional few feet to the end of the line while the eastern ends of the platforms have short extensions to accommodate the 10 car IET trains. There is now limited bidirectional working between Swansea and Port Talbot. Train detection is by axle box counters.

Landore depot

On 18th November 2018 the last HST set to leave the depot was formed with power cars 431098/002 and worked the 12.24 Swansea to Paddington. The depot was now empty except for two class 08 locomotives. The depot was used for the storage of HST trains between 10th December and 7th March 2019 when the last HST left as empty stock to St Phillips Marsh Bristol. It is understood the GWR's lease on the premises terminates at the end of March.

Aberystwyth Vale of Rheidol

The fourth Vale of Rheidol railway station in Aberystwyth opened on 16th February 2019. It consists of a main platform with loop and a short bay platform. The first train was hauled by locomotive no 7 Owain Glyndwr which had recently returned to use after 20 years in storage. The original Vale of Rheidol station was Smithfield 1902 to 1929, the second station was to the south of the main station and remained in use until 1968 when the terminus moved to the site of platforms 1 and 2 formally used by trains to Carmarthen. The new station is opposite the large former engine shed which is now used to store coaches. The next development will be the building of a new carriage shed on the site of the third station and the former engine shed will become a heritage museum to include stock stored at Capel Bangor and elsewhere. The locomotives which are in service use the western end of the new workshops and locomotive and carriage restoration takes place in the eastern section.

Station work

A major project is underway to renovate the roof of the main building at Cardiff Central. The major project at Bangor awaits completion. A temporary footbridge has been installed at Abergavenny pending improvement work.

Bridge Work

All bridge work associated with the electrification to Cardiff has been completed. Pembroke Road and Milford Road bridges at Haverfordwest

were renewed in January at a cost of £ 4.5 m. Work is ongoing at Caerleon Road bridge in Newport.

Halton Curve

Crew route training commenced in February between Chester and Liverpool Lime Street. Usually a class 150 is used.

ROLLING STOCK IMPROVEMENTS IN WALES

Class 150 150284/85 have had Persons with Restricted Mobility (PRM) modifications, which include a retention toilet and these were the last of the 36 class units to have a major overhaul at LNWR Crewe.

Class 158 are also having PRM upgrades including fitting of retention toilets at Crewe LNWR. Those already observed fitted are 158818/819/822/823/826/829/831/835/840.

Facilities for the emptying of retention toilets have been provided at Machynlleth.

The arrival of three coach class 230 ex Underground and four coach class 769 ex electrical multiple units are still awaited by Transport for Wales. Both will require platform extensions at some stations.

The franchise agreement stipulated that all Pacers should be adorned with external banners. The following slogans can be seen adorning the trains created by someone with a sense of humour.

THE START OF A NEW JOURNEY/ DECHRAU TAITH NEWYDD

142002/006/ 010/069/072/ 073/074/075/076/ 077/ 080/081/082/083/085
143601/602/604/607/609/625 143601/02/04/07/09/25

THESE TRAINS WILL TERMINATE SOON /MAE'R TRENAU YMA'N
DOD I BEN CYN BO HIR

143604/605/606/608/616/622/623 143605/06/08/16/22/23

THE JOURNEY IS ALMOST OVER FOR OLD TRAINS /MAE TAITH YR
HEN TRENAU AR BEN CYN BO HIR

143601 /608/610/614/624/625

Those in italics/underlined appear to have different logos on opposite sides

All the class 142 and 143601/09/10/14, the council owned units, are in the old ATW livery with the rest of the class 143 are in the newest ATW livery.

Rowland Pittard

EMAIL ADDRESSES/WEBSITE

The Railfuture membership secretary does not have details of email addresses of a number of members. As Rail Wales is only published twice a year, it is possible that emailing will be used in the future to communicate news to members in Wales, which can not wait until the next issue of the magazine. An example would be details of visits to operational rail facilities.

Therefore, please ensure that when you renew your Railfuture membership, you provide details of your email address if you have one. The list of member details including email addresses will only be used for Railfuture communications and not supplied to other parties unless you authorise otherwise.

Please also keep a watch on the Railfuture Wales website as this will be used more in the future to keep you informed of news and events of interest to members.

Peter Kingsbury

SOUTH WALES ELECTRIFICATION UPDATE

An electric railway looks like it could soon be with us following intense work at Cardiff Central over Christmas and the New Year. During this period, platforms 0 – 6 were all closed at different times to allow footings to be installed on the mainline platforms for electrification structures. Following the work the paving slabs have been replaced, so currently the only evidence of this is at the London end of the platforms. The back page photo shows the view from the platform end after completion of the work.

Further work has also been done at Severn Tunnel Junction, resulting in the closure of all lines over the holiday period.

Trains were originally expected to run under electric traction into Cardiff Central last December until early last year, when completion was deferred to mid-Summer 2019. Now it has been delayed again until near the end

of the year, with a full electric timetable now anticipated for January 2020. The line is currently live as far west as Bristol Parkway.

Julian Langston

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 **31st August** for the autumn 2019 issue. The editor may edit letters for publication.

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Welsh capital to soon join the modern rail era. The picture shows recent work to erect a number of gantries immediately east of Cardiff Central. The 12.30 to Portsmouth Harbour is shown leaving on 4th January 2019, while in the distance the 12.31 to Penarth can be seen approaching the station.

Photo: Julian Langston

railfuture
CYMRU | WALES