

Issue 67 Autumn 2019

Rail Wales

Newsletter of Railfuture in Wales



Back to the future: locomotive hauled trains have returned to the Rhymney Valley to cover for Sprinters withdrawn for modification to comply with mobility regulations: the 17.46 service from Cardiff calls at Caerphilly on the 5th September 2019 tailed by 37 025 in BR blue livery. Another class 37 was at the front of the train. Photo: Peter Kingsbury

railfuture

CYMRU | WALES

WELCOME

I have just arrived home from Newport station where notices proclaim that the overhead wires will go live on 14th September 2019. It finally appears that the long running saga of the Great Western electrification is entering its final stage and I hope by the time the next issue of Rail Wales appears in March 2020 electric trains will be operating through to Cardiff.

Whilst the cancellation of electrification west of Cardiff is greatly regretted, the provisional 2020 timetables released for comment show that stations west of Cardiff will benefit from the acceleration east of the capital by journey times to South East England being reduced by 10 to 15 minutes. Railfuture Wales is campaigning for these benefits to be consolidated for journeys within Wales by accelerating Cardiff to Swansea trains to provide end to end journey times of 45 minutes for the 45 miles. We wish to see one service an hour achieve this.

Railfuture believes this is achievable without electrification. Some expenditure by Network Rail to raise line speeds and timetable amendments to omit intermediate stops mean this goal could be achieved within a few years. Grand Union Trains, the company behind the proposed open access service from South Wales to London, is suggesting that it will achieve such a timing if it achieves its target of operating from Llanelli to London in 2023 (see page 3).

I am pleased to report that the Railfuture national AGM hosted by the Wales branch in May 2019 was judged a success. Visitors from England and Scotland were impressed by the changes that are underway in Wales following the letting of the new Wales & Borders franchise. These were brought into focus by two well received presentations from Colin Lea from TfW Rail and Prof Mark Barry.

I have recently attended a conference on transport policy in Wales at which integration between bus and rail and promoting active travel were dominant themes. The usual comments were made about the need to make end to end journeys easier where rail alone could not provide the total movement solution. However, I am aware that many people will not consider cycling or using a bus to reach the nearest rail station however good the cycleway infrastructure or frequent the bus service. Others who live in more isolated locations will never be able to be provided with an attractive bus service.

The conference was followed a few days later by my visit to Tiverton Parkway to gain access to the Devon rail network. I was surprised at the size of the station car park and frequency of trains stopping there. This new station appears to have been very successful in terms of attracting users to rail who presumably, given the lack of other stations nearby, would otherwise have made their entire journey by car.

This set me wondering whether the development of more parkway stations should be given a higher priority when discussing ways of increasing rail usage in the context of reducing carbon emissions. Has this aspect of addressing the climate emergency been downplayed by many rail campaigners who instinctively dislike anything that is seemed to provide improvements for motorists?

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Rail Wales which provides a range of interesting and varied news.

Finally, a visit has been arranged to the driver training simulator in Cardiff on Saturday 28th September 2019, as part of an initiative to provide Railfuture members with additional value. Spaces are still available -see page 4 for details. Please book ASAP.

Peter Kingsbury

NEW FRANCHISE(S?) TO OPERATE IN WALES

Recent news indicates that North Wales will see, and South Wales may see, new train operating companies provide services in the not too distant future.

The change in North Wales is more certain as the long-distance West Coast franchise operating from Euston station, held since rail privatisation by Virgin Trains, is to pass to a consortium comprising the First Group and Trenitalia. The operator will replace Virgin on the Euston to Holyhead route from December 2019. The franchise runs until 2031. The consortium has pledged to introduce bi mode trains on the North Wales service. The involvement of Trenitalia, with its experience of operating high-speed lines in Italy, is stated to be key to operating the first phase of HS2 which is part of the franchise award.

Whilst the Virgin trains service only ever provided a minority of train services along the North Wales mainline, it is disappointing to see that the

new franchise appears to have no firm commitment to provide additional services west of Chester.

More ambitious but less certain is the proposal from Grand Union trains for a new 'open access' express service between South Wales and London. The proposal is in two phases: Cardiff to London from May 2021 running non-stop east of Bristol Parkway. A Cardiff to London time of 100 minutes is predicted. An electric locomotive and Mark 4 coaches would be used.

Phase 2 to follow in May 2023 takes the service west to Llanelli, running non-stop between Swansea and Cardiff in 45 minutes or less. This service will use the Hitachi class 802 bi-mode trains. Some trains could use the Swansea District line calling at the proposed parkway station at junction 46 of the M4. The frequency of the service (both phases) will be two hourly. Grand Union is waiting for a decision from the regulator (ORR).

One interesting aspect of the proposal is for trains to call at Severn Tunnel Junction, currently omitted from the South Wales to Paddington service. Grand Union envisages providing increased parking with improved access from the M4 using land vacated by the former toll booths.

The proposal is very ambitious and raises obvious questions about the ability of the new service to be accommodated on the already busy Great Western mainline. However, the company is experienced and operates between Yorkshire / North East England and King's Cross.

The Railfuture Wales committee has yet to discuss this potentially exciting development but provided there are no significant effects on existing services, including the imminent acceleration between Cardiff and London from Great Western, the Grand Union initiative is welcome.

Peter Kingsbury

Fancy being a train driver?

A visit to the driver training simulator at Cardiff Central station has been arranged for Railfuture members on Saturday 28th September 2019 starting at 12.00. Please email peter.kingsbury@railfuturewales.org.uk ASAP if you wish to attend as numbers are limited.

RAILFUTURE WALES NEWS

The activities of Railfuture in Wales are managed by a committee elected at the AGM held in April. The committee meets four times a year to decide on campaign priorities, policies and other activities. The next meetings are on Saturday 12th October 2019 at Shrewsbury station beginning at 11.00 and Saturday 11th January 2020 at the Cathays Community Centre, Cardiff at 12.00.

All members are welcome to attend the committee as observers. Meetings typically last two to three hours but you are welcome to leave and join at any point you wish. Please let Peter Kingsbury know if you wish to attend or have any questions.

At the July 2019 committee, a decision was taken to start the challenging task of reviewing and updating the Railfuture Wales development plan 'On Track for the 21st Century'. This document can be read on the Railfuture Wales website (www.railfuturewales.org.uk). It sets out a comprehensive vision of improvements to Welsh railways.

The plan was last updated in 2013. Following the award of the Wales and Borders franchise in 2018, a significant review of the plan is required as a number of the 'asks' in the current document will be delivered. Other changes such as the cancellation of the Cardiff- Swansea electrification require a policy rethink. A small group led by Mike Watson has been established to undertake this task.

In the interim, as explained in the last issue of Rail Wales, the committee has identified several immediate campaign priorities. These are:

- faster journeys between Cardiff and Swansea (a 45-minute target) which can be achieved without electrification,
- faster Cardiff to North Wales journeys with an aim of all services to reach Bangor in under four hours,
- a turn up and go frequency on all parts of the South Wales metro. At present this is not proposed for the Ebbw Vale, Vale of Glamorgan and Maesteg branches, and
- a minimum frequency of two hourly on all routes. This requires additional services on the Heart of Wales, Conwy Valley and Fishguard routes.

LETTER

The Autumn 2018 **Rail Wales** newsletter asked why the Rhymney valley will retain heavy-rail units while other routes are downgraded to tram-trains with no toilets. I can only guess but would surmise that there was a minimum viable quantity of tram-trains. Given that street-running will only be required on the Cardiff Bay branch (for now), it may have been necessary to find *somewhere* else to use the units. The lack of toilets matters, particularly if extensions such as Aberdare to Hirwaun (or, better yet, Glyn-Neath) are opened. My hope is that additional light-rail sections (such as Coryton to Taff's Well) will be constructed to utilise tram-trains cascaded from longer routes. That would allow a return to heavy-rail stock, with toilets, on all services running north of Taff's Well.

However, the new fleet proposed for long-distance services is unlikely to be cascaded far away. "On Track For The 21st Century" notes that rolling stock has a long working life, often 30 years for a DMU. It is therefore vital that this fleet is fit-for-purpose (another aim from the development plan). Double-width doors are not appropriate. Neither is the proposed 'doors at thirds' arrangement. Peter Robins's comments (Spring 2019 issue) are also relevant; *"diesel is bad for both the environment and people's health, so what is TfWRail's plan for phasing it out?"* In the long-term, electrification has to be the way forward for most routes. In the meantime, it is right to ask whether the new fleet should be diesel-electric. That might reduce fuel consumption, particularly if they are battery-hybrids with regenerative braking. And could space for a pantograph etc. be allowed to facilitate a bi-mode conversion?

Remember that these new trains could easily last until 2052, and that net-zero greenhouse gas emissions are needed by 2050. Building a new fleet is also carbon-intensive, so would scrapping the Welsh fleet in 2040, after only 18 years' service, make sense? Along with the door layout, this need addressing urgently, before construction commences and changes become impossible.

If straight-diesel is the only option, then the number of new trains must be minimised. That means holding onto the class 158s **and** class 175s. A small number of new DMUs operating alongside plenty of older units would allow electrification with the older DMUs withdrawn and the newer ones cascaded to routes such as the Heart of Wales Line.

In any case, I would propose that one of the two existing long-distance fleets (either class 158s or 175s) is retained to allow enhanced services,

including on the Fishguard, Conwy Valley, Swansea District Line (SDL), Milford Haven and Heart Of Wales routes. The SDL trains should be an hourly express service between Carmarthen/Pembrokeshire and Cardiff calling only at Port Talbot Parkway, Llanelli and (potentially) a new Tawe Valley parkway station at M4 junction 45. Together with frequent 158/175-operated services between Swansea and Carmarthen/Pembrokeshire, this would allow the Manchester services to terminate at Swansea. The six new CAF vehicles saved could instead be centre cars, allowing six 3-car units with ETCS for the Cambrian.

Again these changes must be agreed quickly, before the opportunity to retain 158s/175s (presumably cheaper to lease and perhaps operate than the new units, which could improve the benefit:cost ratio) is lost.

Regarding Railfuture Wales' new campaign priorities, I would therefore ask why the design, quantity and choice of rolling stock is not on that list. It is right that infrastructure enhancements to reduce journey times are on the radar, but the frequency enhancements (and having the right trains (and sufficient trains) to run them) are probably more-urgent. Between Cardiff and Swansea, there are capacity issues to address as well as the journey time. Additional trains to Maesteg, for example, could conflict with the introduction of express trains to Carmarthen. It would appear that opportunities for fast trains to overtake stoppers are required between Cardiff and Bridgend. That could be addressed as part of a programme to speed up the route, or perhaps by ensuring that four tracks are provided through the proposed Miskin station, with platforms on the relief/loop lines only.

Thomas J Wheeler

If you have any thoughts about the points raised by Thomas Wheeler, please send them to Peter Kingsbury for publication in the next issue of Rail Wales, or (much quicker) use Twitter to inform users of this platform of your comments. If you are not 'followed' by Railfuture Wales on Twitter and wish your comments to appear on our Twitter site: @RailfutureWales, please inform our Twitter account manager John Hanahoe of your tweet by e mailing John at mogmut@btinternet.com .

NETWORK RAIL NEWS

Following an extensive review, Network Rail is making changes in how it operates. The proposal is a new model for the organisation; one that will better align with train operators and franchises. It will bring track and train closer together, embed a customer service mindset and ensure a better focus on performance. We will push devolution further than ever before, making routes more responsive to local needs and cutting through red tape and bureaucracy.

What's changing?

- There will be fourteen routes increased from the current eight. Each route will have responsibility for delivery of its operations, maintenance and renewals. Wales and Borders will comprise one route area.
- The routes will also be responsible for day to day delivery of train performance and will work closely with their local train operating partners.
- The routes will be supported by five Network Rail regions, each led by a managing director. These will be Eastern, North West & Central, Scotland's Railway, Southern and Wales & Western.
- A new Network Services directorate will be formed from the Freight and National Passenger Operators and Route Businesses Centre, and will co-ordinate national initiatives that impact the operational railway such as freight, incident management, security and performance.
- A number of previously centralised services and functions will also be devolved to region or route level enabling us to be more responsive to customers and passengers and better deliver to future plans.

How this will affect Wales and Borders

- Network Rail has announced £2bn investment to improve the railway for passengers across Wales and Borders. The plan represents a 28% increase in spending compared to the last funding period (2014-2019) to increase reliability and improve performance over the next five years. It is the first time that the Wales and Borders funding plan has been developed by Network Rail Wales and Borders and is made up of over a thousand local schemes designed to deliver improvements for as many passengers as possible.

- The plan is focused on maintaining and renewing the existing railway to improve train punctuality and reliability for passengers. This includes investing an additional £27.7m to improve the railway's extreme weather resilience, £176m on track renewals and refurbishments and £135m to improve signalling in West Wales.
- Major improvement work will include investing £22m to renew the iconic Grade II listed Barmouth viaduct and delivering Phase 2 of the Port Talbot re-signalling scheme to improve reliability on this part of the network. Phase 1 of the project was completed earlier this year and included the installation of 160 miles of new cable, 55 new LED digital signals, 160 metres of new track and buffers at Swansea station.
- Network Rail will also install new pumps at Sudbrook pumping station, which pumps water from the Severn Tunnel. This will reduce the energy consumed by the pumping station by up to 5 per cent, as well as ensuring that rail services on the South Wales Main Line continue to be safeguarded from flooding. The funding will support Transport for Wales' significant investment of £5bn over 15 years, which will see passengers benefiting from new trains, improved stations and increased capacity across the network.

WALES TRANSPORT AWARDS

The inaugural Wales Transport Awards are being held on Friday 1st November 2019 at the Mercure Holland House hotel in Cardiff. This black-tie event aims to highlight some of the best example of practice across the Welsh transport sector as well as employees who have shone in their roles. TfWRail has entries in one category but as the awards relate to the period before the company was fully established it is anticipated it will be more fully involved in 2020. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.walestransportawards.co.uk/>

COMMUNITY RAIL IN WALES RECEIVES A BOOST

Hugh Evans, recently appointed Head of Community Rail at Transport for Wales, outlines the changes to occur as TfW seeks to improve links with local people and grass roots organisations across the country. He says:

“Given the exciting plans we have for Community Rail, Transport for Wales (TfW) is set to bolster its Community Rail function through the creation of a Head of Community Rail position, alongside several supporting positions dedicated to the movement. The bolstered function is set out in the diagram.



“The two Community Rail Managers will support all aspects of Community Rail and Station Adoption. This duo will also each be recruiting four Community Rail Ambassadors & Apprentices to deliver our plans for Community Engagement.

“In addition to the Community Rail Managers, the function will also include a Property Manager whose role is to deliver our Social and Commercial Development Plan. This plan will outline how TfW will develop disused space at stations for the benefit of local communities and businesses. We will be seeking the help of local business in deciding what can be provided for the communities where this disused space exists.

“We have always referred to opportunities that exist in developing the rail offering for tourists. To assist TfW and all our Community Rail Partnerships, we have recently recruited a Partnership Marketing Manager who will start in early August. We look forward to introducing her once on board.

“Regarding Stakeholder Management, in the broader sense, this will be managed by Lois Park, who will work alongside four Stakeholder Managers. Lois has made a couple of appointments and further appointments will be made over the coming months.

“This is an exciting time as things are, at last, beginning to settle down and clarity of roles becomes evident. As new team members are recruited and, where appropriate, I will ensure they make themselves known to you all.”

Hugh J Evans–Head of Community Rail

WALES FREIGHT UPDATE

Rowland Pittard presents his report which reader feedback indicates is one of the most enjoyed features in Rail Wales:

There are now six companies with freight contracts in Wales with the return of DCR.

There have been more losses than gains over the recent period:

- Colas lost the car component traffic between Bridgend Fords and Dagenham.
- Freightliner lost the coal traffic between Portbury/Avonmouth and Aberthaw/ Fiddlers Ferry.
- GBRf lost the petroleum flow from Port Clarence to Green Energy Cardiff Docks.

Change of operator Freightliner took over the working of aggregate trains for Tarmac from Moreton on Lugg and Port Talbot Grange siding from DBC from 31st March.

DBC took over the working of the Swindon to EMR Liverpool Docks scrap trains from GBRf from 28th April which involves using MBA wagons based at Cardiff Tidal sidings.

DBC took over from 28th April Freightliner the coal workings from Cwmbargoed and North Blyth and the Margam to Dee Marsh steel workings

Infrastructure Changes related to Freight traffic Number 5 shed in Newport Docks has been completely rebuilt. A new single-track line now goes into it, diverging from the quay lines just after crossing the docks road.

The use of East Usk Yard by stone trains to and from Moreton on Lugg and Grange siding commenced on 30th March when 66534 worked a train of empty HIA wagons from Basford Hall. A number of sidings at East Usk Yard have previously been relaid.

The Bridgend Ford branch is now out of use but the Penyffordd Cement works branch has been brought back into use.

The Anglesey Aluminium sidings at Holyhead have seen recent use storing imported new rolling stock for Transpennine Express.

Aggregates There is a regular thrice weekly train with containerised limestone from Hardendale to TATA at Port Talbot. There have been no stone trains from Machen since 17th February 2019.

GBRf worked stone trains from Cardiff Docks to Crawley have continued to run with workings on most Thursdays. However those to Acton have ceased on Mondays.

GBRf continues to work as required on Mondays gritstone to Washwood Heath and Stourton for CEMEX. The short turn gritstone flow to Padworth ceased on 19th April.

GBRf continues to operate an occasional gritstone on either a Tuesday or Thursday to Colnbrook.

Stone trains continue to depart from Moreton on Lugg to Hayes with a regular Monday train to Radlett and occasional trains to Hothfield. Workings to Elstow appear to have ceased. Freightliner has taken over these workings and its first train was on 31st March for Hayes with the first to Hothfield on 1st April and Radlett on 2nd April.

Crushed blast furnace slag trains have continued to run from Port Talbot Grange siding mainly to Hayes. These workings transferred to Freightliner with the first working to Hayes on 4th April. Workings to Kennet have ceased but there have been occasional workings to Hothfield (first 9th July)

and Radlett (first 2nd August). The last DBC working was on 27th March 2019 to Hayes.

The Tidal to Rotherham electric arc furnace slag service continues to run worked by DBC usually twice a week at 01.50MO and 23.39 ThO.

The movement of incinerator ash commenced on Tuesdays from 31st July from Cardiff Docks to Days Avonmouth replacing the flow to Brentford. It is used for the manufacture of concrete. There was a gap from 11th June to 30th July for incinerator ash movements from Cardiff Docks to Avonmouth. The empties now return direct from Avonmouth to Acton. On 27th July part of the train was unloaded at Avonmouth, the rest at Brentford.

A first occurred on 20th August when DCR with hired 60096 worked 14.05 Neath Abbey Wharf to Rossington with incinerator ash with some metal content from a local scrap metal processing plant yard.

The Tidal to Rotherham electric arc furnace slag service continues to run worked by DBC usually at 01.50MO and 23.39 ThO.

Car components The Bridgend to Ford Dagenham car component trains have ceased. 56087 worked the last loaded 15.35 Dagenham to Bridgend Fords siding on 14th June and there were no further trains until 27th June when 70807 worked a 15.35 from Dagenham with the remaining IVA vans thus placing all 47 vans used on the service at Bridgend.

The fleet of IVA wagons have been put on storage at Ellesmere Port leaving on 4th July and at the Barry Tourist Railway leaving on 24th July.

Cement There has been a change in the pattern of workings from Aberthaw Cement. The Tuesday train to Westbury is now frequently replaced by one from Tunstead which is usually routed via Didcot to Westbury but the return working is via the Marches. The Wednesday train to Moorswater near Liskard continues to run returning empty the following day. The Friday train to Westbury continues to run but the empties return on a Monday.

GBRf 66713 worked empty cement tanks from Gloucester New Yard to Penyffordd Cement on 28th August for clearance testing and departed with the wagons the following day to Clitheroe.

Coal Freightliner worked trains between Avonmouth/Portbury and Fiddlers Ferry have ceased thus reducing the number of trains using the Marches line. The final details of the coal trains between Avonmouth/Portbury and Fiddlers Ferry are a daily train which ran from Avonmouth between 25th and 28th March and one from Portbury on 29th March. There was one final train combined train from Avonmouth and Portbury to Fiddlers Ferry which departed on 8th April 2019.

There were only four Colas coal trains to Aberthaw Power station before the contract was handed over to Freightliner. Regular Freightliner worked coal Freightliner trains from Portbury to Aberthaw Power Station did not materialise and only one partly loaded train was operated. This was on 9th August when Freightliner 66504 headed the 15.29 East Usk Yard to Aberthaw Power station coal train (which had been loaded at Portbury on 27th July) with 15 loaded and 6 empty HHA wagons loaded with imported coal. This was expected to be the last coal train to Aberthaw Power Station. The coal was required for blending to allow the remaining coal at the power station to be burnt in the autumn before it finally closes.

The last Freightliner working from Cwmbargoed was on 26th April with DBC taking over the following week. DBC continues to work one or two trains weekly to Earles sidings at Hope for the cement works. DBC also works one or two trains each week from Cwmbargoed to British Steel Scunthorpe. There was a break after 18th May until 3rd July as administration and change of ownership took place at the steel works but trains recommenced in July

The working of the once/twice weekly coal trains from North Blyth to Port Talbot Grange transferred from Freightliner to DBC from April.

There is usually a weekly train from Onllwyn to the Coal Products smokeless fuel plant at Immingham which must be now the longest running coal service in Wales. There is an occasional train usually monthly with containers for loading for Mossend in Scotland and is one of the last remaining wagon load trains in the country.

There have been no trains from Gwaun Cae Gurwen to Onllwyn since 10th May but there has been an occasional 21 HTA wagon block train to CP Immingham.

Intermodal Freightliner continues to work its long standing Southampton to Wentloog service and the chemical flows from Dow Corning Barry to Tilbury MWO and Southampton TTho where loadings have increased.

Freightliner diverted its 23.14 SuX Felixstowe to Bristol intermodal train to Wentloog from 8th January 2019 and added a second daily service at 01.48 MX from 7th May. This is stabled at Bristol FLT on a Saturday morning working forward to Wentloog on Monday mornings because of siding space at Wentloog.

The MW0 Barry Docks to Tilbury service commenced running to the new Tilbury terminal from 5th June with the last service from the old terminal to Barry on 6th June.

The DRS worked Daventry to Wentloog train for Tesco continues to run six times a week.

Iron Ore Iron ore trains from Redcar to Port Talbot Grange siding were reinstated to run on Mondays and Wednesdays using MWA wagons. The 12:27 Redcar to Port Talbot Grange loaded train on 19th June was terminated at East Usk, this time due to capacity problems at Grange. The loaded wagons were worked forward to Port Talbot Grange on 19th July. This was the final load of iron ore from Redcar.

Nuclear trains DRS continues to serve Valley for Wylfa Power station.

Petroleum Puma Energy's storage facility at Immingham has reopened and has dispatched a weekly train to Westerleigh . This has slightly reduced the number of trains from Robeston. Usually there are now seven/eight weekly trains to Westerleigh and five weekly to Theale

The last recorded 19.20 Port Clarence to Cardiff Docks Green Energy petroleum train ran on 22nd April 2019.

Scrap 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.

A new feature has been the movement of class 313 electric units from Ilford and class 314 from Scotland for scrapping at Sims Yard in Newport Docks One or two units have been arriving each week. 314206 arrived from Scotland on 14th March and a class 313 from Hornsey London on 8th April.

Steel and tinplate The major changes have seen a reduction in the movement of steel to Birdport Newport to one or two trains a week but a large increase to Newport Docks with up to three trains a day from Margam and /or Llanwern plus tinplate trains from Trostre. There have

been no tinsplate trains from Trostre to Birdport but there is still the occasional train of slab from British Steel Scunthorpe.

The majority of movements are for TATA from Margam and Llanwern and inter works traffic continues with hot rolled steel in open wagons 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 TO (and sometimes on a Friday) rebar train from Cardiff Tidal to Burton was increased from 24 to 28 vans towards the end of the July, and has been noted with 30 VGAs. Also occasionally noted on this train has been a single SPA wagon, the first revenue earning use for this type of wagon on the mainline for a couple of years.

The GBRf worked Trostre to Tilbury service has run to the new Tilbury terminal since 5th June once or twice a week and a Margam to Grain train runs most Thursdays

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

Timber Timber trains worked by Colas continue to run TThO from Baglan Bay to Chirk.

Rowland Pittard

NEWSLINES

Cardiff Bus Station

At the end of July, it was announced that all the pieces of the financial and land assembly jigsaw were now in place to enable a start to be made on the new bus station outside of Cardiff Central. The project timetable has slipped several years. The proposal's design is essentially as previously outlined with 14 under cover bus stops. In recognition that the new bus station will be smaller than the facility it will replace, the possible location of several more stops on the south (opposite) side of the rail station is being assessed.

New station shortlist

Network Rail has announced that its list of possible new stations in Wales has been reduced to four: St Clears between Carmarthen and Whitland, Ely Mill on the Cardiff City line, Carno on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth route and Deeside Industrial Park on Wrexham to Bidston line. The four will now be subject to further assessment. The proposed station between Cardiff and Newport called St Mellons Parkway is a privately funded scheme and is still being progressed as a separate initiative.

Magor Walkway

The decision to not construct the M4 relief road to the south of Newport has given fresh impetus to the campaign to open a station at Magor. The site is near the eastern end of the proposed new road. The issue of how to provide for transport demand along the east-west corridor in SE Wales, which the new station would help address, will be at the heart of the Welsh Government commission established following the abandonment of the relief road. Railfuture Wales will be submitting evidence to the commission.

Landore

Chrysalis Rail has taken over Landore Depot in Swansea as a rolling stock maintenance and overhaul depot. The depot, has been closed since December 2018. It re-opened at the beginning of August to house some of Chrysalis Rail's latest rolling stock refurbishment, modification, repaint and overhaul projects.

Chrysalis has been overhauling stock at Long Marston near Stratford upon Avon including TfW stock for a number of years. The first stock to be upgraded at Landore is class 156 units from Scotland. Chrysalis Rail has also been operating at Holbeck, Leeds and Reading and has its head office in Crewe.

The site will have capacity to house Chrysalis Rail's rolling stock programmes such as vehicle interior and exterior refurbishment, vehicle modifications such as at-seat power, installing accessible toilets, LED lighting and interior/ exterior re-paint work, as well as the potential to look at storage options.

The first unit for upgrading Scotrail 156509 arrived on 5th August and returned on 27th August 2019.

Onllwyn Test Track

The Welsh Government has spent over £1m designing and promoting test tracks on the site of the Nant Helen opencast mine and the associated coal processing plant at Onllwyn in the Dulais Valley.

It is proposed that there will be a high speed electrified testing loop 6.9km long, which will be used for testing passenger trains at speeds up to 110 mph and an electrified inner testing loop for testing of Infrastructure plant and machinery 4.5km long. There will be a research and operations centre on the site. The present coal preparation plant sidings will be adapted and upgraded to serve the test tracks. Some sidings may be used for stock storage with a capacity for 280 vehicles in warm storage and 100 in cold storage. There has been local consultation on the proposals.

CAF Works, Newport

The new CAF manufacturing facility is to the west of Llanwern steel works adjacent to the TATA down service line. There are two sidings next to the down service line and five covered sidings connected at the west end. These seven sidings will eventually connect in to the down service line. To the east of the workshop there is a traverse which accesses on the west side the three road assembly area and on the east side eleven sidings including two covered one for a water test facility and one for the paint shop. There are proposals for a short test track on the site. The connection to the down service line is yet to be commissioned as there are ownership problems to sort out with Tata, TfW and Network Rail. The first set for Arriva Northern was completed in late June but left by road.

Club 55 sheds five years

More mature Railfuture members will recall the popular Club 55 ticket offer twice a year from Arriva Trains Wales. TfW Rail has relaunched it with the age limit reduced to 50. The principles remain the same: £29 will buy you a return between any pair of TfW Rail stations with no advance booking required. The only restriction is tickets are not valid prior to 9.30 am on Monday-Friday. The offer runs until the 24th November (last outward journey date).



DELIVERY OF RAIL WALES

In order to reduce the cost of producing branch newsletters, the Railfuture Board has decided to encourage members to receive their branch publications by e mail. This is not mandatory as members who wish to receive a postal copy can continue to do so. However, if you are willing to change to e mail receipt, please log onto the Railfuture website www.railfuture.org.uk/member and update your preferences using the 'Selfcare' area. You will require your Railfuture number, which is printed on the rear of the paper address sheet used to send Railwatch and a PIN code (which can be obtained by email from the same website page if you have forgotten it).

Email copies of Rail Wales will be sent at the same time as postal copies.

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 for the spring 2020 issue. The editor may edit letters for publication.

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The reopening of the Conwy Valley branch in late July following major flood defence work coincided with the National Eisteddfod in Llanrwst. To mark the occasion a steam special ran to North Llanrwst on the opening day of the festival where the train is photographed. Additional trains ran throughout the event from Holyhead and Bangor boosting the normal three hourly frequency.

Photo: Rhodri Clark

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