**Fforwm Rhanbarthol Rhanddeiliaid — Gogledd a Canolbarth Cymru**

**North and Mid Wales — Regional Stakeholder Forum**

**Tuesday 7th March 2023**



**Adroddiad o’r cyfarfod**

**Meeting Report**

North and Mid Wales Regional Stakeholder Forum

The forum met on the 7th of March 2023, 14.58 – 15.21 (via Microsoft Teams)

**Attendees**

**Forum Members**

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| Peter Mcdermott | Tourism Manager, Conwy Council |
| Michael P. Thomas | Tourism Manger, Angelsey Council |
| Ann Elias | Ceredigion Council, Mid Wales Regional Engagement Team – Strategic Transport, Highways & Environmental Services |
| Claire Williams | *Community Rail Officer, Conwy Valley Railway Partnership* |
| Ian Nellist | Federation of Small Businesses |
| Iwan Williams | Bangor University |
| Jasmin Koffler | Tourism Manager, Conwy Council |
| Rhian Wyn Williams (AMG) | Gwynedd Council Transport Officer |
| Sara Crombie | Network Rail |
| Joe Hodgkinson | Transport for Greater Manchester |
| Bethan Swidenbank | Network Rail |
| Claire Williams | Cambrian Rail Partnership, Development Officer |
| Andrew Saunders | Surface Access Strategy Manager, Manchester Airport |
| Gerard Rhodes | Cheshire West and Chester Council |
| Nick Smith | Senior Regional Growth Manager, Avanti |
| Joe Bickerton | Destination Manager, Wrexham Council |

**Transport for Wales**

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| Gail Jones (Chair) | Stakeholder Manager – North and Mid Wales |
| Elise Jackson | Community Engagement Officer – North and Mid Wales |
| Rebecca Wilson | Customer Marketing Manager |
| Laura Kendrick | Communications Business Partner, North Wales |

**Agenda**

1. **Introductions**

**Gail Jones, Stakeholder Manager (Chair), Transport for Wales**

Gail Jones welcomed everyone to the forum and informed forum members that the meeting was being recorded.

Gail updated on the upcoming closure of the Barmouth Viaduct, when the date is confirmed Network Rail are planning a press release in the next couple of weeks. As and when we have any information we will share it with our stakeholders, it looks like the closure will take place first week September until the end of November, but this has not been confirmed.

At the last forum we caried out engagement on the Bangor and Holyhead Station improvements consultations. All the feedback and data that we received as part of those consultation has now been collected, we will put the results of them both up online in the next few weeks, again when this info is available, we will share it with forum members.

Station improvements updates for Flint and Chester Stations, TFW are progressing tenders for both, and we hope that we will be able to update on contract programmes in the next few weeks. Designs have been submitted and are awaiting approval form Network Rail and Local Authorities.

Those that live close to Abergele, Deganwy, Penmaenmawr, Helsby, or North Llanrwst stations may have noticed some works at these stations. We are installing ‘Harington Humps’, which provide an increase in the height of the railway platform to make them compatible with our new trains.

Gail asked if there were any questions and Claire Williams from the Cambrian Rail Partnership enquired about the new shelter at Welshpool, and asked if it can it be fed back that any new shelter should have a water butt attached to it, to enable station adaptors to water plants. Rather than going through a long process of getting permission from Network Rail, it would be a common-sense approach going forward. Gail said she will feed this back.

1. **Rebecca Wilson, Customer Marketing Manger**

Rebecca introduced herself and explained that she would be updating forum members on our tourism marketing in the North Wales region. The presentation showed several photographs depicting various marketing activities that the team are working on.

The ‘Rail to Trail’ campaign ran in Autumn last year encouraging people to use the Welsh Costal Path, encouraging people to be more active and travel on our more scenic routes. The campaign was a great success and luckily Visit Wales’s theme this year is ’The Year of Trails’. So, we will run our second batch of rail to trail campaigns, which launched last week. Welsh Costal Path also partnership with national trail, Offa’s Dyke also coming on board as partners. This will run throughout march and into Easter and we will see how it performs. Active tourism work, natural beauty more about doing something different, not shopping etc, encouraging people to be active.

The well-known Cadw partnership and 241 offer has been extended. Will push this in the summer and people can expect to see more of this campaign in the media then.

The image ‘Gwlad Gwlad’ is just in Newport Station but gives an idea of some of the placemaking planned at our stations to make them more attractive. We plan to update tired looking stations, updating waiting rooms, empty walls, entrances. Big, beautiful images will be added along the ‘Welcome to/Croso I’ message. The rail to trail images will be used in wating rooms, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno are on the list, we can provide details if requested.

The ’Kids Go Free’ will continue, we will continue to push this and update the images etc. Really good proposition for tourism, especially in a cost-of-living crisis. With a fare paying adult two children can travel for free, under 16 off peak and under 11 any time.

The final image on the slide shows the latest activity, the ‘Sliding Doors Experiential’ a 3x3 sliding door with a giant screen was taken to stations across the network, which randomly opens to show a different destination. The idea was to encourage destination inspiration. Opening the conversation and saying, ‘we don’t just go to Cardiff’. A way of promoting all the other amazing destinations across the network. We had great feedback, people realising they could travel to different places, especially in North Wales.

After the overview of the tourism marketing plans, Rebecca opened the floor to questions.

Ann Elias noted that Local Authorities have made investments in big screens with info for passengers to support the bus industry, some of which are at train stations. **Action: Rebecca and Ann to discuss this further outside of the meeting.**

Ann asked if there were plans to extend free rail travel for children with Traws Cymru. Rebecca advised that she has a meeting with the Traws team and ask the question, adding that It would make sense to run promotions on both modes. **Action: Rebecca to report back to the Stakeholder Manager, Gail Jones the results of the meeting with Traws**.

Gerard, Cheshire West Council, building on the work mentioned in Chester, what work is being done to promote visitors from Wales to travel to the border regions, Cheshire and the Marches? Rebecca advised that TFW have a good relationship with Visit Chester and have run joint campaigns with them in the past, and there are further plans to continue this work, particularly on the Marches line as this is part of the ‘inter-urban’ route, promoting more long-distance travel form Cardiff to Shrewsbury for example. Now with the ‘Rail to Trail’ campaign TfW will be promoting access to Offa’s Dyke from Chirk and Ruabon, additionally Mid Wales and travel along the Cambrian to Aberystwyth line etc is promoted a lot in Birmingham.

Over the next year we will be looking at what destinations are popular at different origins, at the moment it is a blanket approach, but it is becoming clear that there are some that are far more popular. We will continue to focus on our scenic and inter-urban work, focusing on the various long and short distance services.

Gerard noted that there are rotes that fall entirely outside of Wales, Frodsham Helsby and Liverpool and the Halton curve. Rebecca said that we do a lot of digital marketing around Liverpool as we can focus in on radius around stations. We work in and outside of Wales along the borders and want to ensure no area is missed out, and that we are promoting the whole network.

Ian Nellis asked if we are aware of the trails campaign and any plans to engage with Ramblers. Rebecca advised that we are working with Ramblers Cymru, the Community Rail Team have links with them and have created community a series of walks with them. Conversations are ongoing with Ramblers Cymru on how we can build a partnership and some bespoke routes. This work continues.

Ian also advised the forum members on inter railing and asked if TfW had considered this. Rebecca advised that this hasn’t been considered but it would be great to investigate it’s potential, and maybe it could combine will with the trails campaign. It could be a new target market. Rebecca will take the idea to Visit Wales and see what they have to say. **Action: Rebecca to report back to Gail on any outcome regarding the option of inter railing.**

Claire mentioned the publicity event for Community Rail Week in Birmingham where they had taken sand to the station to make a beach to target people from Birmingham to travel along the Cambrian line to visit Wales. Most tourism advertising is done through Wales on Rails, but Community Rail Week is coming up in May, could we do something similar in 2023?

Rebecca advised that Mel Lawton has already been in touch about the sliding doors and that she would be happy to have a meeting with Mel and the CRP team to discuss how she can support any events they plan.

Joe Bickerton had a question on destinations and placemaking. A commercial group has approached Wrexham Tourism about advertising at stations in Wrexham. However, without a huge budget for advertising Joe asked if there was anything that can be done to create a sense of place in the stations in the county without going down the commercial route. There is some political pressure to increase that sense of welcome, with Wrexham being a sought-after destination now. If you go to Wrexham Station, it is very much branded as ‘Visit Chester’ as they have purchased a lot of paid for advertising at stations.

Rebecca advised that there might be opportunity to do more around the placemaking work mentioned earlier and suggested that she and Joe met to look at enhancing the welcome to Wrexham message without going down the third-party advertising route. **Action: Joe and Rebecca to meet regarding access to Wrexham campaign.**

1. **Forum Close**

Gail thanked Rebecca for the presentation. There were no further questions from the forum members. Gail thanked everyone for their attendance.

## Next Regional Stakeholder Forum

The next North and Mid Wales Regional Stakeholder Forum is scheduled for Tuesday 6th June. The meeting will be held over the Microsoft Teams platform between 11:00 – 11:30.