

TfW Rail Limited - Board minutes

19 August 2021

1300 - 1700

Location: 3 Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd and online

Attendees

Members: James Price (Chair); Peter Strachan; Heather Clash; Marie Daly; Jan Chaudhry; and Alexia Course.

In attendance: David O’Leary; Jeremy Morgan; Stephanie Raymond [item 8]; Chris Williams (item 9) and Neil James (item 12).

Part A

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Notice of Quorum

A quorum being present, the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and declared the meeting open.

3. Declarations of interest

James Price and Alexia Course are members of the Pullman Rail Ltd Board.

4. Safety Moment

The Board viewed Network Rail’s ‘Beware of the Bubble’ campaign video.

5. Customer moment

The Board reviewed feedback from customers including complaints on several topics such as appreciated supplies of water on services, level crossing guidance, dealing with queries, and cancellations notice.

6. Minutes & Actions of Previous Meeting

The minutes from the meeting 23 July 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The Actions Log was noted.

7. Managing Director’s report

Performance over weeks one and two of period 4 were good but there were some notable issues including Sunday cancellations, a signal failure at Abercynon and some dispatch irregularities. The hot weather at the end of the third week and into the fourth week affected train performance. Overall, passenger demand is on an upward curve and increasing Sunday reliability has improved the situation.

A plan to recraft the colling fan issues on the Class 769s failed, but some work has been subsequently undertaken to fit a more effective set of fans which should increase engine reliability.

Enough technical information was gleaned from a Vivarail investigation into the gen set thermal event with the Class 230s to supplement an internal technical report to assess the risks going forward. The units have now been cleared to resume driver training.

Workforce assaults, threats and abuse, workplace violence and anti-social behaviour in the post lockdown period continues to be a problem. Some COVID-19 related security contractors have been diverted to support conductors resuming their duties in the passenger saloons to help get passengers back into ticket buying habits. Antisocial behaviour by youths has been a particular problem in the upper Cardiff valleys with a group at Hengoed causing particular problems. A task and finish group is in place to review the approach to tackling the problems. This approach includes working with the local police, social services, community safety partnerships, local politicians and councils, utilising all TfW departments and their community contacts.

After discussions with Amey Infrastructure Wales, it has been made clear that the Adam Street bridge works in Cardiff will not be able to start until September 2021 and given the amount of structural work involved and the highway closures required, are unlikely to be completed before February 2022. This will impact on restoring the six trains per hour service to and from Cardiff Bay.

The recent acquisition of Pullman Rail Ltd was welcomed and seen as a significant opportunity to allow for easier introduction of the new Stadler trains and provide additional maintenance and stabling options.

The Board were informed that the Safety Executive committee discussed recent despatch incidents, both of which were due to newly qualified conductors. Due to experienced drivers, neither moved past red. A task and finish group and additional training and guidance has been set up to deal with the issue.

[REDACTED]

The Board requested more granularity on non-workforce injury issues **[Action PS]** and that this could be a potential area for a deep dive at the Safety Committee.

The Board also questioned why there has been a low take up on body worn cameras. It was reported that staff had concerns over wearability issues. Alternatives have been identified and it is hoped levels of adoption will increase. It was agreed to include usage figures in next month's report **[Action BJ and JC]**.

Concern was raised that some trains might be leaving early on the Valley Lines and should not be tolerated. It was agreed to issue a reminder to conductors about early leaving **[Action JC and BJ]**.

8. Management Accounts

Stephanie Raymond joined the meeting. Variances to the budget submitted in May currently stand at £16m for revenue and nearly £19m for capex. A budget revision focussing on passenger revenue, staff costs and capital projects is currently under way, to be submitted towards the end of September. In the meantime, budget holders

have been asked to challenge spend plans and propose different ways of working to lead to sustainable cost reductions.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Capex subsidy required was £2.2m which was £4.3m less than budget and predominantly due to phasing of costs in relation to Canton Depot and the introduction of new fleet.

The Board were informed that escalation of Schedule 4 issues in Network Rail had yielded no result. A paper will be tabled paper at the next meeting, but further escalation may be necessary.

[REDACTED]

The Board noted the period 4 finance review.

9. Commercial update

The Board noted the commercial update. Highlights included:

- Continued period-on-period growth delivered in Period 4, with revenue now up to 56.5% of the pre-COVID average and ticketed journeys up to 48.0%. This represents the strongest periodic result achieved since the start of the COVID pandemic
- Encouraging performance delivered across multiple strategic indicators, with Smart Ticketing and BBYB compliance growing period-on-period and cash usage and cost of sale continuing to fall.
- Traws Cymru is currently a separate bus network in Wales, but work continues to try and bring it into the rail system and improve the customer experience, for example through the website.
- The Capacity Checker campaign has now been re-issued to market, featuring roadside posters, newspaper ads, radio ads and social media content. Coverage will continue to mid-August 2021.

The Board were informed that Keolis Amey's original bid anticipated an inflationary increase of RPI+1, which is reflected in TfW group budgets and would amount to a 3% increase in January 2022. It was agreed that this needs checking with the Welsh Government as to whether this still meets their expectations given their focus on increasing the use of public transport and modal shift **[Action DOL]**.

Chris Williams joined the meeting to introduce a discussion on commercial KPIs. The Board discussed passenger growth and inquired as to whether mandatory use of face coverings is contributing to lag in growth and whether decision making can be influenced through data. It was confirmed that there is little data in existence, except for some collected by Transport Focus **[Action – Chris Williams to circulate]**.

The Board discussed a range of ideas around offers to encourage passengers back to services, third party retail, dealing with cash and reducing ticketless travel.

[REDACTED]

