

**Llandeilo and District Civic Trust Society.**

**Notes of a Public Meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2006 at the Civic Hall Llandeilo.**  
**“Development of Llandeilo Railway Station”**

The meeting was attended by over Forty members of the public .The speakers were David Edwards Community Rail Development Officer; Gillian Wright the Chairperson of HOWLTA; Paul Regan Architect and the Vice Chairman of the Society; Colin Jenkins, The Mayor of Llandeilo and County Councillor Ieuan Jones.

Dr D. Townsley-Hughes the Chairman of the Society chaired the meeting.

Chairman’s Introduction :The Society works to improve the quality of life for all who live and work in Llandeilo and District, by encouraging community action, good design, sustainable development, conserving and developing the built environments, through partnership with local government, business, industry and voluntary sectors. The Speakers today are an example of working in partnership for the public benefit.

The Chairman then proceeded to introduce each speaker in turn of speaking in the program, after saying that. he had received an apology for absence from Thirza Swindell , Adoptee of the Station, who had done so much voluntary work to improve the flower beds at the station

(1) Mr Paul Regan, Vice Chairman of the Society, presented his proposals for an improved design of the railway station, illustrated by photographs of the station as it is now, compared with computer generated images of a new look improved railway station.

(2) The Mayor of Llandeilo, Councillor Colin Jenkins, spoke of the road approach improvements and stressed that they were the start of the Town Heritage project and should be completed in 3 to 4 weeks and would be linking up with the Heritage Trail being prepared by Cambria Archaeology, including Heritage boards to be installed as part of the Tour. These will include the story of the Town’s prominent people, and local places of scenic and historic interest. This will be completed by the end of March. There will be plaques on historic buildings in the town and new signposts will be erected directing people along tours of the town. There will be better car parking facilities at the station and improved paths to the river bridge and Tregib Woods. A grant of £50,000 has been obtained

(3) The Chairman of Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association (HOWLTA) Mrs Gillian Wright and the Community Rail Officer Mr. David Edwards).

(i)spoke about the 120 miles of the line and the core section of Llanelli to Craven Arms. They commented on the clearing of vegetation and the cleaning of the carriage windows to enable views of the valley to be enjoyed properly. The HOWLTA Forum includes representatives from the Arriva Trains Company .The rail, infrastructure is run by Network Rail and Arriva leases the Station from that company. As to security on the line the railway police are scarce on the ground in Wales as a whole. but if enough complaints area made they will attend to incidents. The local police will also assist..

(ii)There are now four trains each way Monday to Friday and two on Sundays. An accommodation guide to B/Bs and hotels near the line is being prepared To improve the customer support the Forum consists of Customers from along the line, the Local Authorities, Regional Tourism Partnerships (six in Wales) and Arriva Trains the aim is to increase rail travel in a strategic way There are now gaps of 3 to 4 hours between trains and the hope is to obtain cash from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), (which is an enthusiastic supporter of the rail network generally) to plug these gaps .To increase marketing, there are promotion publicity materials, including information boards at the stations, with taxi telephone numbers and local information and maps about the nearest town .

(iii)Half of the stations on the line have been adopted but some are nowhere near people and some are a long way from car parking.

There are interpretation boards in English and Welsh at Llandeilo station. In Llandovery HOWLTA is to take over the station building. There is now provision for a £5 ticket from either end of the line to include soup and a roll The organisation will support the Heritage Trail in Llandeilo. The presentation ended with a plea to join HOWLTA and to use their web site.

(4) The Chairman introduced Councillor Ieuan Jones who reviewed the situation of the road renovation and the town enhancement scheme; including the grants position and that the County

Council had agreed to take over part of Station Road from Railtrack. Phase I the final surface will be laid next week and bushes will be planted along the roadside. The Heritage Trail will be designed by Gwilym Hughes The next task will be to link the town with the river bridge by the centenary anniversary in 2011 This work will include removal of the saplings that hide the river and the bridge, repair of the railings and re-paint the bridge. A good parking area will be required near the Station for cars and coaches. He said that it was his job to bring the first stage to completion

**The Chairman then invited questions and comments of relevant information from the floor to the Panel of Speakers.**

1. A proposal to bring back steam trains to the line between Llandeilo and Llandovery with engine sheds at Llandeilo and to set up a Towy Valley Steam Heritage trust was outlined by Simon Buckley. It was hoped that this would be backed by the Heritage Lottery Fund and to develop the station at Llandeilo as a prime tourist attraction like the Severn Valley Steam line. The proposal could be compared with the Gwili railway but this would be much longer The number of visitors could be more than any existing railway in South Wales.
2. David Edwards said the HOWLTA and the HOWLForum would give all the help that they could and he compared the idea with the Amman Valley Railway project and hoped that the two could link up at Pantyffynon. The Line is entering into negotiations to become a “Community Rail Project” to differentiate such lines from the main lines. Five such private lines have been set up in England and by this time next year the Heart of Wales Line could become one.
3. The question of the provision of toilets on the trains ? -could not be provided until there were more trains.
4. Telephones on the station (to enable disabled persons to ring for a taxi? –if there was a public telephone within 400 yards of a station then a telephone could not be provided.
5. The size and prominence of town signs at the station? This could be looked into
6. How will the by pass affect any station planning?-Ieuan Jones said since the public meeting nothing further has been heard about the by-pass and there has been no information from WAG .The route proposed is no longer viable, as some houses have been built over part of the route and as the road has been detrunked this has also changed the position .There was comment from HOWLTA that care had to be taken when considering any plans that the town was not separated from the railway station as this would preclude access by less able persons and the Welsh Office had been charged not to make the same mistake as had been made further up the line as at Welshpool. Comments from the floor referred to the flood danger to any by-pass plans and that no account seemed to be taken of the flood plain and the environmental impact on the station and its car park.
7. In response to two speakers from the audience who suggested that any local railway developments should await a decision about the location of a Llandeilo Bypass, the Chairman asked the meeting / audience whether they agreed that we should proceed as soon as possible to try and implement suggested improvements presented to the meeting, beginning with the proposals of Mr Paul Regan, without waiting for a decision about location of a bypass. No one disagreed.
8. A comment from the floor about the destruction of the station building was answered from HOWLTA whose representative stated that they had not been informed or consulted and it was a shock to their members The Wales and West Railway Company had been in charge. .
9. The car park would never be attractive and viable while the prefabricated concrete building remained taking up room that could be profitably used .It was pointed out that the building was leased from Railtrack and the building could only be repositioned if that company decided that it was necessary ‘for operational necessity’
10. Construction of any embankments near the railway line would be contrary to TAN15 planning and speakers attacked the lack of a long term planning strategy and the by-pass would not come in the short term. In Ffairfach Tregib school would not have been built under TAN15 and the plans for a

future old persons home to replace Arwel Tawe could not be carried out although the land had been set aside for this

**11.** The links between the services by rail from Swansea and London and onwards on the Mid Wales line were criticised and also the links between trains and the bus services. Could this be considered when the proposed increase in train services was being planned?

The reply was that while the County Council finances the buses within the county they do not have any financial control over the services to Swansea .There is a review of the transport services every year but the buses are not used as much as they could be.

**12.** Comment :The walk to the expanded Tregib Woods is not within the Town's Heritage Trail scheme

**13.** Comment : The last train of the day sometimes didn't arrive

**14.** Getting changes in the trains timetable?

Arriva had to put a business case to get WAG to fund more services and it was agreed that the rolling stock was not satisfactory but WAG was making more funds available for rolling stock.

**15.** The audience was asked to let the Rail Officer know if there were things on the station that needed attention

**16.** There were plans to link up four schools (including Tregib) to draw up an art project for the line.

**17.** Pass holders can now get a 50% reduction in the fares to Swansea.

**18.** Taxi telephone numbers are on the station notice board.

**19.** What is Phase 11 of the Station improvement ? The Town Council had inspected the station and agreed to tidy up the bushes and the brambles. Improvement of the Station itself, including the car park will require further funds.

**20.** Could there be signage at the Station that would point the way to the town? This would be included in the Heritage Plan .

**21.** HOWLTA and the Community Rail Officer have done an audit on the signs in the County and this will be looked at .

**22.** It is planned to have a rail timetable in the centre of the town.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their contributions and everyone for their attendance and participating in discussion.

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Geoffrey DV Williams, February 2006