



## The Monthly Newsletter for all who work at the Llangollen Railway

### Issue 1. February 2022

#### Croeso I Post Dyffryn Dyfrdwy!

#### Welcome to the Dee Valley Mail

Dee Valley Mail has been created for everyone working on our superb railway to be better informed about what is going on. It is widely recognised that communication around the railway could be better and the *Dee Valley Mail* will hopefully be one way that this can be improved. DVM will bring you monthly news from the Board, Volunteers and LR Departments to try and keep you updated about how the railway is doing along with what is going on.

It won't fix our problems overnight, but will hopefully be a useful step forward. I would welcome news, stories and photos from all departments and each issue will see a different Board Member and Department provide a column. That way we can all learn a bit more about what everyone else does.

As a volunteer of nearly 16-years standing in the Diesel Group, Signalling Department and organising diesel and 1960's galas, I am passionate about our wonderful railway. Like you, I want to do my part in helping make it a success.

Pob lwc a dymuniadau gorau / Good luck and best wishes

**Tez Pickthall. LR Volunteer.**

#### Phot-Spot



7754 with a Cynon Valley Railway Society Special at Taylwain Colliery, March 1970. Photo courtesy of Random Railways.

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#### News from the Board

The Llangollen Railway Trust Board meets every month. The February meeting was a long one and there are several developments to make everyone aware of.

#### Personnel Changes

**Pete Edwards** has stepped down as Chairman after 16 months in-post. Pete announced he wished to do so back at the AGM owing to his professional commitments outside of the railway. He will remain on the Board and continue his focus on policy development and governance. A massive thank you to Pete for his hard work and commitment through this most difficult period in the Railway's history. He can be proud of what he has achieved. **Phil Coles** has agreed to act as temporary Chair and the hunt is on for a longer-term replacement. The Diesel group are now very much looking forward to seeing a bit more of Pete - there's a floor to finish in the No 1 end cab of our Class 47, chop-chop!

The Board continues to function with stretched capacities and as a result maintains the search to recruit further members to strengthen the team and share the workload out. With having ongoing challenges surrounding Director liability insurances, this continues to be a hurdle for further recruitment. This said, the existing Board remains resolute that any future Board representation will be determined by acknowledging the skillsets required and not simply by having enough votes.

With the current Board representatives continuing to operate without several liability safeguards, it has been necessary to welcome additional advisory contributions from people willing to help, as well as input from legal and HR agencies. As a result, the Board has welcomed additional assistance from - **Peter Brewer** (Commercial & External Communications) and **Richard Abbott** (Health & Safety). Both join us with considerable professional experience and expertise in their respective areas and we would like to offer them a warm welcome.

**Paul Bailey** also decided to stand down from the Board at the AGM, but continues to coordinate numerous

fundraising appeals from Corwen to the 50T Cowans Crane. The Board wishes to thank Paul most sincerely for his efforts and recognise his considerable ability to make folk part with their cash. From sponsoring a football team to support 5532's overhaul to the odd tonne or two of ballast for Corwen, we've all been inspired to support Paul's railway's fundraising. Thank you Mr Bailey!

## Phot-Spot



Feb 2022 half-term services will be provided by Team Railcar - with the Class 108/104 hybrid and 109 units in use. The weekends will see a two-train service.

## Staff Appointments & Recruitment

Based on progress made to-date in stabilising the Railway's governance, planning re-structures and the critical need to maintain continuity and focus, the Board will be appointing **Tom Taylor** as the Railway's Trust Manager, on a temporary 6-month basis. Whilst the title is a definitive change to the former General Manager, it recognises the re-structured, charitable purposes of the LR Trust. This will allow Tom to continue to focus on delivering the LR's governance and organisational restructure, which is considered critical to enabling the Railway to become 'fit for purpose'. Tom has been called in to advise numerous organisations in the Charity & Voluntary sectors (known as the "third sector"). on strategy, planning and governance. This has included the LR for a number of years, alongside running his catering and freelance consultancy business. Consequently, Tom has a wealth of experience in areas the railway needs the most at the moment. This is underlined by his spearheading of the One Railway project. Tom is very highly regarded by influential folk dealing with the third sector in the Welsh Government, National Heritage Lottery Fund, Denbighshire County Council and other public sector agencies. We are very grateful to Tom for all the help that he has given us so far in a voluntary capacity and are convinced that he is the right person to take us forward in our vision towards becoming a leading charitable and heritage organisation. Tom's appointment is for an initial 6 months with the aim of it becoming a

longer-term role. It will enable the Railway to explore and forge robust partnerships with other liked-minded heritage and cultural organisations (like the Eisteddfod Ground) and allow us to compete on a far more level playing field when it comes to bidding for external funding, from trusted organisations like The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Welsh Government.

**Tim Pulford** has returned to manage the Heritage Engineering Department on a part-time basis. He has already been instrumental in successfully recruiting maintenance staff within the MPD and Carriage & Wagon team to ensure we have complimentary paid capacity to work alongside our considerable volunteer workforce as we look forward to the 2022 operating season and slowly address the backlog of work in these areas.

We are also about to embark on a recruitment exercise to appoint a **Commercial Manager**. This is considered another area of development within the organisation as we aim to build financial resilience. We encourage everyone to show interest in the campaign, even if it only to share with your family, colleagues and friends.

## Catering to move back in-house

In line with achieving the Railway's commercial aspirations, the catering service will now be transferred back 'in-house'. Taylored Catering Services has successfully delivered our Llangollen and on-train hospitality services for the past 8 years.



*The Carriage Tearooms. A great place for volunteers and visitors to relax and enjoy a drink and cake*

Bringing catering back under LR Trust control gives the railway the opportunity to build upon the provision developed over recent years; such as the on-board dining service and the Carriage tearoom. This will continue to compliment our wider commercial offering. The initial priority will be to ensure that the current operation is maintained and ready for the 2022 season. This will include transferring the small team of paid staff over to the LR Trust, which will be required under TUPE

employment regulations. The appointment of Tom as LR Trust Manager will also enable him to support the catering service through the transition to being run in-house.

Looking ahead, there is an opportunity for volunteers to make a greater contribution to the management and delivery of our catering provision. Many of us would be delighted to see the return of more on-train dining in some form, even if just a simple fish and chip-style service or the availability of a volunteer's bar during the high season, along the lines of what has been provided at special events like 1960's weekends with great success.

## Volunteering Update

Let's start with an important announcement. Thank you to ALL volunteers from ALL departments for their contributions and commitment to supporting the recovery of our great Railway. We should all be proud!

Whilst we aim to swell representation at Board level, it is crucial we continue to encourage volunteer involvement across all areas of the railway. In an effort to add further energy and capacity to Volunteering, **Ian Bibby** has been appointed as the Railway's Volunteer Liaison Officer, with support from **Sandra Reynolds**, as Volunteer Administrator. In an effort to capitalise on neighbouring public events, Ian be attending the Llangollen Toy & Train Sale being held at the Pavilion on 19<sup>th</sup> February. Ian will be looking to showcase volunteering opportunities available at the LR and needs your help! Should you wish to be involved, please contact him (via Tez's email, see last page). This is envisaged as the start of the LR forging very close relationships with other local third sector partners, such as the Denbighshire Volunteer Council, to encourage further recruitment.

Although stepping down from a Board role at the AGM, **Andy Maxwell** continues to be a real power-house as our Head of Motive Power Department (MPD). There isn't much he isn't grafting away at - be it Austin No 1's successful ongoing hire to Somerset & Dorset Railway or seeing 7754 returned to steam hopefully later this year,

**Mark Smales** has also passed-on the Management of the P/Way Department after getting it back on its feet and through the repair of some key infrastructure that got the railway operational, including the Dee Bridge timber renewal. Mark remains Diesel Group Chairman, a key part of the S&T team and jack-of-all-trades around the MPD.

Both Andy and Mark are thanked most sincerely for everything they have done and are still doing. Both continue to work with and support Tim Pulford in his role.

**George Jones** has retired from his role as LR Press Officer. George fulfilled this important role for many years and did an excellent job of publicising us in the local, national and railway press. We hope we will still be seeing George out and about with his camera.



5310's second man makes the token exchange with the Goods Junction signalman on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021. A great photo by George Jones, our recently-retired Press Officer

## Remembering another George Jones

It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of the railway's other George Jones. George was involved in the Railway for over 30 years, starting in the MPD and working his way up to driver.

After standing down from the footplate George became a keen member of the Carrog station team, finishing up as ticket clerk. George will be much-missed at Carrog and we offer our sincere condolences to his daughter Barbara and the rest of the family. George's funeral will be held on February 18<sup>th</sup> at 2:30pm in Pentre Bychan. George's family have very kindly asked for all donations at the service to come to the railway, for which we offer our grateful thanks.

## 2022 Operations Update

The plan for 2022 is to build on our success of last year. We aim to balance the books by working within budgets and ensure viable running. Our Cash Flow Forecast, which is updated as our costs and overheads change, is based upon an estimated passenger revenue. The problem is that we do not have any viable data on passenger numbers other than for 2018/2019 so, with last year's figures adding to the calculations, we are developing a model to use for forecasting. The tourist sector appears to be reporting record bookings for this year, which is probably due to continued concerns over COVID encouraging folk to take UK holidays. We will continue to monitor the situation and if required make appropriate changes to our operations to meet demand.

I have received a number of questions regarding 2022 Operations & Timetables. Hopefully I can answer these here and now. During the latter part of 2021 and through the winter maintenance programme, it has become apparent that our P/Way is suffering from a lack of investment over a long period of time. So, the lack of running on Mondays, Tuesdays & Wednesdays in the Off-Peak is simply there to allow time for essential maintenance to be carried out.

To put this into perspective we need to spend something in the region of £160,000 on our P/Way over the next 18 months to 2 years. Also, if we look at recent data, it is not viable to run trains every day with the number of passengers we typically see. People visiting the area have 'X' amount of money to spend and the experience of last year has shown that if we are closed on certain days the customer will more than likely come on another. As we now have a working website and growing social media presence, it is also easier for our customers to make their choice of day to visit.

Continuing with P/Way news, 3 issues have been identified at Deeside Halt that required action before trains could be run for the 2022 season. Firstly, the west end points were found to be out-of-gauge. As such, the P/Way team have replaced them with plane track on the Up/Down Main Line. Deeside Loop is now, for the time being, Deeside siding and accessed from the east end points, which are both clipped and scotched for the Up/Down main line. The passing loop will be re-instated when time, materials and budget allow.



*Plane track installed in place of the west points at Deeside loop. Platform removal work is also ongoing in the background. Photo (and hard graft) thanks to Peter Jump, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022.*

The second issue is the platform. After careful examination, some structural timbers were found to be rotten and life-expired, causing the platform to creep towards the running line. Work will take place to make the platform safe for operations which may require temporary removal of the platform. Again, this will be re-

instated when time and budget allows. Finally, Deeside Box has not been used for the best part of 2 years, so the decision has been made to mothball it for the foreseeable future. There will now be a single section between GJ and GY. S&T will remove all Deeside Tokens from GJ and GY Signal Boxes.



*The P/Way team undertaking platform removal works at Deeside Halt following discovery of rotten supporting timbers, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022. Photo thanks to Pete Jump.*

### Mk1 Coaches

The railway was left with seven operational Mk1s, most of which are privately owned. These have suffered from a lack of investment but we are putting in place a schedule and budget to bring them up to a decent standard to enhance the customer experience. I need to thank Team C&W for the brilliant job they did in getting the rake presentable for the Santa Specials. Fantastic work was done, especially on our FK, which we sold as First Class at a premium fare - that sold out on virtually every train!

**LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY**

## EVENTS - 2022

2nd - 3rd July	Classic Transport Weekend
3rd - 4th Sept	Diesel Weekend
8th - 9th Oct	DMU Railcar Weekend
29th October	Halloween Train
5th November	Ride the Rocket Firework Train

As shown above, we are looking to re-introduce a number of events into this year's calendar. It also looks like we may be in a position to start running Real Ale Trains after an offer from Tez Pickthall, Iain Ross & Pete Edwards to take these on. If anyone is keen to support these beyond buying a few pints please do get in touch with Tez.

## Corwen

All being well, Corwen Central Station will open in the second half of the year. A tamper is booked to arrive in late April to tamp and level the track. We have a supply of ballast to complement what has already been put down so, with a bit of welding, the track should soon be good to go. This will leave Team S&T with a few essential works to be completed plus any snags which come to light before a sign off from HRMI. You hopefully already know about the Levelling Up Grant, which will pay for the Canopy and Completion of the station. Although there is some confusion between the UK, Welsh Governments and Denbighshire CC as to how these funds are accessed, Tom Taylor is on the case and he hopes to find a solution that will not slow things down. Corwen has the potential to open up our catchment area to the west and have a dramatic effect on our passenger numbers. Bring it on!

## Heritage Proposals

The Board receive many suggestions from members and volunteers. We are more than willing to look at any ideas or projects the membership may have. However, they need to be documented so a proposal can be created and presented to the Board. When our governance and restructuring is complete, we may be in a position to apply for HLF, or similar funding to help facilitate such projects. 2022 will, I'm sure, have its challenges but, in comparison to the last two, I'm confident we can overcome anything thrown at us! Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or require further information.

## Mike Williams, Operations Director



Not a Pink Floyd sleeve, but the underpass at Berwyn station and graffiti written over a century ago by local men awaiting WWI postings. One example of a heritage project that needs a detailed proposal to move forward.

## One Railway - 'Staying on Track'

As the Railway's 5-year strategy plan continues to be developed, the following 5 priorities are being recognised

as the organisation's vision of which all our objectives and actions will serve;

1. Strengthening organisational governance and leadership
2. Ensuring a commitment to the sustainability of the Heritage Sector
3. Providing a quality-driven public experience
4. Building financial resilience
5. Enabling enriched volunteer experiences

Further planning workshops are to be organised over the following weeks, where everyone will be encouraged to contribute and participate. In the meantime, we actively encourage the continued use of [onerailway@llangollen-railway.co.uk](mailto:onerailway@llangollen-railway.co.uk) to share your thoughts & suggestions. They do all contribute to the shaping of Railway's future.

## February Focus: Team Cowans Crane

We are very pleased to announce that agreement has been reached with the Board to purchase the railway's 50 Ton Cowans Sheldon Rail Crane back from Sandbach Commercial Dismantlers Ltd, who purchased our historic crane at the auction of the PLC assets in May 2021.

It was built in Carlisle for the War Department in 1943 as an oil-fired 45-ton steam crane with the works No. 8053. It was then sold to British Railways' London Midland Region in 1960 and renumbered RS1085/45. Later it was given CEPS number ADRC95221 which it carried until conversion from steam to diesel-hydraulic power in May 1986. It was then based at Laira depot up until withdrawal.

The crane has been at Llangollen for many years and is of considerable value. It will allow the MPD team to lift and move steam locomotive boilers, with lifts for Pannier 7754, Prairie 5532 and Standard 4 80072 all required soon. The Permanent Way Dept will be able to tackle pretty much any job including ones that our smaller 12t crane cannot handle. It also grants us flexibility with being able to re-rail vehicles quickly, should the need arise, although we obviously try to avoid that need at all costs!



Our 50T crane earlier this month. Photo by Andy Maxwell

SCD have kindly agreed to repayment over 10 years, including weighing in of day-to-day LR scrap. We are however keen to complete the repurchase sooner and not put further on SCD's generosity. Promises of £6,000 have already been made through low profile publicity. In addition, sales of scrap to SCD have raised a further £3,000. This is great, but our target is to raise another £15k and secure the crane's future as soon as we can.

If you would like to help with fundraising you can send a cheque payable to "Llangollen Railway Trust Ltd." marked for the attention Paul Bailey, c/o Llangollen Railway, the Station, Abbey Road, Llangollen LL20 8SN or contact Paul at [paulbaileywincham@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:paulbaileywincham@yahoo.co.uk) for other payment options. We can accept online donations via Bank Transfer. Gift Aid is also available, which (ahem) "raises" any donation made by a UK taxpayer. Hope that's "hooked" you in (we'll stop now).

**Paul Bailey, Andy Maxwell & Tez Pickthall**  
Team Cowans Crane

## Current Board Representation

The Board wanted to clarify the names and positions of the current LR Trust Board given the recent changes since the Annual General Meeting back in October 2021.

Name	Role	Remit
Phil Freeth	Finance Director	Cashflow forecasting, budgetary allocations
Pete Edwards	Director Policy Development	- Review of existing policy framework
Phil Coles	Director Infrastructure & Acting Chair	- Infrastructure review and facility improvements
Maureen Theobald	Director - HR & Volunteers	Staff contract extensions, volunteer inductions
Bob Creasey	Director Secretariate	- Compliances, insurances, bookkeeping
Mike Williams	Director Operations	- Season running schedule, support to operational & maintenance activity
Peter Brewer	Non-Executive Advisor - Commercial & Communication	Organisational Communication Plan
Richard Abbott	Non-Executive Advisor - Health and Safety	Risk Registers, safety policy familiarisation

## Phot Spot



*The Class 109 DMU seen during a successful test run on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February following replacement of a fractured crankshaft. Team Railcar has done a stunning job to get the "Wickham" back in business so quickly. Photo with thanks to Mike Martin.*

## And there we are!

I hope you've found the first issue DVM a useful and enjoyable read. I also hope the name is not too controversial. It is not a pre-text to rename the railway - we've been there and will always be the **Llangollen Railway**. We run through the wonderful Dee Valley and our volunteers can be found working all along it. There was also an early western-bound mail train that used to run pre-closure, although I'm not sure it was named,

The next edition will be published in March (the date is flexible) and so I would welcome contributions of news, photos and an LR Department to step up and provide a short update about what they're up to. If I receive more than one update or other content that I cannot fit in then it will get used and be held over for a later edition. Diolch!

Tez Pickthall. [tez.pickthall@btinternet.com](mailto:tez.pickthall@btinternet.com)

## A Closing Shot You Can Almost Hear!



*Right away! 3802 leaves Llangollen on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021 with a Santa train. Cracking shot by Paul Evans.*