

Janet Finch Saunders AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Network Rail
St Patrick's House
17 Penarth Road
Cardiff
CF10 5ZA

16 March 2020

Dear Janet,

Petition P-05-913 Creation of Lôn Las Môn Multi-Use Path

Thank you for your recent letter to Bill Kelly regarding the petition on a potential multi-use path on the disused branch line between Gaerwen and Amlwch. Bill has asked me to follow up and respond in my role as Senior Public Affairs Manager for Wales and Borders.

For background, Anglesey Central Railway Ltd. (ACRL) have held a licence to carry out basic maintenance on the line for a number of years. Their long-term aspiration is to restore the branch as a heritage railway and in 2016 we formally started the industry consultation required to progress a long-term lease of the line. At this time ACRL were the only interested party actively involved in discussions with our route community rail team.

We recognise that more recently, the future use of the line has been subject to considerable debate locally, and that Lôn Las Môn have developed alternative proposals that would instead see the line re-purposed as an active travel route. Although negotiations towards a lease with ACRL were already well advanced, we felt it was important to be fair in our dealings with all parties and so we agreed to discuss their proposals and provide them with guidance on the industry disposal process.

We also explained to them that during the industry consultation phase in 2016, the Welsh Government and freight industry had made it clear that they would only support the disposal of the disused line if the ability to restore passenger or freight services on the line was maintained.

Earlier this month, Lôn Las Môn requested that we open formal negotiations on a lease with them for an active travel route, with the ACRL negotiations still ongoing. Although we have considered this request very carefully, including taking counsel from our legal and property teams, we feel that lease negotiations with ACRL are now advanced to a stage where it would be unfair to Lôn Las Môn, or indeed any other interested party, to start negotiating a lease with them in tandem.

Of course, should the lease negotiations with ACRL not progress to completion, or if the terms of the lease are not complied with, there may be future opportunities to discuss an alternative use for the line. However, it is worth noting that Welsh Government recently reiterated their desire to see a rail solution maintained on the branch.

As we have suggested previously, to both Lôn Las Môn and ACRL, we would encourage continued dialogue between both parties and other stakeholders on Anglesey to explore potential opportunities for collaboration.

Yours sincerely,



Sam Hadley, Senior Public Affairs Manager, Wales and Borders

cc: Adrian Williamson, Lôn Las Môn