



## Lôn Las Môn

P-05-913 - Pwyllgor Deisebau 23.06.20 / Petitions Committee 23.06.20

Dear Sirs, Madam

We would like to respond as follows to the letters & enclosures from Network Rail – Cymru Wales dated 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020. We fully understand the delay in getting this letter from Network Rail out to ourselves due to the situation we have all found ourselves in under the Covid 19 Pandemic and it has changed many things in Wales and how we look at walking, cycling and access to safe spaces / traffic free environments. Answering the specific paragraphs in Network Rails letter we would add:

1. We have over the last year had a number of discussions with Sam Hadley who has as he says been very even handed with our proposal and approach to the alternate scheme for this disused line, the only disappointment is that despite our best efforts with our consultants at Michael Chown and John Grimshaw <http://www.johngrimshawassociates.co.uk> we were unable to follow up with a face to face or Zoom type meeting with Network Rail to discuss with them our proposals in more detail including options for step in and an option to take on the lease if the Heritage Group failed to obtain sufficient funding for their scheme. We did make the request to open a line of discussion re an alternate lease actually back in October of 2019, it was only in March 2020 did they acknowledge such, which was a little disappointing.
2. We have been aware of Anglesey Central Railway Ltd (ACRL) licence to carry out basic maintenance and clearance on the line, this came to an end in April of this year and was limited to a short 2-mile section of line in the middle of the island. Network Rail made us aware of the formal industry consultation of which WG and others were required to respond to if a long-term lease were agreed for the line and or disposal of. We have asked so see sight of this consultation, but nothing has been forthcoming i.e. what was asked of WG and the Local Authority and were the general public of Ynys Môn asked for their views and opinions. This petition which was only open for a very limited period (1 month) showed that there was a strong appetite for a Multiuse Path in favour of any Commuter or Heritage Rail. It seems clear that before any disposal or lease is agreed to it should be a matter of the residents on the island to have a say on and not just a private company and UK Gov Department.
3. As respect of the industry consultation with options for freight and or passenger services, it's very unlikely that freight would ever be used on the line given that there is no heavy industry left on this portion of the island that would need or warrant freight services that could not be met via road based carriers. Of recent the Rehau plant Amlwch also recently closed down and they used exclusively road transport, the Associated Octel plant in Amlwch is slowly being demolished and taken away which was the last freight use of the line in 1993/4 when the line was finally closed. As regards light rail or passenger services, the North of the island is well served by bus services and even the Local Authority are exploring ideas for decarbonising bus services by looking at hybrid buses and hydrogen powered buses which get more into the countryside and villages, far more than a train service would which only serves a limited number of villages / towns. Relate to this matter is the cost of a ticked a Rover

Ticket which can take you to a number of places on the island is only £4.50, how much would a rail ticket cost and how much would it need to be subsidised by to make viable?

4. We do stand by our proposal which has been fully costed at £5m and a full feasibility including integration with current Active Travel, National Cycle and walking routes is ready to be commissioned. We see from the Network Rail letter that they have indicated that *“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.”* This we welcome, it does go on to say *“However, it is worth noting that Welsh Government recently reiterated their desire to see a rail solution maintained on the branch”* This is borne out by letter we have received from Ken Skates AC/AM dated 4<sup>th</sup> June to Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP Secretary of State for Transport (see attached) The third from last paragraph which reads *“My letter also set out other priorities for rail re-openings and my officials have recently lodged an expression of interest for the New Ideas Fund, for the restoration of passenger services on the line between Gaerwen and Amlwch on Anglesey”* We find this quite strange given that in the recent consultation on opening new stations Llangefni which lies on the centre of the island was not considered for re-opening in favour of other larger population centres in North Wales i.e. Deeside. We acknowledge that the Minister has a portfolio to push forward but we urge the WG and Minister to consider the breadth of support for a much-needed Multiuse path across the island.
5. We have indicated in our previous responses the benefits a Multiuse path could provide which are far more wide ranging than passenger, freight or a heritage service:
  1. **Health** (refer to Dr Dyfrig ap Dafydd letter) see previous petitions committee response
  2. **Schools**, the route passes by 7 secondary & junior schools lie along its length
  3. **Active Travel**, the line passes through three business and industrial estates, with the growth in cycling in recent months this path could provide greater connectivity
  4. **Business**, cafes, campsite, B&Bs and pubs along its route would all benefit and as other former railway paths have shown micro business grow up along them servicing its users
  5. **Tourism**, one running group has approached us with the view to running a Metric Marathon along its length 26km as opposed to 26 miles, no road closures needed as route travels through a number of villages. Start of end being in Amlwch which in itself would be a boost to the town. Increased footfall from walkers & hikers wanting a more level path than the coastal path, this includes better provision for wheelchair users holidaying on the island
  6. **Environment**, the uninterrupted 18-mile traffic free route passes two large bodies of water & nature reserves such as Gors Dryga, it’s potential as a Green Corridor is enormous to biodiversity and wildlife connectivity from North to South on the island.
  7. **Cycling**, one thing the Covi19 pandemic has shown is the growth in cycling, numbers of new and returning cyclists have grown by a reported 300% with national and local cycling shops barely keeping up with supply which you only need to go out on the local lanes and existing cycling paths to see how busy they all are. One key factor though is the need for Safe Spaces i.e. Traffic Free environments are the safest for all concerned, whether they are new or returning to cycling or adaptive cycling. We have a duty to provide better for all these users instead of just pavements and country roads.
6. This is a scheme to be run by Lôn Las Môn CIC, we are not looking for the Local Authority to run or manage the scheme, we just need the WG to consider what it could bring to Ynys Môn and call on them to help us pause any signing of any long term lease on the line until it’s been put before the Senedd or the island so that a democratic decision can be made on its disposal.

“Greenways & Multiuse Paths are traffic-free routes connecting communities to all kinds of destinations for commuting, everyday journeys, leisure and recreation”.

Continued...



## Lôn Las Môn

Yours Sincerely

Adrian Williamson

For and on behalf of Lôn Las Môn

List of Appendices;

**Appendix 1** – Ken Skates AC/AM letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Appendix 2** – List of UK wide former Railways converted into Rail Trails, Railway Paths, Greenways and Multiuse Paths