

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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 19 Tachwedd 2019
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Petition Number: P-05-913

Petition title: Creation of Lôn Las Môn Multi-Use Path

Text of petition: We call on the Welsh Government to withdraw its objection, and offer support, to the proposal for Network Rail to permit the Anglesey Central Railway to be re-purposed into an 18 mile traffic-free multi-user path from Amlwch through to Gaerwen. Having been out of service for the past 26 years, it is our belief that the line could no longer serve any useful purpose for passenger services or freight between Gaerwen and Amlwch. Instead, the Lôn Las Môn multi-user path would be open for use by families, walkers, runners, equestrian users and leisure cyclists, including those with disabled access requirements.

1. Background

Anglesey Central Railway is a 17 mile railway line connecting Amlwch to Gaerwyn and the North Wales Mainline. Passenger services stopped on the line in 1964 following the implementation of the Beeching Report. Industrial freight services continued until 1993. The line itself remains in place, but has been mothballed.



The line is owned by Network Rail – the body responsible for most rail infrastructure in Britain. While the Welsh Government has powers to invest in rail infrastructure to meet its own priorities, rail infrastructure investment and planning in Wales is not devolved and is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Media reports indicate that in 2012 Network Rail granted a licence to Anglesey Central Railway Limited to begin clearing undergrowth from the lines with a view to reopening them to heritage rail services. Network Rail is currently negotiating a lease with the organisation.

Network Rail's Network Licence requires it to carry out an industry consultation when disposing of land – including entering into lease agreements. This requires the organisation to consult with a range of rail industry and other organisations, including the Welsh Government and local authorities. A consultation on the lease was held in 2016, however the details do not appear to have been published.

The Welsh Government has been developing business cases for new railway stations across Wales through a three stage process. A proposal for a station at Llangefni on the Anglesey District Line had been included at stage one and two – presumably requiring the line south from Llangefni to the existing network to be reopened.

The Welsh Government's National Transport Finance Plan 2018 update (published in May 2019) refers to the station being considered at stage two of the process. However, the outcome of this process does not appear to have been published yet.

This station proposal is not mentioned in the letter from the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport to the Chair on this petition.

More recently, Lôn Las Môn is campaigning to repurpose the line as a multi-use path. The development of walking and cycling routes, as well management of most public rights of way, is largely the responsibility of local authorities. The Welsh Government is increasingly linking funding for active travel routes to priorities identified by local authorities in delivering the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.

2. Welsh Government action

The letter to the Chair from the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters AM, highlights the Welsh Government's decarbonisation objectives set out in its low carbon delivery plan, Prosperity for All: A low carbon Wales. In particular, this outlines the need to encourage active travel. However, in discussing the implications of the Active Travel Act the Deputy Minister notes:

Our Active Travel Act places a duty on local authorities to plan and create walking and cycling networks in all larger villages, towns and cities. It would be

for Anglesey County Council to decide whether there is potential to develop this route as an active travel route through consultation ahead of the submission of its next Integrated Network Map. The current position is that Amlwch and Llangefni are designated localities to which our Active Travel Act duty applies to, though Gaerwen is not.

We fully recognise the potential of developing the disused railway between Gaerwen to Amlwch as a multi-use path for leisure and tourism. However, whilst we value leisure cycling and walking, these are not priorities for transport policy.

It would be for Anglesey County Council to decide if it wishes to pursue other sources of funding for developing the disused railway line as a multi-use path.

The Deputy Minister also refers to the Welsh Government's September 2019 publication, *A Railway for Wales: the case for devolution*. This document sets out the Welsh Government's aspiration for 'full rail devolution', including rail infrastructure. The Deputy Minister notes that this 'will allow us to consider reopening some currently disused lines such as Gaerwen to Amlwch'.

The Deputy Minister does not set out the Welsh Government's position in responding to Network Rail's industry consultation on the potential lease. However, in noting the implications of *A Railway for Wales* in terms of reopening the line, he concludes:

We would therefore wish any alternative use [of the line] in the meantime to accommodate potential future use for rail passengers and freight.

3. National Assembly for Wales action

The issue has had limited consideration in the National Assembly for Wales. However, on 17 July 2018, during the Business Statement and Announcement, Rhun ap Iorwerth AM said:

I received a letter from the Minister for economy and transport on 25 June, and in that, he referred to a meeting that had to be cancelled between both of us a while ago because of reasons that the Minister couldn't avoid. But it says a couple of positive things about plans that I'm very supportive of: to reopen the railway across Anglesey between Gaerwen and Amlwch, and also to reopen Llangefni station. I would like a statement, if possible—written, I take it now, because of the parliamentary timetable—to provide an explanation on this sentence, which I hope is a positive one:

'In terms of the Llangefni to Amlwch line, we don't intend to reopen it, but we are happy to support the proposal that is being developed by the Anglesey Central Railway company'.

I welcome that. I want to know what sort of support the Government intends to provide, because this is a project that could be of great benefit to Anglesey and especially to the town of Amlwch.

The then Leader of the House, Julie James AM, responded to say that while important she did not think the issue suitable for a statement. However, she offered to ensure the Member received a response if he asked a specific question to the then Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.