

# CAMBRIAN RAILWAYS TRUST.

## PROPOSED CARRIAGE SHED AT LLYNCLYS SOUTH.

### **DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT.**

#### 1. Introduction.

This document has been produced to accompany a planning application which is to be submitted by H.M.B. Thomas, Building Engineer, on behalf of the Cambrian Railways Trust. Its purpose is to show the process that has led up to the proposal, and to explain and justify it in a structured way.

#### 2. Planning History.

- Consent ref. 01/11622/FUL gave permission for “Change of use of ex track bed from agricultural use to railway land” and “Relay track bed for operating trains”, extending from Llyncllys Junction to the former goods yard south of the B4396 bridge, including the platforms of the original Llyncllys Station. To date, this has been implemented south of the bridge only.
- Consent ref. 02/12193/FUL was for “Reinstatement of operational railway from South of Llyncllys Station to Penyarreg Lane, Pant”, being a continuation southwards of the first consent. This has been implemented in its entirety.
- Consent ref. 03/12786/FUL was for “Proposed amenity (and) toilet building, car park, retention of temporary buildings and alterations to access” in the former goods yard south of the bridge. This has also been implemented fully, but the temporary buildings have since been removed.

#### 3. Present use of the site at Llyncllys South.

A single railway track (as opposed to the original double track) has been reinstated for a distance of approx 1250m (0.8 miles) from the road bridge at Llyncllys to the infilled bridge at Penyarreg Lane, and sidings have been reinstated more-or-less to the original layout at Llyncllys South. The former goods loading platform has been adapted for use as a passenger station, and a car park and period-style amenity building have been constructed to provide facilities for the public. A restored buffet car is used as a café and shop, and 1960's diesel trains operate at weekends during the summer months. This has proved very popular and about 2,000 paying passengers have been carried to date - many of whom are visitors who would not otherwise have come to the area. The project has already made a significant contribution to the local economy by engaging local firms as contractors and suppliers, by bringing in grant funding to the area, and by attracting volunteers and visitors from other parts of the country who spend money locally.

Items of rolling stock which will be required for the Trust's project have been acquired as opportunities have arisen, and these are now stabled on the site. The Trust has been very fortunate in this respect, as suitable coaches etc. are increasingly difficult to obtain. In all cases they are capable of being moved,

but their condition ranges from fully serviceable to being in need of major overhaul. A steady programme of work is in progress on these vehicles.

#### 4. Future developments.

The Trust has reached agreement in principle to lease or purchase from Shropshire County Council the mothballed railway from Gobowen to Llynclys Junction, following its purchase from Network Rail. An application is being preparing for a Transport and Works Act Order to operate the railway, which is it planned to re-open in stages working northwards from Llynclys. It will be operated primarily as a steam heritage railway, and will become a major visitor attraction, making a large contribution to economic regeneration of the area – based on data from the West Somerset Railway, it is estimated that as many as 234 jobs will be created in the local area. In the longer term, it is intended to extend the line southwards to Llanymynech.

Agreement has been reached in principle to co-operate with the Cambrian Railways Society (a detailed agreement being currently under preparation) and the two bodies have agreed to support each other. The Trust will operate from Gobowen to Llynclys and southwards, while the Society will establish a complementary operation by re-opening the railway from Llynclys Junction to Blodwel and Nantmawr.

As the heritage railway project proceeds, there will be changes in the use of the site at Llynclys South. The original Llynclys Station platforms north of the bridge will be reinstated, so the present platform at Llynclys South will cease to be regularly used by passengers. However the car park and toilets will continue in use, as it will not be possible to provide adequate vehicle access to the original station. In due course the majority of visitors arriving by road will be encouraged to use Oswestry or Gobowen stations, so the number of vehicles using Llynclys South is not expected to rise significantly.

When the railway is extended, the number of carriages and wagons stabled at Llynclys South will be reduced because it will no longer be possible for them to occupy the main line. Instead, the former storage sidings at Llynclys Junction will be reinstated. The off-loading siding at Llynclys South will continue to be used from time to time when rolling stock arrives or departs by road, as no other site on the railway has been identified as suitable for use by large low-loaders.

It is proposed to construct permanent facilities at Llynclys South for carriage repair and restoration, which are described below. Permanent stabling and servicing facilities for locomotives will also be needed at some point on the railway; the location has not yet been decided, but a site at or close to Llynclys Junction is under consideration. This does not form part of the present application.

#### 5. The need for a carriage shed at Llynclys.

The existing heritage railway operation, and its future development, is dependent upon the repair and restoration of heritage railway carriages. At present, this work takes place in the open air at Llynclys South, which is

unsatisfactory from the Trust's point of view because of the effects of weather and the makeshift nature of the facilities. It is also unsatisfactory for neighbouring residents, because it sometimes gives rise to noise and disturbance, and can be regarded as visually intrusive. There is therefore an urgent need for covered facilities.

A number of alternative sites have been considered, but the proposed site has been identified as the most suitable in operational terms, reasonably well screened (with scope for improvement), and capable of construction sooner than any alternative as the Trust already owns most of the land and a rail connection would be relatively straightforward.

#### 6. Uses of the building.

The work undertaken to rolling stock will include welding, joinery, re-wiring, upholstery, general fitting out, and painting. More specialist work to components requiring heavy machinery or hazardous processes would be undertaken off site.

It is intended to use the facility for training, in order to pass on traditional skills, maximise the potential for participation, and to encourage public accessibility to view work in progress, thus providing visitors with a more interesting and informative experience – subject to the limitations necessary for reasons of health and safety.

#### 7. Site Appraisal.

The site chosen is triangular, with a length of about 250m and a maximum width of 25m. It is currently unused and comprises partly made ground, covered with common weeds and some scrub. Trial holes have indicated the presence of medium-firm clay at a depth of about 1.0m, which will be suitable for foundations.

A stream flows through the site in a straight and even channel, apparently artificially formed or altered in the past. To the west, there is an overgrown hedge with mature trees, mostly ash and alder, but with a 25m long gap where trees have died due to flooding and saturation of their roots. There are half-a-dozen houses in this direction, 180m or more distant from the site on the far side of the A483 trunk road. To the north, there is one bungalow at a distance of 160m from the site, and more dwellings at least 200m away on the far side of the B4396 road. To the south and east is pasture land. The site is in a shallow depression so the shed will not appear on the skyline, and can be effectively screened.

#### 8. Size and layout.

After consultation with people experienced in carriage work on the Llangollen Railway and elsewhere, it has been determined that there is a requirement for two coaches to be worked on at a time on parallel tracks, with generous space around them for safe and convenient working, storage of components, and public access. To achieve this, the proposed building is approximately 33m long x 15m wide. The eaves height needs to be approximately 4.5m, and the ridge height approximately 8.2m (These dimensions may vary slightly

depending on the cost-effective design of the steel framing, and possible availability of a suitable second-hand frame). At a later date, some internal stores may be partitioned off, and there is scope for adding a mezzanine floor in the end bay.

The sidings must be laid to a suitable minimum radius, so given the limited space available on the site there is little alternative to the layout proposed other than slight adjustments in alignment. An area of hardstanding, level with the top of the rails, will be provided south of the building, from which an access crossing will be formed across the main line.

#### 9. Design and appearance.

Economy of construction will be an over-riding consideration given the restricted finances available and the many other elements of the heritage railway project which also require funding. Even when grant assistance can be obtained, raising the required match funding is usually a limitation. This dictates a basic steel-framed building with steel cladding.

However it is important to comply as far as possible with the Trust's aim of creating the atmosphere of the steam railway, and for this reason it is hoped that the appearance will be less like a standard modern industrial shed and more like the buildings found on the railway in the 1950's. Typically these would be clad with 75mm corrugated steel instead of trapezoidal-profile steel, painted with black bitumen, and the roof pitch would be steeper than most modern industrial buildings. The doors will be side-hung, in either corrugated or flat steel panels, painted chocolate and cream. In the 1950's ample windows would have been provided for natural light, but the expense of this is considered unjustified today as high-efficiency electric lighting will be used anyway when the building is occupied. However some translucent rooflight panels will be included for background natural lighting.

#### 10. Environmental impact and landscaping.

The small stream traversing the site drains from Llyncllys Pool. It is proposed to divert this stream by agreement with the neighbouring landowner, creating a more varied and natural channel, and consent for this work has already been granted by the Environment Agency. Their site investigation has confirmed that no water voles or other endangered species are present, and that there will be no detrimental impact on fish and otters.

A soil bund will be formed on the saturated part of the boundary, with new planting to fill the gap in the screening hedge. Smaller gaps elsewhere will also be infilled with additional planting, to conceal the shed and sidings much more effectively from the A483 road.

At present outdoor work on coaches sometimes takes place within 80m of the nearest dwelling, but the erection of the shed will more than double this distance, and openings in the building will face away from the dwellings, so impact on residents will be significantly reduced.

### 11. Planning Policy.

Oswestry Borough Council actively supports the Cambrian Railways Trust and recognises the economic development potential of the heritage railway project. The Borough Council is a nominating member of the Trust, as are Oswestry Town Council, Oswestry Rural Parish Council, and Selattyn & Gobowen Parish Council. It is the Borough Council's policy to encourage the development of tourist infrastructure, and to encourage development which increases local employment. Planning officers have informally indicated that they would support the application for a carriage shed provided the interests of local people are taken into account.

### 12. Local Consultation

The Trust arranged a public meeting at Llyncllys on 10.10.06 which was attended by over thirty local residents, including Borough and Parish Council representatives. There was a lively discussion about the effects of the Heritage Railway Project on people living nearby, and some strong views for and against were expressed. Those attending were asked to complete a short questionnaire - copies of the publicity leaflet, the blank questionnaire, and a summary of the results are attached as an appendix.

Unfortunately only 9 completed questionnaires have been returned (up to 22.10.06) but the boxes which were ticked indicate overwhelming support both for the railway project in general, and for the carriage shed proposal. The following general comments were made:

- "Providing the scheme is completed through to Oswestry/Gobowen it will be a great asset to the area"
- "It is nice to see the area busy in the summer"
- "It is a worthy project"
- "Great to see enthusiastic people getting on with a job"
- "I think it will benefit the local economy"
- (I strongly support it ...) "to benefit the local economy"
- "Needs to be kept in a tidier state"
- "Important for the future of Oswestry"

Regarding the carriage shed proposal, the following comments were made:

- "Must not obstruct anyone's views and should be screened"
- "I presume it will help to get the carriages finished quicker so help to remove the unsightly clutter"
- "Only a temporary solution"
- "It will at least take two of the unsightly carriages. There are too many carriages, it just looks like a junk yard".
- "Would like to have been informed at an earlier stage"
- "Possibly over development of this small site"
- "I can work undercover!"
- "I think it might be a better idea if an alternative site/building was found to renovate the carriages"

When asked to state any ways in which the project directly affects their property, the only responses (other than “none”) were:

“Weather conditions contribute to noise and fume nuisance”

“Anything that attracts tourism to the area will have a potential benefit to my business”.

The local councillors, and all residents who put their address on questionnaires, will be contacted to inform them when a planning application has been submitted. The drawings and other documents will continue to be available for public inspection at Llyncllys South, and this statement can be viewed and downloaded at [www.cambrianrailwaystrust.com](http://www.cambrianrailwaystrust.com)

### 13. Access Statement.

The Trust has prepared and adopted a formal Access Policy to ensure that its activities are as inclusive as possible, and seek to avoid create barriers to people’s participation regardless of their background and circumstances.

It will only be possible to access the carriage shed by crossing the railway line. Therefore appropriate measures will be taken, as part of the Trust’s Safety Case for operating a railway, to ensure that members of the public only cross the line when it is safe to do so. Within these limitations, the site will be accessible to all volunteers and visitors without negotiating steps or other obstacles, although some areas will inevitably be uneven.

Vehicular access will also be across the railway tracks. This will only be used occasionally for essential deliveries and plant, but will also be available for emergency services etc., by arrangement with the duty controller when the trains are running.

H.M.B.Thomas  
amended 23.10.06.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Public Consultation.**

The following documents are attached:

Publicity leaflet for public meeting.

Blank Questionnaire.

Bar Chart, results of questionnaire.

Pie Chart, Local residents' feelings towards the heritage railway in general.

Pie Chart, Local residents' opinions about the proposed carriage shed.