

# Conwy Valley Railway Partnership Annual Report



Melanie Lawton

Community Rail Officer

December 2019

## Foreword



It is a great pleasure to introduce the Conwy Valley Rail Partnership's Report for 2019; this has been a particularly challenging year for us and our industry partners, Transport for Wales Rail Services and Network Rail.

The physical disruption caused by the flooding in March and important maintenance work, coupled with the reconstruction of Dolgarrog station, has meant that for significant periods the rail service has been replaced by road transport. As we approach the year end, it is good to know that there is, almost literally, light at the end of the tunnel.

Throughout the disruption, we have endeavoured to maintain contact with our customers and station adopters. We have had celebrations in the form of the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the railway reaching Blaenau Ffestiniog and it was good to hold an event in Blaenau to mark that important historical milestone.

Hard on the heels of a change to the Wales & Borders rail franchise, we look forward in 2020 to a positive relationship with the new operator of the West Coast route, Avanti West Coast, who will provide enhanced services to connect with the Conwy Valley line as well as a through Llandudno – London service.

I would record my appreciation to my Vice-Chair, Cllr Annwen Daniels, colleagues on the Partnership Board for their all their support as well as to our Rail Officer, Melanie Lawton, for her dedicated work and ability to rise to the challenges of the past year.

**Cllr Philip C Evans**

**Chair Conwy Valley Railway Partnership**

## Conwy Valley Railway

The Conwy Valley line, part of the National Rail network at 27 miles long offers one of the most beautiful rail experiences in Britain. 13 stations serve the line; Llandudno, Deganwy, Llandudno Junction, Glan Conwy, Tal Y Cafn, Dolgarrog, Llanrwst, Betws Y Coed, Pont Y Pant, Dolwyddelan, Roman Bridge and Blaenau Ffestiniog form the line.

The Conwy Valley Rail Partnership members include Transport for Wales Rail Services, Network Rail, Ffestiniog and Highland Railways, Conwy County Borough Council, Gwynedd Council, Snowdonia National Park, North Wales Tourism, and two Station Adopter Representatives.



**A wet start to 2019**, the Conwy Valley Railway suffered a significant period of closure during 2019 following storm Gareth



in March. The partnership and its members worked collaboratively to keep passengers informed and moving during the closure. The Rail Officer led the way with press visits and television interviews. Network rail continued pre-planned closures in the Blaenau Ffestiniog Tunnel during November 2019. There is ongoing work at Dolgarrog station replacement until further notice as advised by Network Rail and station enhancements

continue as part of the station improvement plan at Llandudno Junction and Blaenau Ffestiniog.

Partnership collaborations with Transport for Wales, Network Rail and Councillors helped to keep passengers and communities informed and moving during the period of disruption. A series of public meetings were held in Llanrwst and Blaenau Ffestiniog to facilitate the flow of information.



**A steam special** travelled along the line in August, a thank you to the residents, communities, businesses and stakeholders. The train and line were blessed by Tad Deiniol.



In May, we supported Transport for Wales and Ken Skates AM at the launch of the **Community Rail Vision** in Llandudno Station with Community Rail Officers from Wales and the Borders.



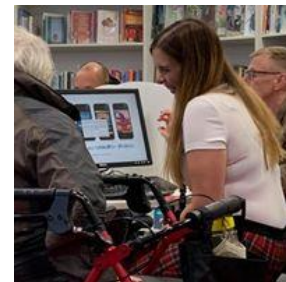
**The Eisteddfod came to Llanrwst**, in August, the partnership joined colleagues from Transport for Wales at the National Eisteddfod in Llanrwst. North Llanrwst station was the main station for the event. Passengers enjoyed enhanced services during this period.



The volunteer station adopters worked extremely hard to create a warm welcome for visitors. Special thanks to the North Llanrwst Optimists.



In October, we supported Transport For Wales **concessionary pass** renewals with a series of public drop in sessions in libraries in Llandudno, Llanrwst and Colwyn Bay.



In November, the partnership celebrated the line reaching **Blaenau Ffestiniog 140 years ago**. We held an intimate celebration evening in the town with the community and friends of the railway with special presentations from colleagues at Llechwedd, Antur Stiniog and the local historical society.



As a special surprise for the community, in partnership with Network Rail, the Blaenau Ffestiniog tunnel entrance was lit up during the celebration evening for members of the public to see.



**School visits** continued during the Winter with pupils from Llanrwst travelling on the service, we were joined by British Transport Police and the School Liaison Officer, a great afternoon learning about railway safety.

In December, we welcomed **Father Christmas** to Llandudno Junction, the reindeers parked at the station while he travelled to Llandudno for the annual Christmas Parade, arriving into the station with a police escort.



A festive carol service in Blaenau Ffestiniog at Siop Antur Stiniog at Blaenau Bendigedig was enjoyed by all and supported by the partnership.

From 15<sup>th</sup> December 2019, the Conwy Valley line will see 4 trains per day, promotion of the **Sunday timetable** was supported with colleagues in the railway booking office.



**Looking forward into 2020**, the partnership will be recruiting a new Community Rail Officer as Melanie will be continuing her journey with the railway and joining Transport for Wales Rail Services as the new Community Rail Manager North. The partnership funding partners will meet in December 2019 with a view to recruitment in January. There will be an opportunity to review partnership membership and give consideration to expanding the area into the North Wales Coast.

The partnership will continue to meet quarterly, in March, June, September and December. A sub group will meet to monitor the budget and recruitment.

Marketing materials including 20,000 leaflets have been ordered and distribution arranged. Six exhibition pull ups were printed and delivered.

Relationships with Transport For Wales will continue and new conversations with Avanti West Coast will be nurtured, we look forward to seeing their new services into Llandudno in 2020.

It will be business as usual following recruitment, an initial bedding in period but it is expected the new officer will continue to implement activities in the business plan. Community engagement activities will continue with the rail officer delivering rail safety messages in schools, working in collaboration with Wales and Borders rail officers and promoting a scenic railway journey.