



MINUTES

**of the quarterly meeting of the Association to be held on
Friday 24th January 2025 at 10.30am
by Zoom (due to severe weather conditions)**

Present were

Cllr Ian Hodge Chair	Holywell Town Council
Cllr Norma Davies Vice Chair	Flint Town Council
Cllr Vivienne Blondek	Buckley Town Council
Cllr Michael Davies	Beaumaris Town Council
Cllr Lynette Edwards	Caerwys Community Council
Cllr Paul Fletcher	Abergele Town Council
Cllr Patrick Heesom	Mostyn Community Council
Cllr Carol Holliday	Prestatyn Town Council
Cllr Sharon Jones	
Cllr Shirley Jones-Roberts	Abergele Town Council
Cllr Alan Manship	Connah's Quay Town Council
Cllr Jayne Morris	
Cllr Peter Morton	St Asaph City Council
Cllr Alan Owen	Connah's Quay Town Council
Cllr Debbie Owen	Connah's Quay Town Council
Cllr Lorraine Rathbone	Buckley Town Council
Cllr Helen Roberts	Conway Town Council
Cllr Jackie Webster	Conway Town Council
Robert Robinson Secretary	Llanfair Caereinion Town Council

Apologies for absence

Cllr Joan Butterfield	President & Rhyl Town Council
Jane Chamberlain-Jones	Rhyl Town Council
G Gareth Nickels	Rhyl Town Council
Cllr Loraine Rathbone	Buckley Town Council
Cllr Ted Palmer	Holywell Town Council
Cllr Berrnise McLoughlin	Towny and Kinmell Bay
Cllr Michael Pearce	Llandudno Town Council



1. Welcome

The meeting received a welcome from the Chair.

2. Minutes of the last Quarterly Meeting

The meeting considered and approved the minutes of the last quarterly meeting held in October 2024.

3. Actions taken from the last meeting

The meeting noted the actions from the last meeting as set out below:

Subject	Status
Publish minutes of the meeting	Completed
Prepare letter to Welsh Government and publish on website and email to members by 8pm same day of the meeting for comment by 10.30pm.	Completed
Publish letter to Welsh Government on Town & Community Council review	Completed
Complete bank mandate	On the agenda

4. Independent Review panel for Wales

The IRPW has passed a list of councils who have not submitted their annual return. The secretary has contacted each of the member councils to remind them to do it. If a return is late or not received the secretary is informed that it will lead to a qualified audit.

5. Executive

The meeting noted the executive meeting minutes from the meeting held in December 2024.

6. Finance and governance

The current bank balance is £4,402.22p.

Internet banking is very close to being in operation.



7. Transport update

The meeting received an update regarding transport. A copy of the letter received from the Chief Executive of TFW is attached to these minutes at APPENDIX B.

A report was given regarding the TFW meeting in Cardiff – the main thing to note is that Shotton Station is down for refurbishment.

The secretary reported on the letter from TFW, a copy is attached at appendix B.

A TFW officer (disabled) may wish to travel the line with the Association along the North Coast, Cllr Ian Hodge, Cllr Norma Davies and Cllr Helen Roberts to attend.

8. Town and community council review

The meeting received a short presentation on the subject of the Town and Community Council review by Welsh Government.

The Association is to look at how it all might work and to send their findings and views as part of the consultation process.

The slides are to be circulated to the member councils following the meeting. The points made by members at the meeting were (in no particular order):

General

- i) Local councils fear of change, voice of the people important
- ii) Working on this drains resources
- iii) Whole system of local government needs looking at
- iv) IRPW has not delivered on its objectives so far
- v) Why 150 councils? No basis offered. Maybe 300 more acceptable.
It was noted that Cardiff has many areas with no community council
- vi) Difficult to see the positives at this stage
- vii) On the basis of 150 councils (Ave £20,000 pop) Anglesey would be just one council – not sure that works
- viii) Future of County Councils was considered taking into account the introduction of 5 regions and the increase in Welsh Government members.
- ix) Local councils are all very different in culture, language, workload, facilities and area.
- x) Some apathy among councils who just wish to sit and wait to see what happens.



Councillors

- a) Would councillors with more work and responsibility still be volunteers. It is difficult to get new councillors now.
- b) Payment of salaries to councillors will come as a cost to residents

Democracy

- a) Voice slowly being taken away from the people
- b) Wish to keep local democracy
- c) Fewer councillors mean less representation

Cost

- i) Cost v benefit analysis needs to be thought about
- ii) Concern that expensive county council staff would relocate by legislation to the revised local councils coming with a cost implication.

Governance

- i) Councils should be able to comply with governance rules
- ii) Audit Wales report noted
- iii) Poor governance in smaller councils a real issue
- iv) 2/3 of seats not contested or co-opted

Ability

- i) Councils will need expertise and more staff – all come at a cost
- ii)

Issues with combining or clustering councils

- a) Council tax levels between councils (some will fall and some will rise)
- b) Conflicts of interest between communities on specific subjects

Sustainability

- i) The Association had a visit from Denbighshire Council who outlined the services that might come down to the local councils. These services were not considered a statutory duty so would need to be run by others. They included:
 - Library provision
 - Playgrounds
 - Open spaces
 - Sports facilities
 - Leisure facilities
 - Litter bins



Continued....
Street cleaning
Youth provision
Car parks (likely the free ones)
Bus shelters
Street furniture
Burial grounds
Community buildings

Other information

i) It was noted that there are approx. 737 local councils of which approx. there are:

Precept under £10k	209	
Precept 10-20k	142	Total very small councils 351 (48%)
Precept 20-50k	155	
Precept 50-100k	81	Total mid-size councils 236 (32%)
Precept 100-200k	67	
Precept over 200k	83	Total larger councils 150 (20%)

Way forward

- i) The Association Executive report a good starting point
- ii) Where councils have clustered it has generally worked well
- iii) OVW or the Association was not relevant to the discussions today.
- iv) Secretary to provide a summary to member councils to respond to by end of February. The summary to include the three options listed below.
- v) The secretary is happy to do Zoom presentation to member councils if they wish.

The chart from Audit Wales is attached at appendix A.

The Association Executive report on the subject is set out below:

Introduction

The purpose of the meeting was to pre-plan for the main meeting to be held on Friday 24th January 2025. To start the process the secretary gave a short presentation on the subject in (3) below.



Town and Community Council review

The programme for completion of the Association paper for Welsh Government is:

January 2025	Identify the views and issues from the members. (issues and ideas)
February/March 2025	To complete the document with consultation. (Preparation of a paper). (Discussion by email and meetings).
April 2025	To agree at the main meeting the document For presentation to Welsh Government. (Final document).

The issues with regard to the reduction of Town and Community Councils from around 737 down to around 150 were identified as follows:

Basis

It was recognised that one size does not fit all with towns (urban) being very different from villages (rural). Any plan for the future needs to reflect this.

Size of council

At present town and community councils vary from Barry (pop 50,000) to small rural councils (pop 700).

Wales has a population of 3.2m and has 737 local councils, average population 4,300. If there were 150 town and community councils the average rises to approx. 20,000 population.

Identity

Towns and communities being joined raises the concern of loss of identity. Smaller councils may feel overrun by larger councils and feeling they may lose control of their communities.

Representation

Representation within communities was considered important and should be protected.

Legislation

It was felt that the only way combining councils or clustering councils would work was via legislation – it was recognised that many would not take part if not.



Culture

Many communities have diverse cultures to others and this becomes an issue if councils were combined as opposed to clustered.

Service delivery

The service delivery of more (handed down from County Councils) will give rise to issues of what each community wants. All vastly different in their views. Service delivery of the level envisaged will require larger unit to enable it to happen.

The list of services that are likely to be devolved to others has been issued at a previous meeting and will be included in the presentation.

Financial

Each council has various levels of reserves and some may not be happy to combine with a council with less funds.

Council will rise whatever the outcome.

VAT

The VAT status of councils would change with partial exemption not being an option once the council budget rise to the level expected.

Seats

If councils were to be combined the allocation of seats (of which there are likely to be less) will be an issue depending upon how they are calculated.

Councillors and payments

With larger councils and with the workload it is expected that councillors would need to be paid when a new system arrives. This has a cost implication.

Services and council tax

Councils may have two parts to their council tax. One part for their own area and part for joint services. Some may not wish to pay for a service on a collective basis if they do not receive it.

Town Clerk and staff

The cost of making staff redundant (less Town Clerk's required) – where is it met from?



Possible way forward for discussion

The executive general view is:

One size will not fit all.

Whatever is taken forward it will need to be backed by legislation.

Three levels of councils maybe right as follows:

Larger councils – leave along (i.e. over £200,000 budget)

Combine councils where the areas are more urban. (over £100,000 budget)

Cluster councils where the councils are more rural with smaller budgets.

9. New boundaries for Senedd elections

The meeting noted the new boundaries for Senedd elections.

10. Consultation on compulsory purchase rules

Changes to the power to limit compensation payable for the prospects of planning permission ('hope value')

*Do you agree that directions to remove compensation payable for prospective planning permissions ("hope value") should be allowed to be included in CPOs made on behalf of **parish/town or community councils** by local authorities under section 125 of the Local Government Act 1972 where the schemes underlying the orders are providing affordable or social housing?*

The meeting **AGREED** that the secretary should write supporting the proposals.

11. Date of next meeting

To note the date of the next meeting on Friday 11th April 2025 at 10.30am – Beaumaris.

If there is a need to change this meeting or to call any interim meetings the secretary will liaise with the Chair and make arrangements.



12. Actions to be taken forward

The actions to be taken forward from the meeting are:

Ref	Item	Action by
1	Issue minutes for comment	Secretary
2	After comments received to publish minutes	Secretary
3	Complete internet banking	Secretary
4	Future of local councils: Circulate the slides from the meeting Circulate a summary of the meetings notes on the subject	Secretary
5	Send letter in support of new compulsory purchase rules proposed	Secretary
6	Arrange for the next full meeting to be on the 11 th April at Beaumaris in consultation with Cllr Michael Davies	Secretary & Cllr Michael Davies



APPENDIX A

Exhibit 2: Qualified audit opinions 2022-23

Income/expenditure	Number of councils	Audits completed	Qualified Opinions	Qualified opinions % of completed audits	Full audits completed	Qualified Opinions Full audits	Qualified Opinions % of full audits
Less than £10,000	209	191	104	54%	62	37	60%
£10,001 - £20,000	142	125	72	58%	37	23	62%
£20,001 - £50,000	155	146	58	40%	48	21	44%
£50,001 - £100,000	81	77	35	45%	26	16	62%
£100,001 - £200,000	67	63	36	57%	19	15	79%
More than £200,000	83	79	32	41%	24	13	54%
Total	737	681	337	49%	216	125	58%

Source: Audit Wales analysis of 2022-23 audit outcomes. These include councils where the audit work has been completed but are to be reviewed prior to certification. The proposed draft opinions are subject to review before issue to councils.

APPENDIX B



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20 January 2025

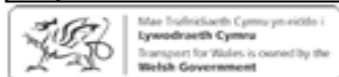
Russell George MS
Member of the Senedd for Montgomeryshire

Dear Russell,

Firstly, may I take this opportunity to apologise for the delay in this letter being sent to you. The North & Mid Wales Association of Local Councils have been in communication with the Stakeholder manager for North and Mid-Wales at Transport for Wales (TFW), and I'm aware that meetings and conversations have been taking place between members of the group and TFW on the issues raised during our previous meeting. I would also like to thank the North & Mid Wales Association for their continued patience, understanding and support as we continue to improve service provision and facilities along the Cambrian line.

I am pleased to say there has been progress on some of the points raised during our meeting and I believe a follow up meeting has been scheduled to take place between TFW and the group in early February 2025. I'd like to provide an overview of the actions as follows:

A	Welshpool Station footbridge - Maintenance and winter gritting programme.	The ownership of the bridge and footpath has now been confirmed, and an agreement is in place between Powys County Council, NMWTRA and Network Rail for the maintenance and winter gritting of the bridge, ramp and footpath. We are working with them to have a sign placed near the footbridge with information/contact details for passengers to report issues of damage, litter etc.
B	Welshpool Station improvements	See above (A) – conversations have also been taking place with Network Rail Wales and Borders.
C	Prestatyn Station overcrowding	We will be asking for security to be in place at peak times to assist with overcrowding. We did this last year, and it worked well.
D	Trains between Chester and Shrewsbury	To be discussed at the meeting scheduled for the 12 th of February 2025 at Shrewsbury Station with Colin Lea and Steve Whitley
E	Main Line train formations	To be discussed at the meeting scheduled on the 12 th of February 2025. As above
F	Station audit– produced by the RUG	The audit was incredibly insightful and provided TFW with a rich understanding of the challenges and opportunities along the Cambrian line. TFW has a thorough station audit programme and a dedicated



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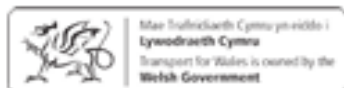


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		team who continuously monitor and review all aspects of our service provision along the line. The findings from the survey will assist that team.
G	Accessibility update/meeting	The Chair of Tfw's Accessibility Panel, Robert Gravelle, provided an overview at the TLG meeting held in November 2024 of the work and procedures in place to ensure all passenger have confidence to travel - including those with additional accessibility requirements.
H	Deganwy crossing (Llandudno branch)	A dedicated Deganwy Crossing task group has been setup and is being led by Network Rail Wales and Borders along with input by Tfw and Avanti West Coast. Details have also been updated at recent Rail User Group meeting.
I	Meeting with Colin Lee (Tfw)	A meeting with Colin Lee had to be postponed in October 2024. This has been rearranged to take place on Wednesday 12 th February 2025.
J	Ministerial meeting to discuss rail survey and A55	We are working with WG officials on this.
K	Cambrian Lines - 197 stock introduced.	New Class 197 trains are due to enter service on the Cambrian Line – subject to CAF deliveries - in 2025 following a period of ERTMS testing. Furthermore, we are looking to introduced 197s onto the Shrewsbury-Birmingham line in Spring 2025 to alleviate overcrowding and Class 158 rolling stock challenges.
L	Overcrowding	See above (K)
M	Signage at Shrewsbury and Birmingham stations	Shelley and Kim met with Robert and Trevor at Shrewsbury Railway Station on the 2 nd October to discuss signage at Shrewsbury. It was agreed that during the summer months, signage boards will be placed to signpost passengers to the correct carriages. There will also be better promotion of the availability of travel companions at the station who can offer assistance. There is also scope to place floor marker lines to further assist.



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Once again, I'd like to thank the North and Mid Wales Association of Local Councils for their continued challenge and advice to Tfw. I hope the details above are helpful and should you require any further details, please do not hesitate to contact.

Kind regards,

James Price
Chief Executive Officer, Transport for Wales