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**MINUTES**

Of the quarterly meeting of the Association  
held on

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at 10.30**

The Festival Church Towyn & Kinmell Bay & by zoom

**Present were:**

Cllr Ian Hodge Chair	Holywell Town Council
Cllr Norma Davies Vice Chair	Flint Town Council
Cllr Joan Butterfield MBE President	Rhyl Town Council
Cllr Vivienne Blondek	Buckley Town Council
Cllr Pat Corbett	Holywell Town Council
Cllr Doreen Mackie	Shotton Town Council
Cllr Michael Davies	Beaumaris Town Council
Cllr Kath Evans	Towyn and Kinmell Bay Town Council
Cllr Lynett Edwards	Caesrsw Community Council
Cllr Paul Fletcher	Abergele Town Council
Cllr Patrick Heeson	Mostyn Community Council
Cllr Shirley Jones-Roberts	Abergele Town Council
Cllr Bernise McLoughlin	Towyn & Kinmell Bay Town Council
Cllr Peter Morton	St Asaph Town Council
Cllr Debbie Owen	Connah's Quay Town Council
Cllr Ted Palmer	Holywell Town Council
Cllr Lorraine Rathbone	Buckley Town Council
Cllr Helen Roberts	Conwy Town Council
Vicky Roberts	Rhyl Town Council
Cllr Jackie Webster	Conwy Town Council
Robert Robinson MBE Secretary	Llanfair Caereinion Town Council

**Apologies received from:**

Cllr Carol Holliday	Prestatyn Town Council
Cllr Alan James	Rhyl Town Council
Cllr Lynda Griffiths	Connah's Quay Town Council
Cllr Jeanette Chaimberlain Jones	Rhyl Town Council
Helen Mead	Rhyl Town Council
Cllr Suzanne Wilson	Connah's Quay Town Council

**1. Welcome by the chair**

The meeting received a welcome from the Chair.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The meeting considered and approved the minutes of the last meeting as set out at appendix 1 of the agenda.

**3. Actions taken since the last meeting**

The meeting noted the actions taken since the last meeting as follows:

no	Action	Status
1	Purchase of a Toucan conference unit.	Completed
2	Letter to Welsh Government on the A55.	Completed see below
3	Letters sent out to member councils re fees.	Completed
4	Letters out to ex members on the offer of reduced fees for the first year.	Completed membership item below
5	Complete rail surveys.	Completed

**4. A55 North Wales Expressway**

Following a discussion it was agreed that Ken Skates or someone from the relevant office should be asked to attend one of the future Association meetings.

**5. Finance & Governance****5.1 Financial**

The Secretary gave a short financial report confirming that £3,900 was in the bank account..

**5.2 Membership**

The meeting received the membership report.

After some discussion the following was agreed:

- a) The councils who have left recently are to be offered a presentation by a member. See appendix A.
- b) A press release of some sort to be sent out to all newspaper and media outlets.(first one attached at appendix B).
- c) Over time to put together an email list of all town and community councils so that direct contact with news can be issued.
- d) Prepare a draft presentation guide for members to use.



### **5.3 Code of Conduct**

It was agreed that the standard council code of conduct is to apply to all Association meetings and activities.

### **6. Banking Hubs**

The members shared views and experiences with local Banking Hubs. Generally the feedback was good.

Banking hubs have appeared in various locations including:

Old bank premises

Libraries

Leisure centres

Museums

The banking hubs in general and administered by the Post Office with a representative from a bank available in the premises each day.

### **7. Tourism**

The meeting considered the tourism tax, how tourism is standing up both in numbers and spending.

Overall there was support for the tourism tax but the feeling was that this should not apply to those who use hospitality venues for work. This point to be made to Welsh Government. The tax should be used to help local tourism and not put into an unidentifiable account.

The general overview of the economy in each town was that tourism was 20% down from the previous year. The cost of living crisis was cited as the main reason.

### **8. Surveys**

A discussion took place around transport matters as follows:

- i) The drop in passengers on the days of the surveys was noted.
- ii) The representative group for TFW is to be the Association who have been asked to enlarge its rail committee membership to aid this.
- iii) A note of what is expected from the representative groups is to be put considered.



### **8.1 Rail services (both North Coast & Cambrian)**

The meeting adopted the rail survey report for 2025 subject to one alteration in the 10 priorities for North Wales – replace item no 4 with the Holyhead Ferry connections issues.

### **8.2 Rail meetings**

The 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026 joint meeting between the North Coast and Cambrian Lines is to be held in Shrewsbury where the Association can meet senior officers from TFW and others. TFW is happy to pay the rail fares for those attending.

The meeting was asked to let the secretary know of any issues they wish to raise and if they wish to attend so that a positive meeting can be arranged.

### **8.3 Buses**

Cllr Peter Morgan raised the subject of changes to bus provision.

The meeting was happy to support the improvements suggested. Details are to be passed to the Secretary.

## **9. Shopping Centres**

To consider a report on shopping centres with a wide ranging discussion taking place with the following main points:

- i) Free car parking is essential to help centres.
- ii) Need to create communities as shopping habits change.
- iii) Increased costs (business rates, increased living wage and national insurances are affecting small business very hard.

The meeting agreed to adopt the report with the addition of car parking issues noted above. See appendix C.

The report is now to be submitted to the Welsh Government.

## **10. Democracy & Boundary Commission**

The meeting noted the review of allowances for 2026/2027.

## **11. Welsh Government Local Council Review**

The up to date news on the Town and Community Council review is as follows:

- i) A review of audit procedure is to be completed to reduce the onus on smaller councils.
- ii) The code of conduct training is to be compulsory for all councillors.



iii) Town and Community councils either working together or enlarging is still on the agenda.

**12. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting is to be Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2026 at 10.30am and will be held by Zoom.

**13. Actions to be taken forward from the meeting**

No	Actions	By
1	Complete draft minutes, circulate and post on website	Secretary
2	Members to offer presentations to the local councils near to them and/or have left recently.	All
3	A draft heading for presentations to be circulate.	Secretary
4	Arrange for a Welsh Government official or minister to visit the Association regarding road matters.	Secretary
5	Complete Holyhead ferry/train surveys.	Chair/Vice Chair
	Circulate adopted rail survey report.	Secretary
	Arrange for meeting with Stena Line, TFW and Avanti regarding Holyhead ferry/rail information.	Secretary
	Send shopping centre report out with free parking added as an issue.	Secretary
	Letter to Welsh Government on Tourism Tax.	Secretary
	Prepare a press release for circulation.	Secretary



## Schedule of members

## APPENDIX A

<b>Members for the period</b>	<b>Members joining</b>	<b>Members leaving</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>
Abergele	Beaumaris	Argoed
Buckley	Holyhead	Bangor
Caerswys	Llanfair Caereinion	Bay of Colwyn
Connah's Quay	Mostyn	Holyhead
Conwy		Llanfairfechain
Denbigh	<b>Associate members</b>	Llangollen
Rhyl	Aberystwyth	Llandudno
Flint	Barmouth	Menai Bridge
Hawarden	Caersws	Penmanmawr
Holywell	Machynlleth	Ruthin
Prestatyn	Rail Future	Welshpool
St Asaph	SARPA	
Shotton	Shrewsbury	
Towyn & Kinmell Bay	Welshpool	

## HEADINGS FOR PRESENTATION TO COUNCILS

### Membership

Membership is open to any Town and Community Council in our area of operation. The Association complies with Once Voice Wales and is not an alternative to them. The Association represents the Mid and North Wales area to ensure they have a voice.

### Area covered

The Association covers the area north of Welshpool – Aberystwyth.

### Meetings

We meet four times a year in a North Wales venue in July, October and April in person and via zoom.

We also meet in January by zoom. If there is a need we meet more regularly.

All councils may put items on the agenda.

### Representation

The Association represents the views of the members collectively as decided at the main meetings – not via a small group. Views are taken forward via letters, consultations and meetings with either Parliament, Welsh Government, Principal Councils, Rail Operators etc.

### Current main subjects

The big topics at present are railway improvements, future of town and community councils review, shopping centres and tourism.

# **NORTH AND MID WALES ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

**CYMDEITHAS CYNGHORAU TREFI A CHYMDEITHASAU MWYAF GOGLEDD CYMRU**



## **Railways and transport**

We have specific committees for transport along the Cambrian Lines and North Coast.

## **Training and advice**

We provide bespoke training as requested by the meetings. The same applies to advice, if needed the secretary seeks the information members require.

## **Information**

The Association has a website at [www.northwalesassociation.org.uk](http://www.northwalesassociation.org.uk)

## **Joining and the cost**

Membership costs £80pa for a council with a population of 10,000 plus, £60 for a council with between 5,000 and 10,000 population and £50 for councils with a population of less than 5,000. First years membership is 50%.

**APPENDIX B****NEWS FROM****THE NORTH & MID WALES ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

<b>What is the Association</b> <p>The Association is a forum where local town and community councils in North and Mid Wales can come together to discuss common issues, complete consultations with both Welsh Government, Railways and County Councils.</p> <p>As a group you have the chance to be part of an influential group on matters that affect you.</p>	<b>Who are the leadership team</b> <p>The leadership team of the Association is elected at the annual meeting in July each year.</p> <p>At present the president is Cllr Joan Butterfield MBE of Rhyl Town Council.</p> <p>The Chair is Cllr Ian Hodge of Holywell Town Council and the Vice Chair is Cllr Norma Davies from Flint Town Council.</p> <p>The secretary is Robert Robinson MBE of Llanfair Caereinion Town Council.</p>
<b>The North Coast main rail line</b> <p>The Association has a separate group which meets with Transport for Wales, Avanti Trains and Network Rail to discuss and advise regarding the North Wales Coast railways.</p> <p>The Association works with the rail companies to improve the services offered on a year to year basis.</p> <p>Rail surveys are completed both out of season and at high season to inform on customer service, passenger numbers and issues which are raised by those travelling.</p> <p>Full report on surveys can be found on the Association's website.</p>	<b>Shopping centre regeneration</b> <p>Shopping centres (large and small) are suffering from heavy business rates, high cost of parking, internet sales and increased national insurance and minimum wage costs.</p> <p>The Association has prepared a report to go to Welsh Government setting out a possible way forward for our shopping centres.</p> <p>This report can be found on the website.</p> <p>The report suggests reducing the size of town centres seeking to make the smaller centre more vibrant – to provide grants and funding to encourage shops to move from the edge of town into the new centres. Alongside this free car parking is very important.</p>



<p><b>Tourism this summer</b></p> <p>The Association generally supports the tourism tax but has concerns that it is also applied to business users.</p> <p>It is important that any tax collected is spent on the tourism sector and not wasted on senior authorities activities.</p> <p>The Association also feels that such tax would be better spent by Town and Community Councils who are closer to their own areas and also would provide better value for money</p>	<p><b>Membership</b></p> <p>Membership is open to any Town and Community Council in North and Mid Wales regardless of size.</p> <p>The current fees are:</p> <p><b>Population under 5,000 – £50pa</b>  <b>Population under 10,000 – £60pa</b>  <b>Population over 10,000 - £80pa</b>  <b>Rail group membership only - £10pa</b></p> <p>The fees are reduced by 50% for your first year membership.</p> <p>The Association does not replace One Voice Wales but compliments their work and focuses on North and Mid Wales in particular.</p>
<p><b>Website</b></p> <p>The Association has a website for information about its work and dates of meetings along with agenda and minutes.</p> <p>The website address is:</p> <p><a href="http://www.northwalesassociation.org.uk">www.northwalesassociation.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Contact details</b></p> <p>You can contact the Association as follows:</p> <p><b>Email – <a href="mailto:supercommuter@mail.com">supercommuter@mail.com</a></b></p> <p><b>Tel no – 07767 267830</b></p> <p><b>Write to – Crown House, High Street Llanfair Caereinion SY21 0QY</b></p> <p>If you would like to receive a presentation to your council about the work of the Association please do make contact.</p>



## SHOPPING CENTRES IN WALES

### 1. Introduction

This report is in outline only and if the Association agrees with its general content then a full report can be prepared.

The report outlines some of the issues with shopping centres (of all sizes) and a possible way forward (or not)

### 2. Cause and effect

Local shopping has changes and with it the slow demise of many centres. What has changed is:

- a) Covid – its effect on shopper patterns.
- b) Loss of banks.
- c) Loss of anchor shops.
- d) Internet and online shopping.
- e) Lack of free parking and excessive parking charges.
- f) Delivery to your home by supermarkets and other retailers.
- g) What shoppers are looking for.
- h) Business rates making business non-viable.
- i) Out of town centres with free car parking.
- j) Planning – allowing development on major roads comprising fuel stations and eating establishments – mainly fast food.
- k) Pressures on people's time.

### 3. What is happening

The world has changed (see 4 above) and we need to recognise this.

The large strategic centres in Wales (Cardiff and Swansea) and in England are being chosen by major retailers. For example John Lewis and other international retailers are staying or going to set centres. All the other centres around loose them with no replacements.

Travel is easy for people to get to these centres. An example is that Liverpool is not that far to travel to from North Wales. Therefore why do the traditional larger retailers need to be in the other centres who were surviving before.



The High Street was hit very hard when Woolworth's ceased trading, then BHS and M&S pulled out of many centres. What was left was not attractive enough to sustain a centre.

#### **4. Types of centres**

Towns and cities have six types of centres as follows:

##### **Strategic**

These centres are the very large ones (for example Cardiff).

These centres attract the large international retailers and are generally doing well.

##### **Major**

These centres are or were important centres in the past (for example Llandudno, Rhyl, Bangor etc).

These centres are not attracting enough footfall to sustain the larger retailers in numbers.

##### **Provincial**

Smaller but important local centres (i.e. Holywell, Prestatyn)

These centres have lost many of their main retailers and are experiencing empty shops leaving a 'toothing effect',

##### **Local**

Small centres (Denbigh, Ruthin).

These centres have a smaller number of shops to service local needs. Shops in these centres are difficult to sustain leaving a lot of units empty.

##### **Specialist**

These are centres which have a particular character and centre of attraction (Conwy, Bets y coed).

These centres are few and are generally standing up to the pressures of the retail environment. There may not need to be any action here.



### **Out of town**

Out of Town Centres have had a severe effect on town centres but are still popular for the regular shopper. No action may be needed here.

### **5. Issues**

The main issues which have affected the town centres and their attractiveness to shoppers include:

- a) Empty shops – often looking untidy.
- b) Non retail frontages – estate agents, solicitors, evening retailers (takeaways).
- c) Lack of reasons to go to centres – loss of banks for example.
- d) Cost of being in the centre (rates and rents).
- e) Slow re-actions of the planning system to meeting a changing environment.
- f) Parking (lack of it or cost of it).
- g) Lack of public toilets.
- h) Local Authorities not understanding or listening to business retailers, often this is caused by too many restrictions and rules.

### **6. Actions into the future**

The actions that could be taken into the future would include:

#### **a) Do nothing**

Let the market take its part and leave local plans as they are with identified centres as they are today.

**Effect** is that centres will continue to struggle and in some cases 'die a slow death'.

#### **b) Try revitalising centres**

To expend money in trying to revitalise centres with grants and incentives.

**Effect** is that a lot of money is spent with little or no result. Evidence of this is the Mary Portas report and actions taken in several towns with £100,000 invested in each. In each case the town has not improved in some cases has got worse.

#### **c) Change strategy**

Reduce the size of centres for retail in local plans and invest in incentives/grants to enable those businesses outside the new centre to move into it creating a more vibrant centre but smaller. This would include a review of parking provision and parking charges.



**Effect** Either town centres do not respond and continue to struggle or the centre could be revitalised with a more pleasant environment to attract shoppers to a more select centre.

## **7. Recommendation**

The following is recommended:

- a) A full report is commissioned to be presented to Welsh Government and Parliament.
- b) A local MP and SM to be found to promote the report in the Senedd and Parliament.
- c) To seek funding from the Welsh Government for a full study.
- d) Town and Community Councils should have more say and involvement in looking after their own centres.

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