

Dear Members of Wem Town Council

Thank you for considering my email to Network Rail and the newly formed Transport for Wales regarding my safety concerns regarding Wem Station and the lack of a ticket machine on both platforms and the need for a pedestrian footbridge at your last meeting. I appreciate the general consensus that "the Town Council have requested this numerous times over the years with no success so they do not see any merit in pursuing this suggestion at this time." However I would like to bring your attention to the fact that the new franchise will operate on a different model. With the change of franchise comes new blood. I have already had a response from Steve Whitley the newly appointed Borders Business Unit Manager for Transport for Wales Rail Services (TfWRS) and he has agreed to meet me at Wem Station on the 4th December. When anyone is new in post in an organisation like this they will be keen to make their mark. The response he has made so far has been positive and he has confirmed a footbridge would be in their remit not Network Rail's. Please see his comments below:

Regarding the installation of a footbridge, this would not usually be for Network Rail to lead – it would be the Station Facility Owner (in this case, us, TfW) to lead on and secure funding for (from whatever source). We are happy to lead this activity, but I must note that we would need to work together with a number of stakeholders (NR, Local Authorities, those living close to the station who will be affected by the structure) to demonstrate a case for the investment. Then, we will need to secure funding – which, again, would come from a number of parties.

Note that he says "**We are happy to lead this activity**" I feel that it is imperative that Wem Town Council should give its backing to Transport for Wales Rail Services if it is to pursue this project. I feel strongly that a footbridge should be argued for on safety grounds not convenience. There was a footbridge in the past and there is no reason there could not be one in the future. This is precisely the right time for the town council to express its support so early in this 15 year franchise. Given the positive response from TfWRS I hope Wem Town Council will reconsider and find that there is merit in showing support for TfWRS to lead a project to secure funds for a footbridge at Wem Station and for the Town Council to commit to assist in any way it can.

Kind regards

Jon Bielstein

Agenda item 13b

Forwarded on behalf of Councillor Joyce Barrow, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Waste and Licensing

Following on from discussions, between myself and Mark Barrow, in relation to the demise of the Community Enablement Team, I think it useful to balance that, with confirmation of his proposals, to develop a new team of six officers. (Focussed upon Place Plan Development)

The 18 'Place Plans' are the principal means through which we discuss, agree and set local community investment and development needs across the county. We believe much of the current debate over CIL resources could have been averted, if we had given the ongoing refresh of Place Plans more priority, focus and engaged with Town and Parish councils much more openly. We are keen to 'reboot' and repair our relationship with Town and Parish Councils and to begin a phase of more open conversations, that help us meaningfully understand their local issues and pressures and create the opportunity to share our own.

In the context of yesterday's cabinet approval to proceed with our initiative to address unmet housing needs, I am also very mindful that we need to ensure a much greater level of understanding and common purpose with Town and Parish Councils, if we are to successfully address the local housing issues.

We are keen that we have a cohort of officers, who can interface across the various departments of the Place Directorate and other areas to help synthesise our work as a council, into local single conversations at a local level and to internalise back into the council, those local issues and pressures.

Resources have now been assembled to fund these new posts and Mark is finalising the formal HR process before releasing them next week. We anticipate that members of the Community Enablement Team will be able to apply for these posts within a 'ring fenced' process. We hope to confirm the exact timings next week, but the hope is to recruit to those posts before Christmas and progress this new approach in the New Year.

Kind regards
Councillor Joyce Barrow
Portfolio Holder for Communities,
Waste and Licensing

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