

WEARDALE RAILWAY TRUST COUNCIL (WRT)

Minutes of the management committee meeting held at the Low Waterhouse Farm, Esh Winning on Tuesday 24th March 2015.

The meeting started at 19:37PM.

Those present

Mike Wood – Chair
John Askwith
Kevin Hillary
Kevin Richardson
Gerry Mudd
Ruth Carroll
Paul Wilson
Tony Slack –Secretary

1 Apologises for absence

Richard Maughan, Peter Baker

2 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the 24th February 2015 meeting were approved by the Directors.

Proposed: - Kevin Hillary
Seconded: - Ruth Carroll

3 Matters arising from the last meeting not covered in the agenda

There were no matters arising

4 Identify any other business to be discussed in Item 18

The Weardale Gazette have offered competitive rates to take an advert for the Heritage Service 2015.
The possibility of another volunteer day to be considered to tidy up the stations prior to the Easter services.

5 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

There were no changes in conflicts of interest.

6 Chairman's Report

There has been a promising start to our Heritage Service and hopefully we will have a season that is more successful than last years. Operational volunteers need to be encouraged to give as much availability as possible. It is only April and it is already a struggle to fill some of the roles.

Stanhope Station lease is still not resolved. Steve Raine is advising the Trust with this and hopefully will have some significant news shortly. In the meantime, we have instructed a roofer to proceed with the repairs the cost of which will be around £2750.00. In any event these repairs are down to the Trust and it is better we have control of the price rather than Durham County Council.

Number 40's boiler, smokebox and chimney have been moved to Wolsingham for security; the new firebox and old tube plate are inside the G5 new unit at Shildon and are safe. One boilersmith has looked at boiler in its current state and is estimating his price to complete the outstanding work. Another two names are to be contacted to see if they can provide prices too. Initially, its time scale which is going to be the critical element of the project with a potential end of 2016 for return of the boiler.

The Chairman's report was accepted by the Directors.

Proposed: Ruth Carroll
Seconded: Paul Wilson

7 Treasurer's report

Since the last Council meeting membership renewals have continued at a steady rate, many with donations. One member has converted to life membership. There has been little expenditure this month which leaves our cash balances healthy. We are in a position to repay Gerry Mudds' loan, if required and to pay for the Stanhope Station roof repairs. Some concerns have been expressed about spending on the roof if the lease is not renewed, but under the current lease we have to maintain the state of the station, even if we then end our tenancy.

The meeting at County Hall went well and although we have not had a response as yet, DCC were given some strong reasons to support our claim for a long lease at a peppercorn rent. We will not be required to vacate the station when the current lease expires.

We are still waiting to find what the new cost of completing the restoration of 40 will be and this is a worry. We will have to do much of the work on a voluntary basis to make it possible to contemplate continuing.

We must consider increasing membership fees and the timing of this. Since the last increase, postal rates have increased considerably and the cost of printing BTL has gone up too.

We should also consider our DBS account. This was on 7 days' notice, but the DBS have changed these accounts to an instant access but of course at a lower interest rate. Alternative accounts will be explored to maximise the available interest, any suggestions would be welcome

Thanks to Paul Wilson for getting on with the lottery once we had obtained information about current players.

Cash balances are: Barclays: £2668.72, DBS: £23,320, Cash asset: Profit from 2014's Heritage Service

Proposed: Kevin Richardson

Seconded: Ruth Carroll

8 Trust Shop

Funds have been approved for the shop manager to re-stock the shop ready for the start of the operating season.

9 Secretary's' Report

The Secretary reported that the Trust Accounts will be lodged at Companies House before the end of April.

Correspondence:

The Trust has received a thank you card from the wife of the long standing member for the efforts put in to mark his' 80th birthday with a trip on the Bubblecar and the tea at the Black Bull at Frosterley.

There has been a request from a member in Huddersfield for five extra books of tickets for the Easter Raffle. These have been sent and the ticket stubs and monies returned.

A letter has been received from a young boy, with a covering note from his parent, requesting information about the Trust steam engine and the 2015 service. A reply will be sent.

A letter has been sent on behalf of the Trust to the Deputy Editor of Heritage Railway Magazine requesting that the 2015 WRHSL service be included in the monthly "Up and Running" feature.

Ticket stubs and monies, for the Easter Raffle Draw are being returned at a healthy rate. At this stage it would appear that the Raffle will result in a significant contribution to Trust funds.

There were no Equal Opportunities/Anti-discrimination/ Trust activities which meet our public benefit items to report.

10 Heritage Services

The 2015 Heritage Service started with Mothering Sunday on the 15th March. Passenger numbers were modest but the weather was poor on the day which probably detracted from the appeal of a day out in the Dale.

The 2015 brochure was produced in time for Mothering Sunday and distribution is underway. A list of all the locations where brochures have been accepted is to be produced by John Hill/Tony Slack.

On the weekend of the 25th and 26th April we will be operating the Summer Timetable with 4 return journeys each day in conjunction with a Vintage Event at the Black Bull at Frosterley

There is a vintage car rally planned for the 15th and 16th August arranged by NEMMOC. A discounted fare is proposed for participating members.

At the CIC Management Teleconference, the cost of a track access charge was discussed and a suggestion that £5/running day might be considered. The meeting concluded that it was too early in the season to take on the additional cost at this stage and a decision should be deferred to the next meeting. The possibility of a donation as a percentage of profits might be a possibility at the end of the season.

11 No 40 Report

This item is covered in the Chairman's Report above

12 Projects/Restoration Activities

There have been no Carriage or Wagon project works this month.

Stanhope Station roof is now an ongoing project with a contractor identified and costs obtained. Consideration should now be given to the Platform Canopy.

A custodian is required for the Sentinel Shunters with a view to repainting the serviceable unit to perhaps be available to provide driver experience days during the season.

The Sunday Gang are in the process of clearing the area around Harperley Station and this could be a focal point for the Halloween Service.

13 Volunteer and Membership secretary's Report

Skilled volunteers are in short supply and more multi-skilled volunteers are required. PTS training and refresher training is required.

To date over 200 membership renewals have been received which is the majority of the ones sent out with the last issue of Between the Lines.

A list of the 31 people/organisations that receive complimentary copies of BTL was discussed and an amended list agreed.

The possibility of sending electronic copies of BTL was discussed particularly for the overseas members. This was to be explored. The meeting agreed that only one magazine would be sent per address.

14 Weardale Railway Trust Activities

There is a WarBlitzer/RailBlitzer event in conjunction with the NETOA on the 16th May

On Monday the 31st August there is a planned excursion from Howden le Wear to Wolsingham with train journey to Stanhope and onward to Tow Law before returning to Howden. Tickets are £20/head. Extra café capacity will be required – Nina will need to be at Stanhope.

15 Weardale Railway CIC reports.

The following were discussed at the management meeting:

The WRCIC financial results for 2014 were presented at the Board meeting on the 9th March.

Turnover was £1.24m which was down £100k on 2013

Polar Express revenues were up 16% at £1.1m

Expenditure was £1.66m resulting in a £420k operating loss for 2014.

The dealings with HMRC are now concluded

There are no plans to operate services in 2015 other than the Polar Express starting in November.

It was noted that Lafarge have put the site of the former Eastgate Cement Works up for sale.

16 Other reports from Trust Directors

16a Weekly Lottery/Fund Raising

It has been established that there were 17 members of the old Lottery scheme and all have been or are about to be contacted. Of those already contacted 3 have stated that they no longer wish to continue and will not be joining the new Lottery. However funds are still coming in for the old Lottery.

The Application forms for the re-launch of the Lottery are now available.

The gambling regulations have been reviewed and the Lottery is not required to comply with them.

16b Educational Activities

Talks (Dates/Locations)

A talk was given in Skipton to the University of the 3rd Age.

Publications. None.

Presentations. Durham City, Yesterday Belongs to You. 09/05/15.
Possible exhibition at a re-launched West Auckland Carnival

Magazine (Publication dates/content deadlines)

BTL87 May 2015 issue. Contributions required by Thursday 23rd April 2015 at the latest. Despatch date 8th May 2015. There was a request for content and photographs.

The above was provided in a post meeting note from John Askwith to the Chairman.

17 Any Other Business

The efforts to locate the VHS tape of the line have again drawn blank a letter of apology will be sent to the owner.

The meeting agreed to place an advert in the Weardale Gazette for £20 + VAT

The proposed Volunteer Day was deemed to be at too short notice.

The meeting closed at 21:40PM

18 Date of next meeting

Next WRT Council meeting: - 28th April 2015 at 7:30PM at Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre, Bishop Auckland.