

WEARDALE RAILWAY TRUST COUNCIL (WRT) MEETING

Minutes of the management committee meeting held at Low Waterhouse Farm, Esh Winning, on Monday 25th January 2016.

The meeting started at 19:22PM.

Those present

Kevin Richardson – Chair
Mike Wood.-. Vice Chair
Mark Woodhams
Peter Kearsley
Peter Baker
Paul Wilson
Tony Slack –Secretary

1 Apologises for absence

Ruth Carroll, Gerry Mudd, Richard Maughan, John Askwith, Steve Raine

2 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the 30th November 2015 meeting were approved by the Directors with the following correction:

Item 8 The first line of the report should read, - The AGM was very good and had gone very well, all matters raised in discussion were answered.

Proposed: - Mike Wood
Seconded: - Paul Wilson

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

Trust promoting itself 2016. Website etc. update. Maintenance regime. WRHSL publicity.
The lack of progress with the CIC with respect to prospects at Eastgate
Trust Draw Raffle Prizes

5 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

No change

6 Chairman's Report

The Chairman gave a verbal report.

First of all, a belated "Happy New Year" to one and all.

We have just completed the 4th "Polar Express" season, and initial reports indicate that it has been the best yet. Passenger numbers are up significantly from the previous year at around 51,000 visitors, with a corresponding increase in operating profit. Despite the misgivings of a number of people in the early years, Polar Express has become the main source of income for WRCIC, and goes a long way in keeping investment being made on the infrastructure. Plans are already being made for Polar 2016, (already around 10,000 tickets have been sold), and WRCIC are investigating ways in which we may be able to accommodate even higher passenger numbers for the event. To have achieved these results would have been difficult, if not impossible, without the support and skills of our volunteers who assisted by providing the essential operating crews. A grateful thanks to everyone involved!

As we enter 2016, we look forward to a very busy year.

- The boiler for number 40 is now at McEwan's boiler smiths for initial tests and evaluation prior to finalising a contract to complete the necessary works.

- Plans are well in hand for extending our heritage service to Witton-le-Wear this year. Materials for repairing the platform are ordered, and the Sunday Gang has spent several weekends working hard to clear the station and its surroundings.
 - We have been notified that WRCIC are proposing to operate a weekend of special trains for enthusiasts, using the class 47 locos and Polar stock, over the weekend of 6th-7th Feb 2016. They have requested volunteer support for this event.
 - The timetable for this year's heritage service is in the process of being finalised
 - The canopy at Stanhope station is high on our list of priorities for maintenance and repair. Plans are in hand to carry out an initial experimental repair to the roof, to ascertain whether or not it is within our capabilities to do the work "in-house".
 - Wolsingham platform cabin is in need of repair, as is the cabin at Broadwood.
 - The Sunday Gang will, as ever, be working hard at keeping Mother Nature at bay. Extending to Witton-le-Wear will put even more pressure on them, so we need to do all we can to ensure they have the means to continue their invaluable work.
- All of the above will, no doubt, put a considerable strain on our resources, both in terms of finance and manpower. With this in mind, we need to plan how best to attract more money and volunteers.

BARS / WRCIC have appointed Evan Green-Hughes to review all of the training and operating procedures currently in force at both Weardale and Dartmoor, with a view to ensure that all safety critical operations are made as safe as possible, whilst at the same time removing unnecessary and trivial items from our rules. I would ask that everyone support this project, since the aim is to make the operation of the railway as risk-free as can be expected.

I have been approached by the General Manager to investigate moving the youth team coach, in order to facilitate the removal of the pinch point at the bottom of the office staircase. I have proposed looking at various solutions, including relocating the staircase to the car park fence at the opposite side. Discussions are ongoing.

The strong winds of recent weeks have caused the heavy telephone cable, which stretches from the office Portacabins to the control office chimney, to dislodge the decorative brickwork around the top of the chimney. The damage is such that the top of the chimney will need to be rebuilt. We have discussed this with the General Manager and he has agreed that, since the cable is the property of WRCIC, the company will fund the repair. I am advised that a contractor has been appointed, and that this work will be done this week, weather permitting.

From the length of this report it can be seen that 2016 promises to present many challenges to the Trust. I am sure that, with the support of our members, and the cooperation of WRCIC, we can move the Weardale Railway forward and build on our successes of the past.

Finally, it is with deep regret that I report the recent death of Douglas Collins. Douglas was an active volunteer and a gentleman in the truest sense. He will be missed by many, and we have passed on our sincere condolences to his widow Judith and their family.

Proposed: - Paul Wilson
Seconded: - Mike Wood

7 Treasurer's report

Although the trust volunteers have been active over the last couple of months the Trust's own operations have not. Consequently there has been little change in the Trust's finances since the last meeting.

This time of year is a quiet time for membership renewals and expenditure has exceeded income over the period.

The main expenses have been:

£432.00 Incl VAT	Independent Examiners fees (£360.00 nett – the same as last year.
£112.00	VAT Payment
£515.00	Cost of producing Between the Lines magazine.
£42.00	Extra payment for stock of WRT Ties. Total now £476.00
£20.00	DCC Lottery Licence

Income has consisted of membership renewals, including some donations, the sale of 7 WRT ties and the Trust Lottery.

Balances at the bank are:	Total	£28,888.00
Cash held at Barclays		£5576.00
Cash at Darlington BS		£23,262.00
Cash in hand		£43.00

It is anticipated that the coming months will see an increase in expenditure with repairs to infrastructure and No 40 restoration.

The Treasurer has pointed out that there is an outstanding Invoice for £2705.00 to Multi-Tal.

Mike Wood declared a conflict of interest in this and withdrew from the meeting.

The treasurer recommended that this sum be written off from the accounts. The proposition was considered by Council and Proposed by Peter Baker and seconded by Peter Kearsley. This resolution was passed without objection.

Mike Wood re-joined the meeting.

The invoice for the transport of No 40's boiler to McEwen's had been received and paid.

It was proposed that the £2000 held within the restricted funds for Witton-le-Wear platform be released to the project following Jim Crowther's e-mail indicating that he still wanted his donation used for the benefit of the villagers of Witton-le-Wear.

Proposed: Mark Woodhams

Seconded: Paul Wilson

8 Trust Shop

There has been no shop activity since the end of the operating season of the Heritage Service.

9 Secretary Report

Trust correspondence.

A letter of thanks has been received from Mr John Hopkins for the complimentary copy of the Rebirth Book and the latest timetable to assist in his writing a book about his East- West cycle ride that took in the Weardale Railway and mentions his friend, the late George McDonald, who had been a long-time supporter of the railway. Mr Hopkins is hopeful that his book will be published in 2016.

Letters of thanks have been sent to the BARS representatives for their contribution to the AGM. A letter of thanks is still required to be sent to Keith McNally for the video shown after the AGM of the Wickham trolley ride up the line to Eastgate.

Action: Tony Slack

A letter of thanks has been sent to Harry Taylor for two donation recently made to the Trust.

Mike Wood reported that the Sunday Gang clearing the area around the station area at Witton-le-Wear contributed to our public benefit objective.

10 No 40 Report

The boiler for No 40 is at McEwen's works and we await the results of the Non Destructive Testing (NDT) together with the report from the boiler inspector indicating any additional work. Costings for any additional works, over and above the current quote, need to be identified and approved prior to proceeding. The Trust will be represented when the boiler inspector makes his visit. The project will be conducted with strict financial control.

11 Projects/Restoration Activities

Paul Wilson has contacted DCC and there are two revenue streams that might be accessible for small grants. This will be followed up. Gerry has agreed to mentor Paul with his background of successful grant applications. It was decided to put a Heritage Lottery Grant application on the back burner at the moment and concentrate on small grants. A new scoping document is to be circulated by the 7th March 2016.

Action: Paul Wilson

12 Projects

Witton-le-Wear Station Platform

The order has been placed, on Polydeck, for the GRP platform material. Delivery is expected early/mid-February. The first instalment has been paid to Polydeck.

Witton-le-Wear Parish Council have secured a grant to improve the environment around the frontage of the station and are working with the Sunday gang to clear shrubs etc. Arrangements have been made with a local farmer for a JCB to help with the clearance work.

Evan Green Hughes has stated that an independent assessment of the installed platform will be required.

13 Volunteer and Membership Secretary's Report

Membership Report.

The membership currently stands at 534 with 4 new members in the last few months. There are 19 Complimentary Members at the current time. There are now 12 Youth Team members, 51 Life Members with the rest of the Membership being made up of Full, Concessionary and Joint Membership.

Volunteer Report

New volunteer inducted who is interested in helping Kevin with Bubblecar maintenance.

Medicals.

Medicals are expiring

An updated list of outstanding/expiring medicals will be given at the next meeting.

There was a request for Directors to indicate what content they want on the website.

14 Weardale Railway CIC reports.

There have been no Management meeting since the last Council meeting.

Council decided that the third nominated Trust Director position on the CIC Board will be discussed at the next Council meeting.

15 Other reports from Trust Directors

The 2016 brochure for the Heritage Service is in production. Aha have been contacted to distribute this year's timetables.

15a Weekly Lottery/Fund Raising

There have been two new members join the Lottery. Lottery Application forms were distributed at the AGM but as yet there has been no response.

15b Educational Activities

- Talks (Dates/locations)

25/04. Tudhoe Local History Society.

06/06. Sedgefield LHS,

11/10. Spennymoor Probus.

17/10, JA will need support - Wensleydale Railway Assoc.

Plus one other talk to confirm a date.

- Publications.

- Magazine (Publication dates/content deadlines)

BTL90 in production. Despatch 06/02.

16 Any Other Business

Trust promoting itself 2016. Website etc. update. Maintenance regime. WRHSL publicity. Attendance at events making public aware of the railway and Trust existence. There needs to be someone to lead this. Ideas needed of how to we can recruit more members.

Website. Plans to update it in 2016. Directors need to review with some urgency which content is required to transfer from old website.

Action: All

The lack of progress with the CIC with respect to prospects at Eastgate

BARS were approached at the end of the December board meeting and asked to re-establish communication in respect of Eastgate. This is to be followed up by e-mail.

Action: Tony Slack

Trust Draw Raffle Prizes

Evan Green Hughes is to be contacted with respect to his views on offering Cab pass rides as raffle ticket prizes.

Action: Tony Slack

The meeting closed at 22:15PM

17 Date of next meeting

Next WRT Council meeting: - Monday 22nd February 2016 at 7:30PM at SDRYT Coach Stanhope