

# WEARDALE RAILWAY NEWS UPDATE No.1

## 18 OCTOBER 2008

Now that the Railway is under new majority ownership and plans have been announced regarding the intention to develop and extend the operations, the Trust Board has decided it would be appropriate for members to receive a regular update on plans and progress. It is intended to produce this update regularly to supplement the information provided by the Trust Magazine 'Between the Lines' and it is hoped it will be a useful source of information for volunteers to pass on to their friends and our customers.

### THE NEW COMPANY

- Weardale Railways is a Community Interest Company, 75% of the shares are held by Iowa Pacific Holdings through their UK subsidiary: British American Rail Services (BARS). 12.5% of the shares by the Weardale Railway Trust (WRT) and 12.5% by Durham County Council (DCC), until April 2009 this DCC shareholding is split 50:50 with Wear Valley District Council.
- Directorships: The Board is made up of 4 Directors appointed by BARS, 3 appointed by WRT and 2 appointed by DCC. A Safety Director will also sit on the Board

### COMPANY PLANS

Ed Ellis (President, Iowa Pacific) has given an overview of their plans for the group of Companies they acquired from ECT, the main points are to: -

- Gain licences from Network Rail and the ORR to set up and operate network wide rail freight Company to be called D & C Railway.
- Seek freight haulage contracts at Weardale and elsewhere on the network.
- Clear track etc to gain access to Bishop Auckland by year end 2008.
- Commence freight and passenger service capability to and through Bishop Auckland in 2009.
- Move remaining stock and records from RMS Wakefield to Weardale.
- Move accounting function from Wakefield to Stanhope.
- All depot based rolling stock not owned by WRCIC, WRT or BARS to be subject to a written agreement.
- All non-functional rolling stock for which there is no funded plan to be removed or scrapped.

### PROGRESS

- **Track clearance:** The 'Sunday gang' have cleared the trackbed as far as the former Wear Valley Junction. They have been followed during the last week by a rail mounted flail which has cleared back the vegetation to the loading gauge limits- it has reached Witton le Wear. (GL,KH)
- **More Track clearance:** Another weekday gang has started work on the high embankment between the Junction and Etherley Viaduct where there has been considerable growth (trees circa 20 ft high on the track itself) in the 15 years since the last train passed this way. (GL, SRc)
- **Rolling Stock – new arrivals:** As part of the plan to move useful stock from RMS Wakefield to Weardale an 08 Shunter and a class 73 (73139) have arrived. (GL)
- **The Junior Club** had another successful bag packing day last weekend at ASDA Bishop Auckland where they raised over £700 for No 40 and for their uniform fund. (DM)
- **The Junior Club** is approaching its first anniversary – other events are planned but meanwhile a video presentation on their first year has been put together by the Club Leader, Dave Million. (DM)
- **Rolling Stock:** Tipping wagon – not a big job, but very useful, a small tipping wagon has been constructed to work with the Wickham trolley for track repairs, etc. (GL)

## WHAT NEXT?

- **Track Clearance:** As well as continuing the work mentioned above, the **Junior club** will be out this coming weekend working, under supervision, at the Junction area with members of the Sunday gang. (DM, GL, KH)
- **Rolling Stock: No 40:** Work is proceeding on completing the rebuilding of the Trust owned loco. An outside expert is overseeing this work, estimated time of completion – including recertification and test running - is March '09. The Appeal Fund has so far raised just over £18,000 towards the cost of this work, more is still needed. (GM)
- **Escomb area:** - Materials are being located and acquired to repair the damaged section of track and the landslip sometimes referred to as 'Broken Banks'. (GL, AT)
- **Stanhope Office:** Is to be staffed, initially on a part time basis and starting immediately, as part of the setting up of a joint 'head office' for all the BARS operations in the UK. It will be based in the upper floor of the existing Project office. It will, in conjunction with weekend volunteers, enable us to have daily telephone coverage. (GL).
- **Santa Specials:** Bookings going well and ahead of 2008 bookings at this time. Haulage is still being finalised, more news soon. (JA, IG)
- **2009 Timetable:** In final stages of preparation. In order to allow time for track and other repairs there will be no passenger services in February and November next year. (JA)
- **Witton le Wear Level Crossing:** Renewal of the gates on this crossing is now a priority – a quotation for the replacement gates is now being processed. (GL, AT)
- **Darlington Turntable and Ryhope Footbridge:** Both these items have been purchased / obtained for the railway. We have agreement in principle for the Territorial Army, who examined both items recently, to remove and transport them to Weardale as a training exercise, probably at the end of the first quarter of 2009. Safe storage is being arranged. (AT, GM, THr)
- **First Aid:** Thanks to assistance from Bishop Auckland College funds have been obtained to run First aid courses for volunteer staff engaged in operating and other duties. (AT)

**Edited by Gerry Mudd. 18/10/08.**

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