

WEARDALE RAILWAY : NEWS UPDATE : No.32
2 FEBRUARY 2010

STANHOPE -SHILDON PASSENGER SERVICE ANNOUNCED
CHARTER TRAINS BOOKED AND NO 40 TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE

- **WEARDALE RAILWAY ANNOUNCES MID YEAR START FOR SERVICES TO SHILDON :** The Railway issued a press release announcing its intention of commencing a community service of trains running between Stanhope and Shildon where it is planned to connect with the trains running through to Darlington. This service and the timing of its introduction is conditional on BARS affiliate D & C Railways obtaining its passenger and freight operating licences. This will enable D & C R operated trains to work on the network. A provisional timetable has been developed which allows for 5 return trips between Stanhope and Shildon per day, plus the normal Heritage service between Stanhope and Wolsingham, also with paths for a return trip to Bishop Auckland from Stanhope for special heritage excursions. There is also provision for paths for freight trains to and from Wolsingham. More details will follow when the administration and planning details are nearer finalisation. This news received media coverage – please see :- http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/4875570.Passenger_services_return_to_heritage_line_after_60_year_hiatus/?ref=mr and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/tees/8485037.stm>



Looking north out of the doors of the shed at Wolsingham onto the newly extended Road 3 (Photo : A Gregory)



The former sidings yard at Wolsingham now cleared in preparation for the laying of the main siding and the coal loading area. See map in last issue. (Photo : A Gregory)

- **WOLSINGHAM COAL LOADING PLANS :-** As mentioned in the last update a meeting was held with the Parish Council in Wolsingham early last month to discuss the plans. The Railway and UK coal are now developing plans to deal with the issues raised by the residents in the 47 houses adjacent to the lorry route to the loading facility in the railways Wolsingham Depot. A planning application is being submitted on this basis. Meanwhile work continues on extending road 3 which runs through the main shed and also on the long siding which would be used by the coal wagons. Fencing between the fast disappearing former steelworks has been erected . See progress photos.
- **HMRI INSPECTION VISIT :-** The inspection took place on January 25th and 26th. On the first day the inspection team toured the line examining crossings, fences and trackwork. The Inspector was pleased with the work done since his last visit and approved a list of outstanding works – principally the erection of signs, fencing and completion of vegetation clearing for sight lines etc. On the second day the emphasis was on our documentation procedures and the new Safety Management system application document. Again the Inspector was satisfied with the steps taken to implement his previous recommendations. The next formal step will to be gain final formal approval to open the line for the Charter trains later this month, following completion of the works.

- **GENERAL MANAGER POST :** Eighteen applicants were short listed from a large number of applications Stage one of the process finished at the end of January and those on the final short list will be invited for interview mid month.
- **PROJECT CONNECT :-** Work continues on flailing the trackside vegetation by the Project team also joined by the Sunday Gang on the appointed days – this work should be completed all the way to Bishop Auckland by the time you read this. Steve Goodwin is in charge of the team, which will also complete the signage works prior to the Feb 19th charter train, as well as continuing with the preparatory work in the Depot area. A Network Rail Inspection train is also scheduled to visit the line during March. The ballast regulator (see picture was used by the ‘Connect’ team to fettle the ballast on the whole stretch of the line down to Bishop Auckland.



The Ballast Regulator ready for action in Wolsingham Yard



The Ballast Regulator at Bishop Auckland, job done. (Both photos A Gregory)

- **2010 TIMETABLE :** The new timetable is now published and is being distributed. The service pattern for the Wolsingham – Stanhope service is basically the same (as are the fares) but as previously mentioned there is a slight reduction in the number of mid week operating days in nthe ‘shoulder’ seasons based on an analysis of the 2009 results. There has been a smaller print run this year because the Railway plans to issue a new timetable in connection with the reopening of the Bishop Auckland link. See earlier item.
- **OPERATING THE COMMUNITY SERVICE :** D & C R will provide Mk 2 coaches for the service which will be class 31 hauled with one of the coaches converted as a driving vehicle. It is planned to run via a temporary platform on WR land adjacent to the B & Q store at Bishop Auckland, a footpath connecting it to the existing Network Rail platform. This is a temporary measure until such time as we can arrange joint platform arrangements which will of course involve new trackwork layouts and costs, with Network Rail. It is envisaged that volunteers will be able to assist in operating this service as train crew as well as a nucleus of D& C R staff – this will include driving and other duties. Operating days will involve shift working between the hours of approximately 7am and 9pm. Again more on this later.
- **CHARTER TRAINS – LATEST :** The Operations Manager reports that liaison meetings continue with Network Rail and arrangements are in hand to carry out a rehearsal prior to the excursion train on February 19th. This is the now fully booked UK Railtours Charter from Kings Cross. It will be followed by the Spitfire Tours on February the 27th where places are now almost fully booked, it is advertised as ‘Limited Availability’ and they have increased the price for the Stanhope ‘add on’ to the York price from £10 to £25 . This tour runs from Crewe via Birmingham. A further operator, Pathfinder Tours, is planning a visit, probably in May if paths are available, and a fourth operator is starting to make arrangements. The 19th February Charter will be topped and tailed by Class 66 locos and the 27th February charter by 2 Class 37’s and a class 47 loco.

- **CATERING, SHOPS NEWS :** The next 2 weeks are shut down weeks for the passenger service so opportunity is being taken to do an early ‘spring clean’ of the shops – Kath would welcome volunteers for this. It is also hoped to start work this year on extend the café area into the adjacent room (the ‘old shop’) – we have planning permission for this alteration from the Council. This will provide a much needed extension to the seating capacity. Contact Kath Wood on kathwood_95@hotmail.co.uk or 07779 571 228.
- **2009 : A RECORD YEAR FOR WEARDALE RAILWAYS :** The Mince Pie specials marked the end of a very successful year for Weardale Railways . Passenger journeys over the year were up from 21,000 in 2008 to 25,000 in 2009 and revenues from all sources was 25% higher than in 2009 and was ahead of the target set by management. It was also our most ‘Lapland’ like season so far as the two pictures below from Terry Wansbury, taken on the 2cd January, show. This was the day no passengers braved the elements, but the crew when not operating the crossings still seemed to have a high morale. Was that a mince pie Doctor?



- **WEARDALE RAILWAY AND TOURISM PUBLICITY :** Mike Richardson reports that we will be involved with the DCC tourism promotion distribution days at Bolton (February) , Peterlee (March 10), Bowes Museum (March 16), Durham County Cricket Club (March 24) Bishop Auckland Food Festival (April 29) More information from Mike at : mike.richardson@durham.gov.uk
- **WR TRUST NEWS :** Sadly, David Scott our new Trust Chairman has informed me that his wife, Carol, has had to go into Darlington Hospital for more treatment, we wish her well. Carol was a mainstay of the Booking Office at Stanhope until just over a year ago , we miss her and hope she has a speedy recovery. Former Chairman, Kevin Hillary , who as reported earlier is now one of the Trust’s three directors on the Board of WRCIC has sent the following : I would like to thank the new Chairman Mr. David Scott for his kind words. I hope that I will be able to air the aims and concerns of the Trust and it’s Members, to the CIC board, in what is going to be a very exciting time for the whole of the Weardale Railway project. The Railway has so much going for it, the scenery of Weardale, the impending charter trains, along with the proposed mineral traffic. We now need to keep all this momentum going. BUT, we DO NEED an influx of working volunteers and if you read this and you are not a member of the Trust why not give your support by joining the Trust, they is a saying often heard on television “every little helps.”
- **No 40 TO MAKE AN APPEARENCE FOR CHARTER VISITORS :** There are plans, not finalised, to have No40 in steam in the loop at Stanhope with the buffet car and the Class73 for the February visits – possible with libations available in the Buffet car. “ Goody bags” provided by DCC Tourism and the WR will be handed to passengers during their short ‘leg stretching’ break at Stanhope. It is also planned to operate No 40 on Mothers Day (March 14th) and over the Easter break (April 2 – 5th).

- **DEPOT AND RESTORATION NEWS :** A general pre inspection clean up of the Depot was completed and Yard lighting has been rehabilitated. Work on the Trust owned Pullman Coach ‘Nina’ is now underway. Target is to have it ready for Easter trains. Otherwise work continues in relaying track and surfacing roads and loading areas. Photos below show the new fencing and ‘Nina’ (A G)



- **WRJC COACH RESTORATION PROJECT :** This former Scotrail Mk 2 coach is in the depot undergoing restoration. The Juniors report : - “Once complete the coach will comprise three distinct areas, the west end half of the coach, will be the meeting / training room, this will also be a function room for use by the railway for special events, the east end will be the permanent home of the model railway which will be changed from it’s current portable format into a permanent display, lastly, the east end vestibule / toilet area will be made into the WRjc office and storage room. External work will include repairing the body work, removing and cleaning the windows, repainting into the Weardale Railway livery, internally we will be removing the current seats and tables, replacing the lower wall panels, painting throughout, replacing the carpets, new furniture and blinds and work on the electricity supply. External work will include repairing the body work, removing and cleaning the windows, repainting into the Weardale Railway livery, internally we will be removing the current seats and tables, replacing the lower wall panels, painting throughout, replacing the carpets, new furniture and blinds and work on the electricity supply. The coach will eventually be based at Stanhope station in the old bay platform (platform 3) at the east of the station and we envisage this will happen before the main Summer period as we would like to have the model railway open during the summer season,



WRJC Coach with seats, tables, toilets and ,luggage racks removed. Internal walls and floor panels will be replaced



External view of 5226 with WRJC members at work (Photos ; A Gregory)

- **WEEKLY NOTICE CHANGES :** In order to reduce the amount of information contained in the Weekly Operating Notice, it has been agreed that, a periodical operating notice will be issued quarterly. From time to time the contents of this will then be transferred into the General Appendix thus ensuring that the latter document is up to date and that the amount of paper that train crews etc have to carry around with them is kept to an absolute minimum. (Operations Manager)

- **A ‘SENIOR’ JUNIOR CLUB ?** : Membership of the Junior club is for individuals up to 16 years old. This` leaves a gap until members can be accepted as Trust Volunteers at age 18, Several members of the Junior Club are now in their last year of membership before becoming full adult members. So to ease their transition to working volunteers in their own right, the GM and OM are looking at ways of being able to give them further training as “active assistants” in the roles of guard, crossing keeper, ticket inspector, station assistant and controller. This approach will have two benefits in that it should reduce the formal training period before the individuals concerned are ready for assessment whilst, simultaneously, helping to maintain the interest of this very promising and hard working group of individuals.
- **NEWS FROM OUR USA AFFILIATE –THE RIO GRANDE SCENIC RAILROAD :** This railway which runs over the 9,280 ft La Veta pass, the highest point on any US line crossing the Rockies, is naturally experiencing its own version of the 2010 winter. The railway runs weekly ‘Winter Wonderland’ excursions to the top of the pass. The day starts at 9.00 am and ends at 5.45 pm, is diesel hauled and uses bi-level dome cars. Sandwiches, soups and hot drinks are available for purchase . Prices range between \$33 and \$54. You can view a video at :-
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyb2xFxnNho>



General Electric B39-E diesel no 8577 hauling one of the former Santa Fe two level Dome cars over the La Veta pass (Photo RGSR)



The Eastgate site looking south over the works and on to the quarries on the slopes beyond. The works site is now cleared.

- **EASTGATE ECO VILLAGE :-** Since the project gained its initial approval last September – the Project team is now established and more detailed planning is underway Recently the Department of Energy announced funding of £461,000 to drill a second deep borehole into the ‘hot’ granite which underlies upper Weardale and is to be the source of warm groundwater planned to be used in a central heating system and in a spa. The second borehole will test the feasibility of recycling the water back into the ground after it has passed through a heat exchanger. The Project is led by a team at Newcastle University. Here is the link to the full story : <http://www.journallive.co.uk/north-east-news/environment-news/2010/01/13/pioneering-central-heating-system-for-eastgate-eco-village-61634-25586837/2/>



Found on a Photo site “Walking on the Weardale this is the type of Loco to be utilised on the new service.



D & CR 31601 on home ground near Plymouth –Dec12th

Line.” British Transport Police are to hold talks in the area prior to the new services..

Edited by G C Mudd : 2 February 2010 : Questions, comments, suggestions to : gcmudd@ntlworld.com