

## WEARDALE RAILWAY TRUST COUNCIL (WRT) MEETING

Minutes of the management committee meeting held at Witton-le-Wear Community centre, on Monday  
14<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

The meeting started at 1930hrs

### **Those present**

Kevin Richardson – Chairman  
Peter Kearsley  
Paul Wilson –Secretary  
Tony Slack  
Steve Raine  
Bob Dingle  
Jean Clarke  
Mike Wood from 1940hrs

### **1 Apologies for absence**

Richard Maughan, Gerry Mudd, Simon Adams

### **2 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> August meeting were approved by the Directors with the following corrections.

Paragraph 4; sentence reworded to reflect conversation

Paragraph 14; recently documented twice concurrently

Proposed: - Bob Dingle

Seconded: - Jean Clarke

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

Nil

### **4 Identify any other business to be discussed in Item 22**

- AGM 2020 planning/ notification
- Northumbria in Bloom outcome
- BTL order
- 2020 Timetable plans
- Rebirth book reprint
- Ticket books

### **5 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

There are no new conflicts of interest.

### **6 Chairman's Report**

As we approach the end of our heritage operation season, it is very gratifying to realise that we have made significant progress, despite the difficult challenges that we have encountered. There has been a significant effort from all our volunteers, whatever time they have been able to afford. We are, at last, seeing signs that progress is being made on Number 40's boiler, as we shall learn from the report during this meeting.

We finally got our class 108 dmu into service, albeit at this late stage in the season. A significant amount of work remains to be done, but we have at last seen it run on Weardale metals. A heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed, both in the workshop and in the team, who put significant effort into cleaning it ahead of it going into service.

We recently held what I believe is our first railcar gala. The weather appeared to put a dampener on passenger numbers, however it was pleasing to note that, largely due to the significant effort of our volunteers, the event ran without a hitch. That weekend coincided with the AGM of the Diesel Railcar Association and this year Evan Green-Hughes arranged for it to be held at Stanhope. Most of the members arrived Friday, when 16 of them took advantage of a driving experience in the class 122 "Bubble

Car". All experienced drivers, many of them volunteer at other railways that have significantly shorter lines than we have at Weardale. Consequently, the trip between Stanhope and Scotch Isle gave them the opportunity to drive a good distance, with a variety of speed limits and gradients. The feedback from this proved overwhelmingly positive. On Saturday they paid to travel the whole line between Stanhope and Bishop Auckland, before holding their AGM in the "Caledonian Sleeper" lounge car. I was invited to welcome them on behalf of ourselves and WRCIC. I took advantage of this opportunity to comment on the examination and service methods of railcars, as used by other heritage railways, particularly given the appalling state of the class 108 that we have purchased. The meeting proved very productive, with the added benefit of having the opportunity to meet and network with fellow DMU engineers.

We are all aware that WRCIC has been having difficulties lately. Daniel Brown has recently left the company to further his career. This coincided with another key member of staff taking seriously ill. With personnel numbers already cut to the bare minimum, these two further losses have put considerable strain on the already reduced number of paid staff. Consequently, the recent weekend saw a much-reduced café service at Stanhope, which resulted in potential passengers turning away and going elsewhere for food. We need to closely monitor this situation, since it could have ramifications for our heritage service, and the reputation of the railway. Fortunately, we are near the end of our operating season, so the effect should hopefully be minimal.

Despite the difficulties currently besetting WRCIC, the present state of the Trust makes me feel very optimistic. Our finances are currently in very good health, we are at last seeing progress on both Number 40 and the 108, and our volunteer numbers are steadily increasing. The efforts of our Wednesday work group are very much in evidence, with fresh coats of paint at Witton-le-Wear and Broadwood cabins, as well as at Wolsingham station. The work of the Sunday gang is, as ever, evident in various places, and we now have a certificate from "Northumbria in Bloom" recognising the efforts of our gardening team! As ever, thanks to everyone for your continued support. We have a great team!

Proposed: - Mike Wood

Seconded: - Bob Dingle

## 7 Treasurer's Report

Bob discussed his report to Directors.

### Mandate changes

The Darlington Building Society mandate has been amended to reflect the change in Treasurer. Barclays Bank has had all the necessary documents relating to the change in mandate but has not yet responded. All transactions to date show as being managed by P Baker.

### Questions on Financial Reports

As I have had only a month to explore the financial system set up by predecessor, if there are questions of detail that Board members wish me to answer I would be grateful for prior notice of such questions in order to prepare answers.

### VAT and Gift Aid

The VAT return for Q3 is due after 6/10/19. I am recommending that for this first return its preparation is double checked by our accountants to ensure accuracy following the changeover of Treasurer. The same recommendation applies to the preparation of this year's Gift Aid return. Both may result in some small additional accountancy fees.

### Current financial position

The balance in the current account is **£63,472.31**

The balance in the Darlington Building Society savings account is **£18,027.10**

This cash situation is healthy, the Board may wish to consider committing to continued refurbishment of the 108, and/or infrastructure repairs and/or repayment of loans. Current liabilities in terms of loans was established as £30K.

The annual contribution from WRHS Ltd. has been received and amounted to **£19,975.65**. This is not significantly different from the previous year's contribution.

Income from subscriptions to date amount to **£6110.67**

Shop income to date amounts to **£6218.05**

## **WRT Data Protection Officer**

We have paid by direct debit the annual data protection fee. The reminder email informed us that changes in the WRT named data protection officer should be passed to the registrar. This was identified as Chairman, Kevin Richardson at the meeting. Bob Dingle to action.

Bob discussed the financial governance of the Trust and shared his views regarding the relationships between Weardale Railway Trust & Weardale Railway Heritage Services. This paper was discussed and presented by the Treasurer and considered by Trustees during the meeting. Amendments made as agreed by those present. An amended copy retained within Trust records.

Income £3557.23  
Expenditure £8109.12

Trustees discussed the need to develop an asset register, Bob Dingle to consider.

It was identified 4 cast plates would be needed to be fixed to Trust's 108 DMU (2 either side of each car)

Proposed: Peter Kearsley  
Seconded: Mike Wood

## **8 Trust Shop**

No report, however, profits were reported to be limited.

## **9 Secretary's Report**

We have been contacted via email by an individual who was looking to establish his own CIC the Children's railway. Looking to bring in own hired in stock and crew, with the plan for WRCIC to get a share of profit in return from hire of line. Passed onto Head of Ops who has replied to individual asking him to get in touch.

We have received written request from a visitor who is seeking a raffle prize for the Stroke Association. It is addressed to Heritage Services, but they suggest a cream or afternoon tea voucher for 2020 as potential raffle gift. Not a request to the Trust, but wondered if a voucher for two on heritage services next year? The event is at the end of October at Barnard Castle. This was agreed by Trustees.

Positive feedback received from a customer on 14 Sept 19 via email.

*Dear Sir/Madam,*

*My wife and I travelled from Stanhope to Bishop Auckland and back last Saturday 14/9/2019.*

*I felt I had to write to say a very big thank you to the Staff on the train, platform, shop and cafe for being so friendly and making us so welcome. Their enthusiasm for the Weardale Railway is to be commended.*

*The 'Bubble' car was in excellent condition, as were the cafe, shop, platform, and puts many other heritage railways to shame.*

*A special mention must be made of the ticket collector, Derek Snell, who provided us with so much history/information on the route (in both directions). Having travelled on many preserved railways, he has to be one of the best 'ambassadors' we have come across! Well done Derek!*

*We will certainly be returning to your railway when next in the area.*

Feedback sent for inclusion in the next BTL.

## **10 WRT interface with partners and non-charities reducing reputational harm**

Trustees discussed relevant key information provided by the Charities Commission. Having reviewed the information contained within the links Trustees acknowledged the importance of this and expressed current systems are enough to manage the Trust's interface with others.

## **11 Data Protection Legislation**

Peter Kearsley provided an update. WRCIC have engaged an agency to undertake data protection matters, with the following amendments made in the following areas. Length of time for gift aid;

dependants information/ date of birth; medical records. Trustees discussed and considered actions as a result. Peter Kearsley to make revision to policy as needed.

## **12 No 40 Report**

Following several telephone calls and emails from Richard and myself, some positive progress to feedback, during October and September. At the beginning of October McEwen's plan mount the smokebox tubeplate this week, following a request from McEwen's to measure the Smoke box tee piece, completed over the weekend and sent back to McEwen's

In September, 40's boiler being worked on a during visit, half side sheets had been welded onto the outer firebox. All stay holes drilled and countersunk. Pads were machined and tapped ready for welding in place for washing out.; longitudinal stays and other parts were stacked ready for assembly. Tanfield boiler is being worked on in parallel which Maria explained will make costs less. Guy working on 40's boiler is from Riley's/ ELR. However, a lack of timescale is a concern.

Prior to this a telephone call from Alistair highlighted the following; the boiler is progressing well; we are just putting the final tapings in the smokebox tubeplate for the washout plugs and the tubeplate will be mounted and readied for riveting. We are currently reclaiming plate material around the firebox stay holes where they have ended up oversized in the past.

The specialist washout plug bosses are now all made and ready to be fit and we have made the patch screws to go in the outer firebox sides where the tolerance was low. We are nearing the point where we need Graham Morris to attend site to pass off the internal work for the last time and allow us to fit the firebox.

Trustees discussed pit space within depot which is currently occupied by 40. Question asked about whether 40 could be moved short term whilst awaiting boiler return.

## **13 Projects & Restoration Activities**

**108** – in service currently running on 3 engines with 1 isolated. Plan to run for rest of season. Money to spend on gearbox into service, as well as final drive. Roof a priority to ensure weatherproof as stored outside. Would benefit from being sand blasted, Bob Dingle to circulate a contact.

**Kingfisher platform** –Trustees discussed planning permission requirements and location. Steve Raine to discuss planning.

## **14 Trust Promotion Drive**

Mark Woodhams feedback attendance at recent events. Mark and the Trust stand has been present at Bishop Auckland History and Heritage; Beamish, Yesterday Belongs to You; Locomotion and Community Event at Witton Le Wear.

In 2020 on 21 October sees the 125yr anniversary of the opening of the railway to Wearhead.

## **15 Volunteer Liaison Officer's Report**

Bob Dingle provided an update. There has been a steady flow of new volunteers throughout the year, passing out on crossings or as TTI's. Trustees discussed retention/ maintaining the interest of our volunteers.

Mike Wood reported the Sunday Gang has experienced a couple of wash outs due to weather, continuing to make a noticeable difference between McNeil's and Harperley.

Wednesday group have been painting and cleaning at Wolsingham Station.

## **16 Membership Secretary's Report**

Jean Clarke provided an update on the Membership which presently stands at 438. The breakdown of type includes:

Complimentary 23

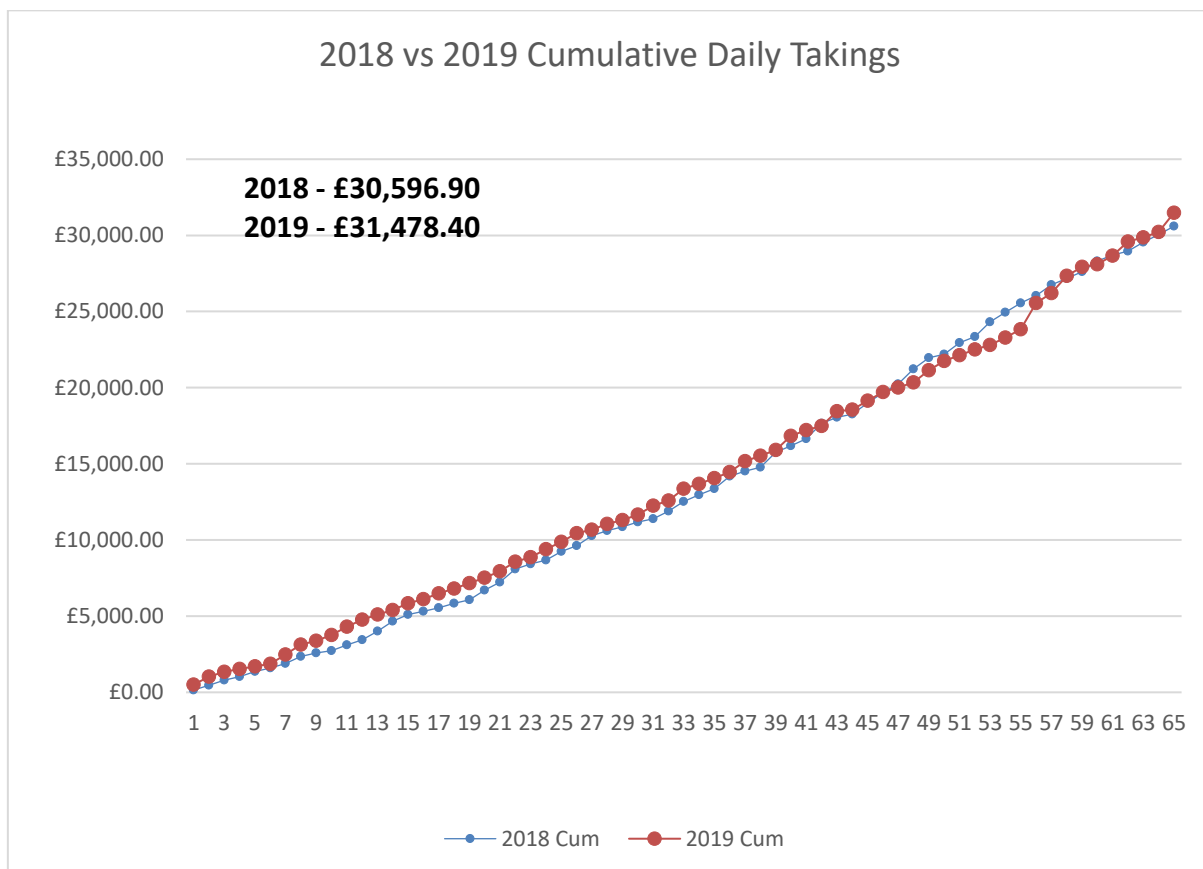
Life/Joint Life 60  
 Juniors 5 (1 of whom membership expired 2018)  
 Concessions 197 (1 of whom is a student)

Of the 7 memberships that lapsed in 2018 attempts of contact have proven unsuccessful. 95 renewal reminders (inc 22 Joint) went out with BTL 104 in August (88 + the 7 above) and of those 26 have renewed. To date there remains 47 outstanding (13 of whom are Joint).

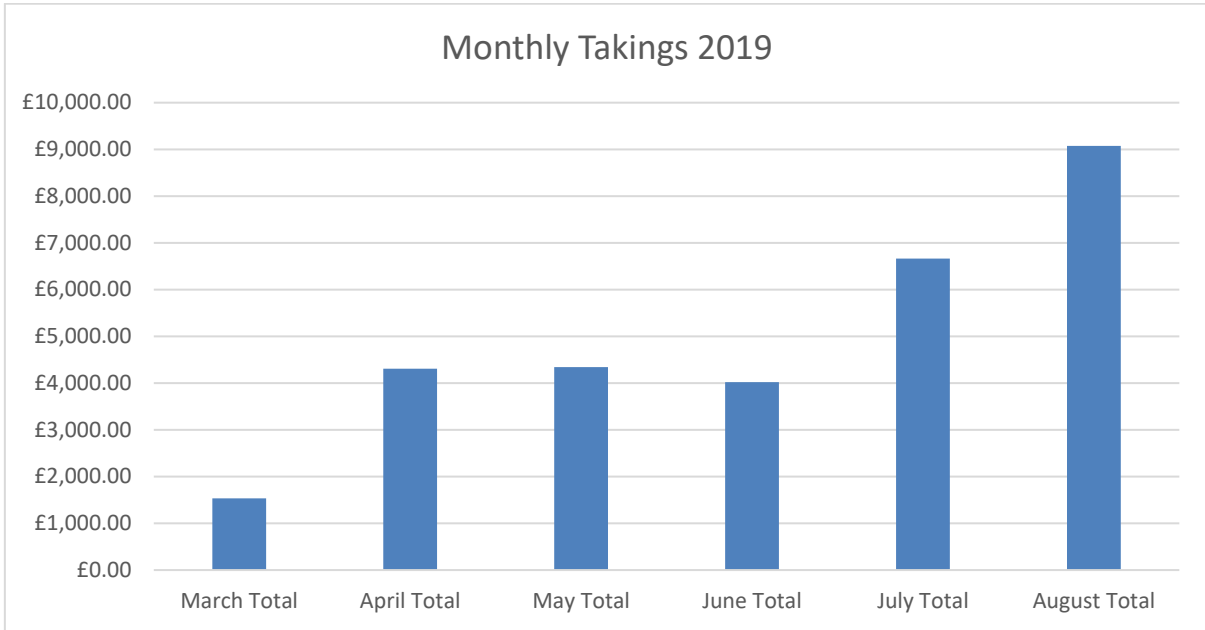
We have had 22 new members this year – the first one being 20 February. The spread of applications shows the majority come in in April (6) and July (5). 2 joined in August and 2 in September.

## 17 Heritage Services

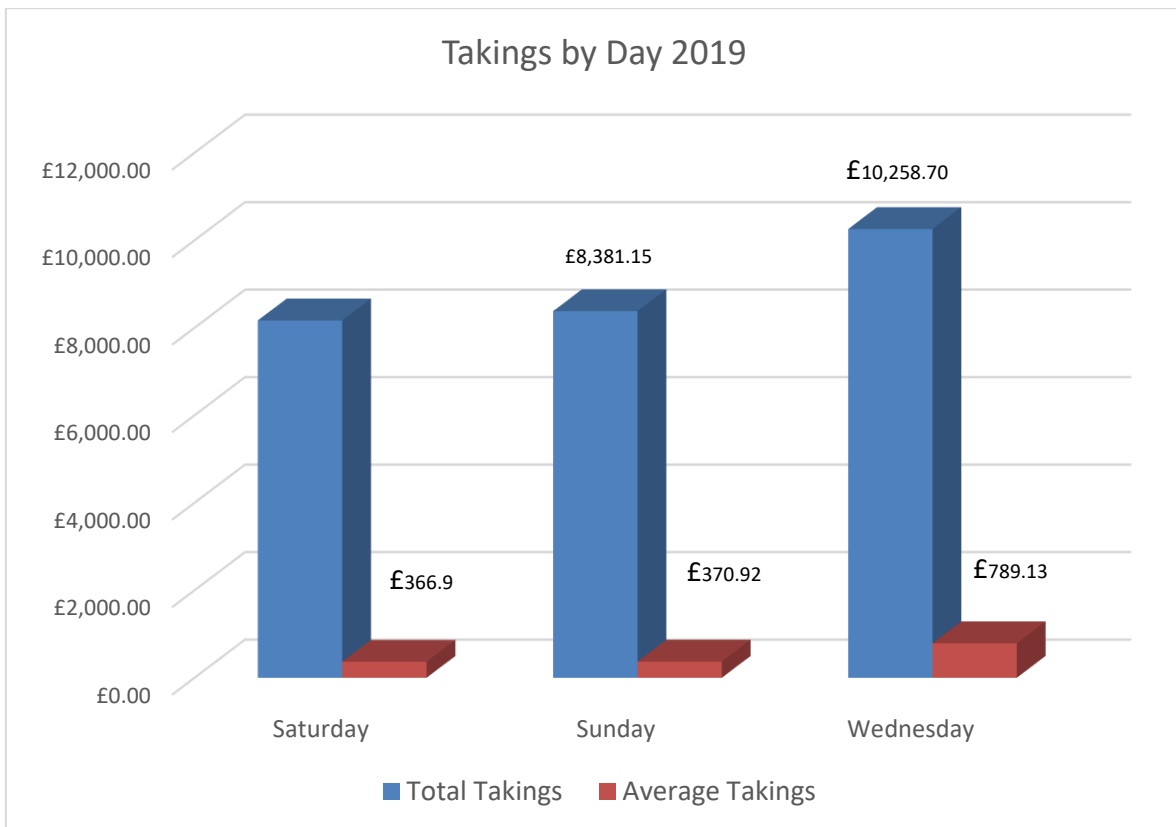
Tony Slack provided an update to the meeting. The Heritage Service Cumulative daily takings to the end of August are shown in the graph below. The total for 2019 after 65 days of operation is £31,478.40 compared with the 2018 figure, at the same number of days, of £30,596.90.



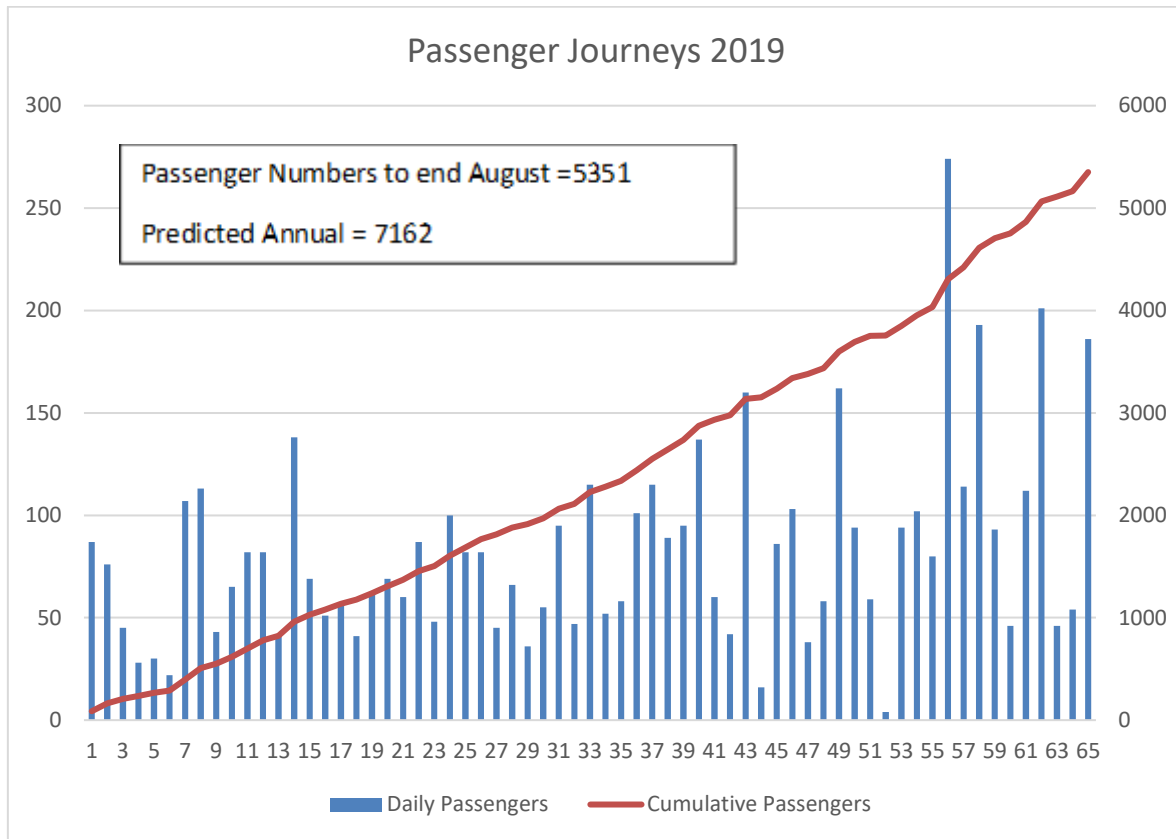
Monthly Gross takings are shown in the graph below



#### Daily Average Takings



#### Passenger Journeys to end August 2019



**18 Weardale Railway CIC Reports.**

There have been no Board meetings, however a Management meeting has been conducted. Key points not for publication were;

- No further progress of path at Bishop Auckland
- Cream teas not selling; planning for Sunday Lunch's next year
- Potential sales for storage shelved
- Recent break in at Wolsingham depot, criminals disturbed
- 400-ton new ballast ordered for Paradise
- Coach bogie swap project on course
- Trespass incident on bridge 30

Steve Raine gave an update on a confidential matter.

**19 Other reports from Trust Directors**

**19a Weekly Lottery/Fund Raising**

Mark Woodhams provided an update. A winner was announced, well done to Tony Slack.

**19b Educational Activities**

Talks:

- Diesel Railcar Association 5 Oct 19, JA Stanhope Station
- Elm Ridge Ladies Group, Darlington JA 16 Oct 19.
- South Hylton History & Heritage Group, Sunderland JA 21 Oct 19.
- Friendly Heritage Group Illustrative talk JA 23 Oct 19 BA Baptist church
- Visit to Weardale Railway by the Friendly Heritage Group 30 Oct 19
- Bishop Auckland Town Hall over 55s Group, Woodhouse Close Library JA 4 Dec 2019

Publications:

BTL 105 – deadline for reports 24 October.

**20 Any Other Business**

- AGM 2020 planning/ notification, Paul to complete and circulate
- Northumbria in Bloom outcome fed back, to apply again next year.
- BTL order, no extra needed for this quarter
- 2020 Timetable plans, feedback to Tony on his earlier suggestion via email
- Rebirth book reprint, to proceed, printers to produce in correct colours.
- Ticket books, revised format agreed

The meeting closed at 2240hrs

**21 Date of next meeting**

**Next WRT Council meeting: - Monday 2 December 2019 at 7:30PM at Witton-le-Wear Community Centre.**