

WEARDALE RAILWAY TRUST COUNCIL (WRT) MEETING

Minutes of the management committee meeting held at Witton-le-Wear Community centre, on Monday 5th August 2019.

The meeting started at 1930hrs

Those present

Kevin Richardson – Chairman
Peter Kearsley
Paul Wilson –Secretary
Tony Slack
Bob Dingle
Richard Maughan
Jean Clarke
Simon Adams
Mike Wood from 2025hrs

1 Apologies for absence

Steve Raine, Gerry Mudd, Mark Woodhams

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the 3rd June meeting were approved by the Directors with minor corrections.

Proposed: - Peter Kearsley

Seconded: - Bob Dingle

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

Nil

4 Identify any other business to be discussed in Item 22

Nil

5 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

There are no new conflicts of interest.

6 Chairman's Report

Following on from my recent email, Peter and Louise Baker are in the process of finalising the accounts up to the end of July, including the vat return, after which we will arrange the hand-over of the finance to Bob. I would like to extend the Trust's gratitude for the time, professionalism and diligence that Peter and Louise have committed to the role. Thanks also to Bob for agreeing to take on the responsibility as Finance Director.

Much of my own time lately has been spent on carrying out maintenance and repair work to the Class 122 bubble car. This has had the detrimental effect of keeping me away from progressing the work resulting from John Joyce's visit to help prepare the Class 108. One fault that we identified during John's visit was that there were numerous contact faults in the jumper cables which connect the 2 cars. Norman Clarke has stripped, cleaned and repaired the cables ready to re-install. As soon as time is available, we will re-fit them and give the unit another trial run to ascertain what further work is required.

We should be becoming increasingly concerned at the distinct lack of progress on the completion of the boiler repairs for Number 40. Prior to the inception of the heritage service, our main source of finance towards these repairs was a series of appeals to our members for funds, at which promises were made, together with a series of loans, which are still to be repaid. We need to plan a strategy to pressurise McEwen's into returning our completed boiler as soon as possible, then to have a plan which will ensure the rapid return to working order of this, our main asset.

Steve and Tony have made further progress, as WRCIC Directors, in working on the confidential matter that we have recently discussed. They will no doubt update us on this matter during this evening's meeting.

We have made some progress on the proposed platform at Kingfisher / Holebeck. A Trust volunteer has kindly agreed to project manage this proposal and is currently investigating the various ways and associated costs that might allow us to provide this new facility within budget.

You will all be aware of the successful application of a grant toward the installation of the path between Bishop Auckland West and the Network Rail platform at Bishop Auckland East. I have had further discussions with Evan Green-Hughes as to how best to progress this, with emphasis on ensuring that the financial aspect of the whole project is handled in a sensitive manner. I have further emphasised that we, as a Charitable Trust, cannot hand over cash, and will offer to directly pay for a selected part of the project up to our agreed contribution. We will also contribute by providing some of the labour, particularly in helping to clear the undergrowth from the work area.

I want to finish this report by thanking all our volunteers for their time and commitment over the recent weeks. The heritage service has made great demands on our operational volunteers, and it is encouraging to note that we have, so far, managed to crew every operational day, albeit due to some staff, once again, working extra days. The work being progressed by our non-operational volunteers is also showing excellent results. The floral displays at Stanhope are outstanding this year, thanks to a number of Trust volunteers. Another Trust volunteer has transformed Wolsingham Station cabin by repainting the exterior. He has been assisted at times by the Wednesday work group but has done the bulk of the work himself! The Wednesday work group and the Sunday gang have also been hard at it, clearing vegetation and helping maintain lines of sight. The warm, showery weather this year has resulted in an abundance of fresh overgrowth which is proving a real challenge to keep in check. Well done and thanks to all concerned!

Proposed: - Simon Adams

Seconded: - Bob Dingle

7 Treasurer's Report

Since 1st June, there has been little out of the ordinary in income or expenses. The shop has done remarkably well on many days and the renewals have kept coming in often with round up donations. The expenses have been related to the 108, the 122 and painting.

Trustees were advised at the end of July of Peter and Louise Baker's wish to hand over the Treasurer/ Financial Controller responsibility. Bob Dingle has had previous experience with managing finances and has kindly offered to pick up day to day management of Trust accounts. We agreed to explore options when it comes to preparation of the Trust Annual Return. Paul Wilson proposed Bob Dingle for the role which was unanimously supported by trustee's present.

Actions from this;

- Handover between Peter & Louise Baker/ Bob Dingle
- Bob Dingle to spend time with Peter Baker as time allows
- Authorised signatory status needs applying for by existing signatory with Barclays Bank.

A query was raised in relation to the payment for GPS from our treasurer. The Board discussed the GPS purchase and took note of the specialist nature of the device and its particular application to the safety of the railway. Having considered the purchasing policy previously determined, the Board determined to purchase the GPS from the supplier through the operations manager's company account.

There is still £19K to transfer into Trust accounts from profits from Heritage Services from 18/19. Loans for Trust assets 108, No.40 and Gerry Mudd's loan still to repay.

Highlighted a payment issue with the Sum up, with monies received having been paid into Trust accounts instead of Heritage Services. Action to review income and transfer ticket money back, with a plan to transfer the total amount at the end of 19/20.

The balances are healthy today:

Barclays	£38,883
DBS	£17,982
In hand	£636
Total	£57,501

Income £3219.59

Expenditure £3096.12

Proposed: Bob Dingle
Seconded: Tony Slack

8 Trust Shop

The shop had good sales of £1,373.49 within the reporting period; with £148.39 being spent on shop stock. Further spending was agreed of £189.66 during July via email by Kevin Richardson and Paul Wilson and shared in this meeting.

9 Secretary's Report

Our annual Companies House web filing for 18/19 has been completed in July. I had forwarded onto Trustees the latest Charities Commission newsletter 63. I am awaiting the password from Peter Baker for the charities commission to enable me to change correspondence details.

Emails to Info@ address have been busy, general enquires in relation to heritage, cream/ afternoon teas and special trains have been the main bulk of enquiry.

We've also had contact from the Friendly heritage group based from Bishop Auckland and linked to the Auckland Project. They are an elderly group and John Askwith has liaised to offer an illustrative talk and ride on train on Wednesday 30 Oct from Wolsingham to Stanhope.

We were contacted by a subcontractor from Morton's wanting to put together a local history bookazine about the NE. John Askwith agreed to assist to provide photos.

Out of the blue we have been contacted by a German holiday operator wanting high quality images to support their planned 8-day NE railways tour in June 2020. They've not asked whether we are running at this time or costs. <https://www.maertens-reisen.com/suche/reise/museumsbahnen-in-nordengland/>

The Victoria Inn @ Witton has been in touch asking about arranging a trip to the Victoria Inn, like the Gin & Beer trains. I asked Evan to get in touch for potential cost of train, unless we as a Trust want to run something on an evening from Bishop or Stanhope?

We were contacted by the Wear Rivers Trust about Japanese knotweed seen near Frosterley. I asked the Head of Operations if he could assist with supporting access over the line which he has done.

10 Data Protection Legislation

Peter Kearsley is working with the CIC to share the work we have done as a Trustees in support of GDPR and provided an update. Discussion around who is responsible for key volunteer and medical records. Identified that Dr Mike Wood, as Medical Practitioner should be the keeper of volunteer/ staff medical records and the CIC should only have the relevant certificate.

Dependants details shouldn't need to be kept, although acknowledged there are slight differences in policies. Trustees identified that Mike Wood and Peter Kearsley should be designated key holders for GDPR information held.

11 No 40 Report

Richard Maughan reported that he'd contacted McEwen's. Visit to be planned in near future, due to challenges in obtaining information from them. Concern about shifting time scales. Trust Secretary to write formal letter if no timescales/ progress can't be established.

12 Restoration Activities

None identified, volunteers currently stretched.

13 Projects

The provision of a platform at the Kingfisher site has moved forward. A meeting was held with the Kingfisher Management, the donor of the money, Steve Raine and Tony Slack. During the meeting potential sites were reviewed and a position trackside just west of milepost 9 was thought to be the most practical. A Trust volunteer has agreed to survey the site as soon as possible. They have also contacted a company for a budget quotation based on the design of Witton le Wear platform. This came in at a surprising £72,000. Alternatives are being sought and Polydeck have some interesting new options.

Trust 108 DMU is awaiting Kevin Richardson's availability. BIS has now been added. Volunteer Norman Clarke has been continuing overhaul of the jumper cables. Trustees discussed sourcing repairs privately given the 108 and currently 122 out of service.

To approach Head of Operations and Alistair Gregory regarding potential contacts to approach for skills in servicing 1st generation units.

Northumbria in bloom ceremony planned for 25 September at Gateshead.

Trust Sentinel plans now on hold due to more pressing demands.

Paul Wilson to contact Witton le Wear heritage group regarding permission to progress the notice board at the station.

14 Trust Promotion Drive

Mark Woodhams provided a written update, shared in his absence. Ken and June Wilson recently attended an event in Jubilee Park Spennymoor recently and they took one of our displays with them. Quite a few people did stop to have a look and hopefully this will lead to more visitors to the railway and hopefully some new volunteers.

The Trust appeared in the Northern Echo recently, apart from a few minor errors I think the article overall was very good. It was a great bit of publicity; however, one downside was that one of our volunteers has apparently become quite a celebrity in Ferryhill as he is frequently being stopped in the street and asked was that you in the paper? Mark will keep in touch with the journalist and have given him an open invitation to pop up and see us in operation on a heritage running day.

The Trust stand attended the Bishop Trains Event the other Saturday but due to the terrible wet weather there weren't many people about. I did bump into Sue Snowden in her official capacity of Lord Lieutenant. Also, The Bishop of Durham and his wife stopped to say hello. Both John Askwith and I had a lovely conversation with the Mayor of Bishop Auckland, Joy Allen and she is keen about our Railway. Looking at possibly organising a charity train for a group of people. I suggested she could consider our railway; we could organise an event around her having a return ride on the Bubble Car Charity Train.

John Askwith and I are booked in for Beamish event in September and as we need to be in costume John has sourced some Edwardian outfits from Head of Steam Museum. Should make some interesting photos.

15 Volunteer Liaison Officer's Report

Bob Dingle provided an update. As he has kindly agreed to take on the Treasurer role, Bob indicated that he was unable to carry out this role in addition. Simon Adams has indicated a willingness to take on this role from Bob. Trustees are appreciative of this.

Bob reported our recent volunteer promotion has led to 9 new people coming forward to volunteer in various roles. Discussed engagement with interested parties, Bob is keeping in touch. 3 are in training as crossing keepers; 2 completing PTS on Wednesday, looking to fill the vacancies at Broadwood currently. A further 2 are interested in gardening/ Sunday Gang.

Mike Wood reported the Sunday Gang has spent 6 days at Bishop Auckland West and between McNeil's and Harperley.

Wednesday group have been painting and cleaning at Wolsingham Station.

16 Membership Secretary's Report

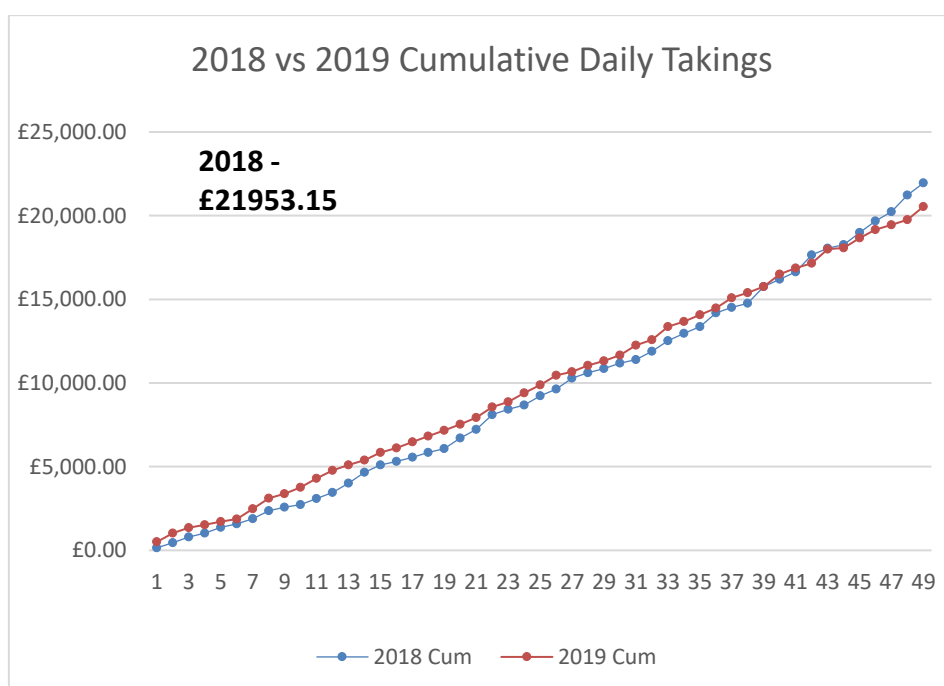
Jean Clarke provided an update. There are 441 members presently. 145 renewal reminders sent out, 93 renewed. 7 older memberships to email or telephone to check. 88 to go out with next BTL.

17 Heritage Services

Tony Slack provided an update to the meeting. The 2019 Heritage Service has recovered from the failure of the 122 Bubble Car in May and were operational by the weekend of the 8th and 9th June.

The Heritage Service Cumulative daily takings to the end of July are shown in the graph below. The total for 2019 after 49 days of operation is £20544.60 compared with the 2018 figure, at the same number of days, of £21953.15. This is disappointing and if continued will result in a less funds being available for transfer to the Trust next year. Similarly, passenger numbers are projected to be lower than last year, at circa 6000, which was already a decrease on the previous year.

We continue to receive group bookings with a number being repeat business from previous years. One such booking has recently been accepted from a local Primary School to repeat an Evacuation Day train. In August we have a visit from Kee Travel for the fourth consecutive year and two big one's next week with parties of 49 on a Sunday running day and 76 the following Wednesday, the latter followed by Cream Teas in the Mk II carriages. As these are both on running days the 122DMU has insufficient seating to accommodate either of these parties. As the availability of the Class 108 is uncertain provision of the Class 31 locomotives and Mk II stock has been agreed with the CIC. If this route is taken it will adversely affect the profitability of these bookings and further reduce the funds available for transfer to the Trust from this season.



The young volunteer TTI's have bedded in well and are now "flying solo". Recently, another new member expressed an interest in volunteering in a customer facing role and has undertaken initial training as a TTI. However, we continue to struggle to fulfil the operational roster in other areas, notably at Broadwood Crossing.

18 Weardale Railway CIC Reports.

There have been no Board meetings, however a Management meeting has been conducted. Key points were;

- Safety fencing erected at Bishop Auckland West
- Rising costs, a concern
- Afternoon tea trains are more popular than Cream teas, to explore alternatives
- 2019 upgrade plans, Bishop Auckland joint path part of this
- Scotch Isle West facing point in place and operational
- 08 shunter driver courses
- ERS

Tony Slack and Steve Raine discussed a confidential matter.

19 Other reports from Trust Directors

19a Weekly Lottery/Fund Raising

Mark Woodhams provided an update. No winners yet but a couple of people came close, one participant has ceased membership. May have a new idea, still in the planning stage and will share more at a later meeting.

19b Educational Activities

Talks:

Weardale Railway Illustrative talk JA 24 Sept 19 6pm The Four Clocks
Friendly Heritage Group Illustrative talk JA 23 Oct 19 BA Baptist church

Publications:

Nil

20 Any Other Business

Nil

The meeting closed at 2215hrs

21 Date of next meeting

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