

# Newsletter of the Bala & Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Trust



*Artists impression by Xavier Guerra*

A potential view of Llan Ffestiniog in the future, Exact look remains subject to change due to limitations of software available to produce this image.





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**W**elcome to our fifth newsletter This newsletter comes at a time of great

challenge for many of our members with 12 week enforced isolation for some and being furloughed from work for others. It has also resulted in some aspects of the Trusts work being delayed with other organisations having their resources and priorities diverted

towards dealing with Coronavirus plans and issues in their local teams.

We have been working away in the background and have identified several sites of importance to the project that merited further investigation into ownership. So far we have identified owners for two of those sites but not the third. We have opened contact with one of the site owners, namely those of the Llan Ffestiniog Station grounds and had some very positive discussions with them. More details of those discussions can be found in this newsletter.

On the last page of this newsletter you can see a chart outlining the position of our timber for a tenner appeal. Each sleeper represents £2,000 raised (and received) towards our general funds which will enable us to pay for any costs related to work carried out by the trust. Please do give generously to this appeal as it will also provide us with funds for any legal fees during discussions with Network Rail.

Please note this does not include funds already collected for other appeals or transferred from the old Society.

Happy reading.

Shane Barry  
Chairman (2020 - 2023)



## Network Rail

Due to Network Rail Concentrating on Coronavirus issues we have not had any further progress to report at this point in time. Once things settle down we hope to be able to report more in the future.

Network Rail have given an outline indication of where they envisage things going in terms of negotiation positions and the committee is discussing its views surrounding these. In time the committee will be approaching members to gain their input based on these discussions and what options the members would like the committee to pursue moving forward.

The members will be contacted about this once the committee is able to gain further information from Network Rail on receipt of Freedom of Information requests that have been submitted.

## Trust Headboard



I had hoped to show this headboard to the members at the AGM but unfortunately circumstances prevented that from happening. It is the hope that the Trust will be able to use the headboard for promotional opportunities in the future and any fundraising charter trains that the trust may arrange in the distant future.

# Llan Ffestiniog



Llan Ffestiniog Station site was in private ownership until the owner at the time passed away and the land was inherited by the current owners of the site. Part of the site remains in their ownership (namely the areas outlined in green above).



We have had a series of letters between ourselves and the current owners and the discussions in these have been very positive to date.

This culminated in a face to face meeting on the 28th July to walk the site and help outline in more detail both sides plans for the site and how we would hope to fit together.

This meeting has resulted in an agreement in principle for the Trust to carry out vegetation works on the site in order to assist both sides in helping to define clearly the boundaries of the site the Trust wishes to utilise and the current owners wish to retain.

The site at Llan Ffestiniog (subject to the current owners agreement) has the potential to enable us to recreate the station area itself (without goods and carriage sheds) with a view to becoming an additional focal point for members of the local community through the creation of cafe facilities on site.

This station is likely to become a key part of the line due to the ability to have a crossing point for trains at busy times as well as a significant local population of its own for volunteers and other support.



# Working Party Weekend 19/20 September

As a result of the meeting with the current owners of the Llan Ffestiniog Site we can now confirm that the plan is now to work on the vegetation on the site at Llan Ffestiniog with several aims which are outlined below.



We have highlighted the area which we will be concentrating on for the working party weekend in green on the diagram above. The area to the right of the green section is owned by a third party and is not a part of any plans for the Trust.

The area in green will be cleared of vegetation and have a general tidy up to make marking out boundaries for the long term lease agreement between the Trust and the current owners easier. It is also an opportunity for the trust to establish the conditions of the platforms and the cattle dock to ascertain how much restoration work will be necessary.

We will also be seeking to secure and save any artifacts, brickwork etc from the original station site with a view to potentially using it in the restoration if suitable.

Please note that there will be some areas within the area marked green we will not be able to work on due to previous arrangements being made by the land owners.

It is proposed that a total of 10 volunteers in addition to the Chairman and the Environmental Officer will be able to safely work on the site taking into account social distancing rules (assuming no changes between now and September).

We are now appealing to members to get involved and come along with us for the weekend.

We would like where possible for members to bring with them:

- Strimmers
- Pruners
- Rakes
- Shovels
- Any other suitable hand tools.

Please ensure any tools you bring are marked with your name or other identifying method to ensure they do not get lost!

If you would like any more information then please do not hesitate to get in contact with us.

If you wish to volunteer please get in touch with the Chairman via email, facebook or any other method you wish to use (no carrier pigeons available sorry!)

# Timber for a Tenner Appeal

The diagram to the right is the infographic that we will be using to illustrate the progress of our timber for a tenner appeal. Our Treasurer Steve Richards launched the appeal in the last few weeks and prior to launch we already have received several donations and regular donations to the appeal.

This appeal is quite important to the trust as it gives the trust sufficient general funds to meet its needs over the next 12 months including covering any legal fees and costs while negotiating a lease for the line with Network Rail and any other negotiations necessary.

The Trust needs to be in a position where when Network Rail says yes that they can within a very short space of time cover any invoices for legal fees (both Network Rails and the Trusts) to ensure minimal delays to any sign offs with the view of starting work on the track as soon as feasible after the confirmation of exchange of contracts.

As per any appeal any donation made to the appeal no matter how small or big is most welcome. Anyone wishing to make small regular donations is encouraged to do so, do not forget to fill in a gift aid form for your donation.

## FOI Requests

The trust currently is awaiting results of several FOI requests which have been delayed due to Coronavirus redeployments of staff by the councils involved.

One was to help us establish the circumstances surrounding ownership of Llan Ffestiniog Station. The information in this is no longer necessary having been established from other sources.

The second request is to Gwynedd Council for a document that the Trust has become aware of that centered around the restoration of the mothballed section of line between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Trawsfynydd Lake Halt.

We have other requests in with a few other organizations with a view to establishing ownership of another plot of land on the line which was initially identified as possibly being owned by the MOD but they have responded with a FOI request stating that they do not own this site. Inquiries are still ongoing to try and establish who does as NR have stated that they do not.

