

Newsletter of the Bala & Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Trust



Shane Barry



View of Maentwrog Road Goods Shed showing some of the work necessary to restore it.

Introduction



Shane Barry

Welcome to the first official newsletter of the Bala & Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Trust.

This newsletter follows hot on the heels of a well attended AGM on the 3rd February in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Out of 61 members of the Trust we had 14 members attend the AGM and 11 members cast their proxy votes prior to the AGM. We are deeply grateful for everyone who voted in person and by proxy vote as it enables us to ensure we are working on behalf of you our members.

The AGM and the subsequent discussions at the AGM have given us a strong indication of the wishes of our members and we as a committee promise to honor these wishes and do our best to implement them in a manner that benefits the line.

This newsletter outlines the outcomes of the resolutions and committee member votes at the AGM as well as giving an indication of votes for the Committee Members.

Please be aware that while the line is currently not operational it does remain the property of Network Rail and only personnel specifically authorised by Network Rail may enter any part of the Railway land

Bala & Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Trust

www: www.balaffest.org.uk

Network Rail

Web: www.networkrail.co.uk

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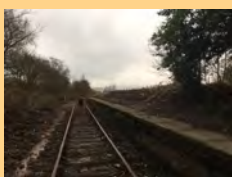
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Current Members: 60

Regular Donations: 1

(Regular donations is payments by DD or SO on a monthly or more frequent basis)



Mandy Grant



Thank you for all your support at the AGM. I think we must now all agree that while

it took a long time to get there the result is worthwhile.

Now to the really hard work.

Firstly converting the Society into a Charitable Company. As explained at the meeting this

may take a little time due to the need for more secure banking arrangements to be put in place, the formal appointment of the Trustee/Directors and finally the transfer of the membership to the Trust. Alongside this process application will be made to HMRC for registration under Small Charities Gift Aid Scheme. Applications generally take 3-6 months to process. We will of course keep you fully advised as to the progress of all these changes.

Secondly in respect of the Project I have a full page which is filled with questions which all need to be answered before we can develop detailed plans to proceed and most important of all these is understanding the views of all the potential Stakeholders in the Project ie. Councils, National Park, Magnox, Network Rail to name but a few. To achieve this Dan is preparing a document to be mailed to the Stakeholders explaining our intentions and asking for there views. The responses from these bodies will enable us to understand the existing level of support for the project and what areas we need to address to significantly improve that support and enable the project to proceed. It is hoped that we should have the first meaningful responses within the next couple of months and we will share the results with you once they are collated,

Thirdly we need to establish at an early date an outline plan for the Maentwrog Road facility which needs not only to be a physical plan but an indicative budget of the total costs that are expected to be incurred in developing and operating the site.

Lastly but of equal priority is obtaining a full understanding of all the potential Grant Aid available for this project and the level of cost likely to be incurred in obtaining the funding.

I cannot over emphasise the scale of these tasks and it is very likely that we will need to call on members for assistance to ensure we complete them by the earliest date.

Raymond Reed

(Chairman)

AGM Outcomes

This page details the outcome of the votes for and against the resolutions and committee Votes at the AGM including proxy votes..

Resolution A

Approval to change the name of the Society to: **Bala & Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Trust**

For: 25 Against €

Motion **Passed**

Resolution B

Adoption of the proposed Articles of Association Appendix C

For: 25 Against €

Motion **Passed**

Resolution C

Adoption of a vote of thanks for the contribution to the Project of the late Colin Dale.

For: 25 Against €

Motion **Passed**

Resolution D

Approval of a motion to transform the Society into a Member owned, Not for Profit, Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee using the Articles of Association proposed in Item 3.

For: 25 Against €

Motion **Passed**

Resolution E

Election of Committee Members for the Bala and Ffestiniog Railway Historical Trust.

Role	Name	For	Against	Elected / Not Elected
Chairman	Raymond Reed	25	0	Elected
Secretary	Daniel Newton	25	0	Elected
Treasurer	Steven Richards	25	0	Elected
Public Relations	Daniel Hornby	19	6	Elected
Project Development	Shane Barry	24	F	Elected
Environmental	Dale Williams	24	F	Elected
Safety	Robert Newton	25	0	Elected
Funding Procurement	Liz Humphries	24	F	Elected

Resolution F

Approval of a motion to allow the Society to join the Heritage Railway Association and other organisations in the furtherance of the project

For: 25 Against €

Motion **Passed**

AGM Minutes

The 2019 AGM of the Bala and Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Trust was held on the 3rd of February 2019 at Cell B in Blaenau Ffestiniog with 14 members present.

The meeting was opened by incumbent Secretary/Treasurer Rob Bradley who gave a brief talk on the history of the project and some detail as to the issues the society (as was at the time) suffered during the early part of 2018 before a steering committee was created to bring the project back on track. This was followed by the reports from the Chairman (Acting chairman Dan Hornby) and Secretary (Rob Bradley)

Chairman's Report:

To members past and present,

It is hard to believe that as I write this, that I have been involved with the project for five years. Talks with Network Rail, with Colin Dale and all the supporter through the years. The minute I saw this line I, along with many others, saw the potential for a heritage railway. We would not be unique in this idea but there is some unique potential given the area we are in. The neighbouring Ffestiniog Railway and nearby slate caverns all telling the stories of railways in Wales. Our would be the only Standard Gauge railway in this particular area, the Top Left Corner of Wales.

So, what has happened in those years?

Well, a company was formed, and permission granted for clearance work for the years of overgrowth to be cleared. The society was set up. Meetings took place to plan the future. However all the best laid plans could not prevent a decision by NR to withdraw those permissions for the clearance of the line. The history of the start of this railway has already been well documented over Facebook pages and at times in the press. This is part of our history not to dwell upon but to learn and develop from.

Over the last 14 months the group has been busy trying to develop a new forward thinking plan and that has included the co-opting of a new temporary committee. This committee has been working with myself and Rob Bradley to get to the stage we are at today. My thanks must go to Raymond Reed, Rob Bradley, Shane Barry and many others who have contributed to this new vision. Also my thanks must go to all the supporters, past, present and future for the support and trust to get this project back on track.

So what is next for the society?

Well, now comes more hard work. It will be evident that we may be some time before we are back on site, but the first tentative steps are being taken. We can not expect to be running trains in Months. It will be Years before that can happen. Inspiration from other railways here is key, our nearest Network Rail and Heritage Railway partnership is the Amlwch Central Railway (In Anglesey) They have faced many of the problems we have and will encounter.

Over the coming months talks with all relevant parties will take place to create a firm foundation to build upon. This may mean updates won't be daily or Weekly but as news is forthcoming, it will be distributed to members.

The planning and future of the railway will be discussed in much more detail by Raymond as the plans are longer than this speech.

So where do we stand at present?

Simply put, we have some funds available in the accounts, more on the accounts from Rob Bradley, and we have the determination and the team in place, subject to the formalities of electoral procedures, for societies and trusts.

This will be the year that hopefully sees the railway project start to come to life once more, and develop into more than just a dream.

We are fortunate that the vision of one man has helped spark the imagination and enthusiasm of many. He had his little quirks, but Colin Dale had a vision, for that we must be thankful, if nothing else, can we get this project running to honour the man who sparked it all and make him proud. For those who hadn't met him before his untimely passing, I will say this, you missed a great visionary and infectious man whose spirit will remain on this railway.

As I close this part of the meeting, well my speech, I look forward to being able to contribute to this project in the future. As for me being acting chairman, it has been an experience and again I convey my thanks to all in the continued support and ask that support continues and gets carried over to the new committee.

Thank you,
Dan Hornby

Secretaries Report:

By Rob Bradley

To begin, we need to draw a line under where we have been and move forward from the past, there is little point in going over what happened but we must learn from it.

My interest in the local railways started in the 1970s when I was about 13 and stayed locally and found out about the railways of the time and that the old platforms were still in situ along with an old GWR Pagoda shelter, this was before the rebuilding of Llan station for the nuclear traffic. My wife bought a house in Llan Ffestiniog and found the line as an overgrown sleeping beast before I found out about the plans to reopen the line by Colin in around about 2015, we were going to use Dan Hornby's house for a meeting but bad weather stopped it from happening.

We finally held a meeting at Traws Lake in 2016 where I met a few local people who were open to the idea of the railway being re-opened. The project really got going when Colin got a license to clear the track at Cwm Bowydd crossing in Blaenau Ffestiniog. A team started to clear the line each side of the crossing under the guidance of Colin's company but decided we needed another support mechanism, thus we held another meeting and the independent Trawsfynydd and Blaenau Railway Society was born to protect the membership should anything go wrong with the company's plans with some of the society members also being involved with the company. We had a treasurer from the January AGM until March 2017 when he left which left us with a very long process to get access to the account details. A new account was set up with new problems arising due to Paypal limits, since overcome.

Work on the clearance continued whilst this was going on with work moving on to the Station and Goods yard at Maentwrog Road with work heading in the direction of Trawsfynydd Lake Halt. It was on this section where some damage was caused by the use of a tractor that was too heavy for the line that saw Network Rail ordering a full desist order for working on the line. It was at this point that the troubles started to become public knowledge with the worst happening over Christmas 2017 and continuing on the Facebook group for the society over the following few months. During this time, and in early 2018, Dan and myself were working hard, were asking various members to help with a view to getting to project back up and running. As such we held a meeting held here at Cell B in April with those members being co-opted to the committee on a temporary basis to help Dan and I in our efforts. Since then we have held a number of online discussions as to the future of the project and have put a lot of work in to getting to the point we are at today. With your support we can fully investigate the possibilities with a new plan for the future being proposed here and in the coming months by a new committee. We re opened the membership just before Christmas 2018 and have, at the time of the AGM a total of 59 fully paid up members.

As part of his speech Rob began to talk about the society finances as he had been acting treasurer since the previous treasurer had left in March 2017.

Treasurer's Report

Rob went through the summary of the annual accounts going into detail about the discrepancies seen noting that when Colin Dale took over control of the Bank account he used some of the societies money on company business that was not repaid and that the crowdfunding project were not supported by the society (Class 08 and EMU) apart from one to buy a chipper for the project which Colin used to purchase a tractor mounted chipper and tractor going over the budget in the process.

A suggestion was made to include the balance of the account in future AGMs and this was agreed upon by the membership.

A short talk was given by Nominee for the Chairman's position Raymond Reed about the way forward including the plan of the new committee to be open with where the various processes are and to produce a regular newsletter with input from the membership as well as the committee.

There then followed the voting of the resolutions to be undertaken during the meeting, the results can be found on page 4 above and includes all votes (members present and proxy votes).

The Way Forward

Ray returned to the floor as Chairman to give his view of what the future of the project holds:

The first thing for the Committee is to effect all the resolutions you have approved today some aspects of these are quite complex and will take a little time to complete.

With regard to Project we have over the last few months reviewed all aspects of it in detail and it has become clear that we have no real understanding of the views of all the potential major stakeholders in the scheme eg. Local Authorities, National Park, Magnox, NR and other existing operators in the area. Winning the hearts and minds of these stakeholders will be crucial to the success of the Project. Therefore our first action will be to start to build relationships with each of the stakeholders. To advise them of our plans in respect of the Railway and seek their views and hopefully their support in taking the Project forward. Their feedback will then be used in development of the detailed project plan and business case, together with a feasibility & sustainability study. Alongside this we shall be investigating all the possible funding sources that could be available to the Railway. Only when these actions are complete will we be able to see the full potential of the Project.

We shall keep you the Members fully informed of progress by use of a regular Newsletter.

Any Other Business:

A question was asked about the plans to operate a VeloRail project on the line as talked about before 2010, this was seen to be of no major concern due to the originator of the plan having passed away 3 years previously.

Dale Williams put forwards a thanks to Rob for the hard work that he had put into the project over the last 14 months with a reminder that the committee will always accept advice from him should he be so kind as to offer it in future.

The meeting was closed by Rob at 16:30 .

Project Management Update

Project Development Manager Shane Barry



Firstly I am grateful for your valued support in confirming me for this role of Project Development Manager. Going forward the role is likely to be a busy one and involve co-ordinating the efforts of many people as well as liaising with various bodies with a view to getting the Trust to a stage where we can start working on the line again.

By its very necessity the initial few months of the role will be very much a paperwork driven exercise to ensure we are compliant with all the legal requirements for a Trust, a Charity as well as building up the mountain of paperwork required to ensure compliance with Network Rail and Heritage Railway

Current Progress

This is a list of the current paperwork and / or policies that are being worked on or have been completed since the last newsletter.

Safety Management System V0.1
Rule Book V0.1
Risk Management Matrix V0.1
Maentwrog Road Proposals

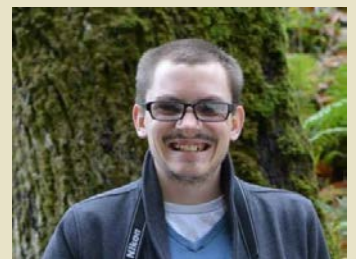
Railway rules and regulations in order to enable the trust to return to work on the line in order to achieve its ultimate goal.

Call for volunteers!

We are appealing for volunteers to help with any knowledge, experience or other assistance they can give us to help the Trust to produce the paperwork required to comply with its legal obligations and anticipated requirements from Network Rail and other stake holders.

Environmental Update

Environmental Manager Dale Williams



Firstly, I would like to say thank you for showing your trust in me to be Environmental Manager for the project going forwards. I know that this will not be an easy task, one which will take time and effort but the results when they start to arrive will prove your faith in me as I create a policy for the society to follow once we begin to get access to the line.

My work will be thorough and will aim to produce a policy statement that will be acceptable to the numerous bodies that we will have to communicate with over the coming months and years. With work I can create an environmental policy that will serve the society well both now and into the future.

Current Progress

Environmental Impact Statement

Facebook

New Facebook Group

As a part of the Society being disbanded and replaced by the new Trust the decision has been taken to retire the old Facebook groups and replace them with new groups to better reflect the forward looking nature of the new Trust. We strongly encourage all members and interested parties to join the relevant groups.

Links to 2 Facebook Groups

Public group (open to all to join):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BalaFfest>

Members only (please ensure you have your membership number ready to gain access):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/balaffestmembers/>

Signal Box Nameboard

At the end of the AGM we were pleased to show the members the Festiniog Station Signal Cabin name board that the society purchased at Auction before Christmas. The name board has returned to its home county and will be put on display in the locality for members, locals and visitors to see it as a tangible part of the history of the line which is part of what the aims of the trust are.



Unofficial bridge on the line!

Supporting B&FHRT

Becoming a Volunteer

We need YOU to help us achieve our aims and objectives, you have already taken the first step by becoming a member which means your subscription helps the railway financially. The next step is to consider becoming a volunteer. In the short term volunteering with the Trust is very much a paperwork exercise, literally!

We as a Trust are currently in the process of tackling the paperwork mountain designed to ensure that we have all the processes, procedures and oversight necessary to obtain permission from Network Rail to return to the line and work towards the day we are able to run trains on the section between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Trawsfynydd Lake Halt.

If you have any expertise or knowledge in any area we would love to hear, equally if you don't have any specific knowledge but are willing to assist, learn and develop we still want to hear from you!

With everyone's support we can make more progress and that day that we all want will come sooner rather than later.

Regular donations

Regular donations are very welcome to help us to build up funds over time to achieve our objectives of preserving the history of the line both the memories and any artifacts that we encounter. These funds will also be utilised to restore the line to a full operational status when we reach an agreement with Network Rail which enables us to do so.

HM Revenue and Customs's Gift Aid scheme allows the Trust to reclaim the tax on all donations made to them provided:

The donor is a full UK tax payer

They fill in the appropriate Gift Aid declaration either by printing and filling out a form (please request a copy from the Secretary)

Your Gift Aid declaration is valid until you inform the Trust you do not pay tax and may be used to reclaim Gift Aid on all gifts and subscriptions made, and may be even be used to claim tax on donations made up to four years before the date of the declaration. This means we receive an extra 25p for every pound you donate by recovering the Income Tax which you have already paid, at no extra cost to you, all you have to do is complete the Gift Aid declaration.



Shane Barry

One of the many spectacular views from the line.