

Newsletter of the Blaenau Ffestiniog & Trawsfynydd Railway Society



David Herbert

David Herbert



Introductions



Rob Bradley

Welcome to our second newsletter following on from the one released in April

Our previous newsletter covered the History of the Society up to date and we are now moving onto the present and the near future for this newsletter.

This Newsletter concentrates on both the makeup of the interim steering committee whose role is to prepare the Society for the forthcoming AGM and the proposed new image for the Society aspects of which are covered in this Newsletter and illustrated more fully on the new website. The Society Committee's current workload is extremely heavy and requires the creation of a small mountain of paperwork to enable all the options proposed to be presented to the members at the AGM.

These options have been developed to empower the Society Members and enable them to set the future direction of the Society following the AGM.

It should be remembered that the only elected members to the committee are Dan Hornby (Acting Chairman) and Rob Bradley (Secretary). They are being supported by the work of the members of the Interim Committee all of who will stand down at the AGM, those that wish to continue to be involved will then seek election at the AGM.

Please be aware that while the line is currently not operational it does remain the property of Network Rail and only personnel specifically authorized 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

Cover picture: David Ireland

Secretarys Report

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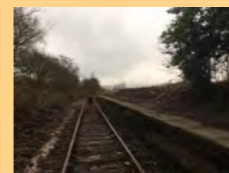
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Mandy Grant



Welcome to our second newsletter. We can only apologize for the delay which

was due to the enormous mountain of work that has been going on in the background which we will detail in this newsletter.

Many of you have been asking about a date for the AGM and we can now confirm that it will be held in Blaenau Ffestiniog on the

3rd February 2019 at 2pm. Formal AGM notices will be sent to the members in January

To reach the current stage we had to answer many questions and ensure that there was a lot of things in place to provide a sound basis for the society to move forward. We asked these questions and between us we decided that we needed help to ensure we got the best outcome possible for the society. As a result we pulled together a group of individuals who felt passionate about the project to form an interim steering committee.

This newsletter shows the fruits of their combined efforts, input, discussion and ultimately support for the society and the project as a whole. We could not have reached this stage without them. Dan Hornby and I would like to extend our thanks to them for their effort and professional guidance. We hope you will want them all to continue to work on your behalf in the proposed Railway Heritage Trust.

But we are also very conscious of gaps yet to be filled. So we encourage anyone who may have a skill to contribute to put themselves forward for election at the AGM. We've set out a nonexclusive view of some of the input that will be required. Surprise us with what you can offer! We are pleased to announce that with the publication of this newsletter.

It became clear at an early stage in discussions that a new image for the Society would be beneficial for its rebirth. We have considered this and propose that the name should be changed to the Bala & Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Trust. The Newsletter & Website have been formatted in the style of the proposed Bala & Ffestiniog Railway Heritage Trust so that you can get the full impression of the proposed public image for the future of the Society.

Current Members will receive the AGM notice by separate email. If you do not receive it and wish to attend or vote by proxy at the AGM, please check your membership status with Rob Bradley and either have it corrected, or renew your membership, as appropriate.

We thank all of our members for their support and encourage you to continue having an involvement in the Society/Trust moving forward. I also encourage you to contact us via the website if you are unsure about anything and we will do our best to clarify any questions / queries that are raised.

Dan Hornby

(Chairman)

Rob Bradley

(Secretary)

Planning the way forwards

With all the work that has been completed to date we are now comfortably at the stage where we turn to the members to formally elect the committee to take matters forward on a formal basis.

The Steering Committee believes that the initial focus needs to be directed towards obtaining agreement for long term access and operating arrangements. Historically this has taken preservation groups in excess of 5 years to reach this stage so it is clear that we are electing people with these timescales in mind.

Our situation is complicated by the line still being nominally in the "Operational Estate" any significant change will necessitate Network Rail consult with government and other stakeholders prior to any agreement being finalised. These negotiations will be very complex and it is not possible at this stage to determine the likely style of agreement that could be offered

The physical layout of the Railway and the tourist activity in surrounding areas dictate that it would be best to commence running in stages from the Trawsfynydd end. That avoids the level crossings in Blaenau and an interface with the Real Railway there until our operations are established. It also minimises any perceived traffic abstraction, and therefore opposition, from the Ffestiniog Railway and other attractions in Blaenau. An early step, therefore, is likely to be to try to make a start on obtaining a site for depot facilities at the southern end of the line. Maentwrog Road is one possibility.

On this basis it is anticipated that revenue from the public travelling on trains or visiting exhibitions and shops in the early stages of the project will be small. A detailed assessment of anticipated revenues and costs to validate the business case and funding requirement is therefore essential prior to signing a formal long term agreement for the branch or any part thereof.

Maximising income through grant funding is seen as essential and has been a fertile source of funding for other start up schemes. An initial review indicates the Trawsfynydd area as a promising prospect.

Purchase of the line outright is the preferred option to minimise future potential costs however it has been acknowledged long term leasing may be the owners option of choice. At minimum, it looks necessary to have rent free access to whichever location is chosen to develop as a depot site. (Maentwrog Road is obvious, but negotiations might push us towards something at the Trawsfynydd end. That's also on a more heavily used access route by road.) Actual location may well be dictated by local and statutory authority preferences.

New logo



Our new logo is based on the company seal of the original Bala & Ffestiniog Railway (right) whose name the proposed trust is based on. As a result of finding the original seal it was decided to update it and the excellent work by Chris Cornes can be seen here.

We are forever in his debt for the excellent work he has completed in converting the seal to our logo.



Membership, Bank Accounts & Website



One of the steering committees roles was to review the setup of the society and ensure it was compliant with relevant legislation and guidelines. As a result the steering committee came up with some recommendations around the membership system and bank accounts.

While this review was ongoing access to the membership system was restricted which had the unfortunate side effect of preventing members from joining or renewing. The steering committee came to the conclusion

that the existing system was not fit for purpose and did not comply with the GDPR requirements which went live in May this year. As a result a new system was proposed and this system is now live through the society website at <http://www.balaffest.org.uk>.

The new system enables members to login and view or amend their data which enables us to minimise the workload for the Membership Secretary. It is also linked directly to the Society bank account (for payments only). For the additional benefits that this system provides us does come with a small cost of 30pence per member per year.

As a part of these changes we have also undertaken the process to open a new bank account for the Society which will make us to be fully compliant with Charity Commission rules requiring two separate individuals to authorise all payments from a Trusts accounts. We have following an examination of the various options chosen Unity Bank as our banking providers who the committee felt were the best and most secure option for the Trust moving forward.

You can now access your membership data and renew etc by going to www.balaffest.org.uk. If you are having any difficulties with the website or membership system then please contact a member of the committee for assistance or preferably email membership@balaffest.org.uk



Whats in a name?

Strategy in Creating a Company

The objective of the steering committee is to put a structure in place which will ultimately enable the line to become operational again. As a part of this strategy it was agreed that the Trust needs the credibility of a company structure and charity status. As a part of this it was felt necessary to set up a new website which could then be used to showcase the history of the branch and the progress of the preservation project. The website has been established to demonstrate the style proposed for the future, give access to the membership system and display some of the history uncovered to date.

The website is at www.balaffest.org.uk.

Achieving charity status gives confidence to our members and other bodies that a formal structure is in place that can be held accountable through the Charities Commission law. It also enables the Trust to make best use of its members donations and through HMRC Gift Aid reclaim any tax paid on these donations giving up to 25% extra value to a members donation.

The Charity Commission heavily favours bodies with a historical and educational linkage and this fits in perfectly with the historical element of our Trust. As a result of this we will be researching the history of the Railway and its environs and making this available to both a local and national audience. The new name reflects both the narrative of history and education and the project to preserve this branch line.

The History People

An early activity that members can lead will be to undertake the research & collection of photos and artefacts. Displays will need to be prepared to bring this history to life. Physical displays to take to events in the local area and also data to load on to the Website and Facebook Pages will be required. That starts to fulfil the Charitable requirements. Once we have a depot and trains, those can be dovetailed into those efforts. A picture of a train is massively enhanced by a real train stood behind it! Even more so by having a train you can travel on and compare the pictures of and views from the line in history with what you can see from that train.

That is how we get the operating railway meshed into the history and education.

The Trust Company

As a part of our efforts and for the future, the formation of a company is seen as essential. As a result we have worked with professionals in the field of company formation and in consultation with Companies House and Charities Commission. The Articles attached as an Appendix are the result of those discussions and consultations.

The Articles define a Not for Profit (self explanatory) Limited By Guarantee Company where the ownership is defined by means of the membership list. Every member owns a share in the company but only for as long as they remain a member. So the members are In Charge. And the Company can't divert the members' money to any other purpose.

Because it is a Company Limited by Guarantee each Members liability in the event of failure of the Company is limited to £1.

The proposed changes to the existing structure of the Society to a Trust based company will require the approval of the members at AGM.

Proposed route to success

Listed below are the key elements for establishing the project operationally.

- Committee appointed at AGM on 3rd February
- Completion of administrative tasks such as Registering the Trust Company, joining the Heritage Railway Association, completing Charity Registration etc.
- Establish a full understanding of grant funding availability for the Project and prepare initial submissions.
- Commence contact and negotiation with NR
- Commence commercial activity, shops, historical research, exhibitions, etc
- Once NR has given clear guidance, commence liaison with affected statutory bodies, National Park, Welsh Assembly Government, Councils, Natural Resources Wales, Office of Rail Regulation etc.
- Complete, validate and review business case
- Complete financial negotiation with NR
- Submit Transport & Works Order application
- Planning Applications and Registrations with statutory bodies
- Commence line clearance and refurbishment, procure stock, construct depots and stations in stages
- Launch train services in stages

Clearly that is somewhat simplified and elements may well overlap, but it gives a flavor of the task ahead.

Steering Committee

Dan Hornby and I (Rob Bradley) are the only two people with any sort of claim to legitimacy from the Society. Even that claim is tenuous given the failure to ratify a constitution for the Society. It has been necessary to gather together both experts and protagonists from all sides to help Dan and I bring the Project to a point where it can be credibly launched afresh. For that reason these people have adopted the description of "steering committee" to try to emphasise the temporary nature of the effort. At the AGM, the members will be invited to elect a properly constituted committee to drive the Project forward on a formal basis.

But first, would like to thank personally all the people co-opted onto the steering committee for their effort, understanding and team ethic. It has been a great help in mapping the way forwards. In no particular order :

Chris York

Chris lives in Thailand. He is a retired Railway Infrastructure Engineering Professional with experience in Contract Writing and Negotiation as well as Rail Industry Commercial experience and Project Management. Video conferencing, telephone and text make him no more difficult to contact than someone just down the street and we have spent many hours discussing the project and the various ways we can move forward. He has been able to unpick the issues of last year and has communicated with Network Rail at a strategic level so knows exactly what is required to drive the project forwards.

Raymond Reed

Ray has a wealth of experience and is a retired Professional Civil Engineer, latterly Managing Director of one of the principle Rail On-Track Plant companies. He is also a volunteer on committees of other Railway Preservation groups and understands what is required to deliver a project. He has been excellent at guiding the team in creating a structure and project plan for the railway and much of what is proposed is down to his proposals that have provided much sanity to our thinking.

Liz Humphries

Liz is Feisty without being aggressive or derogatory, she provides excellent advice and grounding, living in Wales since 1960. Liz Says 'We lived by the defunct Oswestry/Llanfyllin and Oswestry/Llangynog lines, which is where I cultivated my interest in disused railways. We used to bring the kids up here to Barmouth for holidays too, so both the Bala lines were frequently scrutinised! An Eternal Optimist and compiler of random lines of enquiry, Liz wants to help the project on its journey.

Dale Williams

Dale attracted my attention during the last year, he is currently a volunteer at the Statfold Barn Railway, but has close family ties to our area and to the Ffestiniog family. Dale has an excellent understanding of Environmental Legislation, has Bat Certification and is looking forward to leading teams to undertake the necessary Surveys prior to restoration activity on the line. Dale is also a volunteer steward on the Ffestiniog Railway, a challenging job delivering service to the customers in the confined environment of the Ffr loading gauge!

Gary Brindle (now stepped back temporarily due to new self employed status)

Welsh speaking and resident in Penrhyndeudreth. Gary has countryside management college qualifications. He is a driver on the Welsh Highland Railway. Modest and unassuming. Gary has excellent credentials and he can use his experience in setting up train running systems for the railway. He's not easily phased by controversy or overenthusiasm, Gary is a common-sense voice at the committee table.

Steering Committee (Cont)

Richard Grimmett

Richard has long been the voice of reason for me. His experience in management and implementation make him ideal as he knows how to identify and overcome issues in delivering projects such as this. He has much experience in fund raising and society management and has offered his advice (gained from a long and varied working life) and assistance wherever it is needed, and once everything is in place he is happy to retire back to normal membership.

Jeff Smith

Jeff has a background in managing safety and legislative compliance. He is representative of the sort of reason visitors come to N Wales – outdoors, mountain biking etc. Having relocated and living in Blaenau, Jeff now works at Llechwedd.

Shane Barry

I first became aware of Shane during the tumultuous events of last year. Shane has challenged my views on what the railway should be and although initially highly critical of what went before, he now is a huge help in looking forwards. We've talked at considerable length and his heart is well and truly in the right place with sound ideas in tune with the new team. His work – full time 999 Ambulance Staff and similar first responder training - shows a respect and adherence for rules and a high degree of professionalism.

Matt Henchcliffe

I have known Matt now for two years having met at the start of the project on day 1 at Cwm Bowydd Road in August 2016. Matt has a background in the Rail Industry as a Train Driver and as such has a good understanding of Safety Systems and Railway Operations. He is also Chairman of the Green Lanes Association so understands how to develop the society and increase membership engagement. He has been heavily involved in helping me turn around the fortunes of the society and hopes to continue his involvement to ensure the project succeeds in the future.

Two others also deserve mention who have yet to be coerced onto the Steering Committee but have provided considerable valuable input. Huw Einion Jones is a Welsh speaking self employed engineer working on Garrat 130 and other duties at Dinas. He has a can do attitude and is a go to when things need doing locally. Local retiree Ian Dunsire is a volunteer signaller at Porthmadog, but has been invaluable in his other guise as a Partner in one of the major global accounting firms and Treasurer of a local wildlife group.



Committee Roles & Nominations

The AGM is the next step in the future of the Trust. We as a Trust need to elect people to a new committee who will undertake the tasks necessary in bringing the project to a point where we have something to do on the ground.

The Articles of Association of the Trust specify two formal roles only, to be filled by members of the committee electing them from amongst their number. The Chairman and Treasurer. Clearly, in electing people to the committee, members need to be aware of the skills needed to allow the committee to fill those roles.

Mainly, though, we need people with abilities appropriate to what needs doing. A few guides as to what those might be are listed in the second section. But we might find several people are needed for one group of skills, whilst one person actually spreads their effort across several groups of skills. That all depends on who steps forwards and on exactly what direction negotiations drive us in.

The committee is limited by the Articles to a maximum of 15 people, only 2 of whom may be co-opted between AGM's. There is, therefore, opportunity for people to step forward at a time appropriate for their skills and step back when that requirement is completed. It would be nice if people who think they could help with a particular stage of the process could make themselves known as soon as possible and join the committee at this AGM.

You have seen in the last section the people who have helped to date. Most of those will be standing for election. Why don't you join them! It's not about titles. In an age of social media and electronic communication there's relatively little need to attend far off meetings. It ought to be a very satisfying effort. With a prize, however far off, worth striving for.

So, please let Dan or myself know if you feel you have something to contribute, whether ad hoc off committee or as Committee members. Nominations for election to the committee should be with myself or Dan at least two weeks before the date of the AGM.



Formal Roles

Chairman Amongst those elected there should be someone with leadership skills able to keep an overview of progress, front the Trust in formal settings and act to resolve problems.

Treasurer In the early stages, book keeping skills are probably adequate here, but as activity ramps up, formal experience and/or qualifications in a relevant position are going to be needed.

Other skillsets & Capabilities

Press Liaison, Publicity, Internet and Social Media We need to be able to present a coherent media strategy ensuring that we can get the maximum publicity to help bring awareness of it across press, media and social media.

Co-ordinator / Project Manager This to ensure we co-ordinate activity across the Trust and avoid duplication of activity, and manage the order and timelines required to deliver the project to fruition.

Negotiation with Railway Industry Bodies people able to explore with Network Rail and other industry players how and under what contractual arrangements we would access the line

Business Case Development We need someone with skills in analysing the financial viability of the project and to prepare business cases once we know the contractual form of access to be granted

Historians A key plank of the Charity listing will be to develop understanding of the history of the line. Photos of the line's operation in period. Information about the people and goods it carried from where to where. Then to go on to disseminate that knowledge. Local exhibitions. Information on the website. Displays in Libraries..... etc

Fundraisers vital to the viability of the project is creating access to grant funding. As we leave the EU we are going to have to look for finance that will allow us to generate the money to restore the line following the model of many before us in this industry. We may even need to raise funds to buy the line.

Planning and Liaison with Government and Local Statutory Bodies We will certainly need to forge links to all Statutory bodies including Welsh Assembly Government, National Government, Local Authorities National Park and Local councils. This role may well develop into managing applications for Planning Consents etc.

Environmental A most important role in ensuring we act according to environmental law. Ensuring we have a light environmental footprint is vital to preserve habitats and wildlife as we restore the line to its operational state. This includes promoting the habitat and beauty of the local environment.

Safety A Safety management system will be required to ensure all activity is undertaken in accordance existing health, safety and railway legislation.

Local residents Liaison We need to ensure that the residents and landowners living adjacent to the railway are kept informed of developments and also feeding back their concerns to the committee.

Welsh Speakers We will need people to make our publicity and press briefings available in Welsh as well as being able to talk to people on the ground in their native tongue.

Railway Operations Skills From quite soon in the negotiations we will be faced with decisions about affordability. People will be needed who understand the costs involved and limitations inherent in operating and maintaining a single line railway. These professional skills will need to feed into the Business Case modelling.

Skills (Cont)

Business Planning Skills as soon as we have a view of the likely costs in accessing the line, building depots and operating trains etc, we will need skills to prepare a business case to demonstrate to Grant bodies and Funders that we can actually afford to do what we want to do.

Retailing Skills There is certain to be a demand for regalia from inside the Trust membership. The internet means we don't need a physical shop to sell things to the public. Where to source the goods? How to set up an on-line shop? Stuffing things in parcels.....

Catering Once we are on a site, we're sure to want a café..... And car parking.....

Site Operations Co-ordinators Probably some way down the time line. But we will at some stage need to ensure that what we say we are going to do is matched by actions on the ground.

You will know your skills and experience. Can that be dovetailed into anything that needs doing? Even to fulfil a part of one of the requirements above or of one we haven't listed above? Tell us and contribute to the success!

Colin Dale (Obituary)



In early July we all heard the sad news that Colin Dale, who lived in Colchester, had lost his battle with cancer in hospital in Essex at the age of 70.

Colin loved the Blaenau Ffestiniog area and strove to get the line between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Trawsfynydd Halt up and running over many years. He led the Trawsfynydd Railway Company Ltd in its' recent effort at that and brought the potential of the line to National attention.

The Trust would like to record a debt of gratitude for his efforts on behalf of us all and send our condolences to his family and friends.

A resolution of thanks will be presented at the AGM.

Rob Bradley
Trust Secretary

A Guide to Environmental Aspects of Re-Opening

by Dale Williams

As many of our heritage railways run through the countryside there are many environmental factors that have to be considered, more so when the lines are looking to extend or (as is our case) reopen. This article will deal with these important considerations and explain compliance is crucial to ensure the safety of the flora and fauna of the area.

To begin it would be best to give a brief background as to why we will have to follow the environmental policies as set out by the various Acts of Parliament covering the control of works in the countryside and environmentally sensitive areas. There are also specific rules for National Parks that are enforceable in the same manner as the Environmental Acts. If we attempt to move anything that is protected, then we, as a society and the senior committee members, will be liable for a substantial fine which can be up to £5000 per individual Animal or Plant moved, disturbed or killed/ destroyed. While this may seem a bit over the top to many people, the laws were brought in to protect our environment from destruction by unscrupulous people who wanted to make money without regard to the damage to the local environment. A situation that has occurred frequently in recent times.

The main concern in starting to rebuild the line will be to ensure that any endangered animals or plants are identified & protected in such a way that they are neither disturbed nor killed. This will require surveys of the track-bed and local environment, such as streams and local fields to determine the local flora and fauna and if any is endangered. These surveys are required to be executed by professionals employed by accredited organisations for which significant funding will be required. The reports produced will provide the basis for action plans to achieve compliance.

There are a number of structures on the line, under bridges, over bridges, the viaduct and the Goods shed at Maentwrog Road, these will not only require structural surveys to be carried out but also surveys to determine if there are bats making use of them as roosts, either summer roosts during the day or winter roosts where they hibernate due to lack of food. If these surveys show signs of bats or indeed other endangered species, it will be necessary to implement a mitigation plan to ensure their continued safety and wellbeing.

This may seem like a lot of work for a project to reopen as relatively short line in the top left corner of Wales, but it is, unfortunately, a legal requirement. due to several Acts that have been. These Acts, passed both centrally at Westminster and locally by the Welsh Assembly, provide for enforcement of strict guidelines that must be followed by anyone intending to do any work anywhere in the UK. That includes within towns as well as in the countryside as our native wildlife has adapted to survive there alongside us and will find any location to live where it can survive.

Finally, a brief description of what is meant by Endangered species. An endangered species is a plant, or animal that has been reduced in population, either by natural causes or the actions of humans to a critical level. These species require special measures to ensure their decline is halted. There are various levels to the endangered species on the list however all will require appropriate forms of protection/intervention to ensure they thrive for the future.

It is hoped you have found this introduction to environmental protection useful and can now grasp some of the complexity of the environmental obligations which will have to be dealt with prior to start works on site.

It is proposed that a more comprehensive article be included in a future newsletter once the results of the first surveys are known.