



Supporters Newsletter for the



Heritage Railway Trust.

December 2015

Welcome to the pre-Christmas newsletter for 2015, which will keep you up to date with the status of the line, and the work of the Trust.

With different stories of economic woe hitting the headlines nearly every day, it is difficult to work out just where any particular interest or project in any local community stands. It seems you get a rush of news and excitement, some pictures and reports in the media, then all goes quiet for months on end whilst we hear of more budget cuts. People are justified in thinking their 'pet project' is lying in the rubbish bin of someone's office somewhere, whilst in reality, there may be a lot going on behind the scenes. What we would like to do in this issue, is to keep the membership fully updated with the current position. The following article gives an account of what has happened in the public reopening of the line, and later we have an account of the Bramley Line's position within the likely course of events. There are a number of links in the following document for members receiving this by email; if any 'printed newsletter' readers would like to see this information, drop us a line with the detail you would like to see, and we'll post copy out to you. Before we get to the reports, the Duchess of Sutherland is seen here at March station, recently heading a special from Norwich to York in December 2015.



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Wisbech to Cambridge Railway Re-opening

Current investigations into the case for reopening the railway between March and Wisbech commenced in 2012. The report and appendices are available at the following link:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20006/travel_roads_and_parking/68/transport_funding_bids_and_studies/3

Following on from the initial work (detailed below), on 29 July 2015, we published an [Outline Business Case \(pdf, 22.61Mb\)](#) and a [GRIP 2 feasibility study \(pdf, 9.8Mb\)](#). These documents demonstrate a positive case for investment at this stage of scheme development.

For a preferred option of two trains an hour from Wisbech to Cambridge, the Outline Business Case and GRIP2 documents show a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.27 to 1, representing high value for money. When wider economic benefits are taken into account, the BCR could rise to around 4.41.

However, without additional work in the Ely area, it is unlikely that this service pattern could be achieved. A fallback option of one train an hour to Cambridge and one train an hour to March would be possible without further work at Ely. This option has a BCR of 1.37 to 1 (representing low value for money), rising to 3.37 to 1 when wider economic benefits are taken into account.

The figures quoted above assume a Town Centre Station; they increase slightly for a station south of the A47 due to the reduction in costs due to the removal of the cost of providing a bridge for the A47 over the railway. However, a town centre station would provide a greater level of wider economic benefits for Wisbech.

Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) is Network Rail's management and control process for delivering projects on the railway, and has eight stages. The GRIP 2 Feasibility stage has now been completed for the March to Wisbech reopening.

The GRIP 2 study looks at potential scheme costs in some detail. Including risk and optimism bias (a factor allowing for an inherent tendency for scheme costs to be underestimated at early stages of development), the cost of reopening the line between March and Wisbech is estimated to range between £70m and £111m. The costings from the GRIP 2 study informed the Outline Business Case.

The next stage of the project is for a GRIP 3 Option Selection study and the funding has now been identified for this. The following step is for a Full Business Case for the scheme to be developed for re-opening in Control Period 6 (2019-2024) or 7 (2024-2029).

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Appendices for the GRIP 2 feasibility study

- [Appendix B - Cost estimate detail \(pdf, 77Kb\)](#)
- [Appendix D - Network Rail GIS extracts \(pdf, 1.65Mb\)](#)
- [Appendix E - March station option 1 \(pdf, 600Kb\)](#)
- [Appendix E - March station option 2 \(pdf, 690Kb\)](#)
- [Appendix E - March station option 3 \(pdf, 719Kb\)](#)
- [Appendix E - March station option 4 \(pdf, 627Kb\)](#)
- [Appendix E - Wisbech station town centre vA \(pdf, 591Kb\)](#)
- [Appendix E - Wisbech station town centre vB \(pdf, 601Kb\)](#)
- [Appendix E - Wisbech station south of A47 vA \(pdf, 438Kb\)](#)
- [Appendix E - Wisbech station south of A47 vB \(pdf, 438Kb\)](#)

Linked to these developments is the awarding of the ten year franchise for the line that runs through Whittlesea, March and Ely. For the first time the Government has set out in the official 'Invitation to Tender' document a requirement that the successful bidder fully supports the re-opening and in meetings all three shortlisted bidders have expressed their enthusiasm for the project.

Previous studies

A 3 stage study was carried out previously.

- [Stage 1 \(pdf, 505Kb\)](#) investigated the potential patronage and revenue generated by rail services between March and Wisbech.
- [Stage 2 \(pdf, 1.34Mb\)](#) considered the capital costs of reinstating the line and providing new stations and an outline assessment of the key benefits.
- [Stage 3 \(pdf, 2.5Mb\)](#) looked into the wider economic benefits that a station would bring to Wisbech and the surrounding area.

Before the three stage study was carried out the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) published the report [Connecting Communities Expanding Access to the Rail Network \(pdf, 1.31Mb\)](#), which investigated the potential of reopening the March to Wisbech rail line along with a number of other potential re-openings.

A key point to note is that despite the positive economic case for the scheme, the Outline Business Case still shows an overall subsidy requirement of around £50M over the 60 year appraisal period. In early years the scheme shows a profit - however, due to assumptions on fuel costs for car traffic set in government guidance, income later in the assessment period is restrained while costs continue to rise with inflation. While from a transport planning perspective this instinctively feels wrong and has no feedback for congestion effects on the road network, it is likely to be an issue for the Department for Transport and for train operators. More work will be needed in this area, and to maintain the focus on the significant wider economic benefits for Wisbech.

End of Report.

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BACK ON TRACK

Working with the Friends of March Railway Station.

You may recall from the last newsletter that to celebrate the 130th anniversary of March railway station, the Friends group held an open day which was supported by several organisations including Fenland District Council and the Bramley Line Trust. The photo below shows some of the displays on Platform 2, and also both Trust and Friends members engaging with interested members of the public.



A number of Trust members also gave assistance to the Friends more recently moving some lengths of rail in the station bays previously used by the Wisbech line. It certainly got several people warmed up on a cold day.

The following pages give a recently submitted report on the Bramley Line Heritage Railway proposal, written by Sue Dockett, to the Wisbech 20/20 Vision initiative.

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INTRODUCTION

The 'Wisbech beyond 20/20' vision consultation stresses the importance of the town's heritage to future growth. The story of the railways in Wisbech over more than 150 years from the middle of the 19th century is intrinsically linked with the story of Wisbech and surrounding area. When the vision is realised it will again be part of the area's future.

The 'Wisbech beyond 20/20' Vision includes a proposal for a heritage trail beginning at the new railway station. A Heritage Railway Centre would provide the ideal starting point. The Trust ambition for a Heritage Rail Centre in Wisbech should be an integral part of achieving the vision for the town.

The Trust very much welcomes this opportunity to put forward an outline proposal for the inclusion of a Heritage Railway Centre close to the new Wisbech Station as part of the Wisbech to Cambridge Rail Link initiative.

Background

The local railway heritage has a special connection to Wisbech's development. The unique breadth of that heritage, added to the general popularity of railways, means that a Heritage Railway Centre would provide substantial economic and social benefits through an entertaining and stimulating year round tourist and local visitor attraction, as well as providing the opportunity for people of all ages to develop highly valued and very marketable skills.

RAILWAY HERITAGE IN WISBECH

Wisbech has a unique railway heritage of local, regional, national and even international significance. It is a fascinating history of which very little is visible today. However artefacts, photographs, videos, personal testimony and other memorabilia still exist to bring that heritage alive.

Wisbech also has a special connection to the internationally famous Reverend W. Awdry and his railway stories in particular, which he began when he was Vicar of Emneth. The church has a stained glass window depicting Thomas, and the old rectory where Awdry lived received a Blue Plaque in 2011. Five hundred visitors were present for the unveiling. The Tramway between Wisbech and Upwell was unique as the only standard gauge roadside tramway in mainland Britain and the first solely diesel operated British Rail line. This was the inspiration for many of the Reverend Awdry's railway stories, in particular Toby the Tram engine and the Henrietta coach. Local railway employees were also immortalised by Awdry. Thomas and Friends have become an international, multi million pound phenomenon familiar to children, parents and grandparents alike all over the world.

BRAMLEY LINE HERITAGE RAILWAY TRUST AND LIMITED COMPANY

The Heritage Railway Trust was formed in March 2010. In May 2010 the Trust was admitted to the Heritage Railway Association (HRA) as an embryo heritage railway. The HRA also covers heritage railway centres and museums. The Trust will remain a member of the HRA and so will continue to enjoy its benefits. The operational side of the Trust's activities would come under the Bramley Line Limited Company which is wholly owned by the Trust.

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The Trust management team and many volunteers have extensive transport heritage, network railway and allied engineering experience. Additionally the Trust has a good working relationship with the College of West Anglia, the Wisbech and Fenland Museum, the Friends of March Railway Station, March & District Model Railway Club, the Great Eastern Railway Society and a number of heritage railways and railway museums in East Anglia.

ARTEFACTS AND ROLLING STOCK

Heritage rolling stock and other artefacts are already held by the Company and its members; however the lack of a physical centre is preventing the Trust from developing further. Once the centre is up and running there will be the opportunity to add to the collection and borrow suitable rolling stock and artifacts from other centres as well as take in donations.

At present the Trust has one Victorian four wheeled brake coach body in the process of restoration and the offer of two GER coach bodies. Numerous photographs, videos, personal testimony and small artefacts, models and other memorabilia are also in the possession of members. The lack of facilities at present has forced the Trust to reject offers of loans or hire of heritage railway rolling stock. The East Anglian Railway Museum is very keen to see their replica Toby the Tram Engine and Henrietta coach on display in Wisbech. The North Norfolk Railway has the restored and only surviving coach from the tramway while at Skipton is the only surviving 04 diesel Wisbech tram locomotive. Both of these could be brought to Wisbech once the facilities are available.

The good working relationship with other heritage railway centres provides the opportunity for frequent temporary additions to the displays as well as some long term loan arrangements for rolling stock, artefacts and other memorabilia consistent with the local railway heritage.

SKILLS AND LEARNING POTENTIAL

A core part of the vision for a heritage railway centre is the creation of facilities which will enable the Trust to acquire historic railway rolling stock and other artefacts for restoration. This will create opportunities for volunteering in heritage restoration and developing highly valued and transferable restoration skills.

The Heritage Skills Initiative, which started in the North East, provides an example of how heritage attractions can provide formal learning to acquire specific heritage skills. All the heritage railways and museums in the North East have taken part in this lottery funded training programme providing apprenticeships to young people to learn the specific skills needed in industrial heritage preservation.

It has long been an aspiration of the Trust to develop the link with the College of West Anglia to develop and provide on-site practical experience of heritage restoration that can enable people to acquire specific heritage restoration skills which are increasingly in demand.

VISITOR POTENTIAL

In 2008, according to the English Tourism Board, 38% of visitors to UK heritage sites were from outside of the locality and more than 44 million visits were made to heritage sites. In 2008/09 one in five adults visited a place connected with industrial heritage. Research indicates that a well marketed industrial heritage facility would bring significant economic and social benefits to

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Wisbech, which experiences the highest level of social deprivation in Fenland. It could attract between 50,000 and 100,000 visitors, providing both a tourist attraction and leisure facility for local people as well as directly and indirectly supporting jobs. A rail heritage centre in Wisbech would substantially increase existing visitor numbers, benefiting from its proximity to the attractions of West Norfolk, Ely and Cambridge as well as providing extra revenue for the re-opened line.

According to the Heritage Railway Association during 2010, heritage railways, tramways and museums attracted 6.8 million visitors. "Railway preservation is no longer a movement of dedicated railway enthusiasts; it is a big and growing industry and a key factor in tourism programmes in many areas."(HRA 2010). The Facebook page for heritage railways has over 112,000 likes and the Mid Norfolk Railway Twitter account has over 4,400 followers.

The overall tourism figures for the area within the scope of a day or short visit to the Bramley Line are very substantial. Around 6 million people visit Kings Lynn and West Norfolk each year (about 700,000 staying visitors) with Sandringham, Hunstanton and Kings Lynn being significant venues. The City of Ely alone attracts over a million visitors per year. The County of Cambridgeshire attracts 20 million visitors per year, 2.8 million of these being staying visitors. Fenland itself attracts 2.5million visitors per year of which about 285,000 are staying visitors.

Major tourist attractions such as Sandringham, Oxborough Hall and Ely Cathedral are well within the key 45 minutes travel time making joint visits within a single day trip possible. The re-opening of the rail link would bring Cambridge within this 45 minute travel time. Visitors to the Wisbech Rose Fair in the summer travel from as far away as Kent and Yorkshire. The Trust also supports an annex museum facility at March station in conjunction with the Friends of March Railway Station and the March & District Model Railway Club.

HERITAGE CENTRE FACILITIES

A Heritage Centre would complement the 'Wisbech beyond 2020' vision by improving the existing heritage and skills and learning offer in Wisbech. Other Heritage Railway Centres, Didcot for example, operate from old facilities alongside existing mainline railway infrastructure. Through its restoration work the Centre will also provide opportunities for informal and formal heritage restoration skills learning, including helping to provide apprenticeships. The Trust would apply for museum accreditation to enable the heritage centre to borrow exhibits from other heritage railway centres and museums, including the National Railway Museum in York.

A Heritage Railway Centre is not a static museum. It is intended to provide a mix of educational and entertaining experiences. The core of the visitor offer will be the heritage rolling stock with both permanent and short term visitor exhibits. Touch screen audio visual presentations of videos, personal audio testimony and still photographs will tell the story of our railway heritage. Other static exhibits such as models and other memorabilia with Great Eastern Railway items and photos would be displayed in cases. There will be changing exhibits of photographs from the vast collection of local photography, railway posters, archive material such as plans and maps and model exhibitions of the local railway network to bring it all alive, as well as the opportunity to see the restoration of railway vehicles and other artefacts taking place.

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The Trust would also like to see at least some limited facilities for providing train rides and excursions on the re-opened line. There are also opportunities for a variety of different events which will attract visitors throughout the year. These could include themed weekends (including an annual Reverend Awdry event linked to Heritage Open Days in September), footplate and driver experiences, charter rail excursions and miniature and standard gauge rides and steam and diesel galas with visiting locomotives.

REQUIREMENTS

- A covered centre for the restoration and display of heritage rolling stock, a shop, a small catering facility and an exhibition area
- Two tracks connected to the mainline and a separate concrete roadway to enable heritage rail excursions to and from Wisbech and allow visiting rolling stock access via rail or road
- An outside area with a connected short external length of track for a diesel shunter and to enable displays of visiting locomotives and rolling stock and a miniature railway
- A service pit to enable the steaming of steam locomotives
- The use of the track between Weasenham Lane and the A47 for heritage train operation if the south side of the A47 is chosen for the new station. **End of Report.**



Trust members have been out and about again this year keeping people informed on the opportunities for both the line, and the Trust's aspirations and activities.

One of the display stands is seen here at the National Festival of Railway Modelling at Peterborough showground again this year.

All that remains now is to wish One and All and very Happy Christmas, and to thank all members for their continued support during 2015. We are looking forward to 2016 in what may turn out to be a very interesting year for the future of Heritage Railway interests in the Wisbech area.

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