



December 2010

NEWS LETTER

HLF NEWS

Good News: The public announcement of the successful award of the Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £165,000 to the RPSI was made on the morning of Saturday 20th November.

The Society's 2020 Committee (and indeed its various forerunners) has been working hard to provide a future for the RPSI which includes a re-focus on its activities as well as considerable capital investment in Whitehead and in the Republic of Ireland. The Committee outlined its proposals to a number of the Society's working members at a conference earlier this year. The application for funding to HLF was based on the entirety of the proposals at that meeting.

The HLF award of Stage 1 funding is to provide the detailed business case, architectural plans and costings that are necessary before award of the Stage 2 funding of £1.8m can be made. The Stage 2 application will take many months and much hard work from the Committee and many other Council members and sub-committees. All of the £165,000 will be spent on the employment of professional people to produce the reports. It is unlikely that HLF would have given the money if they didn't intend to award the £1.8m. However, that doesn't mean we can take it for granted. There are still hoops to jump through!

Even if the £1.8m is awarded it will be insufficient on its own to meet the approximate £5m proposals for Whitehead and (potentially) Dundalk. Whilst proceeding with HLF Stage 2 the 2020 Committee will be also applying for funding from SEUPB, HLF, BF, Heritage Ireland, Dundalk and Carrickfergus Councils, and a number of other potential funders. Time scales are still not finalised but it could be 3 or 4 years before we will see completed facilities.

To attract HLF funding, and indeed the other funders, it has already been made clear that the Society will need to change substantially in its Corporate Governance. The setting up of separate social enterprise (SEP) not-for-profit businesses is part and parcel of the applications.

A major task will be to ensure the opportunities for Society volunteers are maintained and yet at the same time move to a more business-orientated approach to gain the increased revenue to support Society activities over the next 50 years. Without the grants and associated businesses there could be a very limited future!

As you can see the HLF grant is only one strand of a highly interlinked package of funders. All are needed for success. The recent news is fantastic and augers well for the next steps, but the Council will face many challenges in the next 12 months.

Congratulations to all who have done so

much to make it all happen. In particular sincere thanks to Helen Keys, the RPSI's consultant for the HLF application. Her input is what has secured this grant and under her continued guidance there is every confidence that there is much more good news to follow.

In all, the HLF grant is a superb Christmas present for the RPSI.

Behind The Scenes: The 2020 Committee, under the current Chairmanship of Denis Grimshaw, has been hard at work over the last few years considering the major issues likely to affect the future of the Society. Two readily identified areas were retention of heritage skills and finance, both essential to continue to develop our operations as successfully as has been done in nearly five decades.

In particular, the Committee has produced a plan for the development of Whitehead which the Council have approved. Provided funding can be obtained, this plan will see provision of: a new station building, signal box, turntable, additional carriage accommodation (including a workshop), additional locomotive workshop space, purpose-built volunteer/staff and visitor facilities and stores buildings. Target date for overall completion is dependent on funding, but could be between 2013 and 2015 if all goes well.

The new station has already attracted funding and we are currently advertising for a Project Manager to oversee the works and manage the whole project, which also includes security fencing and considerable repair of neighbouring roads and platform surfaces.

The Council is also following 2020 Sub-Committee guidance in reviewing our provision in the Republic of Ireland. Changes to Inchicore, due to the proposed DART underground developments, will probably mean the Society seeking alternative premises in the Dublin area. Additionally, the Council is looking at potential development of a storage site in the

Dundalk area. Negotiations over the Dublin and Dundalk sites continue with IE.

The 'plan' is in fact composed of a number of separate projects which, in order to avail of the valuable assistance of many outside business organisations, and secure finance in the form of grants, may require some changes in the manner in which the Society is governed. The Council has established a sub-committee to review these governance issues and report back detailing any changes thought to be necessary, and how they may be brought about.

As part of the procedures being taken to seek funding a high level meeting of potential funders and supporters of our project took place in government offices at Stormont on Friday 29th October. The meeting was chaired and sponsored by the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI) and included senior representatives of Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Special EU Projects Board, Heritage Lottery Fund, NI Railways, Translink, DTI, Carrickfergus Council, SEP/Invest NI. In total five Chief Executives were present!

John Lockett and Helen Keys of the RPSI made a 30 minute presentation on the RPSI's proposals. Whilst the present shortage of government funds was of course debated, the general mood of the meeting was positive and supportive of our proposals. In particular praise was given to the plans, the business case and our proposals for two new 'not for profit' engineering and events companies.

Now that the HLF Stage 1 application has been successful it will fund further detailed planning of the project by architects, quantity surveyors and other professional services, in order to prepare the final submission for a full grant. Meanwhile, the 2020 Committee continues to move all aspects of the project forward.

We end this progress report with an appeal! Much of this work has been

accomplished to date by fewer than a dozen people! These are exciting times, so if any member can assist, especially in the Republic of Ireland jurisdiction, by dint of professional knowledge and/or skills, please consider offering to help in some way. Yes, it involves meetings and discussion ... but this is how all of us can ensure that the RPSI, already close to celebrating 50 years of achievement, will be 'fit for purpose' for the next 50 years.

If you can help, please contact Denis Grimshaw or John Lockett at the address below or:

rpsitrains@hotmail.com

TRAINS & EVENTS

Country Comes To Town: No.4 was in fine fettle on Saturday 18th September as the incessant rain did nothing to quell the eagerness of Lisburn, Lurgan and Portadown travellers to sample the delights of steam.

Apart from the weather, everything went well to plan, with three return trips from Lisburn to Portadown for the country festival there.

Charter: Over 200 delegates attending a "Computers In Cardiology" seminar in Belfast took time out to sample the delights of steam travel on Monday 27th September.

No.4 hauled the packed train from Belfast Central to Bangor, where the locomotive ran round before returning to Cultra to set down the passengers for a visit to the Folk & Transport Museum.

Schools Day: Two classes of 4 to 5 year old children from Whitehead Primary School visited on Thursday 30th September, one at 10:30 and the second at 11:15.

Each group of 31 children, accompanied by teachers and helpers, was given a short introduction to Whitehead Excursion Station and shown over No.3BG "Guinness" prior to having a train ride. A visit to the shop followed with great amusement to the

children.

Best Of Both: On Sunday 3rd October, the train for the day was Irish Rail GM 073 and 6 carriages of the heritage set, on a tour that took in both Arklow and Mullingar. The weather was generally kind, but the number of passengers was somewhat short of expectations.

On arrival at Mullingar a planned shunt saw the refurbished Cravens bar car 1514 shunted onto the front of the train for the return to Dublin Connolly. Unfortunately, a brake defect was discovered on this coach and it had to be detached and returned to the Galway line platform for attention at a later date. A pity really as a splendid job has been done on the coach, but hopefully it will be fit to travel shortly.

One light moment - two American tourists boarded the special train at Connolly thinking it was destined for Howth - the information screen could have been interpreted that way by the unaccustomed. Their error was quickly discovered and they were set down at Ashtown to backtrack to Connolly. They seemed to enjoy the brief experience.

One highlight was the traversal of Connolly - Newcomen Junction - a first for many on board, and a now very hard section to get a run on, particularly by a locomotive hauled train. Sincere thanks to IE for permitting this.

The bar did a roaring trade throughout the day and the four piece band played non-stop.

Broomstick Belle: On a bright Halloween morning 222 passengers enjoyed the first train of the day to Whitehead. Once there, they made good use of the fine weather and left the train to enjoy watching the locomotive being serviced, pay a visit to the shop or just enjoy the sunshine with a cup of tea or coffee.

During the layover it was decided to add another carriage to the train (because of a last-minute demand for tickets). So it was everybody out to watch as the shunting took place. A slightly late

departure required some very fine work by the footplate crew, but it resulted in an on-time arrival at Central.

The highlight of the train was the family who all came dressed as clowns - even the month old baby.

At 2:15pm a very full train left Central with 263 passengers - much to the surprise of the Passenger Services Team. It was another good run down during which all the kids got a spooky bag containing spiders (all shapes and sizes) worms and a lot of other small seasonal creepy-crawlies.

There were quite a few new passengers and a fair number from far-flung places - Dublin, Cavan and Mullingar to name a few.

Autumn Leaves: Sunday 14th November was a still cold day that was interspersed with patches of fog and brilliant sunshine.

No.4 departed Belfast Central on time with Driver Glass at the regulator - he took the train through to Dublin. Arrival at Lisburn was on time but departure was delayed by 13 minutes due to poor water pressure from the Platform 1 water column. Time was largely made up and with a sizeable crowd boarding at Portadown the four carriage train was comfortably full. Good running saw an early arrival in Dundalk and after taking water and drawing the coal forward the train set off comfortably early. The schedule was maintained and all were delighted as we glided through a deserted Drogheda without stopping. Fine running continued and the train passed Howth Junction ahead of a DART (yet to appear) to arrive 10 minutes early at Dublin Connolly platform 5. All detrained into glorious Dublin sunshine.

Although No.186 with driver Playfair in the seat was on the train at Platform 1 in good time, departure was, for reasons unknown, delayed 5 minutes to 16:15. Running was good but some time was lost with a severe speed restriction at Laytown. Consequently, arrival in Drogheda for water was a few

minutes down. The tank was promptly filled but a technical issue caused a few minutes delay. The locomotive was steaming excellently and made a storming assent of Kellystown Bank. Having earlier determined that nobody wished to detrain at Dundalk that stop was omitted and the train glided through its misty surrounds. The Wellington Bank climb was taken steadily and as Newry was passed the train was around 8 minutes down on time. Onward running to Portadown was purposeful. Unfortunately, it seemed to take for ever from the approaches to Lurgan to pass its gates; with consequential time loss. Water was taken quickly at Lisburn. Arrival in Central was just over 10 minutes down. Despite the delays it was a very good effort by the crew with what is a small goods locomotive. All detrained quickly and by just past 20:00 the train departed into a ghostly fog for Whitehead.

It was an excellent day out that featured both good steam and support crews. The coal on both locomotives was fine so contributing to good steaming. The only down side was unbeknown before the train left Whitehead there was a carriage battery charge issue. So, on the return journey there was a problem in one carriage, as the journey progressed, with its lighting. The Carriage Officer explained individually to all affected.

Victorian Street Fair: On a cold Saturday (27th November) afternoon, with flurries of snow and hailstones, a small team of volunteers ran a very successful series of train rides at Whitehead.

It was part of Whitehead's annual Victorian Fair, and over 200 passengers were carried between 1 pm and 4:30pm. The shop did a fair bit of business during the afternoon but the last hour seemed to be the busiest. Roy Thompson brought his Thomas and his troublesome trucks and kept the kids amused (the Train Manager broke it!).

A lot of people were asking for Santa

Train Tickets; they were referred to the Candy Box, the local sweet shop, which had a few tickets on sale.

Before and afterwards the opportunity was taken to put the train together for the Santa Special trains commencing next weekend.

A big thanks to all who took the time to help. Although it was cold it was time well spent.

Santa Specials: The trains from Belfast, Dublin and Portadown all had sold out by the end of November.

The first weekend of operation took place in the most atrocious weather conditions experienced by our volunteers for many years, especially in Dublin. But they rose to the challenge magnificently and delivered the goods!

Steam & Carols: Cregagh Presbyterian Church Choir have chartered a train for Thursday 16th December for a trip to a mystery destination. There will be around 90 miles of steam and the choir will sing at three destinations. The residue of tickets was made available for general sale.

Mince Pie & Mulled Wine: On Sunday 2nd January 2011 there will be a post-festivities wind-down with a return trip to Dublin.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

NCC 68: On 30th September the coach was shunted to the front of the shed, which will facilitate its restoration. The Society has officially been awarded £6,165.50 (65% of the envisioned project cost) by the NI MC for the restoration.

Another £1,300 has been given in donations by members, for which we are very grateful. A further £2,000 is needed to see the project to completion - so donations still gratefully accepted.

It is hoped that this will be a very quick and effective project which will not take much time away from mainline priorities but, of course, as we've learnt getting the money is only where the unforeseen

problems start!

On Friday 24th September work started in earnest on 68 by the Yoof Team following the grant being approved.

68 is a former LMS coach built in 1922 and re-gauged and sent to Belfast following the blitz in 1941. It is a corridor first/third and has the rare distinction of having two half compartment (coupes).

When the project is finished 68 will be used at Whitehead on train ride days.

Work continues apace on the interior of NCC coach 68.

Tasks have included varnishing the interior. Recent progress consists of walnut combing effect in the first class, mahogany combing effect in second class, white ceiling, suitably repainted luggage racks, black floor band and cream painted lavatory walls.

Vacuum brake cylinders have been overhauled. Each cylinder had its piston rod unscrewed and the bottom section removed using a trolley jack. The rolling rings on the pistons were replaced and the release valves overhauled with various other work such as cleaning up the moving parts.

All was put snugly back together and successfully tested with the vacuum pump.

Upcoming jobs are replacement of the brake blocks, followed by laying of lino.

Mk2 463 (Corridor First Brake):
Mounting of generator in van area.

Dublin: On Saturday 30th October, with thanks to Irish Rail, a carriage transfer special operated from Connolly - Mullingar - Inchicore. GM 083 was in charge, with RPSI brake coach 1916 in tow.

At Mullingar Craven 1514 was added to the train. This coach has been internally rebuilt into a bar at the Society's base in Mullingar. It is a similar layout to that of the 2421 in the current heritage set, with a central bar area and 7 bays giving 28 seats.

A previous attempt to collect the coach,

on the Best Of Both railtour, was unsuccessful due to an issue with the brakes.

The set for the "Santa Special" trains was marshalled to include newly out-shopped Craven coaches 1523 and 1514, the latter being the new bar car.

The set is now composed of seven Cravens, one Park Royal and the BR steam heating van: BR3185, 1505, 1523, 1541, 1514, 1522, 1532, 1539, and 1383.

Park Royal 1383 is included because, in addition to providing 70 seats, it also includes the shop and sluice room.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.1 (DCDR): Alignment of boiler. Manufacture of brackets. Boiler mountings, boiler fittings overhaul.

No.4: In traffic. During October there was essential running maintenance.

No.5 "Drumboe" (CDRRL): Overhaul driving axleboxes, prepare for wheeling locomotive. Assemble bogie and pony truck. Cylinder repairs. The frame will shortly be placed on its wheels. The locomotive (minus boiler and tanks) will then be able to move out of the workshop on a recently extended section of 3ft track, to free up space for work on No.461 and No.85. No.5 can of course be moved back inside for further work when circumstances permit. The last time the wheels of this locomotive rotated was in 1960!

No.85 "Merlin": De-carbonise cylinders. Overhaul pistons, valves and cylinder block fittings. Renew slack rivets and stiffening plates at bogie. Completion of the re-profiling of this locomotive's driving wheels.

No.186: In traffic.

No.461: Locomotive work is concentrating on the overhaul of this engine. Overhaul slide bars and crossheads. Drill, tap and fit boiler stays. Test superheater elements. Overhaul boiler fittings.

On Saturday 30th October a 'milestone' was reached when the locomotive's boiler was turned right way up in the Workshop. (In order to facilitate repair work, including removal and re-fitting of the firebox, the boiler has been either on its back or sides for a considerable time.) Major work still outstanding is the fitting of copper stays to the firebox sides, also longitudinal stays and tubes.

BELFAST MEETINGS

13th October: The new season commenced with Roger Aves and Michael Ware of the A1 Locomotive Society presenting a show about Tornado.

Edward Friel started the meeting with a ten-minute video of Society doings since March - painting No.186, lifting No.85 off her wheels, B142 passing Adelaide, a demo of the TPWS kit on No.4, the Dalriada railtour, No.461 boiler work, NCC Diner 87, Brown Van to Hydebank, work on 935 and 68. It was well received. The commentary included the usual appeals for folk to get involved.

Roger Aves used PowerPoint and video to describe the origins of Tornado, the building and testing as well as some spectacular video of the locomotive in full cry. Michael Ware had some Tornado sales stuff. All in all a stimulating glimpse of what is possible with the RPSI's own 58 project.

10th November: The launch of two books that have not been printed yet! Due to circumstances in Colourpoint, and an anxiety to get things just right, printing of both books has been delayed - but both should be available next month! Despite that, there was a record audience of 125.

In the first half, Des Coakham told about his introduction to the BCDR when he moved from Dublin to a job in Belfast and lived in Bangor before the last war. Ably assisted by Andy Crockart, Des guided the audience through 80 photographs, track diagrams and

drawings of the BCDR and included some images that did not make it into the book. There were quite a few questions at the end and some pictures had to be recalled to answer them.

After the break, there was a screening of the saddest Irish railway film ever made -"Farewell, the Derry Road", the BBC programme made in 2000 by the late David Dillon, a noted documentary maker and one of Vice-Chairmen at the time of his sudden death. Based largely on film from Fred Cooper and drawing on a wide range of sources, the film traced a journey along the line before recounting the run-up to closure and the aftermath of lifting trains. The closing scenes were a skilful blend of scenes shot in 1999 with the lifting trains faded up through them. Not a dry eye in the house!

8th December: A double-header when Tony Hillman presented the Irish photographs of J.J. Smith. Charles Friel's talk on the history of Dundalk's Barrack Street yards was held over for another date.

GENERAL

Treasurer: The Society's Treasurer, Peter Marsden, has resigned from Council due to ill health.

Peter's contribution to the management of the Society over the past few years has been out of proportion to his time on Council and his fellow Council members are very grateful for the advice, guidance and practical assistance he has provided.

If anyone feels they would be interested in taking on the vacated post then please get in touch.

Governance: A new sub-committee of the Society's Council has been set up.

The terms of reference of the sub-committee require it to look at the structure and procedures of the RPSI's management resulting from legislation arising out of new NI Company and Charity acts, and to propose a Council

structure suitably flexible to ensure the Society can meet the challenges ahead. An initial meeting of the sub-committee has identified a number of issues requiring prompt action. These are likely to be addressed before and at the 2011 AGM, and could include revised rules regarding the eligibility of members to serve on Council and changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

WHITEHEAD

Blast Cleaning Facility: Building of the enclosure continues.

Concrete Progress: As part of the shunt for the Schools Day on Thursday 30th September, it was arranged to empty No.1 Carriage shed to allow the final Larne-end section of the shed's central passage to be concreted.

Fortunately, the train rides started around 10:30 and finished by noon, in glorious sunshine.

An early lunch was had after which a full lorry load of concrete arrived at 13:00. It was able to reverse down the full length of the shed.

All 6 cubic metres were off-loaded by 14:00 and levelled by 3 o'clock, when the stock was returned.

DRIVER TRAINING ON THE NYMR

By Robin Morton

(By permission of Steam Railway)

The future of mainline steam train operation in Northern Ireland is being safeguarded - thanks to a new training course which is under way at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

Footplate inspectors from Northern Ireland Railways have been over at Grosmont to undertake practical courses on steam train operation.

The West Coast Rail programme is aimed at furnishing driver assessors

from NIR with the skills necessary to certify footplate staff from the company.

In turn, this will help to assure the future of RPSI mainline steam trains such as the Portrush Flyer, which are crewed by footplate personnel from NIR.

The £36,000 scheme, which is being co-ordinated by the RPSI, has qualified for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in Belfast, which is keen to see heritage skills being maintained.

At the end of October, NIR driver assessors Stuart Andrews and Hubert Anderson spent a week on the North Yorks, and among the locomotives they worked was LNER A4 Pacific No.60007 "Sir Nigel Gresley".

Under supervision from NYMR personnel, they drove and fired service trains and were also responsible for preparation and disposal of the locomotive.

Former RPSI chairman Johnny Glendinning, who is overseeing the project and who accompanied the NIR personnel, said: "We are very grateful to HLF for funding this programme which is key to our plans to expand our mainline steam programme in Northern Ireland.

"The NYMR has proved to be an ideal location for this programme. The busy timetabled service on an 18 mile long line with stiff gradients gives the NIR personnel an ideal opportunity to experience day-to-day steam operation."

Earlier this year two NIR driver assessors -Stephen Faulkner and Michael Hamill -underwent the three-week course and passed with flying colours.

Phil Crawshaw, NYMR traction and rolling stock engineer, said that although they offered footplate experience trips for the public, this was the first occasion on which they had provided training for railway company staff.

He said: "We are flattered to be chosen

to host these courses and we have been aiming to replicate the conditions which they will find in regular steam operation.

"In the earlier course we even had some real-life incidents for the NIR men to deal with such as a derailment and a blown mud-hole door, which meant they had to drop the fire.

"I must say they proved themselves to be great enginemen and well able to deal with the challenges."

At present NIR has three steam drivers -the long-established Noel Playfair and two more recent recruits, Gary Moore and Stephen Glass - but there are plans to recruit additional firemen from company ranks.

Mal McGreevy, Translink's General Manager Rail, said: "Historically we have always been very dependent on a small number of steam drivers - for several years just one.

"We very much value our working relationship with the RPSI and wish to consolidate and enhance our capability going forward.

"We have recently increased our pool of qualified steam drivers, hopefully there will be more to come, and we are now in the process of accrediting our driver assessors.

"This, we hope, will allow us to enter into additional service commitments with RPSI in the years ahead.

"We believe that continuing to support steam operations on the NIR network is really good for NI Railways, is good for Northern Ireland tourism and generally good for the greater NI economy."

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