

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
12 January 2016

Subject: **WENSLEYDALE RAILWAY ASSOCIATION – SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY INTO USE OF THE RAILWAY**

All Wards
Portfolio Holder for Economic Development & Finance: Councillor Peter Wilkinson

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to appraise Members of the plans which WRA intend to pursue in the short and medium terms; and to seek funding from the Economic Development Fund to support the completion of a Socio-Economic Study to inform the future development of the Railway.
- 1.2 The Association has been operating since 1990. It currently runs both diesel and steam engines between Leeming Bar and Leyburn, but has temporary stations at Redmire and Northallerton. It operates solely on volunteers and is looking to become more business-orientated by generating new streams of income to help make it more resilient financially.
- 1.3 In May 2014, Cabinet approved a capital grant of £40k from the One Off Fund towards the installation of a temporary platform at Northallerton West. This was officially opened in November 2014.
- 1.4 WRA are currently looking at two potential projects that they feel are necessary to ensure the growth and ultimate survival of the railway as a commercially viable business:
 - There is a two phase proposal for Leeming Bar. Phase 1 is to build a maintenance shed for refurbishment of diesel and steam engines. They are proposing to do this working with a private sector operator in Leeming Bar, which would enable them to offer commercial services to national rail operators. The estimated capital cost of such a facility is in the region of £500,000. Phase 2 is the development of visitor facilities with improved waiting and buffet areas.
 - In addition to this WRA have drawn up plans to develop their provision at Northallerton West with the building of a permanent platform and the reinstatement of the South Curve to join the main rail network and increase passenger use.
- 1.5 As part of their research WRA had commissioned a Socio-Economic study into the use of the railway. They have recently resurrected this piece of work, to commission an update, and hope that the outcomes of this will provide quantifiable data that can be used in support of any future funding applications to allow them to take these projects forward.
- 1.6 The cost of the Socio-Economic Study is £34,150 and to date grant funding totalling £16,399 has been secured from Richmondshire District Council and the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Association is seeking £11,400 from the Council (see letter at Annex A).

2.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

2.1 These projects are linked to and support the Council's Business & Economy priorities. Further developing the potential of WRA is a project which has been included in the Council's Economic Strategy, Hambleton 'A Place to Grow' within the Business Support Priority Theme.

3.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:

3.1 The risks associated with this grant are low.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

4.1 The grant requested can be accommodated within the funding set aside in the Economic Development Fund.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 A funding agreement will be required between the Council and WRA, this will be through a grant offer.

6.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 By supporting WRA's future development the Council will be helping to improve a local transport system that will help people in the district with no transport access employment opportunities and keep communities connected. The evidence base will consider the needs of all the community and the benefits of an extended transport system.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION(S):

7.1 It is recommended that a grant of £11,400 be approved to be funded from the Economic Development Fund.

DAVID GOODWIN

Background papers: Letter from WRA dated 17 November 2015 (at Annex A)

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Wensleydale Railway Association (Trust) Ltd

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17th November 2015

Concerning: Funding for Socio-economic impact report

Dear Mr Goodwin

I am writing on behalf of the Wensleydale Railway, to request consideration of financial support towards a refreshed socio-economic impact report to be completed by Arup.

The Railway is planning an extension of its line from Redmire to Aysgarth Falls, a return to the centre of Northallerton, and a general upgrade of the line, stations and trains. It is our intention to raise the capital for these works through a Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership application of £3.5m, matched by commercial partners, share issue and general fund raising. To be successful we need to underpin the Railway's Business Development Plan with an independent socio-economic report that includes a cost benefit analysis of these proposals. We need this level of independent research and analysis to be able to make a credible application to the HLF for LP funding.

So far we have secured grants towards this of £11,400 from Richmondshire District Council and £4999 from the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Arup have offered to refresh their original report at a discounted price of £34,150. A contribution of £11,400 Hambleton District Council would be most helpful. The Wensleydale Railway will raise the balance required to commission the work.

We anticipate that the research will be completed by April 2016 and an application to the HLF will follow in May 2016.

I will be pleased to provide any further information about the research commission or the railway's development plans in general.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Walker'.

David Walker

Trustee Wensleydale Railway Association (Trust)