

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
6 May 2014

Subject: GRANT TO WENSLEYDALE RAILWAY ASSOCIATION

All Wards

Portfolio Holder for Support Services and Economic Development: Councillor P Wilkinson

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The Council has the economy and prosperity as a high priority and has received an application for funding from the Wensleydale Railway Association (WRA) which will help improve the economy in the Bedale and Northallerton areas.
- 1.2 The WRA has been in operation since the early 1990's and has an overall long term business plan which includes:
 - Extending the line from Leeming Bar to Northallerton (Business Expansion)
 - Extending the line from Redmire to Aysgarth (Business Expansion)
 - Exploiting its unique selling point as a quiet line linked to the main national network to develop a national centre of servicing, maintenance and restoration work (Business Sustainability)
- 1.3 The formal proposal is to upgrade the railway infrastructure between Leeming Bar and a new temporary platform at Northallerton West and provide a railway passenger service.
- 1.4 The cost of the project is estimated to be £51,000. It is suggested that a grant be offered up to a maximum of £40,000.
- 1.5 The WRA has undertaken all the feasibility work including obtaining planning permission needed to open a temporary access to Northallerton.
- 1.6 However the floods in January caused a major land slippage on the line near Akebar between Bedale and Leyburn. This urgent and unforeseen work has used all the WRAs development funds raised to extend the line from Leeming Bar to Northallerton.
- 1.7 Further details are given in the Capital Programme form attached at Annex A.

2.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

- 2.1 This project will help Wensleydale Railway Association bring passengers from Bedale and Wensleydale to Northallerton. As such it extends the passenger element of the line from Leeming Bar where it presently stops, to Northallerton and will therefore link to Council priorities or improving transport, improving the economy and bringing employment.

3.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:

- 3.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

4.1 The financial implications are limited to the amount of grant being offered, which is suggested comes from the one off fund. There are no ongoing revenue implications associated with this.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this grant offer.

6.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES:

6.1 The grant will indirectly benefit groups with protected characteristics providing an accessible form of transport, particularly to employment, when other forms of transport are being cut or costs increased.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION:

7.1 That Cabinet approves and recommends to Council that a grant from the one off fund be offered to the Wensleydale Railway Association of a maximum of £40,000 in respect of opening the line from Leeming Bar to Northallerton.

DAVID GOODWIN

Background papers:	None
Author ref:	DRG
Contact:	David Goodwin Director of Leisure and Health 01609 767147

CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Capital Scheme :

GRANT TO WENSLEYDALE RAILWAY ASSOCIATION

Description of Project :

The Wensleydale Railway currently operates the 22 miles of railway from Castle Hills Junction approximately 1 mile north of Northallerton main line station (where the line is physically connected to the East Coast Main Line), and Redmire on the eastern boundary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and close to Bolton Castle. The line is leased from Network Rail with approximately 89 years remaining on the full insuring and repairing lease.

The line was reopened to passenger services from Leeming Bar to Leyburn in 2003 with a further extension to Redmire in 2004 when Bedale station also reopened.

The line from Castle Hills, Northallerton to Leeming Bar has remained open for freight traffic and movement of rolling stock.

This proposal concerns the upgrading of the line for regular passenger traffic, erection of a basic temporary platform at Castle Hills (to be known as Northallerton West), and introduction of rail passenger services between the two points.

This is an initial stage in the development of this section of the line which, in later phases which are outside the scope of this document, may involve further development of the Northallerton West site and construction of an additional length of line to provide improved interchange facilities with main line services.

Planning permission for the temporary platform has been obtained and landlords consent for the construction is also in place. The proposed construction is a scaffolding and board structure which meets all regulatory requirements. This first phase will have pedestrian access from Springwell Lane and the project includes fencing and footpath construction to enable this.

Revenue Implications and how they are to be financed :

None

Community/Business Benefits :

In 2013 the Railway carried 45000 passengers using the generally accepted measurement of single journey equivalents. This represented growth of 8% over the previous year and we would expect that trend to accelerate in future years. In 2014 passenger numbers are predicted to be 55000, which is a combination of the continued growth in traffic, and the effects of a number of high profile events such as the Tour de France and visiting locomotives. Approximately 73% of passengers travel over the whole line and a conservative estimate is that 9500 of those would extend their journey to include the reopened section to Northallerton. Additionally, we are estimating that an additional 3000 passenger journeys will be created over this section in 2014. A conservative increase is also included in the 2015 prediction, although if resources are available to increase the service provision on this section, a much larger increase, with consequent improvements in revenue may be expected.

Projected Northallerton West Passenger Figures

Projected Passenger no's 2014 (Northallerton Section)	12500	Projected Passenger no's 2015 (Northallerton Section)	14700
Average revenue per passenger (Northallerton Section) £	5	Average revenue per passenger (Northallerton Section) £	5
Revenue (Northallerton Section) £	62500	Revenue (Northallerton Section) £	73500
Passenger related additional operating costs	11700	Passenger related additional operating costs	13200
Revenue 2014	50800	Revenue 2015	60300

In preparation for the construction of Northallerton West, and to maintain the infrastructure in a fit condition for occasional trains to operate over this section, the Railway has already committed £28000 to refurbishment of the track in the last 18 months. This investment has been primarily in track components such as sleepers which have been installed by volunteers.

These additional revenues will have the effect of substantially improving the Railways ability to develop in future years, and to improve its resilience.

Reinstatement of the rail passenger service on the route from Leeming Bar to Northallerton West has a number of elements of social benefit.

- ✧ **TRANSPORT** – Whilst the limited service initially provided will offer only minor journey opportunities to local residents, it will enable trips into Wensleydale to be accomplished on foot or by cycle, reducing congestion and pollution. It also provides visitors with a through route to Northallerton from Redmire and Leyburn. Market day services will be provided.
- ✧ **ECONOMIC** – It is expected that additional visitors to the Railway will be attracted due to the reopening of this section. Using the generally accepted multiplier the additional spend from these visitors should provide an additional £60,000 - £120,000 revenue for service and tourist businesses in the Hambleton area during the first year of operation. Increased services will increase this substantially in the following years.

✦ EMPLOYMENT – The Company would expect to create 0.5 FTE in permanent employment and a further 0.5 FTE seasonal employment within 12 months of project completion. We would estimate that a further 1.25 FTE would be created through additional business created by this project in the area.