

VALE RAIL NEWS

ISSUE 1 : 01/12/2008

New Newsletter

This newsletter has been put together in a very short time with the intention to keep the membership up to date with current events. It is not intended to be a glossy publication full of colour photo's at the moment. The newsletter will be published once a month until further notice. The cost of production and distribution is relatively low. However, the Company is trying to save money in all areas. We would therefore ask members willing to accept electronic copies via e-mail to contact us on valeofglamrail@hotmail.com. In the future, a small donation may be asked for to pay for printing and distribution costs for printed versions.

New Board Appointed

As members are aware, four of the six members of the Board were standing down along with Mr Austin Jeffrey who was a co-opted Board member requiring formal election by the membership at this time. Therefore the only remaining Board member would be Brian Mills. No formal proposals had reached the secretary before the meeting. However the Board decided to accept nominations from the floor and explained a group of members were willing to try and rescue the company. They were Shayne Lewis, Mike Fox, Carl Hookings, Nick Weedon and Gareth Haines.

No other members put themselves forward for election and the group was individually elected unanimously. The new Board convened an immediate meeting and assigned some rôles.

The New Board is as follows:

Carl Hookings
Michael Fox
Shayne Lewis
Austin Jeffrey
Gareth Haines
Brian Mills
Nick Weedon

Chairman
Vice Chairman
Company Secretary
Operational Director
Engineering Director
Director/Per Way Adviser
Publicity Director

Santa Specials

The new board have agreed to run several school day's and two public steam days on the following dates:

5th, 8th & 12th December (Schools)
20th & 21st December
28th December (Mince Pie)



Moving Forward

What are we doing?

Securing the future

The Board is negotiating with the bank and Council and all other interested parties. If the Board succeeds, the Vale of Glamorgan Railway will live on in a new way. We understand change is difficult but to survive we must adapt. The railway will be based in Barry but with reduced liability making it financially sustainable without grants or Council support.

Securing the assets

For the railway to survive, the Board is assessing all assets and dispensing with little-used unnecessary items. The two main assets owned by the Railway are "Pamela" and "Bill Caddick" but unfortunately they are both mortgaged against the £105,000 loan. However, after negotiations with the Bank, they have given the Board reassurance to a point where the Board consider this no longer an issue.

What we need you to do

Trust Us

The Board needs you to trust them to make decisions, some will not be well liked but in time we hope you will understand it was the only way for the railway to survive.

Renew Your Membership

You all know how short of money the railway is, and I'm sure you can understand having outstanding membership fees does not help. We understand why you have not renewed till now, but now is the time to pay and give the railway security.

Volunteering

The railway still needs volunteers, The board believes it's too soon to give up and urges the membership to keep on volunteering. We have to both run trains and catalogue and pack away all the artefacts at the station in the coming weeks. If you would like to help, please ring the office, as we are looking for help both mid-week and on weekends.

Write to your Councillor

The Board is not happy how the Council has treated the Railway and I'm sure you feel the same way. Therefore we call upon you to write to your local councillors complaining about the treatment of the railway after so many years of service. We have included a draft letter which you can also find on the website. I cannot understate the urgency of these letters, so please send them at your earliest convenience.

Become an asset owner

The Company will be looking to sell certain assets to raise funds, however the Board is also looking to sell shares in other major assets to the membership. The share price will be £100 per share with no individual limit per member. If you would like to know more, please contact the office to register your interest.



Message from the Chairman

Carl Hookings

23/11/2008

Under more normal circumstances, I would say thank you to the other Board Members for electing me as Chairman, and what an honour it is to be the new Chairman of the Board of the Vale of Glamorgan Railway.

But we all know why we are here, and alas it is no pleasure.

We are met with the arduous task of apparently dismantling years' worth of other people's hard work. It is a double edged sword.

- **Who is the new Chairman and who are the new Board?**

Most people don't like what I say, who I say it to or what I do and how I do it. That's it. The Board, most of you will already know and are all fully committed to the Railway in some manner or other. Short term management may appear to be personality led, and be unpalatable, but this is unavoidable at this stage, with things being so dynamic.

- **The Transitional Board and its objective**

The Board has been formed from key players within the company. It is not by design, a true Board, but a management team with clear objectives. It does not see itself as a Board that would run the Company under normal circumstances. If and when the clear objectives that have been laid out for us have been achieved, this Board will stand down. There are far better players for that on-going rôle within the company. Let me say on a personal note, that it is the respectable face of all those individuals who have committed themselves over the years, to the long term running of the railway that has been taken advantage of by the forces precipitating our current circumstances. These members have conducted themselves with a dignity and fortitude that has not been repaid.

Over the next few weeks, we will have to dismantle, pack away and close down facilities that years of work took to build. The very foundations of our Railway have to be swept away in a brutal cost cutting exercise, to ensure its very survival.

Walking around the Barry Island station building in the cold and quiet last night, whilst we were locking up, I had to ask myself 'Can I really do this, to apparently wipe out everything and reduce this Company to some rolling stock and boxes of archived material?' Well right now, we have no choice. The alternative was the total closure of the Railway.

Stuart Bailey, whom everyone knows, said at Saturday's AGM, that he hoped that "the Railway Company which started off as a group of like-minded individuals, would continue in that form" beyond the machinations of today's current events. That is what we are about — continuance and survival. Continuance demands rationalisation and realism.

You can't wipe out the spirit of the volunteers that form the main assets of our railway. With your trust and faith we will continue in a form yet to be determined.

What had happened and why?....

Two things have happened to the Company in the last few months. Firstly the Vale of Glamorgan Council has ceased to financially support the Railway. The Railway has never been able to support its Infrastructure costs and operate at a profit.

Secondly the Vale of Glamorgan Council went out to public tender, for a Management Company to operate the old BR Depôt at Broad Street and for reasons known only to them, they encompassed the entire Heritage Infrastructure and proposed control of heritage operations also in that tender. The Vale of Glamorgan Railway Company did not bid but critical members and associated groups did formulate a bid, strictly adhering to the terms of the Tender, and encompassing the Vale of Glamorgan Railway in the Plan. The Group failed to secure the bid.

Why?..

We believe that the Council thought we lacked experience — we didn't!

What should have happened?..

The board believes that within that terms of the tender, a ring-fenced agreement and in fact a ring-fenced operating area within the site, should have been secured.

Is it the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning?....Someone once asked!!

Well I and the Board would like to think the latter.

By our actions, are we damaging the end and what good might have come out of that? Exploring this situation, it could be that a new railway might grow from that very outcome, but we as your Board feel that it would not be the case in the current situation, not with the likely outcome of the Operational Tender bid for the former EWS site and the Heritage infrastructure.

The Board believes that an independent Railway is still the best way forward for Heritage operations at Barry, and the Board further believes that a strong Heritage Railway at Barry will ultimately, be of tremendous benefit to the incoming Operator of the site.

With its vastly reduced costs and overheads, it frees the site Operator to concentrate on the new commercial plans for the site, and it draws clear boundaries and responsibilities for the management of Heritage Steam and Diesel operations for Educational and Tourist purposes.

The Railway as you know it.....

The railway will almost initially appear to disappear and some of you will wonder what happened. Most of you will only remember us for the perceived damage we would appear to be doing. We however, believe that this could be the beginning of a new era for the railway.

It is our intention where possible, to retain as much of the key elements of the Rolling Stock and the rest of the Company's assets for the future. We are actively looking for specialised storage for the Company's archives and donated material, I know many members have contributed and have felt nervous about the future security of this

collection. Many have donated artefacts and items of significance, usually from relatives of generations gone by and they therefore have sentimental relevance. Be assured that the collection will be returned should our objectives prove unachievable. Brian Hill will be working actively with the team towards achieving that aim.

Membership.

Some members have not renewed their membership this year. I understand that with the uncertainty of the future of the Company, that it might be perceived a waste of money, but it is not. I will be blunt and say, 'shame on you.' The Railway is counting on the support of its members to get it through these difficult times and we need all the funds we can raise.

Please think again as every renewed membership isn't just money, it is a vote of confidence in the aspirations of your Board and the past, present and future volunteers.

Rolling Stock...

Some of the Rolling stock will have to be sold and quickly, negotiations are underway to dispose of any item that is not used or is too expensive to deploy in future. Careful consideration will be given to each sale and this will not be done lightly but nonetheless it will be done.

The Financial way forward...

As you are no doubt aware, funding for whatever reason has been curtailed by The Vale of Glamorgan Council. I know many Traders and Rate payers have felt that too much money has been spent on the Railway, but in fact when you explore the Grants, and capital Projects, this has not been in vain. In fact all of the buildings are owned and still operated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and have not been lost, and are generating revenue as we speak for the Authority.

Barry Island has suffered terribly, since the closure of the holiday camp, but we all knew that, the "Holiday Camp" no longer fitted into the mainstream Holiday Business, and therefore change was necessary. Barry Island has had to try to re-invent itself.

In my opinion, Barry Island to a large degree has been successful. The Seafront at Barry Island is more than respectable and the traders who have 'stuck in' there certainly deserve our respect.

I believe and I am assured that in fact now, the traders at Barry Island are concerned at the likely demise of the Railway at Barry Island and I am assured that they were counting on any other business that acts as a magnet to their business. The cessation of Heritage Rail operations at Barry Island would further contribute to the downslide of business for seafront traders, and further confirm Barry Island's membership to the "has been" club.

I do not believe that the Heritage Railway should be or could ever have been the saviour of Barry Island's Tourist business but it is a wheel in the gear box of the future of the Barry Island visitor economy, and therefore needs to continue.

Well what part does the Vale Council play in this, you might ask?..

Before I start on that, I need to say that in my opinion, given the History of this authority and its past abilities, the idea of a Heritage Railway and the likely commitment required for the concept was truly visionary.

Whilst some of the objectives were never achievable, the project has matured, and many positive benefits have grown out of the project, the Vale of Glamorgan Railway being the spearhead of this project. The railway possesses an excellent operations team whose abilities far exceed the requirements of such a small railway and the volunteer maintenance team at Plymouth Road have experience that can only be bought in at huge cost and it is a priceless asset to the Railway and the Town, which it does not realise it has, and take my word for it, many opportunities for commercial rail operations have been missed.

If any commercial opportunities present themselves to the new Operator of the site, the operational and engineering experience of the company will no doubt be needed and speaking from a commercial aspect, the sites at Barry offer potential employment opportunities, in Engineering in specialist fields, and the training of those fields.

Commercial: We have already done this.....

The Vale of Glamorgan Railway and its associated Groups have carried out Training in Driving & Maintenance and have demonstrated their ability to operate in the market place and deliver the very standards required by leading Rail Companies.

What next?..

Well if we can cut our costs and they have to be reduced totally and quickly, this will enable the company to operate at virtually zero cost for the next few months. Having consolidated our position, we would then commence summer operations, with all revenue diverted to operational costs only and from there, we have to start the long climb to rebuild our finances for the future.

The Planned Outcome..

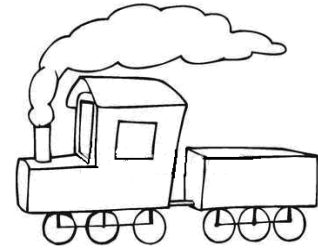
This is no mean task in itself. If we survive the downsize, there are cost implications to just operating, but in an almost cryogenic state, any revenues that arrive will stay, and we can build on our operating fund for next summer.

The Reality..

That the Railway frees itself of the shackles of its past costs and that an Agreement can be reached with the Council, securing part of the site with terms that are conducive to the successful operation of a financially independent Heritage Railway, working with a commercial operator at the site to ensure that operation mutually secures employment (Tourism, Training) and Educational benefits within the town.

LOCO NEWS

Gareth Haines



Steam Locomotives:

'Pamela' 68070

Pamela has operated passenger trains throughout the season with only minor running repairs to attend to. The loco also made a special appearance on the 5th November on a top and tail service with D9521. Further attention to motion as well as a boiler washout will be undertaken after the New Year ready for 2009 season

7705

Work continues on the cab and bunkers around maintaining Pamela. Vacuum braking pipework has also been prepared ready to form into shape for mounting onto the frames and buffer beams

Diesel Locomotives:

'Bill Caddick'

Bill Caddick has continued its role as Plymouth Road shunter throughout the season. The loco will have oil and filter change over the next few weeks as well as brake adjustment now that the brake blocks have been bedded in.

'Salty'

Salty has continued its role as Barry Shed pilot as well as performing empty stock movements between the Barry and Plymouth Road sheds.

D9521

It has been a busy season for D9521. It spent May to July visiting the North Norfolk Railway before returning to Barry via the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quainton Road. Winter maintenance will commence in the New Year.

47768

The bodywork has been filled, sanded down and under coated in between priority work throughout the year. Further work on the cab ends continue.

Diesel Multiple Units

One of the class 108 power cars continues to have its brakes attended to. This again is fitting around priority work.

The class 117 has been operational throughout most of the summer events and has recently been involved in further Arriva Trains Wales training.

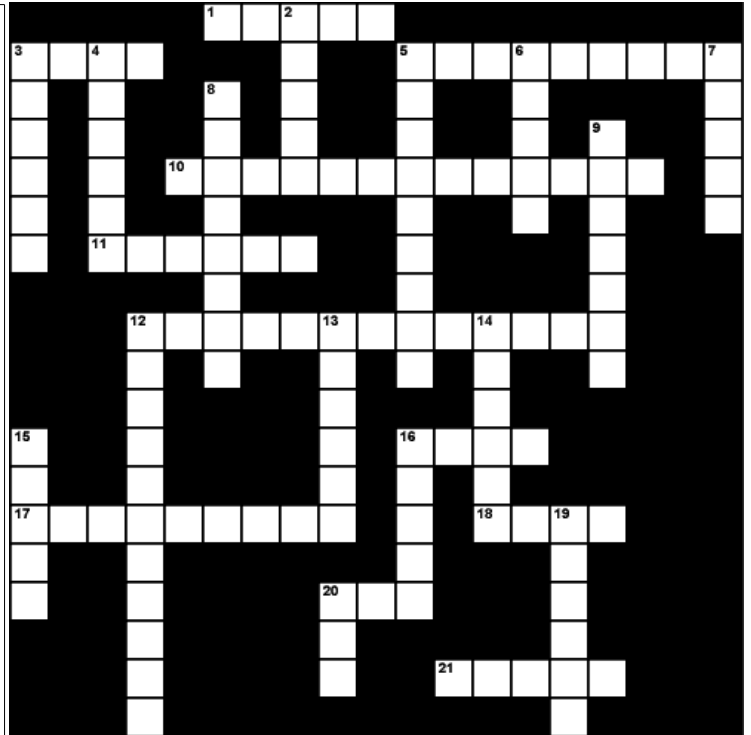
Christmas Crossword

Across

- 1 Christmas hymn (5)
- 3 The wise men's guide (4)
- 5 The town where Jesus was born (9)
- 10 The original Santa Claus (5,8)
- 11 The bird eaten for Christmas dinner (6)
- 12 A tradition introduced by Prince Albert (9,4)
- 16 A lot of angels (4)
- 17 Evergreen plant with white berries (9)
- 18 Gift from the shepherds (4)
- 20 Climbing plant (3)
- 21 One of Santa's reindeer (5)

Down

- 2 Small brown thrush with a red breast (5)
- 3 Where Joseph and Mary had to stay (6)
- 4 The four weeks leading up to Christmas (6)
- 5 The day after Christmas Day (6,3)
- 6 The king visited by the wise men (5)
- 7 Gold, frankincense and... (5)
- 8 A popular addition to the Christmas table (8)
- 9 Name of the archangel (7)
- 12 A decorated orange (11)
- 13 Christmas lasts for... days (6)
- 14 A Christmas tree decoration (6)
- 15 The army occupying the land at the time (5)



New Sponsors

The railway has received recent support from the following organisations



Contact Details

Michelle will be working in the office till the end of December. Please feel free to ring for information or to make bookings. Any changes involving the office will be conveyed to the membership at the earliest possible moment.



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