

# The Lynton Line – Issue 3 April 2021

*An occasional newsletter intended to keep local residents informed about activity on the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, including events, behind-the-scenes work and rebuilding.*

## Star of the TV Screen

Viewers were treated to two visits to the railway in TV programmes broadcast during the winter. Presenters Rob Bell (for Channel 5) and Tim Dunn (for Yesterday channel) both chose to visit the L&B (and the Lynton Cliff Railway) in late summer 2020, and they both conveyed very clearly the delight they felt at what the railway has to offer.



*Rob Bell filming at Woody Bay, and Tim Dunn perhaps hoping for a ride on the engine!*

## Progress Behind the Scenes

Even during the long Covid lockdowns, railway volunteers have been working hard to maintain the railway's infrastructure, and to further our plans for the future. This edition of the local newsletter gives an update on what has been going on over the winter.

## Planning Matters

Our planning application to build a new permanent timber tearoom to replace the present temporary structure at Woody Bay Station was approved by Exmoor National Park in December 2020. The new building is designed to reflect a typical rural timber structure, whilst maintaining its identity as a building designed and constructed by the Southern Railway during the 1930s. The length and width of the new building are the same as those of the existing temporary tearoom.

Later, in January 2021, our planning application to demolish the disused timber lodge in the woods above Chelfham station was approved by North Devon Council. The planning approval allows a new single-storey timber lodge to be built in its place, providing the railway with an insulated building offering modern overnight accommodation facilities.

Meanwhile, work continues to enable us to start work on extending the railway to Parracombe, Blackmoor and Wistlandpound.

Trial pit investigations were carried out at Killington Lane and Parracombe Lane cuttings during December 2020, and further ground investigation works were completed early in 2021. This work included 6 boreholes as well as further trial pits. The samples and observations from these works will provide foundation design data for bridges at Killington Lane and Blackmoor Gate, and for the workshop and yard at Blackmoor Gate. Two boreholes were drilled into the existing embankments at Rowley Moor and Lower Rowley to enable an assessment of their strength and stability for reuse. Lower Rowley embankment is an impressive earthwork, similar in size to Parracombe Bank that partially collapsed under pressure of floodwater during 1952.

Trial pits were also dug to investigate the nature of material in the infilled cutting each side of the at A399 at Blackmoor Gate. Soil samples were taken to assess any potential contamination at the Exmoor National Park car park site (the location of a former petrol filling station) and from the Old Blackmoor Gate Hotel site where the railway car park will be built. After lab analysis of the samples, the reports will allow us to discharge certain planning conditions.

## Looking after the Trackbed

Following concerns raised by a Parracombe resident, investigations showed that there was evidence of ash die-back in trees on the railway embankments in the area, with the potential to cause risks to life and property. Professional tree surgeons carried out a survey between Cricket Field Lane and Fairview and an application was made to Exmoor National Park for planning permission to fell the trees which are in a conservation area.

The affected trees have now been felled and will be removed when the easing of lockdown permits. Parracombe Parish Council and the affected residents were kept fully informed throughout the process.



## External Engagement

The L&B has recently taken part in an online webinar hosted by Exmoor National Park as part of The Rural Enterprise Exmoor initiative. This was launched in the autumn of 2019 to map and review current business activities across the moor and to gain a wide range of views from businesses around the challenges they face and future opportunities. The webinar event was

attended by people from many local hospitality and visitor attractions, and helped us to better understand and support Exmoor's rural economy and links to the National Park.

### Railway Operation

To ensure our steam locomotives can safely re-enter service, both *Axe* and *Lyn* have been given their Annual Boiler Test, and both were passed for service.

Measures have also been taken to ensure our volunteers re-familiarise themselves with our operating procedures after a long gap in services. To this end, the railway is implementing a new system giving all relevant people immediate access to up-to-date procedures and instructions. We are adopting the system used by most UK heritage railways.

A series of training sessions at Woody Bay, together with a trial running day, are ensuring that operations are managed safely throughout the 2021 season.



*At Woody Bay, low-key Covid-safe maintenance work to buildings, carriages and locomotives by volunteers living locally has continued.*

### Re-opening in 2021

As in 2020, we believe it is most important that the railway opens when the Covid-19 rules allow it, and especially during periods when visitors are able to visit the area but some local attractions are still closed. This helps to relieve pressure on tourist 'hot-spots', helping everyone to remain safe.

As the Government road map out of lockdown has remained on course, we were permitted to re-open to the public on Tuesday 13th April 2021. We have similar Covid-safe measures in place to those we employed last summer and at Christmas, but incorporating lessons learned during those periods of opening.

With the step-by-step easing of lockdown, and with the possibility of the Covid situation changing at short notice, we plan a flexible approach to opening in 2021.

Therefore we will use our website to publish our timetable on a readily-accessible page which we can update daily if needed, rather than distributing a printed timetable leaflet.

After opening to the public on Tuesday 13th April for three days to take advantage of the last week of school holidays, we are opening at weekends only until the end of May. This is because visitors to the area will initially be limited to day trippers and those staying in self-contained self-catering accommodation.

During that period, camp sites, B&Bs and other holiday accommodation will open, and we know that booking levels are high. So, from June we will open 5 days a week, remaining closed on Mondays and Fridays. We may increase the number of operating days once we see the level of demand.

### Working from Home

Even when lockdown prevents visits to North Devon, many of the railway's volunteers are busily working at their homes all over the country to help to ensure the future success of the line. The documents required for the Transport and Works Act Order application for the line's extension are being produced, and detailed engineering specifications and designs are being worked on by our qualified engineering team.

Others, with the necessary practical skills, are patiently restoring the equipment needed for the safe operation of the extended railway.



*One of several beautifully restored single line control instruments recently completed by a member in Devon. Pairs of these instruments, very similar to those used on the original railway, will ensure that only one train can ever enter each single-track section of the railway between two stations.*

### Feedback

We welcome your feedback on this newsletter, and will answer any additional questions you may have. Contact our Operations Director Clive Robey [clive.robey@lynton-rail.co.uk](mailto:clive.robey@lynton-rail.co.uk).

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