



LYNTON & BARNSTAPLE RAILWAY TRUST

NEWS BULLETIN – March 2023

Another Station acquired – Blackmoor!

Lynton & Barnstaple Railway announces the acquisition of another former station site.

We are pleased to announce that agreement has been reached and contracts exchanged for the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway to purchase the Old Station House Inn, Restaurant, Pub and the adjoining House and some adjacent land (for the future reconstruction of the railway). The purchase will be completed on 17th April 2023.

The L&B Blackmoor Company PLC is a subsidiary of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust.

We are indebted to the previous landlords, Mr & Mrs Shepherd, who have worked hard over many years to provide a warm welcome to their customers and build a successful business that has recently navigated the pressures of the COVID pandemic.

The venue will eventually provide Station facilities in addition to continuing to operate as a Pub and Restaurant as part of the extended Lynton & Barnstaple Railway.

As the new landlords, the company is not planning radical change to the premises and assure all the regular and occasional visitors to the Inn that it will continue to offer a warm welcome with quality food and drinks. A programme of investment is planned which will respect the heritage of the setting and its place as an important part of the local community by retaining and enhancing the present character of the pub and restaurant.

Directors of the L & B Blackmoor Company PLC and the new manager look forward to meeting our customers, old & and new.

There will be further announcements regarding special events and future plans after completion of the purchase next month.

Planning options - your opinion counts

The planning permissions granted five years ago were to have been modified by the section 73 applications that you have read about. This would have allowed staged construction of the extension from Killington Lane to Blackmoor. Despite the huge efforts made by your planning team and our professional advisers that was regrettably unsuccessful. The reasons were set out in Newsletter 79.

Now we have the opportunity to take stock and decide which way to proceed, despite the current setback, we will not give up on the goal of a longer Lynton & Barnstaple Railway. Please read and consider the Consultation on Options set out below. Your opinions and comments will be taken into consideration before the next steps are progressed.

A quick response would be appreciated; much of the work carried out is still current and valid for the next application.

Consultation with members on Options to progress extension of Lynton & Barnstaple Railway following withdrawal of the section 73 planning applications – March 2023

Governing policies

All options to extend and reinstate the railway are governed by planning policy and law. The current documented and established phased development is well founded. (Phase 1, IIa, IIb and III)

The s73 applications were withdrawn due to an underlying point of law, rather than planning policy; the railway is supported in the local plan and there is currently no barrier in principle to new planning applications but known objectors' opinions must be addressed.

Reinstatement of the railway is “major development” and Environmental Assessment is necessary. Fundamental to this is a clear traffic and parking strategy to cater for the increased numbers of visitors.

Blackmoor Gate is accepted by both Exmoor National Park (ENP) and North Devon Council (NDC) as the appropriate location for a 160 space carpark and coach park. This is why the centre of operations, the engine shed, yard and workshops were planned to be located there and were granted planning

approval in 2018. For this reason, it is simply not realistic to contemplate starting at locations in the Yeo valley.

Options are therefore limited:

A. Abandon attempts to progress within Exmoor National Park and progress southwards from Wistlandpound towards Pilton (Phase III).

- i. Land is required from South West Water/Forestry England for a new route around the reservoir because the old route is under water.
- ii. The gradient beyond the dam is excessively steep (approx. 1 in 35) because the track must pass above dam crest level.
- iii. Spirals, lazy S curves etc could be considered, but these all would require more land to be acquired.
- iv. The original route from the dam down the valley is occupied by the private access road to South Thorne.
- v. The route from Hunacott to Narracott is occupied by a public highway.
- vi. Four new river crossings are required, all subject to Environmental Agency detail design approval.
- vii. There are land acquisition challenges at several locations.
- viii. Planning permission will be required for everything south of Wistlandpound Halt. No preparatory work has been done.

This would be a huge and expensive task with an unpredictable outcome.

Estimated time to planning approval: 3+ Years, risk – high, cost – high.

B. Progress from Woody Bay towards Lynton (Phase IIb)

- i. Land is not owned north of Woody Bay except a small length near Barbrook.
- ii. Two technically challenging and very expensive road bridges to carry A39 over the railway are required subject to Devon County Council technical approval and adoption.
- iii. There are several land acquisition challenges.
- iv. The site for a new Lynton terminus has not been defined nor acquired.
- v. There are severe technical challenges to overcome the topography beyond the original terminus which is a private dwelling and inaccessible.

- vi. Planning permission will be required for everything north of Woody Bay and no preparatory work has been done.

This would be a huge and expensive task and does not utilise the Blackmoor centre of operations. It has an unpredictable outcome.

Estimated time to planning approval: 3+ Years, risk- high, cost – high.

C. Progress a staged development of Phase IIa

Rowley Moor Farm – Work has commenced on the visibility splay and access road. Conversion of the stables will follow. This road will also provide access to the engine shed site, storage and workshop barns.

North Devon Section of Phase IIa: The line from Blackmoor Gate to Wistlandpound has planning approval and commenced in 2019.

Now that contracts have been exchanged on Old Station House Inn by L & B Blackmoor Company PLC and the track bed for the new station is secured for the Trust, work can resume on the North Devon section:

- i. Obtain approval to vary current planning condition that requires all works affecting the A399 to be completed before any other development is started.
- ii. Commence work reinstating the line between Bridges 55 and 53.
- iii. Negotiate and submit a new planning application for a new access into OSHI and for a new smaller Bridge 56 design in place of the current approved long tunnel.
- iv. Review overall OSHI and station design. Incorporate footbridge/subway and gated crossing (ORR requirement)

Estimated time to build start: about 6 months, Risk - low, cost – low.

Exmoor National Park Section of Phase IIA: Submit staged planning applications.

1. Reinstatement of the line from Killington Lane to a temporary halt near Cricket Field Lane. Construct bridge 65 at the earliest opportunity.

Estimated time to planning approval – about 12 months, Risk - medium, Cost - medium.

2. When Blackmoor Gate to Wistlandpound is complete and Bridge 56 has been built seek planning permission to develop the engine shed site and the line as far as Lower Rowley.
3. After the engine shed is complete seek planning permission to reinstate the railway between Lower Rowley and Cricket Field Lane.

D. Abandon Local Authority Planning actions and submit a TWAO with Deemed Planning Permission

The Trust has always taken the view that it would work with the local planning authority to accommodate local opinion and obtain planning approval. Using the TWAO process to gain deemed planning permission would undermine that position of co-operation and Exmoor National Park Authority would become a Statutory Objector to the scheme.

This is the option of last resort. Success is unpredictable and compulsory purchase powers are not guaranteed.

Estimated time to grant of Order: 3+ years, Risk – Extremely high, Cost – Extremely High.

Conclusion

Options A, B and D present no benefits, rather they present more very challenging problems.

Option C appears to be the only logical choice subject to guidance from Arup and ENP to minimise risk. This option will also make use of much of the technical information prepared for the original planning application, the section 73 applications and in discharging the pre-commencement planning conditions. The design of Bridge 65 is complete, it has been technically approved by Devon County Council and a section 278 agreement between the Trust and DCC has been prepared ready for signing. This will enable Devon Highways to adopt the bridge as a highway structure upon completion.

Taking forward Option C will enable physical works to start very soon in North Devon followed by work in Exmoor National Park, securing the breakout from Killington Lane as soon as planning approval has been obtained. Excavated material from the cuttings will provide a source of fill for Blackmoor Gate Station area.

One of the most difficult points to defend that the objectors continually raise is the claim that there is no guarantee that the railway will be able to fund Phase IIA. The staged completion outline in Option C provides a means to demonstrate the Trust's ability to deliver fully funded projects.

After the line is complete from Blackmoor Gate to Wistlandpound, bridge 56 to carry the A399 over the railway can be built. This is within North Devon Council's area. A planning application can then be made to ENP for planning permission to build the engine shed and reconfigure ENP's public carpark to serve the operational railway from Blackmoor to Wistlandpound. It would also be beneficial to reinstate the line eastwards as far as Lower Rowley utilising excavated material from the engine shed site to buttress the embankments at Rowley Moor and Lower Rowley. A planning application may then be submitted for the last remaining section between Cricket Field Lane and Lower Rowley.

This option appraisal has been considered by the Board of Trustees. Their recommendations are set out below:

Board of Trustees recommend Option - C

For: John Barton, Ian Cowling, Paul Curson,
Geoff Hunt, Peter Miles, Peter Snashall,
Martin Swainson, Charles Summers

Abstention: Chris Duffell

Against: None

Members preferred Option:

The Trustees invite you to confirm your preferred option choice below. Please complete and return this page by post or by email to the addresses provided at the bottom of the page.

Name:

Membership No:

I support Option: A B C D

Please put a cross in one box with your choice.

Please add any additional comments here:

Send your reply by email to: john.barton@lynton-rail.co.uk

Or by post to: John Barton

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Closing date for replies: 14th April 2023

