

# LINESIDE GAZETTE

Members' newsletter for the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway

*Issue no. 88*

## A message from Peter Miles

It is over eighteen years ago that I was persuaded to take the role of Chairman on the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust. That is a long time however you look at it but in many ways it has flown past. There have been all sorts of challenges in that time, most of which were dealt with by the Trust team successfully. The L&BR reconstruction has made substantial progress from where we were in 2007 to the current recreation of the railway which is a highly regarded representation of what was there before closure.

For some while I have been of the opinion that it is time (well past time?) for someone else to take up the position of Chairman and that is what is now happening. I intend to retire in March and will remain a trustee for the remainder of my current term. I will of course give support to my successor as and when required.

The rebirth of the L&B has progressed in ways that very few thought would ever happen, certainly that was the case when I first joined in the 1980s. Of course, we need a longer running line and with that more carriages, locos, wagons and volunteers but I am sure all this will arrive in time. The country is going through a rough patch currently – and that must affect the L&BR – but I am optimistic that we can weather this and continue with our plans.

I hope the new Chair gains as much enjoyment and satisfaction from his work as I have. That includes seeing the public enjoying our railway, working with volunteers and staff as well as directors and others including the local landowners and supporters who all play their part in the sometimes-daunting task we have been set.

**Peter Miles, L&BR Trust Chairman**

*Note: The trustees have elected Giles Perkins, current Vice Chair, to take over the role from April 2026.*

## Fundraising

There have been some remarkable achievements in fundraising for the railway over the last few months; [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easypartnering.org.uk) partners with over 8000 brands turning daily shopping spending into donations for many causes and has raised over £7110 for the railway during 2025.

Train Station railway simulator enthusiasts around the world have been buying our very own locomotive 762 *Lyn* to add to their collections. This has raised an astonishing £30,000 through the Save the Rails initiative undertaken with game company Pixelfederation. And furthermore, gamers far and wide are saying they want to come to Exmoor and see the L&B for themselves! A new and unusual achievement unique in the narrow-gauge sector.



## Project Axe

Our much-loved locomotive Axe will soon be undergoing a major overall, including changing the boiler tubes, stripping down and refurbishing the running gear and improvements to the pipework in the cab. Axe is of considerable historical importance, so your generous donations to Project Axe will enable this remarkable survivor of World War 1 to continue to be seen steaming at Woody Bay for many years to come.

## Carriage Shelter

This important project for the protection of our heritage carriages has involved considerably more work than first expected. As work proceeded it became evident that the sub-base and ballast needed renewing along with new sleepers around the interconnecting pointwork. Given that our volunteers had other critical tasks to complete over the summer, it was decided to engage our shelter contractor to renew the ballast and construct the foundations for the shelter. Our hard working permanent-way team have done superb job relaying the track and we are delighted to say that the steelwork has now be erected and work is in progress installing the wood cladding.

But, we still need your help in raising funds to complete this essential project. The complexities of the project have resulted in a shortfall of around £30,000 in extra materials, contractor machinery and labour over the original estimate of £60,000. So any help you can give in protecting our unique heritage fleet will be greatly appreciated.



## November Work Weekend

Our hardy volunteers encountered a mixture of heavy rain and some moments of welcome sunshine over the first work weekend. Woody Bay Station was soon full of Christmas cheer with festive lights and decorations, and Killington Lane shelter was transformed into The North Pole, ready for the arrival of Santa!

Along the trackbed to Church Lane and around the halt at Parracombe, our volunteer gangs were engaged in cutting back and clearing a considerable amount of vegetation ready for surveying in connection with the forthcoming planning application (see below). Using a combination of hand tools, strimmers and a hired robotic muncher, tremendous progress was made.

We are genuinely grateful to everyone who came along, and we would love to see even more volunteers at our next Work Weekends: January 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> and March 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## News from the Shed

Several improvements have been made in the Paint Shop. The walls and floor have been sealed and painted, and new lighting, along with dust extraction, provide a much cleaner and brighter working environment.

Work is being carried out fabricating the brake gear of Van 23. This project is very much in the final stages before the chassis is shot-blasted and painted.

A major step forward in looking after our heritage carriages is the investment in a spare bogie, enabling the carriage bogies to be stripped down, inspected and repaired as necessary.

## Next stop Parracombe

This report updates on progress on planning work for extending the railway following publication of the results of the members consultation survey in Newsletter 87 and as published on our website during August 2025.

Work has started to address the multitude of details and decisions that have to be made in order to assemble a comprehensive planning application to extend our railway from Killington Lane to Parracombe Halt.

Discussions have commenced with Exmoor National Park Planning Authority, and these will be progressed during the winter using their pre-application advice service to help identify the scope of any further specialist surveys and reports that are likely to be needed to support the planning application. When that advice is completed we shall be able to report to you in more detail and to liaise with our neighbours over our proposals in advance of submitting the planning application.

Much of the information submitted with the previous planning application can be reused, but it all has to be carefully reviewed and augmented in the context of this new application and in accordance with current circumstances and legislation to ensure that we have to have robust answers to potential points of challenge.

In the meantime, we can progress with preparation of drawings for the extension using recently completed new survey information for the Cricket Field Lane to Parracombe Halt section. This was made possible through the hard work and dedication of our fabulous volunteers during the working weekend of 22nd and 23rd November when overgrown vegetation at the site was cut back to enable our surveyors access to take measurements between 9th and 12th December. All done in the most appalling weather! A huge vote of thanks is due to everyone who came and helped.

### **Activity between Blackmoor to Wistlandpound**

There is a current planning permission for reconstruction of the railway between Blackmoor Gate and a new halt at Wistlandpound reservoir. It is useful to note that the planning boundary at the north eastern limit lies on the Exmoor National Park side of the A399 and includes approval for a bridge to carry the road over the railway when we are ready to extend in that direction.

At the time of writing, the track bed across Bridwick Farm from Old Station Inn as far as Bridge 54 at Pound Lane is being fenced and by the time you read this that work should largely be complete.

Space has been included to accommodate a separate footpath on the eastern side of the railway when the railway is reconstructed but the immediate short term ambition to establish a permissive footpath link using the track bed from Old Station Inn to Wistlandpound reservoir.



## Carriage and Wagon Report

New roller blinds have been fitted to Carriage 7 and the seats have been rebuilt to accept the sliding partitions. Repairs to the outside beading and repainting are in progress. One original broken window has been replaced with new safety glass. The wood side frame and ends of Van 23 are now awaiting the arrival of the underframe.

*Charles Summers*

## News from Chelfham

A number of projects include repairs to the waiting room window frame and a corner section upright on the signal cabin.

Work is currently underway to re-site the garden tool shed and log store enabling assessments to be made for a new future visitor building including an insulated and tidier shop shed.

Across the viaduct, thousands of original parapet bricks, many intact, are being salvaged and some will be reused for shed foundations at nearby sites on the railway, and two diseased ash trees have been professionally removed on the Distant Point land revealing new views of the viaduct from the down siding.

*Nigel Thompson*

## Remembering those we lost during 2025

As the sun set on another year at the railway we carried a wreath on the front of Lyn, the engine in service, as a tribute to past and present supporters, members and volunteers we have sadly lost during 2025.

While we pause to remember them we also want to celebrate their dedication, passion and the many other contributions they made to the railway.

Their hard work helped shape what we have today; it also honours the friendships they built and the happy memories that we will continue to treasure.



## And finally, a few words from our visitors

Our first *Quiet Santa* event targeted at younger visitors with sensory needs, and developed with our friends at Calvert Devon, was a great success. Here are some of the kind comments we received from visitors:

*"My little sister was able to be herself and was able to actually enjoy herself unlike other Christmas events where she gets overwhelmed. She also felt happy that she could be with other similar children."*

*"Came to your Santa event yesterday and I was so impressed. My daughter has autism and for the first time ever she felt so relaxed and excited about seeing Santa."*

*"We had a great visit despite the horizontal rain. Was a great set up and ideal for our kids who can struggle when it is really busy. As usual all staff and volunteers super friendly and inclusive."*