



Lynton & Barnstaple Railway Trust

Report on Options Consultation to progress extension of the railway concluded 14th April 2023

Consultation papers were e-mailed to overseas members on Monday 20th March to ensure that they would all have opportunity to respond. Papers were circulated to UK members by Royal Mail on Thursday 23rd March. Currently the Trust is unable to undertake mass e-mailing, but we would like to implement this when a suitable service provider has been found.

This is a moment for us to make a clear decision over where to concentrate our money and time to extend railway operations and to demonstrate ability to deliver successful projects.

The Trustees felt that it was important to consult with the whole membership to understand their preferences before progressing.

Results:

Votes for Option A	3
Votes for Option B	1
Votes for Option C	957
Votes for Option D	2
Abstentions, none, all, against all and alternative ideas	52
Spoilt Papers (No name and number, 16 for Option C, 1 for none)	<u>17</u>
Total number of returns	1032

Recorded Trust membership is 3046.

This represents a response of 34%.

Only one vote has been counted on returns from joint or family subscriptions unless support of other members was specifically noted.

The return has been very good, and the Trustees thank everyone for their responses.

Discussion

Option C is supported by a substantial majority (93% of total returns). Maintaining momentum and starting physical progress on extending the railway as soon as possible is the clear message.

Option A received 3 votes and Option D 2 votes.

Option B (Woody Bay to Lynton) received only 1 vote, but a few people have suggested a two-stage push in that direction, firstly to Caffyns and then on to Lynton. This may be a good idea, albeit sometime in the future, when we are ready to extend northwards, subject to land acquisitions.

52 members abstained, voted for no options, all options, against all options or proposed their personal alternative ideas. Reasons varied from inadequate detail and proceeding too quickly to anger over management performance and lack of progress. We hope that the logic and benefits of Option C will become apparent and that these members will regain confidence in the project. A large amount of technical information is already on Exmoor National Park planning portal covering the Killington Lane to Wistlandpound section. There is still much to be discussed and worked on both technically and operationally. Although it is not always possible to communicate everything all at once, the need for improved communication is acknowledged.

We are grateful for all comments including those against the proposed options. These will be considered, retained on file and possibly incorporated into plans where they can add benefit.

Additional comments received relating to Option C have been grouped into themes in order of popularity, starting with the most popular:

1. Reinforced support for option C.

This was by far the most commented upon theme with expressions of thanks for the dedication and hard work against difficult circumstances and giving encouragement to keep going.

2. Maintain momentum, start works as soon as possible.

The need for spades in the ground was a very strong message, to show that the railway can deliver and is serious in its endeavour to rebuild the line.

3. Priority to get to Parracombe/Cricket Field Lane/ break out of Killington Lane/ build bridge 65.

Some form of break-out from Killington Lane is seen by many as the priority, enabling the much wanted extended journey on the existing railway.

4. Concern over running 2 railways.

Some people feel that another railway may be detrimental to operations at Woody Bay and that we may not have sufficient staff and maintenance resources to cover both.

This consultation is focused on finding a way to break the planning deadlock to enable construction of the railway to proceed. Construction will take a significant period of time during which there will be plenty of opportunity to discuss and investigate the many possible arrangements for managing, operating and maintaining two sections of railway. This will also include commercial assessment and types of motive power such as battery electric trams.

5. Concentrate on getting to Wistlandpound.

Seen as slightly less of a priority than theme 3 but a revenue-earning railway from Blackmoor Gate to Wistlandpound is recognised by many to be potentially beneficial now that the old Station House Inn has been acquired.

6. Risk that the land required to link through Parracombe/ other land may never be acquired.

An obvious problem highlighted or alluded to by several. Unfortunately, not everyone is enthused by heritage railways and some landowners may not be interested in selling their land to the railway. This is a fundamental underlying problem for the whole Lynton and Barnstaple railway project. However, the approach followed by both the Trust and Exmoor Associates over the past 40 years of acquiring land when an opportunity arises has been successful. There are a number of challenging acquisitions in Phases IIA, IIB and III. Time and patience is required, there is no magic bullet and there is no reason to confront these difficulties prematurely. Two years ago, there appeared to be no prospect of purchasing Parracombe Halt or Old Station House Inn (OSHI) and yet with patience and negotiation, both have been acquired.

Next Steps

Option C will now be advanced. Initially, guided by our planning consultants, we shall engage in further dialogue with both Exmoor National Park and North Devon Council Planning Authorities; their continuing support is paramount to the overall project.

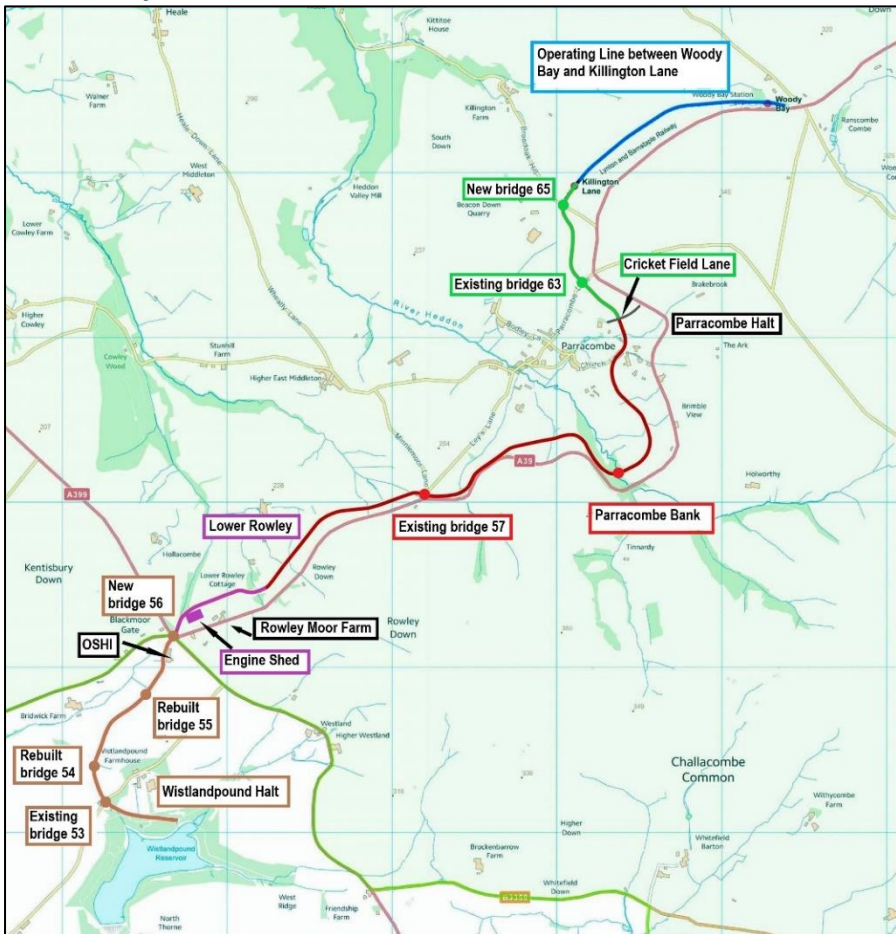
A formal pre-application consultation will be undertaken with Exmoor National Park. This is a confidential procedure, allowing both sides to speak freely, and it includes a scoping process to determine what technical documentation is considered necessary. This will take about 2 months.

Details of the developed proposal will be published on the Trust Website and a public consultation will be undertaken before the application is submitted.

When the transfer of management and operation of OSHI has completed, a parallel liaison with North Devon Council will commence to discuss the process necessary to enable works to continue from Blackmoor towards Wistlandpound. Ideas and options for operating from Blackmoor Gate will be developed jointly with the CIC whilst planning and construction progresses.

The plan below illustrates the whole of Phase IIA annotated to show various places and features identified in Option C that are not apparent on Ordnance Survey maps. A colour version of this plan will be put on the Website.

Illustrative plan of Phase IIA



Once this stage is well underway, consideration of longer-term outline strategies for Phase IIB and Phase III can be looked at in greater detail.