

## **New Year Update on Progress on the Northallerton Link by Ian Sesnan**

The Northallerton Link Project (often referred to as the South Curve Project) is working towards the re-instatement of the Railway route direct into, or as close as practicable to, Northallerton Station.

The Wensleydale Railway already operates the route from Springwell Lane (near Castle Hills Junction on the East Coast Main Line) to Leeming Bar but this is for freight and special traffic only. The barrier is the missing South Curve. To understand this better, look at the [aerial photograph](#) on the Wensleydale Railway plc's website [www.WensleydaleRailway.com](http://www.WensleydaleRailway.com), where you can also read more about the project.

### **Review of 2007**

2007 has been a year of some great progress for the Northallerton Link; the following were the highlights:

- 1) The generous offer by Corus Rail Infrastructure Services to undertake the engineering design work for the South Curve in memory of their (and our) late colleague Clive Roberts. The first site visit was held in early December including a special train (provided to give a view of the layout and to provide refreshments) for the party of engineers who looked at every aspect that will need addressing including bridges, track, signalling, platforms, level crossings etc. An article will appear in Relay 48 (to be published at the end of February) describing this exciting day. Colin Brown, the Wensleydale Railway plc (voluntary) Head of Civil Engineering, is leading on this. Thanks should be recorded to Phil Kirkland, the plc's former head of Civil Engineering, for his work on getting the link to this stage and his ongoing support.
- 2) Officer meetings continued with the local authorities, partnerships, and Network Rail and there seems general agreement about the process from here. Ian Sesnan, Wensleydale Railway plc (voluntary) Director for Communities and Regeneration, is leading on this. The main tasks now are:
  - To commission a socio-economic study of the benefits to Wensleydale, Northallerton and surrounding areas of the proposed reopening. A study brief is close to agreement but experience suggests that between £25,000 and £30,000 will be needed to commission this study. Without doubt, it is a key piece of evidence that will be needed once the engineering options and costs are known. It would be a suitable piece of work for a consultancy to do on a pro bono basis and we would be interested in hearing from firms that may be interested in being associated with such an exciting project. Imelda Havers (a regeneration professional) is the volunteer leading on this and further help would be appreciated.
  - To develop the train service options – there is a clearly a relationship between the various train service options and the costs and benefits that would ensue. This is linked to factors such as the traction and rolling stock used, the line speed, the type and staffing of level crossings, the signalling and the availability of train crew paid and unpaid. Steve Deane, the Wensleydale Railway plc's (volunteer) Mechanical Engineering Director, is leading on this and further help would be appreciated.
  - To further develop the business case so that all of the above are brought together into a cohesive plan. This is required not just so that everyone involved in the Wensleydale Railway can sign up to it but also so that partners and potential funders can see the whole picture and where they fit in. Most importantly, this will be needed for presentation to Network Rail who are not only

the Wensleydale Railway's landlords but also the owners of some, or all, of the land that we will need to build upon. They are also, of course, the managers of the East Coast Main Line and its connecting routes around Northallerton.

- 3) Some of the Northallerton Link Virtual Volunteer Team have been busy during the year. Chris Brooks has been undertaking legal work regarding the Scruton Station restoration project (led by Wensleydale Railway Trust as part of the Scruton Station Partnership); Rodney Morris has continued to energetically promote the link at many of the major shows; John Davies has been developing the Educational Case; Angus Bell has looking into how other railways have achieved their ambitions to link to the National Network; Steve Wilby has been working on the planning issues; Imelda Havers wrote an excellent article for New Start (a regeneration magazine) which put our railway in the context of the Settle and Carlisle and Cumbrian Coast lines. A number of new volunteers have recently come forward and we are agreeing their contributions to the project.
- 4) The Northallerton branch of the WRA who have been campaigning and fundraising for the link since their formation continue their sterling work – you can read about them elsewhere on this website.

### **Prospect for 2008**

The Northallerton Link has moved a good bit closer during 2007 but in 2008 we need to achieve the following key stages:

- 1) The completion of the engineering options work and the selection of the preferred option and acceptance by all parties of this. Two things are key: a) That re-instating the link is shown to be physically possible and b) That it is affordable.
- 2) Commissioning the socio-economic study and it producing favourable results.
- 3) Developing the business case for the link and in particular the short term, medium and long term service proposals.

We have Number 1 under way thanks to the generosity of Corus Rail Infrastructure Services. Number 2 depends on us raising the funds or finding a firm to undertake it on a pro bono basis. Number 3 we can do in-house. Further offers of help – most of the Northallerton Link Virtual Volunteers are remotely located and are not being taken away from vital day to day tasks in running the railway.

*A vital contribution everyone can make is to use and publicise our existing trains as the more passengers we have the stronger the business case etc.*

If you would like to help with the Northallerton Link please contact me as follows:

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