

## The Heritage Line Community Rail Partnership

*Darlington to Bishop Auckland line*  
*The Weardale Railway (Bishop Auckland – Stanhope)*

### Constitution

#### 1 Preamble

The Heritage Line Community Rail Partnership (The Heritage Line Partnership) is committed to the positive and imaginative development of the Darlington – Bishop Auckland – Stanhope line in ways which benefit the communities served by the railway. It sees the line as a vital link serving both urban and rural areas and desires to work with all interested parties to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities along the line, and the railway itself.

#### 2 Aims of the Partnership

- i) To promote and develop the Darlington – Bishop Auckland line for the benefit of both local residents, visitors and businesses.
- ii) To work with rail industry partners for specific improvements at stations and to the train service.
- iii) To work with existing organisations to promote the special railway and social / industrial heritage of the railway and its corridor, and to support local and regional tourism initiatives.
- iv) To promote integrated transport links to the railway, including bus, cycling and walking, and to encourage good links to the national rail network at Darlington.
- v) To support the efforts of The Weardale Railway to re-open the line from Bishop Auckland to Stanhope.
- vi) To work with the National Railway Museum to ensure the new development at Shildon is easily accessible by train and brings maximum possible social and economic benefit to the local community.
- vii) To promote active community participation at stations on the line.
- viii) To work with a wide range of local partners to ensure the railway plays a full part in the social and economic regeneration of the area.
- ix) To seek and secure funding for rail based projects

The aims of the partnership can only be changed at an annual general meeting or special general meeting with two thirds majority vote. At least four weeks' notice should be given in writing to the secretary for any change to these aims and objectives.

### 3 The Partnership

It may comprise representatives from

- Local Authorities (through the Heritage Line Members Group)
- The Countryside Agency
- Educational Bodies
- Small and medium sized businesses
- Larger Businesses
- Tourism Centres and Boards
- Development Agencies
- The Weardale Railway Company and Trust
- Voluntary, youth and community groups
- Transport Trades unions
- Local residents groups and other supporters groups
- Other bodies deemed relevant by the Partnership

The Heritage Line Partnership is a non-party political organisation and political parties are not eligible for membership.

Representatives of County, Borough and District Councils, and rail bodies (including Railtrack, train operators and other relevant agencies eg The Countryside Agency) shall be welcome to attend all meetings and participate in its activities in ways they deem appropriate.

There shall be no fixed membership fee for corporate bodies, recognising that time and other forms of support can be worth more than cash. However, the Partnership welcomes donations from corporate bodies to enable it to do its general work effectively, or for specific projects.

The Partnership may seek to nominate a president and vice-presidents who will occupy a nominal role within the Partnership. Those nominated must be persons with substantial commitment to the line and the surrounding communities, with a distinguished record of public service.

A consensus approach shall be taken in the work of the Partnership and only in exceptional circumstances shall decision making be other than by general agreement. In these circumstances, a two third vote shall be required.

The Partnership shall normally meet at least every quarter, and not less than four times per year. It may meet more frequently if the executive decided it would be appropriate.

#### **4 Partnership Executive (Steering Group)**

- President
  - Chairperson
  - Vice Chairperson
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Other Officers which may be determined
  - Plus a maximum of six others with agreed areas of responsibility.

Representatives of Durham County Council, the relevant District/Borough Councils, and the train operating companies (including the Weardale Railway) shall be welcome at all Executive Committee meetings.

Any person working on a paid basis with the Partnership, (e.g. The Community Rail Partnership Officer) may be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee without voting power. In the event of a tied vote, the chair will have the casting vote.

Members of the executive shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting of the Partnership Council. The Executive shall meet at least four times each year.

#### **5 Partnership**

Any individual who supports the aims and objectives of the Partnership may join as an individual supporter for an annual fee of £5, with a concessionary fee of £2 for pensioners, unemployed persons and those on low incomes.

#### **6 Project Teams**

There shall be as many project teams which would function as sub-committees of the Executive Committee, as is deemed appropriate by the Partnership or Executive Committee. These may include:-

- Business groups liaison
- Schools and college liaison
- Public Rights of Way / leisure and recreation
- Station projects / Integrated transport group
- Publications group
- Fundraising
- Community Groups liaison
- Wildlife habitats – green corridors
- Tourist and Leisure group
- Weardale Railway liaison
- History and Conservation
- Others as appropriate

Each team shall be represented on the Executive Committee and give regular reports on its work. The project teams may involve any person in their work whom they think is appropriate; there is no size limit for their work and they shall be free to meet as often as they wish.

Whilst wishing to give the project team as much freedom as possible, they will be expected to abide by the constitution, and in particular the section on media relations.

## **7 Annual General Meeting**

All officers will be elected at an Annual General Meeting and be subject to annual re-election. A month's notice of the Annual General Meeting shall be given, together with a full agenda. Only the Annual General Meeting, or a special general meeting (see below) shall have power to amend the constitution or the aims and objectives, and one month's notice shall be given in writing to the secretary of any proposed change.

The Annual General Meeting will normally be held in the first quarter of each year.

The quorum shall be 7.

## **8 Special General Meeting**

A special general meeting shall have all the powers of the Annual General Meeting, including power to elect or remove officers, and to amend the constitution and the Aims and Objectives.

A special general meeting shall be called if :-

- (a) two-thirds of those entitled to vote at a Partnership meeting decide it, or
- (b) ten or more members request such a meeting in writing.

A special general meeting shall be called within six weeks of a valid request.

## **9 Other Meetings**

General meetings, in addition to the Annual General Meeting, shall be at the discretion of the Partnership or Executive Committee. If a majority of individual supporters call for a general meeting, it shall be convened within four weeks.

## **10 Principles of Behaviour**

Every member of the Partnership, whether a corporate body or individual, shall be accorded the same degree of respect and consideration by all other members. Behaviour contrary to this, in

particular that which causes offence on grounds of race, gender, disability or age shall be deemed suitable grounds for expulsion from membership of the Partnership.

Whilst wishing to encourage local business development, it would be contrary to the spirit of the Partnership for one business to seek advantage over another through membership of the Partnership.

## **11 Subsidiary Operations and Charitable Status**

The Partnership may seek charitable status if members agree. It may also take part in commercial activities in accord with its aims and objectives and may need to consider the establishment of trading subsidiaries if this is the case.

## **12 Media Relations**

All communication with the media must be either agreed by the Partnership or Executive, or with the agreement of any two of :- chairperson, secretary and media relations officer if the issue is of sufficient urgency to warrant it.

## **13 General**

### **(a) Campaigning activity**

The partnership is primarily a development and promotion group not a lobbying organisation. In politics it is strictly non-partisan and welcomes the support of all who share its aims and objectives and abide by its constitution. Any campaigning activity would only be undertaken by the fullest possible agreement of all the Partnership's members, requiring a two-thirds majority vote of the Partnership Council, and only in exceptional circumstances. These would include proposals for a significant worsening of the existing service, or any major threat to the future of the line.

### **(b) Statutory and commercial organisations**

The Partnership will do its utmost to work positively with all relevant statutory and commercial bodies involved with the line. In particular it will work to sustain a close and supportive relationship with Railtrack and Arriva Trains Northern and any of their successors in the years ahead.

## **14 Finance**

The Partnership shall have a general bank account and may open specific accounts for projects, subject to approval of the Executive Committee. The treasurer will be a signatory to all cheques, plus at least one other person nominated by the Executive Committee. For the main account, this will be the chairperson plus one other named

person. A cheque shall be valid if signed by two of the three named persons.

The Partnership should be free to raise funds in whatever legal ways it deems appropriate. It may, if it desires, make donations to groups whose activities benefit the line, or, if deemed appropriate, other community activity along the line.

The accounts will be audited once a year by two auditors. The accounts will be presented to the Partnership Annual General Meeting. The Executive Committee and Partnership will expect regular reports on finance from the treasurer.

#### **15 Unforeseen Circumstances**

Any circumstances not foreseen by this constitution shall be decided on by the Executive Committee, or the Partnership meeting.