



Supporters Newsletter for the



Heritage Railway Trust

December 2017

Welcome to the pre-Christmas newsletter for 2017, which will keep you up to date with the status of the line, and the work of the Trust.

A special welcome to new members who have joined this year, your support is much appreciated, and we look forward to seeing any of you whom may wish to visit Waldersea depot on a working day. More on this later.

The Trust's confirmed interests are in the railway heritage of the area, and creating a centre of interest supporting and displaying this heritage in as many aspects as possible. However, the current local centre of interest in the railway around Wisbech, is the likelihood of it reopening, or not!

In our bid to keep everyone up to date with the politics around the line and it's possible reopening, a recent Wisbech 2020 Vision summit gave us the latest information on the proposed development of Wisbech, very much influencing decisions on the railway. Also, writing this shortly after the autumn budget, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority have an increased budget of £74 million, specifically for transport links development in the Authority's area. As we write this newsletter, the government has just announced a major investment in reopening mothballed lines from the past. Whilst the area waits to see if the Bramley Line is included in this, let's look at the proposition.



**One of the biggest stumbling blocks** to the railway reaching Wisbech, is the A47 bypass to the south of the town, pictured left. To bring the tracks into the town, it is almost certain that a road bridge would be needed to take the trunk road over the railway. When all the numbers are crunched, this factor alone would approximately double the budget for the whole line. If a bridge was to happen, the line could reasonably get as far as Weasenham Lane unimpeded, and there may be sufficient land available there to create a station with associated parking space for commuters. This is still in an industrial area, and all but a very few current and proposed residential areas are not within reasonable walking distance. But, how many people walk to their station nowadays, unless it's under half a mile?

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**The alternative**, as it saves many millions of pounds, and therefore making the project more likely to succeed, is to have the station on the south side of the A47. Taking this option gives potential for plentiful car parking facilities, and could easily be serviced by a circular town bus route. The site would lie between two of the towns roundabouts on the trunk road, a mere  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile apart, making access by car for local people quite easy. This option however does not cater for the cyclists. Peddling down the A47 is not a challenge for the faint hearted. With the prospect of further industrial development between Newbridge Lane and the A47, a pedestrian / cycle path footbridge would be a relatively inexpensive option, and possibly part of a total least cost option to bring the railway back to Wisbech.

Twitter, Facebook and other social media sources have seen many views expressed. It has been suggested that if people are getting in their car anyway, they'll drive to March station. Car parking at March is very limited, although this could change, but the roads from Wisbech to March are not ideal for 'swift' or easy commutes. The main A47 is very busy all day, and frequently backs up between Wisbech and the Guyhirn roundabouts during rush hours. The alternative 'back' roads route twists and turns, travelling through villages on it's way to March, leaving a direct 7 mile rail journey quite attractive, particularly when the train would go straight on to Cambridge or Peterborough.

### **So what could this mean for the Bramley Line Heritage Trust?**

With the line to Wisbech irreversibly dissected by the A47 trunk road, this would now leave a length of the original line, which is still intact, running up to the Weasenham Lane crossing. The district council are considering a variety of development options around the Newbridge Lane area, as mentioned, taking up the vacant space between the A47 and Newbridge Lane. But to the north of this lies approximately half a mile of the original line. Due to the linear nature of this land, it's potential for industrial development must be limited, but some of our active members view it as an attractive possibility to develop a working heritage railway presence in Wisbech. The original track was finally closed in the summer of 2000, whilst under the management of Railtrack, Network Rail's unsuccessful predecessor. The track then ran into two rail user sites north of the Weasenham Lane crossing.

However, although this section of line is bordered by active industrial sites, there may be opportunity, and space, to create an operational heritage museum centering on and around this section of line.



Newbridge Lane, track just visible, looking north.....towards.....Weasenham Lane crossing gate.

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# BACK ON TRACK

## Peterborough Festival of Railway Modelling.

Another successful couple of days was spent by members manning the roadshow stand again at the Peterborough Arena. Interest on the line and it's current status brought forth some differing viewpoints for discussion, and meeting other visiting members is always a good place to share up to date information. As has been the case for several recent years, Neil was our mainstay for the weekend, with several other members helping man the show over the two days. Our thanks to all concerned in donating their time and effort in setting up and manning, giving railway items for sale, and to Alpha signs for making up a new banner with very little notice.



Our picture shows Ray and Neil with the roadshow stand at Peterborough this year.

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## **Waldersea Depot Working Days.**

Our working days have continued throughout 2017, generally on the second Saturday of each month. During our last work meeting in November, work was started on restoring the tank wagon. If you have time and would like to get involved in this kind of activity, drop us an email and we'll include you on the working volunteers circulation list for notifications of work days etc. We have a shot below of the initial prep work being undertaken.



All that remains now is to wish One and All and very Happy Christmas, and to thank all members for their continued support during 2017. We are looking forward to 2018 in what we hope may turn out to be a very interesting year for the future of Heritage Railway interests in the Wisbech area.

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