



A RAILWAY OWNED BY THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY

TRUSTEES REPORT
AGM 25th APRIL 2022

A warm welcome to the Trustees Report for the first 18 months of the Alford Valley Community Railway Ltd. (AVCR).

I will start by giving a brief update on how we have arrived at the current position.

A meeting took place in February 2019 hosted by Aberdeenshire Council Marr Area and Donside Community Council to ascertain if there was enough support to get the old Alford Valley Railway up and running again. As good support was shown at the meeting, further meetings then took place through out 2019 culminating in a feasibility study to determine its viability. By March 2020 we had the results of the feasibility study and a community meeting was held to discuss the findings concluding that the project was viable and a small group was formed to take things forward.

Then Covid arrived and meetings moved on-line, this proved to be a benefit as long distance discussions became easier.

With help from Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS) and Shares Scotland a Community Benefit Society was setup and successfully registered in October 2020. (A BenCom conducts business for the benefit of their community. Profits are not distributed among members or external shareholders but returned to the community.)

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The first board meeting took place on Tuesday 27th October 2020 at which the major posts were filled by members from the small group. At this meeting the help and support given by Donside Community Council was acknowledged. It was at this point that the hard work would really start in securing an Asset Lease Transfer and other associated agreements.

A grant application was made to the Marr Area Committee Group towards repairs of the station roof. Due to Covid the deadline for spending the grant was extended.

By February 2021 an application for the Asset Lease Transfer had been submitted to Aberdeenshire Council and talks were taking place between AVCR and Grampian Transport Museum Trust on working together. The group had lengthy discussions on how the project would be managed and implemented with the project eventually being split into four phases, station refurbishment, engine shed and surrounding area, Haughton Park station and the track. Funding applications were made for the refurbishment of Alford station.

In April 2021 the Asset Transfer Group at Aberdeenshire Council had validated our application meaning we were now able to put in a formal application for the lease. Funding for the station refurbishment was approved. An application was also made for AVCR to become a registered charity with the charity commission and this was approved in July 2021.

We appointed solicitors Blackadders to work for us on the agreements required for the leases and on an operation agreement.

Architect Heather Smith was appointed to draw plans for the refurbishment of the station. These plans were approved by the board and subsequently a planning application and building warrant was applied for. Zero Waste Scotland surveyed the building and advised how to make the building carbon neutral.

Following advice the Business Plan was reviewed and a four year cash flow forecast was added, this was then submitted to Economic Development.

January 2022 Aberdeenshire Council approved our lease and it is now in the final stages of completion. Approval of the lease was significantly influenced by Economic Developments ratification and recommendations of the Business

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Plan. With this good news tenders were issued for the refurbishment of the station.

In February 2022 with time running out on one of our grants (GTMT) kindly gave us permission for our contractor A&B Buchan to carry out roof repairs. This now makes the station water tight again.

March 2022 saw the approval of the building warrant and after the tender process a contract was awarded and signed before the end of March for work to start as soon as the lease is approved. Further grant applications have been made to fund the next stages of the refurbishment.

Can I take this opportunity on behalf of the board to thank Donside Community Council for their continued support, Aberdeenshire Council Marr Area for their unwavering support.

Nick Mardel - Area Project Officer (Marr) whose support has been invaluable and continues to be. Janelle Clark – Area Manager (Marr) for all her help and guidance with the project and Heather Macrae – Business Development for her help and guidance with the business plan and helping us secure the lease.

I would like to thank my fellow board members for their sterling work often in difficult circumstances and to very stringent deadlines in making the project the success it is so far and keeping us on track!



Chair Alford Valley Community Railway Ltd.

25th April 2022

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