

Weardale Railways CIC Proposed Wolsingham  
Temporary Coal Disposal Point - Committee  
Statement

1.0 Good afternoon Chairman. My name is Steve Raine and I am a Director of the Weardale Railways Community Interest Company.

2.0 Our scheme today proposes to use part of our existing road and rail connected depot at Wolsingham with some adjoining land to the east side of the former Wolsingham Steelworks, as a temporary coal disposal point for a period of 48 months. The application also provides for retention of infrastructure for the railway depot on completion of the coal loading.

3.0 Our Proposals would enable coal extracted from the UK Coal Park Wall North Surface Mine, near Tow Law, to be carried by coal haulage lorries over a relatively short distance of approximately 8 km (5 miles) along the strategic highway network, the A68 and then A689 to our depot. Coal would be temporarily stocked at the Wolsingham Disposal Point and then transferred to train trucks for onward despatch by rail to the power generator market primarily in Yorkshire and the Midlands.

4.0 The current Park Wall North Scheme provides for coal haulage lorries to travel either south along the A68 then the A1(M) to Yorkshire or Nottinghamshire, and/or north along the A68, then the A692 and the A693, to then join the A1(M) at Chester-le-Street in order to travel to UK Coal's disposal point in Wardley.

5.0 Looking at the environmental impact, if you compare the number of residential properties passed (within 20 metres of the edge of the carriageway) along the currently approved Park Wall Mine haulage routes to link with the A1(M), then going north (along the A68, A692, A693 then A183 roads) the number of residential properties passed involve over 780 and going south (along the A68) over 440. (Figures provided by Professor and Dr Townsend).

(A number of villages including Toft Hill and Tow Law have properties only a pavement's width from the road.)

In contrast, the proposed coal lorry haulage route from Park Wall North along the A68, A689 then via the Site access road (including Attwood Terrace properties) into the depot coal handling area would pass less than 50 dwellings within 20 metres of the edge of the carriageway of these roads: a substantial reduction.

## 6.0 Policies

7.0 Our Proposals are consistent with the national objectives and policies for minerals planning in terms of - enabling the bulk movement of coal by rail and reducing the environmental impact of their transportation by road including Minerals Policy Statement 1.

8.0 The Durham County Minerals Local Plan (2000) also provides policy support for the transfer of minerals from road to rail transport; subject to there being no unacceptable impact in relation to traffic, amenity and the environment. We have made relevant assessments to demonstrate the environmental acceptability of the Proposals in this respect. The Planning Officer's report acknowledges that no objections have been raised by relevant technical consultees subject to the recommended planning conditions and we welcome the recommendation that permission is granted for the scheme.

These proposals will have three major benefits:

#### FIRSTLY – ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

they will enable a significant reduction in the distance to be

travelled by coal haulage lorries from the Park Wall North

Surface Mine Scheme to market and reduce carbon

dioxide emissions.

#### 8.1.1 SECONDLY – EMPLOYMENT

It is estimated that the Proposals would provide

employment for 3 workers on Site associated with coal

handling operations, up to 3 additional personnel in

relation to train preparation and shunting activities and 3

permanent way jobs off-site. It is envisaged that some of

these employment opportunities will be filled by workers

that live in the local community. In addition, there will be

indirect jobs involving drivers of the coal haulage lorries

and trains, along with plant maintenance workers.

For information British American Railway Services Ltd (the majority owner of the Railway) in Stanhope employs 4 full time staff at its HQ, Weardale Railways CIC employs 13 full time staff and there are 15 "young" workers who are part of the Future Jobs scheme. Weardale Railways CIC also have around 120 active volunteers and provide local children with work experience through the Weardale Railway Trust Junior Club. Some members are here today.

### THIRDLY – LOCAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The revenue to be derived from the Proposal will assist Weardale Railways in securing wider community benefits associated with their operation of the recently re-opened railway between Stanhope and Bishop Auckland. We believe such services along the Weardale rail line including the recent commencement of passenger services, will make a positive contribution to the community in terms of a sustainable transport option

along with the growth of tourism in Wolsingham, Weardale District and County Durham. Without the financial support of the freight opportunity this service subsidised by Weardale Railways may be in jeopardy.

## CONCLUSION

Taking the above matters into account, and bearing in mind the Officer's favourable recommendation, we would request that Members resolve to grant planning permission for the proposal having regard to the statutory development plan and all other material considerations including the benefits of the scheme.

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