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UPDATE NUMBER 28.

WINTER 2004 - 2005

ROADS SCHEME APPROVED

On September 16th, Eden District Council granted Planning Permission for the extension of the internal access roads at North Lakes Industrial Park, Flusco. This is the application which has been highlighted in "Updates" over the last 18 months.

During the consultation period, the Council had received about 170 written responses - almost all of them expressing feelings against any development which would affect the trackbed of the Railway. Many pointed out that this issue affected areas outside Eden and required wider consultation. We are grateful to everyone who took the trouble to write in support of the Railway project. Few issues attract so much comment, or run so strongly against the views of the Council.

Keswick Town Council had suggested that a site meeting take place before the Committee meeting, with all interested parties, as the effects of this decision would be felt far beyond Eden District. This was ignored. Members of Eden's Planning Committee did make a site visit, but refused an offer by CKP to provide a Railway Engineer to explain the issues, and no other organisations were represented on site. A representative of CKP was allowed just 5 minutes to speak at the Committee meeting to cover all objections - by which time the Officers had already recommended approval. CKP Railways plc suggested that changing the roads layout would allow all policies to be complied with. The road layout in the application passed is quite different from that illustrated in the planning brief supplied by the developers in 2000.

No conditions were attached to the permission to provide any protection for the Railway trackbed. The Planning Committee approved the application by 8 votes to 4.

CKP Railways plc has made a formal complaint to Eden District Council. Keswick Town Council and other local organisations have also written to Eden demanding explanations for this decision. CKP Railways plc feels that the process leading up to the decision was badly handled and may have misled some Members over the issues and consequences, hence the complaint.

Diverting around Flusco would not be a simple matter - requiring a new alignment either on high embankments over soft ground, or deep cuttings through unspoilt limestone hills. The massive earthworks, bridges and other works required would add many millions to the reconstruction cost of the line, and mean that several miles of existing trackbed would be abandoned - a wasted resource.

No physical work has yet taken place on the site, so it is not too late.

The Keswick to Penrith Railway is included in the Cumbria County Council Local Transport Plan; the Lake District National Park has held a view that the line should be reinstated as part of the National Network, and Government Planning Policy Guidance PPG13 says that trackbeds should not be damaged by any unnecessary development.

Officers of Eden District Council commissioned a review of the CKP project by consultants TPi. Apart from the aspects which Eden's Officers quoted, the report recognised that the Railway project enjoys real local support, and is progressing faster than many publicly funded projects !

CKP RESPONDS TO CRITICISM BY LOCAL MP

Penrith and the Borders MP, David Maclean, issued the following Press Release on November 3rd:

David Maclean Member of Parliament for Penrith and the Border has received a reply from the Minister at the Department for Transport stating that they are going to write to CKP Railways because their public statements have distorted the Department for Transport's position and given the impression that their Environmental Impact Study has received approval when it has not.

David Maclean wrote to the Minister on behalf of Hutton Parish Council and other residents who were concerned at a press release issued by CKP Railways suggesting that the Department for Transport had formally approved the first stage of the Environmental Impact Assessment submitted for a new Keswick to Penrith railway line.

In his letter the Minister states, "You will appreciate from the above that my Department has not given any sort of approval in this matter. We have simply given an opinion on the information to be included in an environmental statement, as we are required to do by the statutory procedure rules. Moreover, the giving of a scoping opinion is entirely without prejudice to our consideration of the merits of a scheme, including its environmental effects, where an application is eventually made. It would therefore appear from the enclosures with the parish councils letter that the promoters maybe attaching unwarranted significance to our scoping opinion. My officials will be writing to CKP Railways about this."

David Maclean said, "I am pleased the Minister has clarified this situation. Local people wrote to me because they were concerned that this project was unworkable financial pie in the sky. CKP Railways gave the impression in the press that they had somehow got government approval for the first stage of this plan. They have not got any approval whatsoever and there would have to be a public inquiry held before the government would even consider this project further."

This was CKP Railways plc's response:

The Rt Hon David Maclean's press release actually refers to concerns which were dealt with in correspondence between the Department for Transport and CKP Railways plc in September and October 2004.

On 19th May 2004 CKP Railways plc had submitted a Scoping Report for opinion as the first stage of its Environmental Impact Assessment. The Scoping Report sets out the information gathered from existing sources, and the studies which CKP Railways intends to undertake to complete the Assessment as part of the application process for a Transport and Works Order (TWO). This follows on from the Engineering Design work undertaken during the previous two years.

On the 13th July 2004, the Department for Transport replied, confirming that the scope set out by CKP Railways plc was appropriate. Their officials re-affirmed the importance of concentrating on landscape, visual impact and road traffic issues and maintaining liaison with specific environmental bodies.

These aspects are all covered in the current programme of work. In formulating that scoping opinion, the Department of Transport consulted Cumbria County Council, Eden District Council, Allerdale Borough Council, the Lake District National Park Authority, English Nature and the Environment Agency.

This was the first stage at which any official comment had been provided on the way that CKP Railways plc has approached the task, and was viewed and reported as good news - underlining the professionalism of the whole team and the appropriateness of the course of design and study work already undertaken.

This was reported in Update number 27, issued in July 2004.

In a later letter, dated 23rd September 2004, the Department for Transport asked CKP Railways to give assurances that any press releases would avoid any implication that the Department had reached a view on the merits of the scheme overall.

CKP Railways plc responded, giving such assurances on the 5th of October 2004. In that letter, the special circumstances of this project were explained - being a community driven project for which local people are providing much of the funding. In this case it is particularly important to keep the public fully and accurately informed, especially in the Keswick and Penrith areas, about such significant milestones in the project's development. No further comment, nor criticism, has been received from the Department for Transport.

It is particularly worth noting that an independent consultants' report commissioned by Eden District Council, when considering a recent planning application at Flusco, remarked that the pace with which the CKP project is progressing "equals or exceeds many publicly funded projects". These consultants also remarked on the "real local support which the project enjoys" and that the project is "very positive" in terms of national and local aims to provide better public transport into the Lake District National Park. Eden's Planning Officers remarked in their evidence to the Planning Committee that "there is no doubt that the rebuilding of the railway is feasible in engineering terms".

This is a very different picture from the "unworkable" pie in the sky stated by the Rt. Hon. Mr. Maclean.

The concerns which The Rt. Hon. Mr Maclean refers to were, in fact, addressed several weeks ago, and the Keswick to Penrith Railway project continues on its planned course. On completion of the Environmental Impact Assessment, there is a legal process to go through to complete the application for a Transport and Works Order.

CKP Railways plc has access to all the relevant specialists and resources to complete the process.

The Rt. Hon. Mr. Maclean has been kept fully informed of the project's progress through our published Updates - even though he has consistently expressed sceptical views about the scheme which "enjoys real local support".

WINTER WORKING

CKP Railways plc's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is continuing.

Work commissioned recently includes road traffic surveys, archaeological investigations (easier when there is less vegetation), and an assessment of "scour" (water damage to the foundations) of the bridges over the River Greta between Keswick and Threlkeld.

The Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) has also started a programme to repair and renew the decking on these bridges for the safety of walkers and cyclists. CKP's Engineers and other specialists have been in contact with the Authority to ensure that there is no conflict or wasted effort. The LDNPA is tackling one bridge each winter - but will apparently not be undertaking any major structural work. The bridges are starting to look a little tired after several decades since they were last properly cleaned and painted. Keeping the path open during this work may give useful insights into ways of providing a replacement foot and cycle route when the Railway is re-opened.

CKP and its team also continue to work in the background to prepare for the final stages of the project - the Transport and Works Order application, construction and operation.

Another big "thank you" to everyone who has written or spoken to us, encouraging us to keep going - it is a long haul and there are occasional frustrations. All moral support is very welcome !

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Unless you have joined the mailing list for the first time in the last few months, now is the time to renew your subscription to "Updates" for the year 2005. The next Update should be in February. A full year costs only £10 and makes a contribution to the project as well as keeping you informed.

Please send a cheque or postal order made payable to "Iceni Enterprises Ltd" to

Iceni Enterprises Ltd
1 Solway Park
CARLISLE
CA2 6TH

Please quote the 4 digit reference number from your order forms or in your email reference.

OTHER ITEMS

Euphony phonecards are not available at the moment. Euphony Communications Ltd has been taken over, and the new owners are deciding which products and services to offer in the future.

We will let you know as soon as we have any news.

Greetings cards, videos and CDs are all in stock for Christmas orders.

BONDS

More than £300,000 has now been raised, and the money is still ahead of the work. Bonds are the main source of funding for the project's development. 2005 will be an expensive year, but should bring the project near to the end of the design and environmental work.

About £65,000 has come from residents of Keswick, Penrith and the villages in between.

The next largest contributions have come from the North East and Yorkshire, and London and the South East - reflecting the origins of visitors to Keswick.

Several loyal supporters have now bought multiple Bonds - a big "thank you" from the whole team !

MEET THE ENGINEER

At Kendal Model Railway Exhibition, February 5th and 6th 2005.

MEDIA COVERAGE

For free weekly updates on transport projects in the UK, visit <http://www.transportbriefing.co.uk>

www.ckp-railways.co.uk

THINKING OF APPLYING FOR BONDS ?

**CKP Railways plc Bonds, in multiples of £100, pay interest at 4% per annum gross.
Please contact the address below for a copy of the Prospectus.
The next batch of Certificates will be issued at the end of January 2005.**

KEEPING IN TOUCH

1. If you have not already done so, please subscribe to Updates (£10 per calendar year).
25% of every subscription goes to CKP Railways plc to help fund development work.
2. If you have access to email, we can send Updates electronically - saving time, money and paper.
Please tell us if you change your e-mail address - we can not contact you otherwise !
3. Visit the website - www.ckp-railways.co.uk This site has information about the project and its history, plus photographs of the line and surrounding countryside in all seasons. The text of several earlier Updates is kept on this site. Latest news is also posted from time to time.
There is a linked site about the old Cockermouth, Keswick and Penrith Railway (the CK&PR).

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT THE PROJECT

1. Phonocards are currently not available.
We are still earning commission on any old phonocards which have been re-charged.
2. Book your rail tickets through "Chester-le-Track" for any journey on the whole National Network, including discounted fares for Railcard holders, etc. Phone Chester-le-Track on 0191-387-1387, quote "CKP Offer" and they will pay 3% of the total sale as commission to CKP Railways plc. The total sale must be at least £25 and must be paid for by credit card. Chester-le-Track also sells tickets "on-line" but these do NOT qualify for the CKP offer.
3. We collect and sell used printer and fax ink-jet and laser cartridges for recycling.
Please contact the address below if you are interested in collecting in your area.
There are no costs and no money to handle - postage is free and packaging is supplied.
4. A professionally produced video "Trains to Keswick" records the history and people along the line. It was filmed in the last few months before closure in 1972. Buy from us at £12.99 per copy (post free) and 25% of the price goes to the reconstruction project.
5. The report "Return to Keswick - the case for a New Railway" is available at £20 per copy direct from us (post free), or order through bookshops by quoting ISBN 1-902543-02-5.
£5 from every copy sold goes into the reconstruction project.
6. For a little nostalgia, Fine Art prints and greetings cards featuring a stunning winter view of the steam hauled "Lakes Express" near Bassenthwaite Lake station, painted by Eric Bottomley of the Guild of Railway Artists, are available from us, post free.
Prints (24" x 16") are £18 each, cards (6" x 8") are £1.40 each with envelopes.
25% of the price of every order placed with us goes into the reconstruction project.
7. **NEW THIS YEAR** - "CKP, only sleeping" is a CD containing hundreds of photographs of the trackbed and surrounding scenery, taken by Nigel Wright - who also manages the CKP website. See for yourself how well preserved the route is, 32 years after closure.
The CD costs £10, and each one sold makes a contribution to the re-construction project.

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No. 28, Nov 2004.

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