

Adopting Henley in Arden Railway Station

Further to my brief presentation to Beaudesert & Henley in Arden Joint Parish Council on 17 June 2019.

Making Henley in Arden Railway Station a community facility and amenity

Developing the station so as to bring the building back into use is for the community to determine what concepts and uses it wants to bring to the station that will support the community and the railway. This work has been underway for some time now by Beaudesert & Henley in Arden Joint Parish Council (JPC) and will require to be firmed up further as part of the next steps.

What the community wants at Henley in Arden Railway Station is largely up to them and the flexibility and broadness of thought/concept is not limited. The only factors that we would advise the JPC should be mindful of is the vision of half hourly interval train services to both Stratford upon Avon and Birmingham which SLPG are continuing to lobby for and are likely to be operating by 2021/22. This will change the passenger demand dynamic for the station and crucially would make certain outlets such as coffee/buffet bar type outlet much more viable and likely (i.e. Dorridge).

Station Adoption

The next step is for the JPC to formally 'adopt' the station. Let me explain what this means and crucially what it does NOT mean. By adopting the station, the JPC would be making a statement of intent to look after it as a facility in terms of its usage, environment, attraction and above all amenity. Station Adoption does NOT mean you become legally liable for buildings, repairs, infrastructure etc. There are often lease arrangements put in place to satisfy both adopters and leaseholders and these set out the level of expectation, commitment and more importantly confirm the legal and financial responsibilities which in any event are discussed and mutually agreed prior. The JPC determine what and how much it wants to do.

SLPG would strongly urge the JPC to embrace the next step and engage with West Midlands Railway Ltd (WMR) to adopt Henley in Arden Railway Station as soon as possible. In advising the Council to consider this route we suggest that the JPC join the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) as a 'Station Adopter' so as to gain access to the advice and expertise of the nationally recognised body that exists to support communities and their railway.

Funding

Once the JPC has joined ACoRP it opens up further potential funding sources for match grants from a number of funding streams. Crucially, by adopting the station the community (Henley JPC) can apply to WMR for funding towards its vision in terms of renovating Henley in Arden station and making it a community amenity. It should be noted that any grant is likely to will require match funding from other organisations but we would strongly advise not to let that put off the JPC from proceeding.

A significant fund from which grant applications will be sourced is due to become available from early next year at WMR so the timing of moving things forward now is excellent. The next few months provide a window for the JPC to work with the Fay Easton, Head of Stakeholder & Community at West Midlands Railway and Paul Webster at ACoRP to develop what it would like to see and potentially get things to a point whereby adequate information will exist that will determine the viability of any proposal to enable costs to be sought to then understand the level of funding required to renovate the station building etc.

Summary

That the JPC adopt Henley in Arden Railway Station to examine, consider and develop proposals that would support grant funding to renovate the original GWR station building providing both a community amenity for Beaudesert and Henley in Arden and by doing so supporting the greater use of rail too.