

Telford Steam Railway Report for the Parish Council AGM.

Telford Steam Railway were able to re start running weekend services during the summer as Government Covid restrictions were eased and ensured that all precautions were taken in line with recommendations. Although applying for various national grants to offset our fixed costs during lockdown, we were unsuccessful, this was disappointing as many other heritage railways got considerable funds from various sources. We were grateful to get some help from Telford and Wrekin Council. Our volunteers worked hard to get the railway ready to accept passengers again and we enjoyed several successful weekends and a couple of specialist events attended by enthusiasts from throughout the country.

Our large Class 37 Diesel (the one with the yellow front) made its first public appearance which resulted in great interest from railway enthusiasts. The diesel was purchased and has been restored at Telford, by a couple of our members, over the last few years.

The decision was made during the summer, to go ahead with the Polar Express in November / December 2021, the future was uncertain at the time, as no one knew what the Covid rules would be at the time of the event. Tickets sold well and many trains were completely sold out. Passengers travelled from throughout the country and we had a very positive response. The event was organised by an almost new group this year, all volunteer members of the railway. It is a tremendous achievement for a small railway like ours, to host such a large event and cater for over 24,000 passengers over a 6 week period, operating 6 nights a weeks with 4 trains a night. Locals residents who live alongside the railway line from Lawley to Doseley were offered free tickets for the dress rehearsal trains. As the Jiggers Bank Park and Ride site was unavailable this year due to it still being used as a Covid testing site, Telford and Wrekin Council were most helpful in providing us with a Town Centre car park to operate our park and ride service from. The aim as always, is to avoid any passengers using the Horsehay area for street parking. All proceeds from this event are ploughed back into helping to develop our railway.

Another success of the year was to see the return to Telford of our own locomotive 5619. The locomotive has been away from Telford for 14 years undergoing maintenance and out on hire under the control of a third party. Following lengthy discussions and a new signed agreement, sees it return under the control of Telford Steam Railway. It was used to haul all the Polar Express Trains and is planning to go out on hire to the Llangollen Railway for this summer, before returning for Polar Express 2022.

Our AGM was held at the village hall and a good turnout of members heard about the successful year and the exciting plans that the railway have for moving forward, our president Lord Grocott attended and all 5 directors were re elected. New track laying equipment will be purchased to help with the track laying towards Doseley, which we will hopefully start this year. Drainage work needs to be done in the cutting just beyond the Horsehay and Dawley Station and work to re align the platform at Lawley is also required, in addition to re laying the section of line that crosses the road into the loco shed. We also intend to move forward with the rebuilding of the Horsehay and Dawley Signal Box, when planning permission is agreed.

The railway are most grateful for the grants that we have received from the Parish Council in respect of the signal box and the Queens Jubilee celebrations.

We were delighted that three of our under 18 volunteers, were finalists in the recent Telford and Wrekin Pride in the Community Awards.

We reopened on Easter Sunday and will be operating on weekends and bank holidays through to the end of September.

Paul Sanderson