

**TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992**

**TRANSPORT AND WORKS (APPLICATIONS AND OBJECTIONS PROCEDURE)**

**(ENGLAND AND WALES) RULES 2006**

**APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED BRECON MOUNTAIN RAILWAY (LIGHT RAILWAY) ORDER**

(an Order to authorise the Vale of Rheidol Railway to operate the Brecon Mountain Railway pending the completion of an asset sale agreement)

**CONSULTATION REPORT**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background and benefits.....	3
3. Operations.....	4
4. Statutory consultation.....	4
5. Non-statutory consultation.....	4
6. Publicising the TWAO application.....	5
7. Conclusion.....	5

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Since 1980 the Brecon Mountain Railway Company Limited (BMR) has been authorised to operate and maintain the Brecon Mountain Railway Company by the Brecon Mountain Railway (Light Railway) Order 1980 (the Original Order). The Original Order has allowed the BMR to operate and maintain a passenger railway of approximately 6 miles in length from Pant Station to Torpantau.
- 1.2. The Vale of Rheidol Railway Limited (VoR) is now applying to the Welsh Ministers for an Order under the Transport and Works Act 1992 to transfer statutory authority for the operation and maintenance of the Brecon Mountain Railway to the VoR pending the completion of an asset purchase agreement.

## **2. Background and benefits**

- 2.1. The Brecon Mountain Railway was conceived as a heritage project over 40 years ago when a search started to find a suitable site to build and operate a steam railway using locomotives collected from around the world.
- 2.2. The choice of the Merthyr Tydfil location was heavily influenced by its industrial heritage. At one time Merthyr Tydfil was the greatest iron making town in the world, most of the very early railways used rails rolled in Merthyr Mills. Merthyr witnessed, in 1804, the trial run of the world's first steam railway locomotive built by Richard Trevithick.
- 2.3. The current railway runs for about six miles from its southern terminus at Pant station, adjacent to the abandoned Morlais Quarries, which supplied limestone to the iron works in the area, again by rail. In fact there were railways everywhere, all built to secure the intense activity generated by the iron industry and mines in the area. The northern terminus is at Torpantau, deep in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, giving users access to an area otherwise difficult to reach.
- 2.4. All of the operation and maintenance on the railway is carried out by the railway's own staff. In addition to the routine servicing and repairs, complete locomotive rebuilds are carried out using some machinery dating back over 100 years, yet still performing a useful task. For example, the wheel lathe and hydraulic press were built in the 1890s and are still both operational and useful. New boilers are manufactured and even complete locomotives built from scratch. All the carriages and wagons in use were built here.
- 2.5. The Vale of Rheidol Railway and the BMR were in common ownership for a period after the privatisation of the Vale of Rheidol Railway in 1989. Under the former British Rail ownership the Vale of Rheidol had been allowed to deteriorate significantly to the point where closure was a serious possibility. The Brecon Mountain Railway was successful in its bid to acquire the

Vale of Rheidol and thereafter was able to recover both technically and commercially to the point where it was again able to operate on a stand-alone basis after 1996. These foundations have enabled the Vale of Rheidol to flourish. It has been able to implement a continuous program of development that continues to this day with the very recent opening of its new museum and visitor centre at Aberystwyth station.

- 2.6. Notwithstanding the formal de-merger of 1996, the two railways have continued to maintain close links. It is common knowledge that heritage railways have experienced considerable operational difficulties post-COVID and cost-of-living issues. Most of their income derives from visitor-generated revenue and the Brecon Mountain Railway is no exception.
- 2.7. Thanks to a very generous charitable donation the VoR is now in a position to reunite the two railways and to maintain and develop the Brecon Mountain Railway in a way that would be much more difficult in a stand-alone commercial environment for the benefit of staff and visitors alike.

### **3. Operations**

- 3.1. The BMR operates a passenger service on 166 days each year normally starting 2 weeks before Easter and finishing in late September before resuming again during the October half term and again in December with the running of 20 Santa Specials.
- 3.2. As referred to above, the VoR requires the statutory authority that the TWAO would confer to operate and maintain the Brecon Mountain Railway in place of the BMR.

### **4. Statutory consultation**

- 4.1. Rule 10(2)(d) of the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 requires a report summarising all the consultations that have been undertaken including confirmation that the applicant has consulted all those named in column (2) of the tables in Schedules 5 and 6 to those Rules where authority is sought for works or other matters described in column (1) of those tables, or if not, an explanation of why not.
- 4.2. In this case, there are no works to be authorised and there are not relevant Schedule 5 and 6 consultees.

### **5. Non-Statutory consultation**

- 5.1. As no works are to be authorised under the Order or amendments to the locality, there have been no local consultations. However, a press release announcing the proposed acquisition of the Brecon Mountain Railway was initially published on 26 October 2023 and the following have been sent an advance copy of the application:

5.1.1. Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council;

5.1.2. Powys County Council

5.1.3. Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority;

5.1.4. Mid Glamorgan Area Scout Council;

5.1.5. Dwr Cymru;

5.1.6. Natural Resources Wales;

5.1.7. Gerald Jones, MP; and

5.1.8. Dawn Bowden, MS.

5.2. Although not a formal requirement, the local planning authority has also been advised in writing of the application for the Transport and Works Order.

## **6. Publicising the TWAO application**

6.1. The VoR website includes an announcement about the TWAO application so that visitors to the VoR website are made aware of the application. Copies of the application and supporting documents are available to download from the website.

6.2. A duplicate announcement with a link to the VoR website has been published on the BMR website.

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1. Due to the limited nature of this application and the fact that it is not a works order, there are no relevant Schedule 5 or 6 consultees.