

Funding for Weardale Railway

Durham County Council's cabinet has approved more than £2m of funding for the Weardale Heritage Railway Line.

The railway line stretches from Bishop Auckland to Eastgate, connecting a number of towns and villages and has open stations at Witton le Wear, Wolsingham, Frosterley and Stanhope. The Auckland Project (TAP) concluded the purchase of the Heritage Railway out of administration earlier this year and is seeking to secure the required certificates and authorisation from the Department of Transport to allow trains to run on the line.

TAP's business plan predicts that the Weardale Railway will bring an additional 160,000 visitors into Bishop Auckland and Shildon, providing training, employment and learning opportunities, with a GVA impact of £3.2m.

A report for the cabinet recommended that a grant of £2.1m be provided to the railway line. It said: "The opening of the heritage railway and the continued investment and associated economic leverage in Bishop Auckland is important to the county and local area. The financial ask, however, is significant and comes at an unprecedented time. Taking all factors into account, it is suggested that the council supports the project and provides a grant of £2.1m."

The cabinet has now approved the funding, subject to conditions.