

Following attendance at the December 2015 meeting of Coniston Parish Council (CPC) by a member of the Bluebird Project (BBP) it was proposed by CPC that a group be should be convened to make arrangements for the proving trials at a date to be confirmed. The group was made up of members of CPC, Coniston Business Forum, Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) representatives, along with members of BBP and other representatives from the community.

From the outset the Bluebird Heritage Festival Group (BHFG) has been looking to make the proving trials a significant event with the aim of fostering interest in Bluebird and the Campbell story, providing a high class spectator experience whilst managing the event to create as little disruption as possible to the residents of Coniston and the South Lakeland area. In considering suitable dates the opportunity to extend the "shoulder" season (Spring and Autumn) was clearly understood at the beginning of discussions with BBP, with the caveat from BBP that they did not believe that activity within the winter months would be appropriate.

In saying that, given that there was no date available for the return of Bluebird to Coniston, the group's main focus was to establish the requirements for running an event which was scheduled to take place over 2 weeks, creating the right contacts within and outside the BHFG, working towards securing sponsorship, car parking provision, traffic management and proposed events for visitors that could be held in the village when the proving trials were not taking place.

Recently a Limited Company was formed to act as a bona fide vehicle to work under, this would deal with such matters as third party liability insurance and to aid with discussions with outside organisations and sponsors. If any surplus income was generated this would be passed on to good causes within the area via a transparent process. The meetings have been held regularly, however notes have not been circulated publicly. This was a conscious decision to allow facts to be circulated as and when available and appropriate, rather than speculative, incomplete or incorrect information.

Until late November 2017 a date was never available to work to, although the LDNPA has stated that they did not see the high season as a workable option given the existing pressures on the area with regard to accommodation, traffic etc - both on the roads, other lake users and the overall management of the event. The village businesses could also cater better for the Bluebird related visitors during low-mid season periods rather than at the height of the visitor season.

The overall view of CPC is that a 2 week festival is both welcome and manageable but it needs to be when the village is able to cope with the influx of extra visitors. The LDNPA stance was that proving trials should only take place during weekdays and out of school holidays. The BHFG continues to try to mediate in this regard believing that weekends should be included and a calendar period be established that allowed some school holiday dates to be considered.

CPC and the BHFG continues to work with both BBP and LDNPA to try to ensure that the formal proving trials can be held as part of a Bluebird Heritage Festival on Coniston Water at a time of year that suits Coniston as a village, the LDNPA and the operational requirements of BBP.

A vast amount of work was undertaken 10 years ago to have the Coniston byelaws amended to enable the proving trials to take place on Coniston Water. This was done by representatives of the BBP negotiating with the LDNPA, it would be very disappointing if this was all wasted. The amended byelaws for Coniston stated permission for the proving trial would be granted "having regard, inter alia, to public health and safety requirements, the timing of the event and environmental considerations". We hope that the BBP will accept our open invitation to conduct the proving trials on the lake given that Coniston Water is uniquely linked with Bluebird and Donald Campbell. We, as a village, look forward to welcoming Bluebird home.