

## **Operation Undercover 4: Background to the Project**

The beginnings of the project to extend the existing Carriage & Wagon works to provide undercover storage for more carriages goes back about seven years, when a group of C&W volunteers formed a project team to attempt to make an idea into reality.

The first task was to survey the site to the east and south of the existing building, and as the leader of the team, Larry Lamb, is a professional surveyor, this was carried out 'in-house'. From the survey, it was concluded that it would be entirely possible to construct a four-road storage shed with the potential to house up to twenty carriages, plus a new office, workshop and meeting room complex on the eastern flank.

Also, as part of the project, a new parts storage shed is planned to be constructed as a separate unit at the south end of the C&W yard.

The next task was to arrange for a full professional soil analysis of the site, and this was funded with generous support from the Bluebell Trust. The analysis confirmed that the site was suitable for the proposed scheme.

The team could then move to the next stage of the project, which required detailed building design work and plans to be completed, in preparation for a planning application to the local council. At this stage, the team made a formal presentation to the BRPS trustees and the plc board, to appraise them of the status and potential of the project, clarify the financial case for the project, and to seek authority to progress to planning application.

Authority was given, but in view of the priority at that time for fundraising for the Northern Extension, the project team were tasked with raising the funds within the C&W Department for the planning application stage. This resulted in about two and a half years of fundraising by the team and C&W colleagues, and very many generous supporters came forward with donations or items to sell. A total of about £45,000 was needed to fund the building design work, plans production and the costs associated with compiling and submitting the planning application.

By the summer of 2011, the required funds had been raised, assisted by some match-funding for part of the amount from the Bluebell Trust. The planning application was duly submitted to Mid-Sussex Council, and in October 2011 planning consent was given for the full scheme.

Subsequently, a funding application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, but the HLF requirements to provide sufficient public access and interpretation facilities within the building resulted in significant on-costs. This culminated in a marginal cost to benefit situation, and the application was turned down.

The proposal now is to revert to the original, lower cost plan for a basic carriage storage shed, simply to protect another twenty of the Railway's heritage fleet, and for which our Funding Director, Roger Kelly, is now launching a fundraising appeal for the first stage of the construction.