

## Full steam ahead, going down south

Feilding Herald    Last updated 15:34 13/04/2010

Feilding Steam Rail set off yesterday morning with a full train of 86 passengers and crew, many from Britain and Australia, heading to the South Island in a spectacular fashion.

Two steam engines took the carriages from the Feilding Railway Station to Wellington and onto the Picton Ferry south. The Mainline Steam JA 1211 and the Feilding WAB 794 created a double-header spectacular, allowing the WAB to remain cold for loading onto the ferry.

The WAB was recently completely overhauled and passed its 10-year survey, so it is in good nick for the two-week excursion.

"It's been an expensive exercise, so we need the trip to make some money," Feilding Steam rail manager Russell Wiseman said.

This is the second steam train excursion the Feilding Steam Rail group has taken to the South Island. More impressively, it is the second to head to the West Coast – which is no mean feat.

The team organising the trip are all volunteers.

Some of those on board enjoyed the trip so much they are doing it again.

The 14-day trip takes in Christchurch, the Weka Pass private line and through to Greymouth via Arthur's Pass.

On the West Coast the steam train will take locals on trips to Hokitika, Reefton and Westport.

Most of these short trips were booked out a month ago.

Two extra carriages from the Trans Alpine will be added to the train to take extra passengers from Christchurch to the West Coast.

On Saturday the steam excursion visits Reefton – the first time a steam engine has used this line in about 20 years.

Mr Wiseman said a great deal of paperwork is required to take a steam train on such a journey.

Police have been informed in each district because of motorists who stop to watch as the train passes. They also had to check if fire permits were needed in each fire district they travel through.