

West Somerset Railway 2021 Funding Appeal

Dear West Somerset Railway Supporter

In the last 15 months, the West Somerset Railway has been through one of the most challenging periods in its 45 year operating history. Having stabilised its finances in 2019 and preparing for the 2020 season, the arrival of Covid 19 disrupted everything and led to a major loss of income. Despite the opportunity to reopen in May 2021, there is every indication that the PLC can expect significantly reduced revenues and continued uncertainty around the appetite for visitors to travel on heritage railways.

In order to get through this year, therefore, and survive the coming 2021/22 winter period with the need to undertake essential maintenance and repair work, the PLC together with its two supporting charities, the West Somerset Railway Association and the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust, is launching this Appeal to secure the necessary funding to help us close the gap.

In 2020, the Covid 19 Appeal generated in excess of £500,000 in donations to one of the three WSR family organisations.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

In October 2020, the PLC was also successful in obtaining a grant from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage which gave us £864,900. This meant that we could afford to employ staff, take additional protective measures against Covid 19 and undertake essential infrastructure maintenance and renewal work. However, this money had to be spent by March 2021.

With the delayed re-opening in 2021, and the restrictions we believe we will be under, it is now clear that the railway is going to need further funding to enable it to continue its operation until things (hopefully) return to normal in 2022.

Although the railway reopened on 22nd May this year, visitor uncertainty, Covid 19 precautions and the work necessary to complete the new Seaward Way level crossing will continue to have a significant impact on income levels for some time to come.

At the moment, due to Government requirements, we have to:

- Rely predominantly on advance bookings;
- Load trains to no more than 50% capacity;
- Keep the intermediate stations closed for passengers and visitor use;
- Operate our cafes and shops to no more than a limited number of people.

We need a minimum of around **£150,000** per month to be able to meet our obligations and to run the railway safely and provide a quality experience for visitors.

This does not include the investment required for infrastructure maintenance and renewal which the PLC Board estimates requires a target investment of around **£500,000** per annum.

Our Fundraising Target for the PLC in the 2021 Appeal is therefore a very ambitious one namely:

£1million!

This will help us to:

- Meet the shortfall between our operational costs and predicted revenue for the season;
- Cover our overhead costs which the PLC is working to keep to a minimum this year;
- Provide additional funds to prepare for the winter infrastructure engineering programme; and
- Prepare for and carry out essential work in mechanical engineering and operations in preparation for the 2022 season.

How to Donate

Donations can be made directly to the PLC who will ensure that this goes directly towards the cost of running the railway

There is a very straightforward donations form that comes with this letter. Ideally, it would be wonderful if you felt able to make that a regular donation over a period of time, such as via direct debit.

We really do hope that you can keep supporting the WSR in these uniquely difficult times and so enable the railway to survive through the rest of this season and into next year, when we really hope that 2022 will see the full re-launch of our much-loved premier GWR branch line.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Jones-Pratt

WSR PLC Chairman