

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of Board of Trustees held on Thursday 18th November 2021 at 5.30pm by Zoom video conference

Present: Steve Williams (Chairman) (SW) Geoff Evens (GE) Mike Thompson (MT)
Don Fraser (DF) Matt Jackson (MJ) Martin Brown (MB)
Helen Anson (HA) Ian Coleby (IC)

601. Apologies

Action

Received from Mike Lee

602. Conflicts of Interest

No new conflicts of interest were reported.

603. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16th September 2021

All agreed

604. Matters Arising

a) Museum Curator

It was noted that Ian Camp had been appointed to the role for both Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor and was already proving to be a valuable addition to the Trust.

b) Gauge Museum Formal Launch Event

This was still outstanding and would be taken forward in the New Year.

MT

c) PLC Shares Owned by the Trust

It was noted that the reconciliation exercise with the PLC had now been completed.

d) Charity Commission-EGM outcome

Problems were still being experienced in logging the new articles and EGM outcome with the Charity Commission. SW would continue to work toward a resolution.

SW

605. Proposed Developments at Bishops Lydeard

Further to the report from MT at the last Board meeting, matters had progressed significantly with the PLC having supported the development of an integrated business case covering Station House, cattle dock and siding covered accommodation together with a potential extension of the Gauge Museum. MT said that he was in the process of obtaining quotations from roofing contractors in relation to repairs to Station House but this with proving problematic.

SW outlined the proposals for the cattle dock covered accommodation and Gauge Museum extension. MB summarised the benefits and opportunities in terms of the museum, visitor access to carriages and the additional space for artefact display. Station House as an exhibition space, access to the garden and opportunities for environmental improvements (particularly

if hospitality facilities were included and offers such as cream teas not just to visitors but the local community as well) could be a significant selling point to encouraging people to visit and use Platform 1.

Next steps were to engage consultants to help prepare the Site Development Plan which was fundamental to the business case. A client specification had been prepared (circulated with the agenda) and it was proposed to use consultants who were already familiar with Bishops Lydeard from previous development work.

Costs would need to be funded by the Trust although the Association were also at this stage prepared to make a contribution. A formal project team would be assembled in the New Year to take matters forward. This would include MT, SW (with links to the PLC), MB, GE and Chris Austin. Ian Camp would also be consulted.

The Board endorsed the approach and approved the next steps as outlined.

SW/MT

606. Accreditation Template-Gauge Museum

GE referred to the previously circulated template which set out the actions required of the Trust as part of the process to achieving formal accreditation. Work was progressing on each of the requirements and GE would keep the Board updated.

GE

607. Gauge Museum Opening-Christmas/New Year

The Board considered the merits or otherwise of opening the museum during this period. Given that the Winterlights and Santa trains would all be running from platform 2 and tickets were pre-booked, opportunities for visitors to come to Platform 1 would be limited. It was therefore agreed that the Museum would remain closed to visitors although it would be open MRG members to have operating sessions and to continue work on layout maintenance.

608. Model Railway Acquisition

MJ explained the background. It was agreed that he should make further enquiries of the current owner to identify the size of the layout and the range of equipment being offered and report back.

MJ

609. Heritage Carriages Report and Implementation Plan

The Report commissioned by the Board from Andrew Forster was received. SW reminded Trustees of the context and the need to make some strategic decisions which would influence future work and fundraising. MB summarised the key recommendations in the implementation plan and stressed the need to prioritise work on those vehicles identified as being of greatest heritage value and which were in the best condition.

Following extensive discussion, the Board concluded that:

- The aim was to create a set of seven heritage vehicles with one spare for operational use.
- The 4 coaches identified as priorities should be programmed for further work and fundraising.
- Further consideration should be given to any vehicles deemed beyond economic repair.

- A formal project plan should be developed both for internal work and external funding purposes. This should focus on being able to “tell a story about the historical significance of each of the vehicles” both as a marketing tool for the programme but also to be able to interest potential funders.

MB would take the lead on the project plan development and implementation with support from Chris Austin and the Restoration Team. SW would take the lead on fundraising when proposals were ready.

SW

610. Draft AGM Minutes.

The draft minutes were received and approved by the Board with the following minor amendments

- Confirmation of total proxy votes received and
- Addition of the Q and A material on conclusion of the formal meeting.

SW

611. Finance Report

The Treasurers Report was received. No significant issues were identified.

612. People Engagement Group.

MB, HA and SW updated the Board on the work of PEG. Key points to note were:

- The PLC had approved the appointment of an Environmental Adviser on a voluntary basis and a role profile was being finalised by PEG with a view to advertising early in the New Year.
- A number of initiatives were being put forward for action including e.g. installation of electric charging points at stations.
- A number of events were being proposed in connection with the Platinum Jubilee next Year including a Victorian themed day.
- Engaging with Station Masters and Friends Groups on environmental initiatives and opportunities
- WSR TV was being reactivated with a new editorial board.

MB was the Trust Representative on PEG supported by HA (SW for the PLC).

MB

613. Williton Rental Agreement-Swindon Shed

The Trust would give consideration to its requirements following further discussion between MB and Chris Austin.

MB

614. Proposed Heritage Infrastructure Funding Support

Following a request from the PLC to consider further funding support in 2022 to infrastructure maintenance and improvement, the Board approved 4 projects to a total value of £30,000. SW reported that Blue Anchor up relay and catch point reinstallation was now scheduled for February 2022 as part of the Winter works programme. MT to confirm decision to PLC.

MT

615. 2022/2024 Business Plan

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

SW

616. Education and Learning Officer

The Board agreed an uplift for Helen Anson's new contract to be reviewed annually in line with RPI and to be maintained above the national minimum wage level during the lifetime of the contract.

SW/DF

617. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday, 20th January 2022 at 5:30 PM