



Museum Operating Policy

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Introduction and Purpose.

- 1) Welcome to the new Museum Management Plan for the Gauge Museum at Bishops Lydeard station and the Blue Anchor Museum at Blue Anchor station, forming one Museum on two sites. The purpose of the Plan is to set out how the Museum, in its reinterpreted and reorganised form, will be managed as part of the heritage responsibilities of the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust (WSRHT).
- 2) The Plan also summarises how the Trust will fulfil its obligations in relation to the artefacts and archive material located within the Museum and those items which are stored for historical research and future use.
- 3) The Gauge Museum is located within the old Goods Shed at Bishops Lydeard station. The Goods Shed is of a Bristol and Exeter railway design and built in 1862. Between July 2018 and February 2021, the Gauge Museum has been extensively remodelled to both refresh and reinterpret the story of the West Somerset Railway, its heritage, socio-economic and ‘people’ histories. It is one of two Museums currently run by the Trust the other of which is located at Blue Anchor Station.
- 4) The Gauge Museum Project has been generously funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund together with contributions from the Trusts own resources. This has provided a fantastic opportunity to reinvigorate the Museum, the collections on display and to harness the benefits of modern technology within a heritage environment. In doing so, the Trust believes that this will improve the visitor experience and enhance their understanding of both the history of the railway and as it is today as one of the United Kingdom’s leading heritage railways.
- 5) The Blue Anchor Museum is sited in the Waiting Room on platform 1. It is currently undergoing an extensive remodelling programme, to refresh and reinterpret the story of the West Somerset Railway. The Trust believes that this will improve the visitor experience and enhance their understanding of both the history of the railway and as it is today as one of the United Kingdom’s leading heritage railways.

- 6) The Management Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as further developments and changes occur both within the Museum itself and in its relationship to the rest of the heritage experience across the West Somerset Railway.

The Gauge Museum Described:

Lower Ground Floor.

- 1) The Gauge Museum is located on Platform 1 at Bishops Lydeard station which is on three floors.
- 2) The Lower Ground Floor has been remodelled such as to provide space for a range of different activities including:
 - a) Small, dedicated exhibitions
 - b) Presentations and talks
 - c) Small group work
- 3) It is also equipped for audio-visual use and mobile exhibits. The permanent display is focused on the walls with a particular emphasis on the WSR during wartime.
- 4) The Lower Ground Floor is also the principal location for work in the Museum in connection with the Trusts Learning and Education Programme and Community Outreach activities. These involve visits from local primary schools, community groups and other organisations who want to learn about the history of the railway and its contribution to the socio-economic, cultural and leisure development of West Somerset.

Ground Floor.

- 1) The Ground Floor is the main exhibition area and contains a 'storybook' of the West Somerset Railway which is located around the walls of the Museum in chronological order. The centrepiece exhibit is Sleeping Car no 9038. Built 1897, it was one of three Sleeping Cars built for the Great Western Railway (GWR) Paddington to New Milford boat train service (from Fishguard in 1906), this first class car was in service until 1931. This artifact is complemented by a signal box display and a number of other artefacts which are designed to illustrate the working railway including the WSR as it is today. The Trust has recently initiated a one-way system which allows visitors to enter the Museum from the platform and to exit the building from the south-western corner via a ramp onto the rear roadway and then back into the station or to the car park.
- 2) The Ground Floor is also where the Gauge Museum Office is located. The WSRHT Registered office is sighted in the original Station building on platform 1.
- 3) The Sleeping Car can be entered when a volunteer Steward is present to explain its history, contents and construction. The vehicle has an internal lighting display and features a number of mannequins in period dress.

Upper Floor.

- 1) This is where Gauge Junction, the model railway can be seen. The Model Railway Group is an integral part of the Trust and is run by the Group whose members have an age range between 16 and 22. New participants are always welcome; a number of young people subsequently can go on to volunteer in

other areas of the West Somerset Railway. All the landscape, buildings and other structures have been constructed by Group members and the rolling stock is owned by various members of the group, with a small number of locomotives and other vehicles belonging to the Trust.

Gauge Museum Opening Times and Activities.

- 1) The Trust aims to have the Museum open on as many days that the WSR is running but this is subject to volunteer availability. One of the objectives of the Gauge Museum Project agreed with the National Heritage Lottery Fund is that the Trust should recruit additional new volunteers to bolster its workforce in pursuit of this aim and we have had significant success in this regard. A particular focus for the Museum is also to be open for special events including Galas.
- 2) On days when the Museum is open, this will normally be from around 9:30 AM (09.30 hours) to 4:30 PM (16.30 hours) when at least one volunteer will be on duty in the main Museum. The model railway requires and at least two operators on duty which is mainly over the weekend and Gala periods.
- 3) As part of broadening its offer to visitors and the local community, the Museum should also be available to host small groups both in terms of its Learning and Education programme for primary schoolchildren plus when other organisations and groups may wish to visit. This will include the facility for talks and presentations and other interactive functions some of which will take place out of hours by prior arrangement. The Trust has a good range of audio-visual equipment and accessories available for use by prior arrangement.
- 4) It is also the case that the Trust wishes to be able to offer different perspectives on the West Somerset Railway from time to time including changes in artefacts and exhibits as well as hosting small exhibitions e.g., art, photography or fashion related clothing etc.
- 5) One facility that the Trust is particularly keen to promote is the opportunity to use the Sleeping Car on the WSR itself on a limited number of occasions during any operating season. Whilst the Sleeping Car is in use (by arrangement only), the intention is to replace it with an equally attractive exhibit including locomotives where possible.

The Blue Anchor Museum Described.

- 1) The Blue Anchor Museum is located on Platform 1. It occupies the former downside Waiting Room which is currently being refurbished.
- 2) The displays in the museum will be, in the main, mostly storyboards and self – explanatory exhibits.

The Blue Anchor Museum Opening Times and Activities.

- 1) It is planned that the Museum will not be stewarded. The opening and closing of the Museum will depend on Blue Anchor station staff.
- 2) The Trust aims to have the Museum open on as many days that the WSR is running but this is subject to volunteer availability. A particular focus for staffing the Museum will be during special events and Galas.
- 3) On days when the Museum is open, this will normally be from around 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM.
- 4) As part of broadening its offer to visitors and the local community, the Museum should be available to

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host small groups both in terms of its Learning and Education programme for primary schoolchildren plus when other organisations and groups may wish to visit. This will include the facility for talks and presentations and other interactive functions some of which will take place out of hours by prior arrangement. The Trust has a good range of audio-visual equipment and accessories available for use by prior arrangement.

- 5) It is also the case that the Trust wishes to be able to offer different perspectives on the West Somerset Railway from time to time including changes in exhibits as well as hosting small exhibitions e.g., art, photography or fashion related clothing etc.

Managing the Museum.

Roles and Responsibilities.

- 1) Blue Anchor. In 1985, the Great Western Railway's 150th anniversary year, the Trust opened a small Museum in the down side waiting room at Blue Anchor Station.
- 2) The Gauge Museum. The Trust assumed responsibility for the Museum in January 2017. The Museum (having been known as the Visitor centre) was originally the responsibility of the West Somerset Railway Association (WSRA) and was established in the 1990's.
- 3) Both Museums are leased from the West Somerset Railway PLC. Whilst upkeep of the exterior of the building and the overall structure lies with the PLC, maintenance and repairs to the interior of the Museum is the responsibility of the Trust. This is a flexible arrangement.
- 4) The Museums are managed by a Curator supported by a group of volunteers. Together, they run the Museums on a day-to-day basis.
- 5) The Gauge Junction, model railway group of volunteers (sited in the Gauge Museum) are responsible solely for the model railway, it's upkeep and running, which includes keeping the upper floor area clean and tidy.
- 6) Volunteers act as guides to visitors when they Museum is open to the public. A dedicated learning team takes responsibility for school and junior visits.
- 7) The Curator is also responsible for facilitating access to the Museum for research purposes by prearrangement.
- 8) In addition to the limited storage available in cupboards around the Museum, the curator and the Museum team are also responsible for the management of a dedicated storage facilities located to the rear of Bishops Lydeard station. This contains a range of artefacts and archive material.
- 9) The MODES collections management system is being used to record all artifacts, papers, books and visual recordings and held by the Trust.
- 10) The Museum staff work closely with the station staff and ensure that the Museum, when open, works as part of the wider station experience for visitors and passengers alike.
- 11) When primary school groups as part of the Learning and Education programme, or other community organisations and gatherings are present in the Museum, their organisation, behaviour and use of Museum facilities is the responsibility of the Curator, Museum Stewards or

the Trust's Learning Officer. Outside of the Museum area their organisation, behaviour and use of WSR facilities is the responsibility of the WSR Station Staff; it is critical that all railway legislation, rules and regulations are always adhered to.

- 12) Responsibility for security of the building rests with the Curator. This includes access to the Trust Office or Trust Registered Office and safekeeping of donations until collected by the Treasurer.
- 13) The Trust is a member of the Museums in Somerset, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, SW Federation of Independent Museums and Art Galleries, Industrial Heritage Networks together with the Association of Independent Museums. These networks provide the opportunity to keep updated on the latest developments in heritage Museum management, governance, collections and other areas and are an important part of helping to maximise the visitor experience when visiting the Museums at Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor stations.

Policies and Procedures.

- 1) In addition to working to the policies framework of the PLC, in respect of the Museum its operational management is underpinned by application of several specific core policies related to heritage, collections and conservation care. These come under the responsibility of the Trust or Museum Curator supported by a small team of volunteers and can be accessed either by reference to the Archivist, Curator or on the Trusts website (www.wsrht.co.uk).
- 2) The Trust has recently invested in the MODES software model. This provides for a step change in accuracy of record-keeping and the application of the objectives within the Trust policies particularly in relation to Collections, Collections Care and Conservation and Cataloguing and Catalogue Management, numbering systems for entries and accessioning.
- 3) The Trust will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. The Trust is using the SPECTRUM 5 primary procedures for collections management. It also considers limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 4) Review and updating of each of the policies shown on the Web Site is a continuous process and will be part of the overall management of the Museum and its collections.

Potential Future Developments.

- 1) Having completed the Gauge Museum Project, the Trust is examining the potential for further developments. Although the Gauge Museum building itself is constrained by its location adjacent to the station platform and at the back by an access road, there is potential for extending southwards towards the cattle dock. The relocation of the old archive store provides for consideration of such a scheme. The Museum lacks toilet facilities including those with disabled access and space for conducting research and artefact examination.
- 2) The possibility of extending the covered area to accommodate additional heritage vehicles is also something that might be considered in conjunction with the PLC.
- 3) One of the major objectives in the Trusts Business Plan is to seek formal Accreditation of the Museum from the Arts Council. The preliminary work has been completed and with changes to the Trust Articles approved at the 2020 AGM, the Trust will now be moving to the next stage of its application. Museum Accreditation is a framework for running a resilient Museum that continually improves the way it is run, the way it looks after its collections and the services it offers to the public. An internationally recognised Museum standard, which is subject to a 5-

yearly Review. If successful, this will not only provide formal recognition of the progress made by the Trust in the Museum but will be an invaluable aid to future fundraising by the charity.

- 4) The other key development signalled in the Trust Business Plan for 2021 will be a review of the role and function of Blue Anchor Museum. This is the smaller of the two Museums run by the Trust on the WSR. The Trust has already agreed the approach to be taken for the work which will focus on the historic, socio-economic, leisure and heritage story of the northern end of the line from Williton to Minehead. Now that a specification is agreed, then this will be subject to formal fundraising. The eventual aim is to create 'One Museum on Two sites' with each telling the broad story of the WSR but offering something different in terms of their respective geographical perspectives.

The Museum as Part of The West Somerset Railway.

- 1) The Trust has an excellent relationship with the West Somerset Railway PLC and has been recognised by the PLC as a major contributor to the overall heritage of the railway, its management, development and conservation. The Trust is aware of merging plans by the PLC to create a new charitable body to run the railway and is actively involved in developing those proposals.
- 2) The Trust would like to see both the Gauge Museum and the Blue Anchor Museum play a more integral part in the visitor offer to the West Somerset Railway and to explore further opportunities for promoting the heritage of Museums in other parts of the railway and in the local community. A key element of this will be the Community Outreach Programme that the 2020 Cultural Heritage Recovery Fund award has stimulated. Based on the Gauge Museum, the intention is to reach out to local communities, organisations and those who have previously not had an interest in railway heritage to try and enhance population understanding not just of the history of the WSR but the part it is playing today in keeping railway heritage alive and contributing to the economy and well-being of the people of West Somerset.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Version No	Date	Revision
0.1	December 2020	First Issue of document for review.
0.2	November 2022	Amendments made to reflect changes in Museum Policy. Out for review.
0.3	December 2022	WSRHT Trustees Approved. Next Revision December 2025

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