

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of Board of Trustees held on 17th November 2022 at 5.30pm by Zoom video conference.

Present: Mike Thompson (Chairman) (MT) Steve Williams (SW)
Don Fraser (DF) Ian Coleby (IA)
Matt Jackson (MJ)
Helen Anson
Ian Camp (IDC)

Guest-Mark Smith, Director Heritage Railways Association (HRA)

695. Apologies

Action

Received from Geoff Evens, Mike Lee and Martin Brown

696. Conflicts of Interest

No new conflicts of interest were recorded.

697. HRA-Update from Mark Smith

MT formally welcomed Mark Smith to the Trust Board meeting. Mark is known as a long-standing volunteer on the WSR having occupied a number of senior positions within the PLC and the HRA over many years. Mark said that he was the nominated Link Director for the HRA with the Trust and he had no hesitation in confirming that the Trust were a suitable organisation to be a member of the HRA.

In terms of current HRA business, Mark summarised some of the key issues (as they relate to the Trust) as including:

- Development of a draft Code of Conduct and its purpose. The initial draft had a mixed reception and more work was required,
- Supporting organisations at national level with DFT and Government committees to ensure that the needs and requirements of the heritage rail sector were understood and acted upon. Examples include safety regulation and coal supplies,
- Providing advice on heritage and fundraising. Mark said that a particular individual (Sam Bee) could be helpful and SW would make initial contact with him.

SW

Mark concluded by saying that he was available for discussions at any time should the Trust need to call on him. The Chairman thanked Mark for his input and at that point, Mark left the meeting.

698. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 6th October 2022.

These were agreed as a correct record.

699. Matters Arising:

i) Heritage Committee

IC apologised for the delay in taking this forward. SW said that he had talked to Sarah Hayes who had expressed a willingness to provide administrative support. SW would link Sarah with IC in order to make progress.

SW/IC

ii) Sherrings Yard

SW and MT providing an update on progress with new lease negotiations and the preparation of the new licence for the Heritage Trust. Preparation of the new PLC was almost complete and MT and DF were in discussion with Trust solicitors on the licence. It was noted that a meeting would be held on site on 29th December with the PLC and WSRA to discuss the reparations plan in relation to obligations within the existing arrangements.

MT/SW/DF

iii) Policies Revision

In GE's absence, SW updated the Board. There is a need to ensure continuous feedback on revisions as they were produced and Trustees were reminded of the need to respond. There was a crucial meeting with Rachel Bellamy and Helen Janschke scheduled for 20th January. SW proposed that a small group be formed to provide additional support to Geoff in this work given the demands of the accreditation process and programme. This was agreed and IDC and HA kindly offered to engage alongside SW. SW to organise.

SW

iv) Museums (Contents Validation and Valuations, Insurance and Winter Plans)

IDC said that he and GE were working on content valuation but that this would be a long and in some cases, difficult job given the lack of historical information on some artefacts. DF said that it was important to link this to current and future insurance valuations particularly around e.g, 9038. Winter work progress and intentions were summarised and the Trust would also have a stall at the Winter lights Programme.

As a separate item, it was agreed that there should be a new banister installed for the lower ground floor at BL.

IDC

v) Rail 200 2025

MT will now speak to Chris Austin about this.

MT

vi) Washford Yard Option Appraisal

SW said that the PLC Board meeting in October did not reach a final decision on preferred option and more discussions were required. He would feedback to the Board once more information was available.

SW

vii) Gauge Museum Project-HLF feedback

SW was pleased to report that HLF had agreed to the use of the remaining contingency funds is a contribution to the LHC architectural and design fees for Bishops Lydeard Platform 1 Experience.

vii) The Great Escape

Although the opportunity to obtain funds for this initiative has now passed, HA felt that the Trust should do something in relation to outreach work in relation to an art based project that was created by nature and linked to schools. HA would talk to SW about have to take this forward.

HA/SW

viii) Proposed Restoration Shed-Williton

MT updated. A meeting had been held with LHC at Williton to look at the issues around planning consent in relation to the proposal. This was because Somerset West and Taunton Council felt that the proposed development was too close to the Swindon Shed which has listed status. LHC has been asked to put together a proposal for supporting planning consent and this will be shared with the Board when available.

700. Finance Reports

DF advised that the bank balance remains healthy and that expenditure continues to be managed well within the Trust. However, as income has largely relied on legacies in the past two years, there was a need to review the financial model for the Trust to enable operational expenses and project costs to be afforded over the next 2 to 3 years. MT, DF and SW would be meeting shortly to discuss this and would present proposals to the Board.

DF/MT/SW

DF also reported that the Trust was no longer able to claim VAT exemption and so the cost of this would have to be added to future expenditure. In terms of the 2022 year-end accounts, these would need to be finalised by the end of March 2023. DF summarised how the new membership renewal arrangements will work and that these published to members alongside distribution of the 2022 AGM Minutes and Q and A.

DF

701. Bishops Lydeard Platform 1

Trustees received the costed option prepared by LHC. The significant investment and fundraising required for this scheme was noted. Following discussion, it was agreed that SW would ask LHC to prepare a revised proposal identifying those items which were discretionary and therefore could be removed. It was further agreed that, once received, a separate discussion would be organised for the New Year when the Trustees could come to a final decision about the project.

SW

702. 2023 Museums Programme

IDC summarised his proposals for the coming year in terms of activities and events. It was also noted that 2023 was the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Model Railway Group. A special event was planned for the weekend of the 14th-16th April and the Taunton Model Railway Group were being invited to participate such as to have a number of layouts available in the Gauge Museum for visitors. Trustees supported the programme and details would now be worked at further led by IDC and MJ.

IDC/MJ

703. Model Railway Group

In addition to the preparations for the 25th year anniversary celebration, MJ reported that work on winter refurbishment of the layout was going well. It was noted that donations

to MRG had now exceeded £1000. MJ requested Board approval to undertake expenditure on rolling stock replacement and other aspects of the layout. This was agreed.

MJ

704. Blue Anchor Refurbishment/Reinterpretation Update

IDC updated the Board on progress. The programme was still on track to be completed by the end of March 2023. HA said there were still some aspects of the audio-visual and electronic installations to be completed but she and IDC were discussing these. There was a brief discussion about a formal opening ceremony and it was agreed that IDC would come back with some proposals. The Board also approved the requested expenditure on new shelving.

IDC/HA

705. Learning and Education Programme-Preparations for 2023

HA referred to her previously circulated paper. Given the difficulties with finance, school visits were likely to be fewer next year and therefore the focus needed to change to more outreach work. Additionally, HA and SW had met and discussed a change in direction for the Programme proposing that it would now include adult groups, presentations and wider engagement work in the community. This was supported by the Board. HA said that it would be helpful to tidy up the Gauge Museum office so that it could be used as a reading room and by stewards. HA will update on the new programme in due course.

HA.

706. Partnership Development Group-feedback

MT summarised PDG discussions at the last meeting. Key points to note were:

- Barrie Childs is the new WSRA representative
- a great desire to take forward the recently completed Energy Audit to start to improve the WSR environmental footprint
- the need to “reboot” WSR TV
- support for solutions for the absence of covered accommodation
- support for the DEPG proposals for Williton goods shed

707. Business Plan-2023 review and refresh

SW advised that the Plan needed to be reviewed. He would prepare proposals for the next Board meeting.

SW

708. PLC matters

SW updated on the following:

i) Covered Accommodation Report

The first draft was with the working group for comment. Responses were due by 31st December.

ii) Williton Strategic Engineering Review

This work with now be restarted. It will include the proposals for the Heritage Carriages Restoration Shed and the DEPG initiative on the Goods Shed. There may also be some fresh thinking around Mechanical Engineering with Ryan Pope’s appointment and the arrival of the new Director Mechanical Engineering. Completion of the first

draft was anticipated early in 2023.

iii) PLC 3 Year Business Plan

Work was about to start on this in the New Year with the aim of having a draft plan available for sign off by the end of March 2023.

iv) Reconnecting Business Case

Work on this was proceeding well with the aim of the first draft document being completed by the end of March 2023.

v) New Approach to Fundraising

Some new thinking on collective and strategic fundraising had been put to the PLC Board. These ideas were being considered by the Board and would be used to support the emerging WSR strategic priorities.

709. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 26 January 2023 at 5:30 PM by Zoom