

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of Board of Trustees held on 25th January 2024 at 5.30pm by Zoom video conference.

Present: Mike Thompson (Chairman) (MT) Steve Williams (SW)
Don Fraser (DF) Geoff Evens (GE)
John Robinson (JR) John Waters (JW)
Helen Anson (HA) Ian Camp (IDC)
Ian Coleby (IC) Martin Brown (MB)

In Attendance -Les Blake (Minutes)

784. Apologies. None **Action**

785. Conflicts of Interest

No new conflicts of interest were recorded.

786. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16th November 2023

These were agreed as a correct record.

787. Matters Arising

1) MRG Management arrangements

Handover has taken place with George Legg now in the position. George reports to Ian Camp.

2) Volunteer Wash Up Session

Will take place on 16th March from 10.30 to 12.30

IDC

3) PLC preseason sessions.

JW will speak to his team to see if they want to attend. SW will substitute for MT representing the Trust.

JW/SW

4) Horse Box Project

JW and CA will take over this project in the near future. SW to organise a Zoom session with the Wagon Group to assess cooperation opportunities.

JW/SW

5) Joint Project discussions with PLC.

We have suggested that the QB set be scheduled for Platform 1 on running days. Awaiting a response from the PLC

6) BA Renovation progress and reopening arrangements .

The team are starting to redress the museum. Opening is scheduled for the start of the running season. Ceremonial opening scheduled for 10th May subject to PLC agreement.

IDC/SW

7) Museum Leaflets

Almost complete and ready for the new season.

IDC

8) Curtains for BL lower ground floor.

Material has been chosen and work is ongoing.

HA

9) 2024/5 Business plan update.

Will be distributed when available.

788. Williton and Washford

The Chairman introduced this item and summarised the current position with regard to the proposals for Washford. Although verbal agreements are in place, the process of completing the formal legal documents is proving to be difficult. All parties are almost ready for signature.

MT/SW

JW will be bidding on various items at an equipment sale in Taunton.

JW

MB advised that the H & S documents for the site were being formatted.

MB

789. 2024 Learning & Education Programme

HA advised that BA is the priority at the moment. She is formatting a programme for schools at present. Currently investigating having wartime evacuation trains. A lecture programme is being developed which is hoped could be held as an Event and would be an income generator. The Board thanked Helen for what looks to be an exciting and informative programme for 2024 and enthusiastically endorsed its adoption.

HA

790. Finance

DF has circulated the finance reports. He is working on the annual accounts at present.

Budgets – DF will be contacting the Dept Heads for input. Draft budgets to be issued over the next few months.

Fit out plan – the overall plan for a move from WN to WF and upgrade machinery has been distributed in summary form. The Board agreed that JW can purchase items up to £35k for the fit out plan.

JW

791. Governance.

a) Appointments

SW advised that Sarah Hayes, George Legg, Chris Bolt and John Robinson have been appointed to their roles in the Trust.

b) Accreditation

GE advised that we are on course as previously advised.

c) Organisational Chart and Management Arrangements

Organisation chart & Management Arrangements documents prepared by SW were considered and agreed. The Board agreed that the PR and Comms portfolio should be with SW and that this included responsibility for the website manager role.

SW

d) Equality and Diversity Policy

The draft policy first introduced in August 2023 for consultation was considered by the Board. It was acknowledged that this was an important set of statements around how the charity should operate and manage relationships with its own volunteers, Members and the wider WSR family. The Board approved the Policy for implementation and agreed that it should be added to the suite of policies being prepared for Accreditation. Following discussion it was further agreed that the policy should be reviewed annually.

Agreed the Policy. The review date will be changed to that of annually. All Trustees had a duty to observe the spirit and letter of the Policy but Board accountability would specifically lie with JR.

GE/JR

e) Safeguarding.

JR introduced the new draft policy on DBS certification. He said it was anticipated that around 70% of volunteers will normally carry out a basic DBS check. It was proposed that existing volunteers would not be required to register but will be encouraged to do so. All new volunteers would be expected to go through the process. JR will lead on implementation. The Board approved the policy for implementation and JR will brief on progress and a subsequent Board meeting.

JR

With regard to the development of the Trust Safeguarding Policy, JR said that he has met with SPARK Somerset for advice on content and implementation. It was noted that SPARK no longer provided support to implementation and that an alternative provide it would need to be sourced. JR said that he expected a draft policy to be available for the March Board meeting.

JR

v) Finance & Governance Group

SW presented the revised policy on Financial Decision Making and Delegation of Authority including the arrangements for designated budgets. Following discussion, this was approved by the Board subject to some final comments from Trustees. SW to arrange implementation with DF.

SW/DF

Following from the previous item, the Board had a discussion about the future process for ensuring that it was getting best value from its purchasing decisions. There was acknowledged that many more of these were now being made reflective of an active business agenda but that they were also of higher value.

It was therefore agreed that DF should to develop a draft policy on procurement and that this should be brought to the March Board for consideration.

DF

Emerging Business Plan Priorities – a paper from SW was considered. As this was directly linked to the production of the updated Business Plan, Trustees were asked to immediately review and advise SW of any changes within the week.

ALL

Income Generation Programme – a paper from SW was considered. Trustees recognised that this needs urgent attention both in terms of fundraising for specific projects and proposals for generating recurrent revenue. Trustees were asked to approve the proposed list as a starting point for recurring revenue acquisition and to come back to SW with material and information in relation to fundraising for specific projects.

ALL

792. Gauge Museum electrics

The position with regard to the condition of the Museum electrics was of significant

concern with contradictory information on suitability being received from different electricians. In light of the latest report, IDC will liaise with Pete Chilcott regarding options for remedial action with timescales and responsibilities/funding implications identified. IDC to report back to the Board as soon as possible.

IDC

793. Any other business.

None advised

783. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 28th March 2024 at 5:30 PM by Zoom.