



WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST LIMITED

Registered Charity No. 265564

President: Chris Austin OBE

Registered Office: The Railway Station, Bishops Lydeard Taunton, Somerset. TA4 3BX

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www.wsrht.co.uk

West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust Business Plan 2023 to 2025

Introduction

1. This is the fifth Business Plan produced by the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust (previously 'the Steam Trust'). It covers the three calendar years 2023, 2024 and 2025. It will be rolled forward on an annual basis.

2. Emerging from the pandemic, 2022 was a period of consolidation and reappraisal of how the Trust Board with its volunteers seeks to deliver the objects of the charity. A particular focus has been on embedding the reinterpretation of the Gauge Museum and its attractiveness as a major part of the visitor experience at Bishops Lydeard. 2022 also saw some significant progress in decisions around the long term needs of the Heritage Carriage Programme, but Blue Anchor Museum remained closed for the year.

The Name, Objects and Mission Statement of the Heritage Trust

3. The West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust Ltd is a charitable company established in 1972 and is one of two charities directly involved in supporting the West Somerset Railway. In 2020, the Board of Trustees undertook a review of its constitution. One of the early conclusions was to determine that the name "Steam Trust" no longer represented the focus of what the Trust was engaged with in the modern age which mainly revolves around museums, restoration of heritage carriages and learning and education about heritage and history of the WSR. This proposal was approved by Members in July 2021 together with an updating of the charity's objects and powers.

4. This has enabled the Trust to both pursue its own business and charitable objectives together with being able to play a wider role in the sustainability of the West Somerset Railway.

5. With its Objects, the Heritage Trust aims:

To advance the education of the public in railway lines, equipment and buildings and their heritage in particular by:

- (a) *Establishing, managing and operating railway museums;*
- (b) *Delivering educational workshops and talks to the public at large, including to school groups, students and families; and*
- (c) *The restoration and management of historic carriages and Great Western Railway and other rolling stock and related artefacts for use on the West Somerset Railway or for display and interpretation.*

6. The Mission Statement adopted in 2018 remains the same which is:

"To encourage and engage with visitors through interpretation of the social and economic and physical impact of the railway in Somerset and the West Somerset Railway corridor in particular.

To inform and inspire the next generation, particularly through the STEM subjects, the science, technology and engineering of railways and its relevance to mathematics as well as history, geography and economics."

The Activities of the Trust

7. The Trust currently has six main areas of activity:

- preserving and displaying heritage items relating to railways and the West Somerset Railway (WSR) in particular, and interpreting and curating all the heritage assets owned by the Trust;
- restoring the heritage carriages owned by the Trust for display and operation on the railway
- managing the museums at Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor
- promoting the development and education of young people through the management and display of the model railway, Gauge Junction and other model railways within the responsibility of the Trust.
- running its education and learning programme for primary schools, community groups and other local interests together with promoting community outreach about the WSR
- supporting the PLC in maintaining the heritage and history of the West Somerset Railway.

8. The management of the Museums and the use of the Williton site for heritage carriage restoration are carried out in accordance with an agreement with the West Somerset Railway PLC which came into effect on 1 January 2017. This agreement includes sub-leases on the Blue Anchor museum building and the Goods Shed at Bishops Lydeard, and provides assurance about future access by the Trust to the railway both for the restoration of heritage carriages and the operation of restored carriages. The Trust is a member of the WSR Partnership Development Group and over the last two years in particular, has played an increasingly important role in supporting the PLC to secure the long term sustainability of the WSR.

9. The licence to occupy and restore heritage carriages at Williton expires in September 2023. Details of the new arrangements are set out in the relevant paragraphs below.

The Board of Trustees

10. The Board of Trustees has seen some further changes in 2022. Mike Lee stood down as a Trustee and Ian Camp was initially co-opted and then elected to the Board at the 2022 AGM. Also at the AGM, Geoff Evens, Don Fraser and Steve Williams were re-elected as Trustees.

11. The Trust Board continues to work to a model of each Trustee, in addition to their generic corporate responsibilities, having a specific portfolio area for which they have a lead responsibility to the Board. The current arrangements are summarised in Schedule A.

Our Volunteers

12. Volunteer numbers remained fairly stable during 2022 and we currently have around 65 active volunteers but we expect to add more new people in 2023 as the work of the Trust gathers momentum and is more widely known. Unfortunately, due to the fact that we were unable to reopen Blue Anchor Museum last year, the proposal to try to re-establish a volunteer group specifically linked to Blue Anchor has had to be temporarily deferred. Further work will be undertaken on this once the Museum is reopened.

13. As has been said before, volunteers are the lifeblood of the Trust and over the last 12 months, our colleagues have continued to be engaged in a variety of projects and activities covering:

- Collections Management, Care and Conservation;
- Records Management including digitisation of archives and other material;
- Learning and Education supporting our now well-established Learning and Education Programme for primary schools and community groups;
- Culture, Diversity and the Environment. Supporting the development and implementation of plans to be more environmentally friendly, culturally aware and embracing of diversity;
- Historic Carriages Restoration and preparations for long-term development of restoration accommodation and workshop facilities at Williton;

- Museum Management (including curating and stewarding);
- Model Railway Operating. This particularly appeals to younger volunteers between the ages of 14 and 22;
- Developing proposals for the “Platform 1 Experience” at Bishops Lydeard and;
- Working collaboratively with the WSR PLC and the WSRA to seek a solution for the long-term use of Station House at Bishops Lydeard.

14. More information on each of these activities is provided in the rest of the Plan.

Our Members

15. Following the events of 2020, Membership of the Trust has now stabilised at 108 (up from 92 in 2021). Membership of the Trust is currently open to anyone donating at least £12 a year. The Board of Trustees remains committed to a review of membership arrangements during the lifetime of the Business Plan to ensure that membership represents value for money and that annual fees and benefits are set at a realistic level. The Board also wishes to have a greater level of ongoing engagement with Members during any calendar year rather than just at the AGM. This initiative will be led by the Chairman.

Achievements in 2022

16. Despite 2022 being a year in which there was a delay in reopening the WSR (and the railway didn't run to Minehead due to the need to complete the new Seaward Way level crossing), the Trust nevertheless made progress in the following areas:

- Completion of the Gauge Museum Project at Bishops Lydeard with Heritage Lottery agreement to use the final funds allocation toward the fees for the Platform 1 Experience detailed planning and design;
- Substantial completion of coach 6705 with the exception of final braking tests and authorisation of fitness to run examination. These will be completed in 2023;
- Agreement with the WSR PLC and the owners of Sherrings Yard to offer the Heritage Trust a new long-term licence to occupy a designated area within the Yard for repair and restoration of our heritage carriages fleet;
- Some progress with the repair, repainting and reinterpretation of Blue Anchor Museum although further structural problems meant additional delays to completion. Currently programmed for mid-2023. This also delayed formation of the new dedicated Blue Anchor volunteer team;
- Starting work on the Accreditation plan for the Gauge Museum intended to meet the standards and requirements of the Arts Council. Formal accreditation will aid the recognition of the Museum by national bodies and support future fundraising;

17. In addition to these items, the Trust also undertook a number of other activities during the year which had not previously been identified in the Business Plan. These included:

- Preparation of a formal response to the WSR PLC consultation document on the future use of Washford Yard. This advocated the use of the Yard as a Museum location for static exhibits and long-term storage;
- Contributing financially to heritage infrastructure resilience through donations to the PLC. Two schemes were supported namely environmentally sustainable fencing at Eastcombe and the long-awaited relay work at Blue Anchor including reinstallation of the catch point. There have been further delays to this project but it is due for completion during 2023;
- Hosting the formal launch of the newly reinterpreted Gauge Museum which was reopened by Rebecca Pow MP in April 2022;

Plans for 2022-2024

18. The following paragraphs describe the intended developments in each area followed by a separate section on major projects.

Museum Accreditation

19. The Trust has been pursuing its aim of gaining formal accreditation for the Gauge Museum. The benefits of doing this are that the museum is recognised as operating to an agreed set of national standards and any future developments, particularly where they involve external fundraising, can be set against these benchmarks. Museum accreditation is run by the Arts Council, England working through local museum networks. The Trust was accepted by the Arts Council in October 2021 as an organisation 'Working Towards Accreditation' with a reference number of T560. The museum has until October 2025 to have its application accepted, support for the project is provided by the Southwest Museums Network.

20. During 2022 and early 2023 much work has been completed updating the Trust policies and procedures, these are now available on the Trust Web site, <https://www.wsrht.co.uk/>. It must be remembered that previously the museum was focused mainly on railway activities and functions rather than being a museum in the round. This has meant all previous systems have been assessed and where they needed updating and brought into the Arts Council, England standards this is now being done. Ongoing tasks in hand:

- To finish consolidating Trust procedures and policies;
- Accreditation work is set to the Spectrum 5.0 standard, and it is this standard that the Trust is working towards. There are resource sheets to help with the transition period;
- To work through an action plan template that will allow the Trust to achieve and maintain museum accreditation;
- To appoint a museum mentor to directly support the museum to meet the Accreditation Standard;
- A small team of Trust directors and volunteers has been appointed to assist with the outstanding accreditation work;
- To achieve full accreditation status for the Gauge Museum. This may take up to 4 years from the start date in October 2021.

Museums and Collections

21. The Trust manages the Museums at Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor through licences issued by the WSR PLC. Ian Camp as the new Curator for both Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor Museums has, with the support of Trustees and other volunteers, been driving forward the concept of "one museum on two sites" to integrate activities and to develop the story of the WSR, its history and heritage with Bishops Lydeard having a particular focus on the southern end of the line and Blue Anchor the northern part.

22. Following the completion of the Gauge Museum Project at Bishops Lydeard in 2021, the Trust has completed final snagging and outstanding works across the building. We will continue to build on the newly reinterpreted collections and displays by adding more audiovisual content, exploring opportunities for greater "hands-on" activities for younger visitors and families together with rotating artefacts in storage on to display as and when opportunities allow.

23. In 2023, in terms of ongoing work the Trust will continue with:

- Implementation of our collections care policies and procedures and the management of our collections;
- Operation and refining of the new museum management plan for Bishops Lydeard;
- Exploration of options for hands-on experience and other audiovisual enhancements within the Sleeping Car 9038;
- Archiving and updating our collections asset register using the MODES software package purchased in 2020/21;
- Working with Bishops Lydeard station staff on ways in which more visitors can be attracted to Platform 1 and to the Museum. One example of this has been agreement with the WSR PLC to offer hospitality to visitors in the Station House garden and this will have been trialled during the 2023 Spring Gala and other special events.

24. There will be a major focus on completing the repairs, upgrading and reinterpretation of Blue Anchor Museum. The new displays, refreshed artefacts and audiovisual material will be complemented by some hands-on opportunities for younger visitors with wraparound panels showing the railway, socio-economic and community history focusing on the northern end of the WSR.

25. The reopened and repurposed Museum will not run by itself. The Trust has therefore already embarked on a recruitment drive to identify, train and support a dedicated team of volunteers who will be specifically responsible for developing the visitor attraction at Blue Anchor. The Trust has had tremendous support from the Station Master and volunteers at Blue Anchor and this relationship will be further developed in 2023 and beyond.

26. The Trust has already had some initial success in early 2023 in recruiting additional volunteers for the Bishops Lydeard Gauge Museum. Ongoing recruitment to strengthen our volunteer workforce across the charity will be a continuous theme for the Trust Board over the Business Plan period.

27. Other new and developing projects across the Museums and Collections will include:

- Installation of parts rescued from Sleeping Car 9037 (see Heritage Carriages Programme below) will be installed in Sleeping Car 9038 in the Gauge Museum to make the latter all the more authentic;
- The Trust will be installing a virtual tour of Sleeping Car 9038 and the model railway (see below) to facilitate access for people with mobility issues. There will be a voice-over commentary for both displays;
- We will improve banisters and handrails to improve access to the lower ground floor in the Gauge Museum again for people with mobility issues;
- Over the winter and into early 2023, work by volunteers has made significant improvements to the office area. This can now be used as a reading room and will have improved shelving, window blind and seating;
- Design, preparation and printing of new Museum brochures for 2023;
- A new project called “Loco of the Month” with a display board;
- A special Service of Remembrance and to rededicate the Roll of Honor in the Lower Ground Floor will be held at the Gauge Museum on the 11 November 2023 in the presence of the Bishop of Taunton and invited guests.

28. The Trust will continue to manage the interior of both buildings and to maintain them to an appropriate standard consistent with the improvements gained through the Gauge Museum Project at Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor Museum Reinterpretation Programme.

Model Railway Group

29. Matt Jackson is now well established as the Manager of the Model Railway Group (MRG) which continues to play an important role in encouraging younger volunteers to come to the WSR and to learn important social and practical skills through their engagement with the Group. These volunteers are responsible for the entirety of the layout and seek to make it available for public viewing on as many days as possible when the WSR is in operation.

30. 2023 marks the 30th anniversary of the formation of the MRG. Accordingly, the Trust is looking to mark this important milestone by hosting a model railway exhibition within the Gauge Museum in partnership with the Taunton Model Railway Group next door. This will be held on 9th and 10th September and it is hoped that as many guest layouts as possible in the space available. The Trust is also hoping that our layout Gauge Junction will feature in Railway Modeller magazine at some point during the year.

31. Over the next 12 to 18 months, other priorities include:

- Work to grow the number of volunteers within MRG to future proof operations but also to expand the number of people with model railway rolling stock who are prepared to their own items on the layout;
- Increasing capacity for secure storage of resident rolling stock owned by the Trust which operators can use on the layout. This will facilitate faster preparation and conclusion of

operating sessions. This will be achieved by design and installation of new storage cupboards;

- Marketing for and recruitment of, new volunteers between the ages of 14 and 22 who are interested in operating the layout and thus expanding the number of days on which MRG can provide this activity when the Museum is open.

32. Historically, some MRG volunteers have also gone on to become volunteers on the WSR. The Trust wishes to re-establish links with the Tracker function within the WSR PLC to strengthen these relationships but also to act as a recruitment opportunity to bring more young people to MRG.

Heritage Carriages Restoration Programme

33. One of the historic cornerstones of the Trust has been its heritage carriages restoration programme. The Trust currently uses part of the site at Williton through space rented from the West Somerset Railway Association and the WSR PLC. The acquisition of 11 heritage vehicles over a period of time since the inception of the charity and the intention to restore as many of them to operational/static exhibit order is still a priority for the Trust. However, the changing economic climate, appetite of funders to support this kind of work and the cost of full restoration together with questions about availability of parts, skills et cetera led the Board of Trustees to commission a review of the future of the carriage fleet.

34. The recommendations were adopted by the Board and an implementation plan agreed. The cornerstone of this is focused on completing 6705 to be ready to run in 2023 (a number of delays occurred during 2022 some of which were outside the control of the Trust). The focus in the early part of 2023 will be to ensure that the braking systems on 6705 are working and comply with accepted standards. The carriage is also exhibiting signs of damage paintwork due to prolonged external exposure and this will need to be remedied. Carriage 3639 restoration is now fully underway and the Trust still has the aspiration of working with the WSR PLC and the WSRA to create a short form heritage carriage set of up to 4 coaches.

35. A significant development in 2022 was the identification of John Waters as the Programme Coordinator at Williton and his co-option to the Trust Board with the portfolio lead for heritage carriages.

36. Despite the provision of tarpaulins to reduce corrosion and damage from adverse weather conditions, the coaches stored at Dunster Beach continued to be exposed not only to the weather but random and mindless acts of vandalism which has led to further damage to both carriages and coverings alike. One vehicle has recently suffering significant storm damage and has required urgent attention to make it safe. Attempts will be made in 2023 to find a more sheltered location for them to allow, in the worst cases, safe dismantling, and for others, until adequate covered accommodation is created. The aim is to potentially move these vehicles to Williton to join those already in store there.

37. The Trust will continue to seek additional volunteers to help with the heritage carriages programme. The implementation plan arising from the review envisages a combination of volunteer and funded work on each vehicle going forward.

38. Williton has been the engineering base for the heritage carriages restoration programme for many years. However, the lease held by the WSRA for the use of the Sherrings Yard site expires in September 2023 and with it the licence for use by the Trust. Accordingly, discussions and negotiations have been ongoing for some time in 2022 to agree new arrangements. These have now been confirmed and involve the PLC taking responsibility under a new 20 year lease for Sherrings Yard. The Trust will enter into a new licence agreement with the WSR PLC for the same period involving a dedicated area within Sherrings Yard together with access to common use of facilities at Williton. It is intended to have everything finalised by the end of May 2023. As part of this process, the Trust has also contributed to a reparations plan required by the existing lease to tidy up and make good areas of Sherrings Yard as a prelude to the new arrangements.

39. One of the exciting opportunities to emerge as part of this process are proposals to erect a new shed and workshop providing covered accommodation for the first time for restoration and repair work. The specific plans are outlined in more detail under Major Projects below.

40. This proposal is part of a wider piece of strategic planning work completed in early 2023 setting out major proposals for covered accommodation for both operational and heritage carriage rolling stock. The Report of the Covered Accommodation Working Party is now with the WSR PLC, Trust, WSRA and DEPG and it is hoped that a consensus agreement can be reached on the recommendations so that a co-ordinated partnership approach to implementation can move

forward. Obtaining covered solutions for the storage of the heritage carriage fleet, in view of increasing deterioration and damage, is now a key major priority for the Trust.

41. In 2022, in recognition of the recommendations from the Heritage Carriages Programme review, the Trust also contributed to the formal consultation exercise established by the WSR PLC to consider options for the future use of Washford Yard following the withdrawal of the S and D Trust from the site from November 2023 onwards. The strong view of the Trust was that Washford lent itself to a Museum and long-term storage function for heritage rolling stock. However, the PLC has yet to take a position on this and other possibilities. As a result, the Covered Accommodation Working Party report is inconclusive on this matter. The ability to store vehicles as static display and/or in a completed state following restoration is absolutely vital to the future resilience of the Trusts heritage carriage fleet. If not Washford, then the Trust Board will pursue discussions with the WSR PLC as to alternative options.

Education, Learning and Community Outreach

42. The success of the Education and Learning Programme established as part of the Gauge Museum Project in December 2018 is already well documented. Helen Anson as Learning Officer has made a major contribution to the understanding of the heritage and history of the WSR in through her work and that of the learning assistant's team with primary schools and local community groups. The Trust extended Helen's contract for 12 months in 2020 and in autumn 2021, the Trust Board agreed to offer a new three-year contract until December 2024 which Helen has accepted and is now in place.

43. Now that the threat from the Covid 19 pandemic has diminished, the Trust has begun to receive more expressions of interest from primary schools and community groups wishing to participate in the Education and Learning Programme. The outreach side of the offer has proven particularly popular, as financial constraints have caused schools to look for more economical alternatives to trips. The offer continues to expand into 2023 with new elements being planned including:

- The development of an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) strand through the creation of three new story sacks, allowing not only an expansion of the loans scheme, but also the opportunity for introducing interactive story and play sessions in the museum.
- The further expansion of the audio-visual content on the Lower ground floor and the installation of similar facilities in the newly re-furbished museum at Blue Anchor.
- Participation in the Wild Escape, a national initiative led by the Arts Council, focusing on educating young people more about biodiversity through creativity. If successful, this may well lead to the development of a permanent new strand to the learning offer.
- The development of a regular programme of family events on both museum sites throughout the summer months.
- The refurbishment and re-purposing of the Office at the Gauge Museum to provide better storage and access to the books in our collection, with the aim of providing a bookable reading room for serious researchers.
- The establishment of an outreach lecture programme, consisting of a calendar of scheduled talks and focusing on attracting older learners and community groups to the museum.

Major Projects

Cattle Dock and Siding, Bishops Lydeard

44. Following agreement with the PLC that the Trust could pursue its interest in the "Enhancing Platform 1 Experience" proposal at Bishops Lydeard, the outcome of the project proposals with detailed costings and design prepared by appointed external consultants was considered by the Trust Board at a special meeting in February 2022. The overall concept of a covered area for the Cattle Dock siding and platform together with an extension to the Gauge Museum was accepted by the Board.

45. However, although the business proposal is sound, the overall cost of the scheme (likely to be around seven figures) together with the organisational capacity and fundraising required was felt to be beyond the ability of the Trust to undertake at this stage given its other commitments and priorities. Therefore, the decision was taken to approach the project in phases. Phase 1 will be the Covered Cattle Dock and siding thus providing additional covered accommodation for Trust

heritage carriages. A revised specification has been prepared and, subject to WSR PLC support and approval, this will go to consultants to re-cost and to advise and prepare for planning consent.

46. Phase 2 involving the Gauge Museum extension and other supporting facilities will follow as soon as the Trust is able to focus on this and evidence of success with Phase 1 has been secured.

Station House, Bishops Lydeard

47. The Trust has continued to be in discussions with the PLC regarding the future use of Station House. Last year, the PLC funded repairs to the roof but much work continues to be needed internally to enable the building to function. Conversations continue about options and now involve the WSR as well. It is hoped that a solution can be found in 2023 such that a proposal and plan can be put together.

Williton Strategic Engineering Review

48. Because of capacity issues and other priorities, completion of the review was delayed. It is hoped that this will be finished in 2023 and that the Trust requirements for the Williton site are supported by the WSR as a whole (see below).

Williton Restoration Shed and Workshop

49. Following extensive discussions with the PLC in 2022, the Trust reached agreement with the company that it would now pursue the direction of a two road shed with physical track connection to the North Yard together with a workshop to be located in the south-west area of Sherrings Yard. This is the cornerstone of the license agreement referred to earlier in the Plan. A detailed specification has now been received from suppliers and the next step will be to undertake detailed planning work including seeking planning consent for the development. However, there may well be changes to these proposals as a result of new developments involving Washford Yard

Washford Yard

50. With the departure of the S and D Trust from Washford, the opportunity has arisen to examine possibilities around the use of the Yard for storage of Trust vehicles. Discussions with the WSR PLC are at an early stage but the Trust Board is keen to look at options provided that these are realistic and affordable in the long term. An emerging possibility is that the Yard may be available for restoration and repair work as a consequence of a change in the position of the S and D Trust and its plans for vacating the site from November 2023 onwards.

Technology Development

51. The Trust has made considerable progress in the last three years in the application of new technologies to its activities. The Gauge Museum Project enabled the purchase and application of business software for archiving, asset updating and research and further grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund have contributed to the installation of Wi-Fi at Bishops Lydeard and the introduction of cashless payments for donations. The charity has also updated its website and social media presence such as to improve the visibility of the organisation and promotion of its activities.

52. The Trust intends to build on these initiatives by looking at further opportunities to enhance the offer to visitors as well as continuing to improve its back-office functions. These include:

- examining further options for hands-on visitor activities in museums e.g. Signal Box at Bishops Lydeard;
- increasing visitor understanding of the history and use of the sleeping car at Bishops Lydeard with voice technology and other options;
- further digitisation of records and materials following the work emerging from application of the MODES software;
- further website and social media developments;
- updating hardware and connectivity.

Safety and Compliance

53. The Trust takes its responsibilities and obligations for safety and compliance in respect of its volunteers and its activities very seriously indeed. Unfortunately, the Trust lost its Board lead, Mike Lee, in 2022 and is currently reviewing how to fill his role. The aims and requirements in this regard remain the same from the previous Plan namely:

- we are compliant with all the relevant policies and procedures of the WSR PLC as the operating company and duty holder,
- all our volunteers who undertake safety critical work have had the necessary risk assessments undertaken and that they understand their responsibilities,
- volunteers are conversant with the technical requirements of our working environments particularly around e.g. rolling stock and specific activities associated with restoration,
- that our emergency plan is up-to-date and coherent and is consistent with the wider emergency response arrangements on the railway
- the Trust keeps up-to-date with operational safety requirements through its membership of the to be established WSR Safety Committee,
- the Trust has and implementation plan and audit process and that this is regularly reviewed by the Trust Board to ensure that the necessary actions to mitigate problems and safeguard the health and well-being of our volunteers, other colleagues and visitors remains at the forefront of what we do.

Communications and Public Relations

54. The Trust Board is greatly indebted to the work of Matt Sutton in both managing and updating our website to ensure its continued relevance, is of access and use by Members, volunteers, visitors and the general public. Geoff Evens continues to manage our Facebook page.

55. In 2022, the Chairman initiated the preparation and publication of a Quarterly Briefing for Members which has been well received. The last 12 months have also seen the reinstatement of the “Three Chairs” meetings between the WSR PLC, Trust and WSRA on a regular basis.

56. Ian Coleby continues to edit the Journal and the Trust contributes to the Journal on a regular basis.

57. The Trust Board will in 2023 however want to ramp up its marketing, promotional and information material to increase the visibility of the charity both within the WSR but also outside. To that end, Geoff Evens has established contact with Bishops Lydeard Parish Council and we anticipate regular communications with the local community being enhanced through that initiative. We will be looking for a communications and public relations lead (voluntary) to further coordinate our work across the Trust.

Corporate Development

58. Building on the considerable work undertaken on corporate development since 2021, the Trust continues to look for ways of ensuring its resilience and long-term sustainability. In 2022, the Trust became a member of the Heritage Railway Association and now benefits from access to HRA material, briefings and expertise.

59. We continue to engage with the South West Heritage Trust and the South West Heritage Museums Development and participates in a number of their courses and workshops across a variety of topics relating to heritage, museums and collections.

60. The Trust is a major shareholder in West Somerset Railway PLC and, with the change of name, a consolidation of the current shareholding took place under the new title in autumn 2021. The Trust continues to receive a number of shareholding transfers from current and past PLC shareholders and this will enable the charity to work with the PLC to influence future policy around the development and sustainability of the railway.

61. The level of administrative work across the Trust has increased significantly particularly with regard to the Museums and the Learning and Education Programme. Therefore the Trust will be seeking some additional administrative help on a voluntary basis particularly with bookings and fundraising activity.

Finance and Membership

62. The Trust Board has continued to manage the financial resources of the charity responsibly and carefully. Once again, we ended 2022 in an extremely strong financial position with a healthy bank balance and no outstanding debt. This reflects several years in which the charity has received a number of significant legacies and donations from supporters. However, the Trust Board is not aware of any new legacies or significant donations coming through in 2023 and

beyond and it is therefore likely that income from these sources will be substantially less than in previous years.

63. The Trustees have made no further changes to the Reserves Policy as set out in the Previous Business Plan. However, the Board is still very much aware of the potential risk to financial stability of any significant and sustained downturn on income that might impact on the current reserve levels. Close attention is therefore continuing to be paid to ensuring that funds remain above the minimum target levels set by the Trustees at the end of the Plan period. Additional expenditure will therefore continue to be dependent on developing new or additional income streams. Traditional reliance on donations, legacies and membership income will not, of themselves, secure the Trusts ongoing requirement to invest in its heritage assets and activities. . Given this situation and the knowledge that ongoing operational costs are going to increase from 2023 onwards (for example rental levels for Sherrings Yard), the Trust Board has reviewed its fiscal position and is going to pursue a specific plan for the next 12 to 36 months in recognition of changing financial circumstances. This will include the creation of a dedicated Fundraising Group to pursue targeted external financial support particularly in relation to the major projects summarised earlier in the Plan.

64. As has been previously reported, the Trust has also made a considerable contribution by way of donations to investment in heritage infrastructure with a particular focus on permanent way. Over the last two years, the Trust has made significant funding available to the PLC for the following projects:

- Blue Anchor relay and catch point (delayed due to Covid 19 and then subsequently PLC workforce shortages. Due for completion in mid- 2023)
- Steel Bridges maintenance and repair (2022)
- Replacement sleepers (2022)
- Woodworm treatment-Blue Anchor signal box (2022)
- Environmentally sustainable fencing, Eastcombe (2022)

65. The Trust will continue to consider any future requests from the WSR PLC for further infrastructure investment contributions provided that these again have a significant heritage component to them and are consistent with the charity's objects and powers. However, given the pressures on the charity's own investment priorities, the ability to contribute further to heritage sustainability will be lower over the period of this Plan.

66. As with the previous Plan, the Trust Board as advised by the Treasurer has made a number of assumptions about the projected level of income likely to be received in the next three years. This is always a difficult set of judgements because apart from membership subscriptions, all other sources of income are subject to the same uncertainties that any charity is faced with when managing his finances and seeking to deliver against its objects and powers.

67. Nonetheless, because the finances of the charity are, for the moment, in a healthy state, the Trust Board will continue to, in addition to setting aside funds to meet its fixed commitments, apply a range of hypothecated "budgets" for each of the named projects that the Trust will undertake over the lifetime of the Plan. These "budgets" will be a combination of Trust resources from its own finances supplemented by targeted fundraising.

68. The specific projects currently under consideration (and there will be others during the Plan period for which the same approach will be adopted) include:

- Developments at Bishops Lydeard (Cattle Dock and potentially Station House)
- Improvements and Development of Blue Anchor Museum
- Heritage Carriages Restoration (Restoration Shed, Workshop and Carriages)
- Model Railway Development
- Learning and Education Programme
- Technology Investment
- Storage for Artefacts

69. The following Table therefore summarises the indicative financial model which the Trust Board will implement as part of this Business Plan. Because the Trust does not have a regular income stream beyond membership fees and small donations, these figures should be treated with a certain degree of caution and the ability to deliver against them will be very much influenced by the level of funds received each year and any significant changes in priorities for expenditure which the Trust Board has to consider and make.

	2023 £	2024 £	2025 £
Projected Income			
Memberships	9000	9500	10500
Donations	4200	4750	5250
Sales	250	750	750
Learning and Education	250	1000	1000
Gift Aid	3000	3000	3000
Sub Total	16700	19000	20000
Grants	5300	30000	30000
Legacies	136000	15000	15000
Projected Costs			
Rents	4150	9800	14600
Site Operations	4000	3000	3000
Administration	5500	5700	5900
Learning and Education	8500	10000	10000
Sub Total	25400	24830	25120
Project Budgets			
Heritage Carriages	50000	60000	60000
BA Development	8000	3000	0
BL Developments	15000	20000	TBC
PLC Heritage Infrastructure Support	30000	30000	30000

70. Obviously, there are a range of assumptions here. If over the business plan cycle these have to be adjusted in the light of changing circumstances including a lower than expected income level then the Trust Board will review the financial position accordingly.

71. The Trust will be actively fundraising for the project programme as proposals are finalised and costed. There are a range of potential funders including charitable sources available to support each of these schemes together with national bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Trust Board will assess the best fundraising method and route to achieve successful the necessary outcome. The Development agenda is one of the most ambitious that the Trust has engaged in in recent times and therefore the Board anticipates a continuous programme of fundraising over the Plan period.

72. One of the important aspects of regulatory and financial governance is the need to the Trust is a small charity to commission annual External Inspection Report on its accounts. The Trust Board has used Monahans for its external inspection reports on the Trust Accounts for some years now. Accordingly, in line with good financial governance practice, in 2022 following a review of options, the Board has appointed a new set of auditors.

73. Following the review of its financial position in February 2023, the Trust Board will now undertake a review of membership fees and the subscription process. The Treasurer has already moved annual membership renewal to be that of the first day in January each year. This is in line with the Trust financial reporting period and will allow the charity to much more easily manage the membership process as well as give Members a clear timeline within which to renew. From 2022, the Trust initiated standard reminders to Members in line with this change.

Risks and Challenges to Delivery

74. As with previous Plans the Trust Board needs to be aware of risks and challenges to delivery of the next three years work programme. Delivery of this Plan depends on a number of factors, some of which the Trust can only influence to a limited extent.

75. The need to increase operational income to meet ongoing annual recurring expenditure is now one of the bigger challenges facing the Trust. Arguably, it has been more successful in both improving services and infrastructure for Members and visitors over the last 3 to 4 years which has also improve the visibility of the charity and its contribution to the WSR. However with that has come a greater financial commitment and therefore inherent risk. The Trust Board is well aware of this and as indicated earlier in the Plan, is taking steps to mitigate the impact and to maintain long term financial sustainability.

76. As previously reported, one of the external risks that will impact on the work of the Trust continues to be access to coal, which will no longer be produced in the UK from 2022. Imported coal is of poorer quality and more expensive, and there is no longer a distribution network in place, with the disappearance of most major coal users. The WSR PLC continues to work with other heritage railways, the Heritage Railway Association and the Parliamentary Working Group on Heritage Rail to identify potential solutions.

77. One of the unintended consequences of the success of the Trust is that the work programme is stretching the organisational capacity of the Trust Board and the volunteer team. We need to ensure that there is a balanced approach to each of our activities and that these can be properly prepared and implemented to the normal high standards that the charity has embraced over the past few years. Our search for additional volunteers and external help where required will be a continuous process.

78. Beyond these factors, the pace and nature of progress depends critically on the the actions and success of other WSR organisations coupled with the future availability of resources, both financial and manpower, including:

- The railway remains a functioning operation and going concern over the next two and half to 3 years,
- continued positive income generation to be able to fund projects and meet ongoing commitments
- the ability to write convincing bids for additional funds for specific projects,
- the number of volunteers being sustained and increased to reflect the enhanced range of activities of the Trust;
- major development costs being incurred only when resources are available or have been identified;
- carriage restoration costs or obligations only revealed by progress with restoration of individual vehicles (this should diminish as further experience is gained by the restoration team);
- other unexpected costs being contained, and in particular administration and other running costs being contained broadly at current levels;
- grants and related expenditure such as acquisition of artefacts for the museums being determined on a basis which matches income;
- the newly established collective approach to joint working with the Association and the PLC proving successful and proportionately beneficial to all parties;
- the success of the WSR PLC in continuing to attract increasing numbers of visitors to the railway and (with Trust support) to continue the very real progress made in the last 12 months to increase the visibility of the WSR and to maintain its reputation;

- the willingness (and ability) of the Board Trustees supported by Members where required to make difficult decisions particularly around assets where there is a need to change historical perceptions and aspirations e.g. heritage carriages and
- the ability to reflect safety management requirements across all relevant activities and to proactively apply not just the rules but the learning within a safety culture which is one of continuous improvement.

Evaluation and review

79. The Trustees will continue to review and roll forward this Plan annually. In particular, the Trustees will want to ensure that:

- the activities of the Trust are the most appropriate way of delivering its aims, consistent with its charitable objects;
- they represent an optimal outcome in terms of their importance to the railway,
- they are deliverable against the availability of volunteer and financial resources.

80. In recognition of this need, the Trust Board undertook a formal review of its principal activities and financial position during January and February 2023. The outputs from that review process of those which have informed this Business Plan and progress against both organisational and financial objectives will be kept under regular scrutiny to ensure delivery. Where change is required (and there are couple of areas which may alter from the current Plan intentions) the Trust Board will quickly respond and take the necessary action.

West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust

Board of Trustees

June 2023

Schedule A: Current Board of Trustees and Portfolio Responsibilities

Mike Thompson- Chairman with lead responsibility for strategic leadership and external relations.

Steve Williams- Vice Chairman and Company Secretary with lead responsibility for corporate governance, business planning and fundraising.

Don Fraser- Treasurer with lead responsibility for finance and membership.

Helen Anson- Trustee with lead responsibility for learning and education, community outreach and collections care.

Martin Brown- Trustee with lead responsibility for people engagement and the environment.

Ian Coleby- Trustee with lead responsibility for technology, archiving and heritage.

Geoff Evens- Trustee with lead responsibility for Museum accreditation and special projects.

Matt Jackson- Trustee with lead responsibility for the Model Railway Group and Gala Planning.

John Waters- Trustee with lead responsibility for the Heritage Carriages Programme and Trust Use of Sherrings Yard.