



WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST LIMITED

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West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust

Business Plan

2024-2026

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Appendix 1: Organisational and Management Structure

Introduction

1. This is the latest Business Plan to be produced by the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust (previously 'the Steam Trust'). It covers 2024 to 2026 and will now be reviewed bi-annually.
2. The West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust Ltd is a charitable company established in 1972 and is one of three charities directly involved in supporting the West Somerset Railway. The others are the West Somerset Railway Association and the Diesel and Electric Preservation Group.
3. The Trust is now operating to its new Articles of Association and continues to focus on its core business areas which are summarised in the Objects below. 2023 was a period of intense consolidation and development across all its activities including some key changes in personnel and responsibilities
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.

Objects and Mission Statement

5. 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. Perhaps the most significant event of 2023 and indeed arguably over the lifetime of the charity was the opportunity to acquire the shed and trackwork at Washford which was owned and operated by the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust. This meant that the previous plan to occupy part of Sherrings Yard at Williton and which had only just been implemented including a new licence with the PLC quickly became subject to change. A complex and detailed set of commercial and legal negotiations, culminated in the purchase of the S and D assets at the end of January 2024 and the entry into a long-term lease with the WSR PLC for the use of the site. Further details are set out later in the Plan.

The Board of Trustees and Organisational Structure

9. The Trust Board was delighted to be able to appoint Chris Austin as its new President. In addition to being a past Chairman of the Trust, Chris has an association with the WSR going back many years. A previous Chairman of the PLC and career railway man, Chris continues to be active in the wider railway scene both as a published author and Secretary to the All- Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Railways.

10. The Board of Trustees has seen some further changes in 2023. John Waters was appointed to the Board early in the year with the portfolio responsibility for heritage carriages restoration and was subsequently elected at the 2023 AGM. Mike Thompson, Helen Anson and Martin Brown were all re-elected at the same meeting. John Robinson then joined the Board in autumn 2023 with portfolio responsibility for safeguarding. Due to family and other commitments, the Board said goodbye to Matt Jackson as MRG representative. Following a formal recruitment process, George Legg was appointed as the new MRG manager in early 2024.

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 Appendix 1.

Our Volunteers

12. Volunteer numbers remained fairly stable during 2023 and we currently have around 65 active volunteers, but we expect to add more new people in 2024 as the work of the Trust gathers momentum and is more widely known. Unfortunately, because 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. Over the Plan period we seek to build volunteer capacity through active recruitment and continuing development of individual volunteer skills and experience. We need to enhance our volunteer workforce the full range of activities and projects outlined in the Plan.

Our Members

15. Membership of the Trust has now stabilised at around 100. Membership of the Trust is currently open to anyone donating at least £12 a year. The Board of Trustees 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. In order to pursue these objectives, the Trust Board has appointed a new Membership Secretary with important responsibilities in both areas, details of which are set out in the proposals for 2024 and beyond later in the Plan.

Achievements in 2023

16. 2023 saw the West Somerset Railway return to a period of stability and growth with the PLC seeing increases in ridership and income under the stewardship of a strengthened Board and new General Manager and senior management team. The Trust played its part in this revival of fortunes and, although there is a long way to go, the charity can look back on a number of significant achievements during the year and specifically:

- 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;
- Completion of coach No 6705 with the exception of final braking tests and authorisation of fitness to run examination. We hope to make the coach available for operational use as well as static display during 2024;
- 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 (now overtaken by developments at Washford);
- Some progress with the repair, repainting and reinterpretation of Blue Anchor Museum although further structural problems meant additional delays to completion, There is still more to do in terms of external protection and the Museum is unlikely to reopen in its reinterpreted form until later in 2024 at the earliest;
- 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. The opportunity this consultation presented had a direct bearing on the strategic decision taken by the Trust to purchase the assets from the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust and enter into a long-term lease with the PLC (see below);
- Contributing financially to heritage infrastructure resilience through donations to the PLC including the long-awaited relay work at Blue Anchor and reinstallation of the catch point. There have been further delays to this project, but it is due for completion in early 2024.

The Work Programme for 2024-2026

18. The following paragraphs describe the intended developments in each area.

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. The museum has until October 2025 to have its application accepted. Support for the project is provided by the Southwest Museums Network.

20. During 2023 further work was 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 its own right. The Museum Accreditation Working Group (MAWG) also undertook a review of how the Trust organisational and management arrangements and governance structures operate and are set out and publicised. Agreed changes are set out in the Plan (see later).

21. The search for a Museum Mentor proved difficult and so with the agreement of the Southwest Museums Network, Helen Anson is providing specialist advice to the Working Group. Helen has extensive previous experience of museums management and development including formal academic qualifications. Ongoing tasks for 2024 include:

- To finish consolidating Trust procedures and policies and ensuring their implementation. This includes final work in early 2024 on the organisational and management arrangements;
- To complete the Trust action plan in response to the Arts Council Spectrum 5.1 accreditation standards guidance in 2024;
- To develop a People Plan framework that will complement parallel work on equality, diversity and safeguarding (see below)
- To achieve full accreditation status for the Gauge Museum if possible, earlier than October 2025.

Museums and Collections

22. The Trust manages the Museums at Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor through Agreements, leases and 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. This work will continue into 2024 and 2025.

23. 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.

24. In 2024, in terms of ongoing work the Trust will continue with:

- Implementation of our collections care policies and procedures and the management of our collections;
- To improve the heating retention and temperatures particularly on the Lower Ground Floor;
- 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;
- Sourcing a volunteer with specific responsibility for collections care not only those items displayed in the Museums but also in storage on the Bishops Lydeard site and elsewhere;
- 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 in 2023 was the agreement with the WSR PLC to offer hospitality to visitors in the Station House garden and this was successfully trialed during the 2023 Spring Gala and other special events.

25. 2023 was a more disappointing year for our other Museum site at Blue Anchor station. The major restoration and reinterpretation programme was unable to be completed due to continued problems with the exterior of the building largely caused by the condition of the bank at the back and the ongoing difficulties with water ingress. Almost all the display boards, shelving, cases and audiovisual equipment are now available for installation. A longer- term solution for the embankment and protective measures for the building will need to be identified and agreed with the PLC and a programme of remedial action implemented.

26. Blue Anchor will predominantly be an unstaffed Museum with day-to-day oversight being kindly undertaken by the Station team. Volunteers will be deployed for special events and galas as required. Although internal renovation has gone well with superb work undertaken by a volunteer team led by Ian Camp and John Anson, the ongoing problems with external infrastructure have meant that the completion and reinterpretation of the Museum continues to be delayed and, at the time of writing, reopening is unlikely to take place until sometime later in 2024 at the earliest.

27. 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 underpinned by a People Plan mentioned above and which will be further developed during 2024.

28. Further activities across the Museums and Collections will include:

- Development of a small retail area within the Gauge Museum in order to help boost the funds of the Trust for reinvestment in its business priorities;
- Implementation of the updated Collections Management and Care policies that have been approved by the Board in late 2023;
- Initiation of a new Guest Lecture programme on the Lower Ground Floor of the Gauge Museum or as part of wider outreach programmes;
- Operation of the new facilities at Blue Anchor Museum;
- Provision of updated leaflets and digital advertising for 2024 covering the Museum and the Model Railway.

29. 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

30. We are very grateful to Matt Jackson for all that he achieved 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. Following the appointment of George Legg as the new Manager, he will continue to pursue the aim of enabling younger volunteers 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.

31. In recognition of 2023 being the 30th anniversary of the Model Railway Group, Matt Jackson arranged for Railway Modeller magazine to feature our layout Gauge Junction in their January 2024 issue. We hope to be able to find additional and new ways of showcasing the work of MRG and the wider activities of the Trust over the next two years using amongst other opportunities, the new capacity and skills being applied to PR and Communications (see below)

32. 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 operators with model railway rolling stock who are prepared to lend and run their own items;
- 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.

33. 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. This will be part of our new People Plan (see below)

Heritage Carriages Restoration Programme

34. 2023 was a momentous year for the Heritage Carriages Restoration Programme (HCRP). Having secured a long-term licence for part use of Sherrings Yard at Williton, the suggestion was made to the Trust that it could possibly acquire the engineering shed and trackwork at Washford owned by the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust (S and D Trust). Their lease with the PLC was expiring at the end of November 2023 and, following Board discussions and recognising that we had just entered into an agreement with the PLC at Williton,

Trustees nonetheless felt that this was too good an opportunity to miss. This was particularly the case since the cost of new build

shed arrangements at Williton together with the associated trackwork to connect to the WSR was likely to be significantly greater than the purchase price negotiated with the S and D Trust

35. Accordingly, following detailed commercial negotiations and legal work, the Trust took possession of the Washford assets at the end of January 2024 and entered into a 10- year lease agreement with the PLC for the use of the site. The Williton lease has been surrendered back to the PLC. A Washford fit out plan was rapidly developed by John Waters and the HCRT team and a budget for this work together with the transfer of carriages from Williton and Dunster siding has been agreed by the Board. The next 12 months will see the progressive transfer of vehicles to Washford either by rail or road and carriage 6705 is already under cover there to enable final work to be completed before it is ready for operational deployment on the WSR and/or static display.

36. Carriages not being worked on by the team will be stored in Washford Yard. The challenges associated with outdoor storage will continue although vehicles will not be as exposed as those that were stored at Dunster Beach. Tarpaulins will continue to be the method of coverage for the foreseeable future. However, the Trust has secured agreement with the PLC within its new lease to enable Trustees to pursue the provision of covered accommodation across at least one of the sidings at Washford and this will be the subject of a future fundraising exercise.

37. Carriage 3639 is the current main restoration project. The Trust will be seeking external funding to support the work of the team going forward and it is hoped to make formal applications to funding bodies in the first half of 2024.

38. During 2023, the Restoration Programme benefited from the acquisition of additional volunteers to support the work of the team. The Trust will continue to seek more volunteers to help with the heritage carriages programme. It is anticipated that the ability to work under cover and the availability of new engineering facilities and plant will enable the HCRT team to accelerate restoration work and we hope that that will be an incentive to people across the WSR and outside to get involved in this new and exciting chapter for carriage restoration.

39. The acquisition of the Washford site represents a significant step forward in starting to find covered storage solutions for our heritage carriage fleet together with beginning to implement the WSR wide Report of the Covered Accommodation Working Party. It not only delivers covered engineering and storage space but provides the opportunity for additional covered accommodation in the sidings.

40. In the same vein, the Trust intends to reopen discussions with the PLC regarding the proposed Covered Canopy Project for the Cattle Dock at Bishops Lydeard. The scheme was paused in 2023 due to capacity issues and other priorities for the charity. Discussions will begin again from April 2024 with a view to getting final agreement with the PLC so that the Trust can proceed to fundraising for the scheme. If delivered, the Covered Canopy will provide display capacity for an additional coach and either a small locomotive or heritage goods vehicle.

41. With the latter in mind and given that relocation of the Horsebox currently residing on the Cattle Dock is a necessary enabling works, the Trust has begun exploring its restoration. This is not a straightforward exercise and although the PLC have generously donated a chassis, the restoration requirements and skills are not necessarily all available on the WSR. This again will be subject to an external fundraising exercise.

Education, Learning and Community Engagement

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 through her work and that of the Learning Assistant team with primary schools and local community groups. The 2024 Programme has been signed off by the Trust Board and includes under the banner “Advancing the Learning Offer”. Key elements of the programme include;

Finalising the Reinterpretation of Blue Anchor Museum

43. Completion of the interpretation boards and installation of the audio-visual and hands-on exhibits in a similar approach to that adopted for the Gauge Museum. Working with the BA Renovation team, there will be a new selection and interpretation of a collection of objects for display to promote the story of the northern end of the line.

The limited space at BA will be used flexibly with the intention that it be a potential location for lectures, exhibitions and school learning sessions.

Schools Programme

44. Working with the new PR and Communications Coordinator (see below), there will be regular mailshots to schools including development of special offers throughout the year e.g. discounts to encourage schools to participate in times of financial constraint. One of the highlights will be the evacuee session as part of the 1940s WSR event that can be delivered on board the train as part of the journey. This will also include a package of evacuee experiences.

45. Subject to schools participation, it is intended to put together a new schools event around the 150th anniversary of the railway to be launched during the summer term and potentially developed into an exhibition for the summer months.

46. Another new initiative may be developing a natural history base sessions per schools to be delivered in the station garden.

Lecture Programme

47. As has already been mentioned, the Trust is intending to provide a series of Guest Lectures in the Lower Ground Floor of the Gauge Museum and in other locations. The lectures will focus on a range of topics to do with the WSR and wider railway matters. A number of speakers have already been secured. This will be a fundraising activity for the Trust, and it is hoped that, if successful, the programme will be repeated in 2025 and beyond.

Extending the Museum Offer

48. Continuous improvement and innovation is very much the order of the day for the Education and Learning Programme. It is intended therefore to:

- Develop a script for a museum tour that can be delivered by Stewards/Learning Assistants as part of a premium offer;
- Develop a script for a travelling tour of the line to be delivered on the trains;
- Re-develop the children's trail and print professionally as a commercial product to be sold in the museum.
- Continue to add to video and audio material for touchscreens in both museum buildings
- Create a rolling programme of STEM/Craft activities for Stewards to promote within the museum at all times for families.

Developing the Gauge Museum Outside Area

49. The Board believes that greater use of the garden and outside area between the Museum and Station House provides opportunities for showcasing more of what the Trust has to offer. In terms of the Education and Learning Programme, the ambition is to develop a picture trail based on artwork completed as part of the Wild Escape Project in 2023. We also want to (as an interim provision pending development of the Cattle Dock Project (see above)) use the cattle dock area as part of a "Discovery Zone" creating a linked experience between the Museum and the Garden.

50. We also intend to develop areas of the garden as "hands-on" discovery areas e.g. bug hotel and birdfeeders.

Major Projects

Washford Shed Mobilisation and Development

51. Washford Shed and yard mobilisation and development will continue to occupy a significant amount of project management time within the Trust sitting alongside completion and reopening of Blue Anchor Museum and continued work on the Heritage Carriages Restoration Programme. The carriages will begin to move from Williton to Washford in March 2024 and the horsebox body together with the intended chassis will be brought together for storage at Washford from Bishops Lydeard and Dunster respectively.

Cattle Dock and Siding, Bishops Lydeard

52. As outlined in the previous iteration of the Business Plan and referenced above, the Trust has been unable to pursue its aspirations for the Phase 1 Covered Cattle Dock Canopy scheme as part of the wider project “Enhancing Platform 1 Experience” at Bishops Lydeard. This is primarily due to capacity issues in terms of business priorities across the charity and the PLC. However, it is intended that discussions be recommenced during 2024.

53. It is worth reiterating the current position and basic proposition. Although the business proposal for the wider project 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. 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

54. 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 WSRA as well. It is hoped that a solution can be found in 2024 such that a proposal and plan can be put together.

Washford Station

55. As part of the lease agreement with the PLC for the use of the yard, the Trust has committed to support the operating company with the development of Washford station now that it is back under direct PLC control. This may include examining the opportunities for artefact exhibition and other heritage developments as well as helping to maintain the station in good order. The intention is to improve passenger and visitor numbers and see Washford as a potential destination in its own right particularly if the opportunity to offer managed visits to the engineering facilities is pursued once the mobilisation plan has been fully implemented.

Technology Development

56. 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. A cashless payment function will also be installed at Blue Anchor Museum ready for the 2024 season. The charity continues to update its website and social media presence to improve the visibility of the organisation and promotion of its activities. This is being strengthened by enhanced PR and Communications activities (see below).

57. The MODES digital archiving project has come on leaps and bounds since its introduction in 2021 and is now the established archiving tool for the Trust. There are now three volunteers who are conversant with the programme and it can now be remotely accessed reliably as well as benefiting from a larger and more secure backup facility. Recent and more user-friendly updates by the developer has enabled the team to more easily search for artefacts as well as opening opportunities for access for those without formal training on MODES. The intention is to be able to provide more information about artefacts on display for transition to the Trust Website.

58. The Trust now has around 3000 items digitally archived with about 400 to 500 still to be done. As has been mentioned previously, the Trust will seek to recruit a volunteer with specific responsibilities for collections care and management.

59. In archiving, and then storing, it remains a challenge to ensure that this was being done in conditions that were not detrimental especially given the wide range of materials represented in our collection. A recent visit from SW Museums Network showed that, in those storage areas that now have background heating/humidity controls, conditions were generally acceptable. But it was clear that the care of artefacts is complex and needs a volunteer dedicated to this activity.

60. In looking to further explore the benefits that technology can bring in support of the heritage offer, the Trust will continue to strive for solutions that enhance the visitor experience as well as improving the way that the Trust is run. Some examples of this include:

- examining further options for hands-on visitor activities in museums e.g. Signal Box Museum 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 website and social media developments;
- updating hardware and connectivity.

Safety and Compliance

61. The Trust takes its responsibilities and obligations for safety and compliance in respect of its volunteers and its activities very seriously indeed. It was very fortunate therefore that we were able to appoint Martin Brown as our portfolio lead in this area. Getting to grips with the safety and compliance agenda understanding that it remains largely the same as in 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 an implementation plan and audit process. 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;
- that we reflect good practice and sector wide guidance such as that provided at the HRA Spring 2024 conference from HMRI in respect of safe working at height.

62. A particular focus in early 2024 has been to ensure that the safety and compliance requirements for the use of Washford Yard have been developed, discussed and agreed with the PLC. This includes a number of risk assessments designed to ensure that Trust volunteers can work with confidence and safety both within the engineering environment and out in the yard.

63. To move the requirements in Paragraph 60 above forward, a corporate risk management framework is being produced for consideration by the Board and eventual implementation during 2024. This will enable Trustees and volunteers to focus on the immediate priorities and to ensure that the items identified by the “traffic light system” that are deemed to be the highest risk are dealt with speedily and with rigour. Attention is also being given to fire risk assessments in all the building locations operated by the Trust.

Communications and Public Relations

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

65. However, Trustees have taken the view that with the increasing awareness of the work of the Trust and its contribution to the West Somerset Railway, the need to grow our volunteer base and continue to improve our finances, it was necessary to identify somebody to focus on communications and PR across the charity. Accordingly, the Board was delighted when Sarah Hayes agreed to return to the railway in the role of PR and Communications Coordinator. Sarah has taken responsibility for our contributions to internal and external publications and is busy

starting to collect information about the activities of the Trust for regular publication on both the website and Facebook. She is also exploring other social media opportunities that align with the values and ethos of the Trust.

66. We want to improve our communications with Trust Members and to that end, there will be a lot of partnership working with the new Membership Secretary (see below) in supporting the push to grow the Membership base and provide them with more regular outputs so that they can more easily see the end product of both their membership contribution and where their donations are being used.

Corporate Development

67. A considerable amount of governance review work was undertaken in 2023 and will be ongoing through 2024 to support the application for Museum accreditation with the Arts Council. Specifically, the Trust has:

- Reviewed and updated its management and organisational arrangements. A summary of the current position is included as Appendix 1 to this Plan;
- Continued to review, update or develop new policies and procedures that reflect the objects and powers of the Trust and the specific requirements of accreditation;
- Established a Finance and Governance Group. Early work to emerge from that forum has included a formal paper on Decision Making and Delegation of Authority which was approved by the Trust Board in December 2023 with amendments in January 2024;
- Agreed process for determining portfolio- based budgets (see below);
- Began to look at the development of a People Plan as part of its move to attract and retain more volunteers and specifically looking at younger age groups to aid with succession planning. This will include further progress with ongoing training and development;
- Taken forward developments in Safeguarding (see below).

68. Of particular importance has been the emerging work on Safeguarding. The Trust Board was fortunate in securing the services of John Robinson who has taken the portfolio responsibility for Safeguarding (including DBS, inclusion and diversity). Given his Human Resources background, John is also leading on developing the People Plan. The Trust Board has agreed an implementation plan for DBS certification and will look to implement a Safeguarding Policy following consideration at its March 2024 Board meeting.

69. We continue to engage with the Southwest Heritage Trust and the Southwest Heritage Museums Development and participate in a number of their courses and workshops across a variety of topics relating to heritage, museums and collections.

70. 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.

71. The level of administrative work across the Trust has increased significantly particularly with regard to the Museums and the Learning and Education Programme. The addition of Sarah Hayes and Chris Bolt (see Membership below) will help particularly with event organisation and publicity and fundraising respectively.

Finance and Fundraising

72. The Trust Board has continued to manage the financial resources of the charity responsibly and carefully. Once again, we ended 2023 in a good 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.

73. However, the acquisition of Washford shed and yard together with the cost of disengaging from the Williton licence and the inception of the Washford lease has had an impact on Trust finances. Considerable expenditure has been required both in terms of asset purchase and lease costs together with their attendant legal fees.

The operational income model of the charity has remained largely unchanged for some time now and this will not be sufficient to cover the outgoings of the Trust without some significant additional income to meet the demands of our business programme and the level of overheads. The latter are kept under continuous review by the Treasurer but inevitably a number of these costs are fixed and are influenced by factors outside the control of the charity including inflation.

74. Accordingly, following a review in 2023, the Board established the Finance and Governance Group to look at ways of improving income generation on a recurrent basis together with looking at aspects of governance that underpin decision-making in finance and other areas of activity. In December 2023 the Board received proposals to look at areas where income could be generated, and these are being pursued in 2024. A number of these may impact on Members and volunteers and there will be consultation as necessary before any changes are made.

75. The Trust continues to look at ways in which it can continue to receive legacies and donations and that work will form part of the agenda around Membership and sponsorship during 2024 (see below).

76. One of the consequences of this position is that the Trust will need to, in the short term (unless they are targeted donations and legacies) more closely align its financial support for the running of the railway particularly heritage infrastructure, to its overall financial position and priorities. The operating company receives a significant contribution in kind from the Trust to the management and upkeep of railway assets in addition to the buildings and facilities for which the charity pays through a variety of licences, leases and other agreements.

77. In relation to financial governance, 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.

78. 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 its finances and seeking to deliver against its objects and powers.

79. A review of the current position on Trust finances illustrates the fact that a considerable amount of money has been spent with the acquisition of Washford Yard and ensuring that the heritage carriages team have the equipment and materials to continue their work. In recognition of this, the charity will need to improve its abilities to generate recurrent income to cover the costs of its annual activities. This will be a major initiative during 2024 through to 2026. It also means that many of the projects that the Trust wishes to undertake will need to be externally funded unless new legacies and/or donations appear over the period of the Plan.

80. 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.

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST**BUSINESS PLAN 2024 TO 2026**

	2024	2025	2026
INCOME			
MEMBERSHIPS	7500	8000	10000
Donations			
BL Cash	2500	3000	3000
BL Electronic	1000	1500	1500
Model Railway Group	750	750	750
BA	1000	2000	2000
	10000	15000	20000
BL Sales	750	1000	1250
School Visits	1000	1500	1500
BL Room Hire	500	1000	1000
GIFT AID	4500	5000	6500
Regular Income	<u>29500</u>	<u>38750</u>	<u>47500</u>
LEGACIES	5000	10000	15000
Grants			
Horse Box Restoration	20000	0	0
BL Cover			
Museum Extension			
TOTAL INCOME	<u>54500</u>	<u>48750</u>	<u>62500</u>
EXPENDITURE			
OPERATING COSTS			
MUSEUMS AND ADMINISTRATION			
Rents			
BL	9000	8540	8555
BA	900	930	960
Washford	15000	15000	15000
Site Costs			
BL	2000	2000	2000
BA	750	750	750
Model Railway Group	1000	1000	1000

Washford	3000	3000	3000
Admin			
Web site	500	500	500
Insurance	2400	2500	2600
Post, Print, Stationery	500	600	700
Electronic Donations	450	475	500
Modes Support	200	240	280
Legal Support	800	900	1000
Accounting	900	950	1000
Memberships	500	600	700
Other	500	500	500
Schools and Community Engagement	10000	10500	11000
Total	<u>48400</u>	<u>48985</u>	<u>50045</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) excluding projects	6100	-235	12455
Washford Purchase	78000	0	0
Washford Setup	35000		
Carriage Relocation	15000	0	0
Heritage Carriages	20000	20000	20000
Horse Box Restoration	10000	15000	0
BA Refurbishment	1000	0	0
BL Cover/Cattle Dock	0	0	0
PROJECT EXPENDITURE	<u>159000</u>	<u>35000</u>	<u>20000</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>207400</u>	<u>83985</u>	<u>70045</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	-152900	-35235	-7545
RESERVES			
B//Fwd	337000	184100	148865
C/Fwd	184100	148865	141320

81. 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. The Trust is anticipating a lower-level of income in 2024 and so will be managing its business priorities and expenditure accordingly. Clearly, if income is greater than expected then the position will be reviewed in year.

82. One of the new ways in which Trustees will look to manage finances will be through the introduction of portfolio budgets in 2024. Following detailed work by the Finance and Governance Group, the Trust Board approved the establishment of a budget model with Trustee portfolio holders being accountable to the Board for the management of charity resources and the application of funds against agreed levels and business priorities. This is a significant step forward for the Trust and the system of budget management will be adjusted incrementally as the experience of the new model is acquired.

83. Another key step in 2024 will be a move to active external 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 the necessary outcome.

84. One of the important aspects of regulatory and financial governance is the need for the Trust as a small charity to commission an annual External Inspection Report on its accounts. Following the successful competitive quotation process in 2022, the Trust used its new external auditors for the first time in 2023. That process went well and will be followed again over the lifetime of the Business Plan.

Membership and Sponsorship

85. The Trust Board recognises that perhaps historically, there has been insufficient communication and interaction with Members and that, particularly given recent past events, there has also been an understandable reluctance to grow the Membership base. However, discussions within the Trust Board and also at the Finance and Governance Group have recognised that this is not a sustainable position. The Board believes that Members need to be encouraged both in terms of understanding the work of the Trust but also that more effective engagement is likely to lead to increased support and incentives to others to join the charity in pursuit of its objects and work programme. This includes looking at ways in which sponsorship could be pursued as a means of securing additional income generation on a regular basis.

86. The work cannot be done without the necessary capacity and skills to undertake it and therefore the Trust was delighted, following an external recruitment process, to welcome back Chris Bolt as Membership Secretary. Chris has been working on identifying the key actions necessary to progress both Membership and Sponsorship. These were considered by the Trust Board in March 2024 and the programme of work agreed. This includes:

- improvements to the Membership database;
- a review of Membership subscriptions and incentives to join and remain;
- communication with Members;
- increasing Member numbers and;
- developing a Corporate Membership scheme.

87. The initiative will be rolled out in 2024 and will include consultation with the existing Members on any significant changes to current arrangements.

Risks and Challenges to Delivery

88. 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.

89. 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 significant outlay on the acquisition of Washford Yard and the ongoing cost of its use has had a major impact on Trust finances.

The Trust therefore has to find ways of replenishing its resources not only to fund its programme of projects and enhancements but also in recognition of the fact that the annual cost of running the charity has also increased as a result of a number of these changes and developments. 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.

90. 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. The development of the People Plan and an action agenda to follow that in relation to a dedicated and focused approach to recruitment will be a major aid in helping to both acquire additional skills and enthusiasms but also to mitigate the impact of loss of older volunteers over the lifetime of the plan.

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

- That the railway remains a functioning operation and going concern over the lifetime of the Plan and beyond;
- the Trust is able to see continued positive income generation to be able to fund projects and meet ongoing commitments;
- the Trust has the ability to write convincing bids for additional funds for specific projects and is successful in its endeavours;
- the number of volunteers being sustained and increased to reflect the enhanced range of activities of the Trust;
- major new 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;
- 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;
- the impact of external factors beyond the control of the Trust including changes in legislation affecting charities, changes in safety legislation that impact on costs and insurance costs.

Evaluation and Review

92. Because many of the projects and programmes that the Trust has increasingly span more than one calendar year and have long lead-in times where they are new initiatives, there will be a change in the frequency of Business Plan review. This will now occur biannually. In doing that however, Trustees will continue 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.

West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust

Board of Trustees

April 2024

Appendix 1

West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust Organisational and Management Arrangements

The Trust is a charity and company. It is run by a Board of Trustees who are also Directors and the organisation is registered with both the Charity Commission and Companies House. It is a wholly volunteer-based organisation and runs within the context of the West Somerset Railway workforce arrangements in terms of authority to work, safety and induction.

The Board Trustees currently consists of 10 Trustees. The organisation has been reviewed and updated in the last three years with each Trustee position having a portfolio responsibility related to the objects and activities of the Trust. Each Trustee is accountable to the Board through the Chairman. The Chairman is accountable to the Board. The charity also has a President which is an honorary position. As at January 2024, the Trustees and their roles are:

Role	Portfolio Responsibilities
Chairman Mike Thompson	Strategic leadership, policy development, external relationships and policy oversight
Vice Chairman and Company Secretary Steve Williams	Corporate Governance, organisational development, business planning,, fundraising, PR and Communications
Treasurer Don Fraser	Financial management, financial planning, financial governance, budget setting oversight and membership
Heritage Carriages Programme John Waters	Team coordination and management, programme development, budget management, project management
Museum Curator Ian Camp	Museums management and coordination, managing and coordination of stewarding team, collections care oversight, project development and management and budget management
Learning, Education and Community Engagement Helen Anson	Learning Assistants team management and coordination, annual programme and project development, schools and community groups liaison, Accreditation Programme mentorship and budget management
Safety and Compliance Martin Brown	Programme development, risk assessment and management, corporate risk register, policy development and compliance oversight
Accreditation and Projects Geoff Evens	Accreditation, special projects and project management
Historian and Archivist Ian Coleby	Collections registration, digital archiving, heritage expert, MODES coordination
Safeguarding John Robinson	Policy development and compliance cultural change coordination

The charity has a flat structure where Trustees effectively operate as managers of their portfolio areas and to whom volunteers with specific responsibilities are accountable. Each Trustee has a role profile that includes a person specification and required skill set.

All roles and responsibilities are regularly reviewed and changes made in line with the requirements of the Trust and its business objectives. Organisational development is a key part of the three-year Business Plan and this is updated annually to reflect the changing environment on the West Somerset Railway, business and financial needs couple with capacity, skills and workforce availability.