

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST

Minutes of the meeting of Board of Trustees held on the 30th January 2025 at 5.30pm by Zoom video conference.

Present: Mike Thompson (Chairman) (MT) Steve Williams (SW)
 Helen Anson (HA)
 John Robinson (JR) John Waters (JW)
 Ian Colby (IC)
 Ian Camp (IDC) Don Fraser (DF)

In Attendance -Les Blake (Minutes)

853. Apologies.

Martin Brown

Action

854. Conflicts of Interest

SW advised that he had been working on a project for the PLC. To be noted in the Register of Trustee Interests. As this was the Company Secretary, the Chairman would confirm the correct entry.

SW/MT

855. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 29th November 2024

These were agreed as a correct record.

856. Matters Arising

Action Log was updated and distributed to all Board Members. Any outstanding matters were on the agenda.

857. Finance.

DF briefed the Board on the current financial position. All the finance reports had been circulated and were accepted by the Board.

DF advised that the 2026 financials would be available by the next meeting.

There has been only one response to date on audit quotations. The other 2 Companies have contacted DF today. (Subsequent to the meeting, the two further quotations have now been received). SW to establish interview panel and seek Trustee participation. DF to arrange dates with the companies.

SW/DF

Indicative 2025 Budgets have been circulated to Dept. Heads. DF will be holding discussions with each over the next few weeks with final budget proposals coming to the March Board for sign off.

DF

3639 Fundraising – SW updated the Board. Estimated that £200k would be needed. SW has had a preliminary discussion with the National Lottery Heritage Fund. A Project Enquiry form would now be completed and submitted. It was noted that this type of project must start within 12 months of approval and finished within five years. SW

858. Washford.

J W said that all the Trusts carriages are now at Washford. The Board recorded its thanks to Seb Welsh and other members of the PLC team who facilitated the movements.

It is hoped that the plans for the Working-at-Hight equipment will be signed off on the following Tuesday.

JW

6705 – work is progressing. 1st coat of paint has been applied. Insulation has been installed to stop rust. It is hoped that completion will be the end of March.

MT said that he had initiated discussions with the PLC and the SVR about the formation of a short heritage train to be run at the Spring Steam Gala. This required 6705 to complete its fitness to run examination and MT and JW would be pursuing this with Ryan Pope and Andrew Forster

MT/JW

859. Membership.

The update paper from Chris Bolt was circulated and noted by the Board.

860. Museums.

BL electrics. Following receipt of the quotation, the Trust has submitted an initial Project enquiry for the cost of the work to the Association of Independent Museums. If supported by AIM, a full application will be submitted in April.

SW

BA renovation. The Board received an update report. HA said that it was unlikely that full reopening would be possible in 2025 and was therefore recommending a two-stage approach with the Museum opening on 6th April subject to confirmation that no further water ingress or other problems were present. It was noted that the story boards are in place and that the audiovisuals and other display items would be installed in time for 2026.

The Board supported the recommendations and asked that the thanks of Trustees be passed on to the Project Team for all their hard work and perseverance.

HA/IDC

MRG – IDC reported that, following internal discussions with MRG members, a new organisational structure and reporting arrangement had been established. Trustees reiterated their view that they wished to see the model railway running on as many railway running days as possible. IDC to confirm arrangements and also linked with JR regarding Safeguarding and DBS requirements.

IDC/JR

Visitor experience – IDC produced proposals for a one-way system around the Museum and 9038 which would involve the creation of steps at the northern end of the carriage. The cost was noted and it was agreed that this initiative should be supported.

861. People Plan

Trustees have received the draft Volunteer Agreement. JR outlined the purpose of the document which would be internal to the Trust and set out how volunteers would work with responsibilities on both the charity and the individual clearly set out. The Board thanked JR for this work and approved adoption of the Volunteer Agreement. JR to lead on implementation.

JR

862. Education, Learning and Community Outreach-2025 Programme.

HA introduced her paper which sets out the programme of work for the coming operating season. Key aspects of this include:

- Updated literature, resource boxes and materials for schools;
- Implementation of the Talking Nature project using the South West Heritage Grant and in partnership with Cotford St Luke school;
- Steward Training on how to meet the needs of SEND visitors;
- Engagement with the PLC in preparation for Rail 200;
- Work on the IGGY project noting that 21st June will be “Dinosaur Day”;
- Introduction of quiet sessions for neuro diverse children and families;
- Rebooting the Learning Assistant team with the intention of advertising for new volunteers.

The Board thanked HA for all her hard work and fully endorsed the programme.

HA

863. Governance.

SW introduced a number of topics for Board consideration.

Accreditation – the Museum Accreditation Working Group has been continuing with its preparation programme for application and the following policies and procedures were considered by the Board;

- Collections Care and Management Policy and Procedure
- Disposals Policy
- Loans Policy and Procedure (Ins and Outs)
- Salvage and Damage Policy
- Acquisitions and Accessioning Policy and Procedure

These documents were approved by the Board for implementation. SW said that the policy on Heritage Carriages Care and Management was slightly more complicated than originally envisaged and he was in discussion on the draft with IDC and JW.

SW/IDC

It was noted that the independent Access Audit had been undertaken on 24 January By WELCIL and that the report was due shortly. This would be considered by MAWG and proposals brought to the March Board.

SW

Corporate Policies

SW briefed the Board on progress with a number of corporate policies.

- Conflict of interest Policy, Register of Trustees Interests and Declaration Form. This was work in progress. The new 2025 Declaration Form would be issued shortly for Trustees to complete and the Conflict of Interest Policy would come to the March Board for consideration. Once all the forms had been received, the Register of Trustees Interests would be updated and circulated to Board members. SW
- Corporate Risk Register – SW to meet with MB and JR in the next few weeks to review progress and update (date subsequently agreed as 28 February).

SW

Business Plan

Trustees have received the updated Business Plan developments. Following discussion, the Board approved their adoption into the current Business Plan. SW to coordinate work with Trustees.

SW

Museums Agreement with the PLC

SW said that with support from DF, he had drafted a new Agreement. This had been sent to Kerry Noble for consideration. (Subsequent to the Board, a meeting has now been arranged with the PLC GM for 27th February). SW will report back to the Board in March.

SW

WSR Matters

Trustees were reminded about the tripartite meeting scheduled for 10th February. One of the key issues would be the status of the Norton Project and its impact on the longer term business objectives of the Trust. Trustees were asked to confirm attendance.

Trustees

SW gave a brief assessment of the overall PLC financial position following Christmas.

Joint Fundraising. SW gave a brief update following the latest meeting. The current fundraising projects for the WSRA and WSR PLC were noted.

864 . Any other business

MT advised that he had been invited by Geoff Garfield to attend WSRA meetings and them to us as Observers. Following discussion, Trustees agreed that this would be a good way of developing partnership working and agreed to a 6 months trial.

DF asked if there were dates agreed for the AGMs. SW to follow up.

SW

865. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 27th March 2025 at 5:30 PM by Zoom.