



West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust

Registered Charity No. 265564



Learning Offer – Overview

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1. Purpose

The purpose of the offer is to promote the WSR as a heritage railway and thereby enhance the visitor experience through opportunities for lifelong learning.

2. Collaborating with Groups to provide the most Inclusive Offer

The WSRHT is enthusiastic about providing opportunities for learners of all ages and abilities and we enjoy collaborating with schools and other providers to ensure that the learning we offer is as diverse and accessible as possible.

The original Learning Offer was developed in collaboration with Primary and Early Years Practitioners, and since then we have embraced opportunities to collaborate with a range of different charities and alternative provision settings as well as taking advice from Speech and Language and Occupational Therapists.

- SIGHT Somerset
- Abbotsway School
- Local home-education groups

- Selworthy School (2025)

3 Group offers: (Targeted at Primary Schools and other Youth Organisations)

3.1 Museum Learning Sessions:

- Based on the Primary National Curriculum for History, Technology Science and Maths (STEM)
 - Designed to help children explore some of the key themes of the Heritage Railway
 - Learning Sessions are designed to take place in the Gauge Museum Bishops Lydeard or Blue Anchor and combined with a train ride.
- Current Learning sessions Include:
 - The Seaside (EYFS/KS1)
 - The Railway Children: Edwardian Life (EYFS/KS1)
 - Isambard Kingdom Brunel (KS1)
 - Victorian Britain: The Industrial Revolution (KS2)
 - Deadly Forces: exploring safety on the Railway (KS2)
 - WW2 and Evacuation (KS2)
- STEM Sessions (Can be adapted for either KS1 or KS2)
 - The Broad-Gauge Investigation
 - Brunel's great Bridge Challenge
 - Stephenson's Rocket Challenge
- Natural History Sessions (New for 2025) Exploring classification and biodiversity along the railway.

3.2 Schools Outreach Service:

- Reflect the same themes and content to the museum sessions but presented as an outreach session from the classroom of the booking school.
- Designed to raise awareness of the WSR and provide access to railway heritage during non-operational periods.

3.3 Schools Loans Scheme:

- Loan Boxes reflect the same themes and content to the museum sessions but are presented as a bookable resource box containing objects from the museum collection and resources/topic planning to allow teachers to take ownership of the learning for themselves.
- Story Sacks are available to KS1 and EYFS settings, covering a range of railway-themed children's books.
- Downloadable from the WSRHT Website, resource packs reflect many of the themes and ideas from the learning sessions but take the form of planning and resources for teachers to use in creating their own topic material.
- Allows access to the learning offer to schools across the country and indeed, the world.

3.4 Special Events Learning Packs for Schools

- Using a similar format to the digital packs, these are available on a limited basis and reflect themes relating to events of national significance to promote the continuing significance of heritage railways. Event packs so far have included:
 - Brunel's Anniversary Challenge (to mark the anniversary of the end of Broad Gauge)
 - The Platinum Jubilee Challenge

- The Wild Escape
- Railway 200 (To be launched later this year)

3.5 Special Events and Families Offer: (Targeted at the tourist and wider interest sector)

4 Museum interactives:

Within the museums themselves, we have developed a range of interactive learning activities, to encourage firsthand exploration of the collections. The most significant of these is our Learning Portal, an interactive screen that can be used to provide access to our photo archive, as well as puzzles and quizzes. In addition to this, we also have a range of firsthand exhibits. These include:

- The working signal box (BL)
- Hands-on mystery boxes (BA and BL)
- A selection of period costumes for children (BA and BL)
- Access to the Learning Portal (BA and BL)
- Children's Library and reading area (BL)

5 Museum Trails:

Our family trail is designed to encourage visitors to explore key themes of our railway heritage in greater detail. In addition to this, we also offer an adapted version of this for schools and two additional Science themed trails on Forces and Materials.

6 Family Fun Events: (Offered during galas, events, and holidays)

Family fun events are designed to encourage young visitors to engage with the science, technology, and history of our railway through a range of activities including creative design, art, object handling, storytelling, and role play.

7 The Garden Experience

The Station Garden offers a glimpse into the domestic history of the railway, showing how a Station Master's Garden might have looked. Herb Identification guides are offered for older learners, while a sensory trail provides an introduction to Victorian culinary and medicinal herbs for younger visitors.

New for 2025: Plans to create a wildlife exploration area for visitors to learn more about the diverse habitats along the WSR, including opportunities for firsthand investigations.

8 Exhibition and Performance Space

The lower floor of the Gauge Museum Bishops Lydeard has been designed as a flexible exhibition space, for visiting artists and performers to stage temporary exhibitions. Previous Exhibitions/Performances have included:

- The Peter Barnfield Exhibition: hosting works by local railway artist Peter Barnfield
- Inch by INCH: an exhibition of art and sculpture with creative workshops
- Coming Summer 2025 Iggy for All, including a performance from the Dinosaur Café.

9 Opportunities for Older Learners

9.1 The Lecture Programme

Designed to cater for either general interest of specialist groups, the Lecture programme offers on-site or visiting lectures on a range of Railway and Heritage subjects.

9.2 Research Opportunities

We are currently working on opening our archives and Library to serious researchers, providing space for them to investigate some of the more specialist items in our collection.

10 DOCUMENT CONTROL

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