

## WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST

**Minutes of the meeting of Board of Trustees held on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 5.30pm by Zoom video conference.**

**Present:** Mike Thompson (Chairman) (MT)                      Steve Williams (SW)  
                 Helen Anson (HA)    Chris Darke (CD)  
                 John Robinson (JR)    Martin Brown (MB)  
                 Ian Camp (IDC)

### **963. Apologies.**

**Action**

Ian Coleby and Don Fraser. SW apologised for not inviting Les Blake to the meeting and would email him the following day.

SW

### **964. Conflicts of Interest**

No new declarations

### **965. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 18th March 2026**

These were agreed as a correct record.

### **966. Matters Arising Not On The Agenda**

**i) Museum roof and Emergency exit** – IDC was still awaiting prices for the roof. The emergency exit, ramp and safety barrier would now be done internally following the unsuccessful grant application.

IDC

#### **ii) Proposed Junior Explorer Scheme**

IDC said that he was still keen to pursue options for encouraging younger volunteers to the Trust. With the demise of the PLC Trackers scheme, there was no formal pathway into the railway other than through MRG. SW said that we need to distinguish between the concept of membership and that of volunteer recruitment with the ability of young people to move through the Trust into the PLC. IDC would come back with further proposals working with JR.

IDC

#### **iii) Volunteer Issues**

JR and HA presented their discussion paper. The key messages were:

- the need for regular communication between volunteers and with the Board
- potentially better information sharing with the idea of e.g. a Volunteer newsletter similar to that prepared for Members
- the need for recognition and reward within the Trust in terms of contribution and commitment

It was noted that the Museums team (including MRG) and the Learning and Education team already benefited from regular briefing sessions at the beginning and end of the season with informal meetings taking place in between times. Trustees had now also begun a similar process at Washford and that most volunteers had significant opportunities to influence and shape the work of the Trust in their respective areas. Nonetheless, it was agreed that JR and HA should do

some further work to identify specific proposals that the Board could consider to improve matters and to bring further paper to the next meeting.

JR/HA

### **iii) Blue Anchor Museum-Accreditation Eligibility**

SW advised that he had submitted the eligibility questionnaire to the Arts Council. This would be assessed by the local South West Development Trust representative. In the meantime the Accreditation Working Group has its first meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May.

SW

### **iv) Trust Board visit to Washford**

This went very well with a number of key actions around carriages and covered accommodation emerging from discussions with the volunteer team.

## **967. Trust Fundraiser-Working Arrangements**

SW said that he was meeting Jess Rundle at the weekend and would be briefing her on the Trust business agenda and specific projects. He would then arrange for Jess to meet Trustee portfolio holders and key volunteers to understand their requirements and start to put together a work programme for engagement with external funders.

SW

## **968. CCTV Installation-Washford**

MB introduced his paper with proposals to install CCTV coverage for Washford yard. Given the value of the assets held there and the relatively open nature of the site the Board agreed that this was a necessary security step and approved the recommendations and preferred quotation. The PLC would need to be involved.

MB to action.

MB

## **969. Museum Artefact Disposal: Timing Methodology and Legality**

IDC shared an issue raised by the MODES team regarding the process and decision making in relation to any auctioning of museum artefacts. The Board confirmed that any auctioning of artefacts would need to comply with the Disposal Policy and that timing would be linked to when archiving was complete and the team were ready.

IDC

## **970. Finance**

### **i) Reports**

In DF's absence, SW presented the Finance reports. It was noted that there were no significant changes to current income expenditure patterns and that bank accounts were being managed in accordance with the operational needs of the charity.

### **ii) Legacies**

The Legacy Update was noted and SW summarised the current view regarding when the outstanding legacy payments could be expected to be received.

### **iii) Banking and Investments**

The transfer of resources to Brewin Dolphin was almost complete. Investment in the markets was being carefully calibrated in light of current geopolitical issues. The Trust would however continue to receive a favourable rate of interest from Brewin Dolphin in the interim. DF continued to move funds around the banking

arrangements in order to secure the best interest rates at any point in time.

Trustees asked that their appreciation of the work undertaken by DF be formally recorded.

#### **iv) Investment Plan-Draft 4**

SW said that he had completed the final draft with the inclusion of the wealth management programme as Appendix 3. Following discussion, the Trust Board approved the adoption of the Investment Plan as the implementation vehicle for the Investment Policy.

SW

#### **970. Financial Risk Register- draft 1**

The draft Register was presented by MB. He summarised the work undertaken to date involving himself, SW and DF. The current draft identified conclusions reached through discussion in Finance and Investment Committee (FIC) together with outstanding issues to be addressed.

Following Trustee discussion, it was agreed that Board members would provide MB with any comments within four weeks and that an updated version would then be produced for the July Board.

All/MB

SW said that one aspect of the gap analysis at FIC was the identification of 3 important areas of Trust business for which no agreed policies currently exist. These are:

- Insurance (the process of determining how insurance should be approached)  
-lead SW
- Cyber Security-Lead CD through IT Advisory Group
- Fraud-lead DF

Initial drafts will be considered at the next FIC and then brought to the Board for consideration. SW to coordinate.

SW

#### **971. Corporate Governance**

##### **i) Draft Directors Report 2025**

The draft Report was presented by SW. He said that, along with the Statutory Accounts which were already with the auditors, the document needed to be sent to AC Mole for assessment. There would still be an opportunity for any final amendments to be made at the July Board before circulation to Members for the 2026 AGM in September.

The Trust Board endorsed the draft. Any final comments should be with SW no later than 13<sup>th</sup> July.

All/SW

##### **ii) AGM Arrangements**

SW said that he was coordinating AGM arrangements on behalf of the Trust, PLC and Association for Saturday, 26 September 2026 starting with the Trust at 10 AM. Further details would be available to the Board at the July meeting.

SW

##### **iii) Finance Resilience Group**

The latest Minutes of the FRG were received. The financial position and forward look

of the PLC was noted together with the actions being taken around the carriage strategy (see below), works programme and PLC Appeal (see below).

#### **iv) Director ID Verification**

SW confirmed that in line with Companies House requirements, all Trustee IDs had now been verified and that the Trust Annual Return for 2025/26 had been submitted and accepted by Companies House.

#### **v) Proposed Trust Board Development Workshop**

SW referred to discussions at FIC with MB and DF. The status of the Trust and the responsibilities of Trustees had materially changed in the last two years and the proposition was that the Board could benefit individually and collectively from a development workshop which would be externally facilitated. Following discussion, it was agreed that this was a positive idea and should take place in autumn 2026. SW would take responsibility for sourcing a facilitator and suitable venue.

A draft programme would be prepared for the July Board meeting.

SW

### **972. Information Governance, Systems and Communication**

CD introduced the draft notes of the latest IT Advisory Group meeting and updated on latest thinking regarding modernisation of the Trust IT systems and data management/security arrangements. A number of decisions were under discussion and these would be brought to the next Board meeting for approval. CD and Matt Sutton had begun to have discussions (starting with SW) regarding data management and storage. Six of the nine Trustees were now using a dedicated WSRHT email address.

In terms of system modernisation and management, it was noted that there were two potential providers who would be able to support the Trust. It was also the case that support to Matt Sutton was required in managing the website (although Trustees and others would still be responsible for content).

Discussion about future use and scope of social media was also under consideration as part of a draft Communications Plan which CD would bring to the Board. He proof that Trustees on progress with the proposed WSR Communications Group.

In that context, HA advised the Board of her concerns regarding the limited information and placement of material about the Trust on the PLC website. CD said that he would take this up as part of ongoing discussions with the PLC.

CD

### **973. Trust Development Programme**

#### **i) Station House and Footbridge.**

Since the last Board meeting, both MT and SW had held further discussions. It was now understood that the PLC would collaborate on the technical assessment of installation of a footbridge at the southern end of BL. Accordingly, in discussion with MB who has agreed to lead the project for the Trust, SW had agreed with the PLC that a joint project group should be established to pursue this. He had already started networking conversations to identify potential footbridge options. In the meantime, MT had held further discussions with Clive Hetherington the interim CEO about the sale of Station House and also the future of the Station Farm field. It had been confirmed that the PLC would prefer the House to go to the Trust but

this would depend on the outcome of the footbridge discussions and agreement on valuation. The Board would be kept up-to-date with developments.

MT/SW/MB

## **ii) Platform 1 Welfare Facilities: Bishop Lydeard**

SW and IDC updated the Board. It was noted that the business case for the proposals was almost complete following receipt of costs for ground work and other enabling works from CJ Lynch. IDC summarised the difference in the options acquired and said that the lead-in time for installation was up to 16 weeks. The business case would be submitted to the Board between formal meetings and the Decision Schedule approached would be used to obtain a Trustee decision on the proposals.

SW/IDC

## **iii) Covered Canopy BL: Topographical Surveys**

A paper was considered outlining proposals to undertake topographical surveys similar to those completed for the proposed Visitor Centre. SW also said that the project group was looking at the disposition of artefacts in the Covered canopy space on the Cattle Dock together with options for the future location of 9037. The Board approved the expenditure on the topographical surveys.

SW

## **iv) Proposed Single Siding Covered Canopy-Washford**

This project was already in the Business Plan but the need to activate it had become more acute given space limitations in the Engineering Shed together with the need to put 6705 (and any additional carriages) undercover on a regular basis(see also item on Heritage Carriages Strategy below). Discussions had therefore taken place in FIC (and following the visit to Washford) about establishing a project group to develop proposals. This would also clearly need the input of the PLC. The Board approved activation and Agreed that the work should be led by MB supported by John Waters and the team.

MB

## **v) BL Visitor Centre**

It was noted that work on the specification and business case had begun. Information was awaited from the PLC on the hospitality brief. The PLC were firmly behind the proposal and the Chairman had started to communicate the vision and links to other developments at BL. More information would be provided at the next Board meeting.

MT/CD/SW

## **974.WSR Matters**

### **i) Carriages Restoration and Maintenance Strategy and Trust Heritage Carriages Work Programme**

SW summarise the current position on the WSR strategy. The PLC and the Association had terminated the historical hire agreement and were in discussion about how to take forward future restoration and maintenance of the Mark 1 fleet. This also included the QB set.

The Board was asked to endorse the Trust Heritage Carriages Work Programme as its contribution to the Strategy and implementation plan. This included the proposition the Trust should investigate the possible acquisition of additional (almost) ready to run vehicles (something that the PLC was very keen to see) in order to deliver the strategic objective of running a short form premium heritage train.

The Board endorsed the paper and agreed that MT and SW been mandated to open discussions on the additional vehicles with their respective owners.

MT/SW

## **ii) Discussions with PLC interim CEO**

MT and SW had both held discussions with Clive Hetherington. These were very positive and provided the opportunity for him to be briefed on Trust activities and plans.

## **iii) PLC Board Appointments**

The appointment of the 4 new Board Advisers to the PLC was noted. More detail on their respective roles would be shared when known.

## **iv) PLC Shareholder and Public Appeal**

SW reminded the Board of the background to the Appeal which had now been launched. The Trust was already playing its part in relation to the works programme but would be open to further opportunities (e.g. Station House) provided that these reflected business priorities and were within the charity Objects and Powers.

## **975. Any Other Business**

### **i) Recording of Volunteer Hours**

JR reminded the Board of the need to continue with the trial recording of volunteer hours. 5 Trustees were providing Excel or email returns. 2 Trustees had agreed to trial HOPS.

JR

## **976. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July at 5:30 PM by Zoom.