



West Somerset Railway P.L.C

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Tuesday, 10 November 2020

WSR Culture Heritage Recovery Fund Award – Implementation Update

This note is intended as the first of a series of regular updates to volunteers and staff about how and where the money is being spent in order to achieve the stated aims of the fund.

What is the Fund?

The Culture Heritage Recovery Fund (CHRF) is part of the £1.57 billion rescue package announced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to safeguard cultural and heritage organisations across the UK from the economic impact of COVID-19.

What was awarded to the WSR?

The WSR has been awarded £865,000 to help secure the railway's longer-term viability as a popular tourist attraction, educational offering, and preserver of heritage locomotives. The money must be invested by the end of March 2021 to receive the full benefit of the award.

Implementation Update

A programme implementation board has been brought together to manage the oversight of spending these funds, consisting of the signatories shown at the end of this message.

The first tranche of the grant money (50%) is expected to arrive soon, and the second tranche (40%) will be released later, with the final 10% withheld for contingencies, and in case funds not spent. This will be released subject to progress reports.

There are five key areas where money is planned to be used and a tentative budget has been allocated to each area based on the items submitted as part of the application process:

- 1 – Infrastructure (includes Buildings & Permanent Way)
- 2 – Engineering (includes Motive Power & Coaches)
- 3 – Operations (includes Signal & Telegraph)
- 4 – Covid-19 (creating secure environment)
- 5 – Commercial/Cultural/Behavioural

The board will be tracking expenditure in the coming weeks versus these budgets since all funding has to be spent by 31st March to comply with the rules of the grant award process

The initial plan has been forwarded to the management teams of each of the areas listed above to populate with the more details of resource, expenditure, dates etc

Progress and feedback so far

A significant amount of the monies will ensure that we can keep our skilled workforce in employment. Of the monies to pay for equipment and materials by far the largest amount is allocated to Infrastructure. Whilst it is good to have the money available, the challenge becomes ensuring we have enough staff and volunteers to do the work. We will need to ensure we keep accurate cost information, including detail on objectives with multiple quotations. This is especially challenging since much of the work is specialised and it is not always possible to find many competing parties for each project.

For Engineering, there are so many potential items requiring funding, the challenges are prioritising the work, obtaining appropriate quotations for all of the work required and then ensuring there is no 'drift' in items that may fall outside of the remit submitted as part of the original bid. The main focus of the original bid was on the repair and update of three locomotives plus preparing coaching stock for relaunch of services in 2021.

Most of the spending for Operations will be on salaries to retain staff, with a lesser amount for materials. The bid also includes funding for training requirements across the railway which will be coordinated by the volunteer development team. That team will identify the actions required when specific needs are identified, and any additional resources needed.

The Covid-19 budget cover the costs for running under Covid secure arrangements. The plan will be to have appropriate items purchased centrally and Martin Brown will work with station teams to clarify the work and resources needed to create a secure environment.

Commercial Spend will come later in the programme and be focused on funding promotions to help re-launch the railway early next year. Cultural & Behavioural needs must be in line with the fund's principles and will need to be developed in liaison with the volunteer development committee and the WSRA. Community outreach activities will be led by the WSSRT with the potential to offer volunteer academies to encourage younger entrants.

Questions and feedback.

If you have any questions on any of the processes reviewed here, please feel free to approach any of the programme board listed below.

Steve Williams (Chair)
Martin Brown (PLC)
Mike Thompson (WSSRT)
Geoff Garfield (WSRA)
Julien Weston (DEPG)

Note, Joy Boswell is also providing financial support to the programme and will be ensuring that we are keeping within the overall expenditure parameters.