



West Somerset Railway P.L.C

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WSR Culture Heritage Recovery Fund Award – Implementation Update - 3

This note is the third 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 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.

Projects currently underway:

The previous update contained a full list of the most visible, large scale projects underway, so this update is just going to focus on where there has been progress since the last review.

Roof repairs of the DEPG Goods Shed at Williton

The shed has now been completely cleared due to the instability of the roof structure and some of the grant has been used to provide funding for scaffolding around the shed which will continue until at least the end of March, whilst initial research and roof stabilisation work is carried out. Thereafter, it is anticipated the DEPG will take over responsibility for funding items specifically related to their continued usage of the site. It has also been agreed that a Williton Strategy Group will be reconvened to decide on the future of the shed itself.

Minehead Shed

Minor maintenance work has been approved to Minehead Shed including repairs the Main and Bay water towers, plus the Oil Separator. We have also approved the cost of two proposals for replacement of the DMU engine batteries which have time expired.

Repair and upkeep of rolling stock

Funding has been agreed to support repair work on two coaches TSO 4260 and BSO 9380.

General Infrastructure work

The fund has agreed to provide support for Andrew Young to return to the railway to provide oversight and certification of many initiatives underway. This is critical to ensure all work performed during the winter is properly signed off and authorised for operations.

It has also been agreed that the funding will be provided for minor repairs to Crowcombe bridge and to complete some further bridge inspections which have been identified as requiring potential maintenance work before re-opening in spring. The fund will also provide funding for a new drain cover at Watchet, support the costs of cutting repairs at Washford and to support the cost of a ballast refresh at two locations on the line.

In addition, funding has been provided for a number of re-training initiatives to ensure staff can complete refresher courses where competencies are required which have lapsed during the railway closure period.

The project to complete Doniford Curve Renewal & Drainage will now be funded by the WSSRT (now WSRHT) instead of the CHRF grant funding as restricted funds are available.

Commercial Promotions

It has been agreed that up to £10,000 will be set aside for the production of materials to help re-launch the railway following the lack of publicity during the 2020 closure period.

Cultural and Organisational Development

The engagement of temporary external resource has been approved to ensure work continues around improvement in operational safety & education/training based on ROGS requirements. This project is also part funded by PLC as well as the CHRF fund.

Costs are also being estimated in terms of enabling the re-instatement of all expired competencies on the railway. This included the operation of several refresher trains before the Santa operations and the associated operating costs of running these trains.

Apprenticeships

A total of two Apprenticeships are currently being planned – one in engineering and one in admin/marketing. As previously stated, the PLC will fund the wages, whilst the fund should be able to authorise funding for one-off mentoring and initial support of the new recruits.

Courses for the apprentices can be provided by Bridgwater College and the team has liaised with the Business Manager at Bridgwater College. All courses are at Level 2 certification and are available for a period of one to two years. Further research is being carried out about how these can be financed in the form of grants for college fees which are available. It is anticipated that the apprentices will commence their positions in February or March.

Other project still under review for funding:

- Completion of Track Renewal at Alcombe.
- Repair of rails which ultrasonic test has highlighted as defective.
- Flailing the overgrown line side vegetation either side of track.
- Concrete Sleeper Replacement and Fishplate oiling.
- Rail replacement required at Bye Farm crossing.
- Renewal of Drivers LED lights at Dunster Sea Lane crossing.
- Weed spray application - whole line in early spring.

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)