



West Somerset Railway P.L.C

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Thursday, 11 March 2021

Cultural Heritage Recovery Fund (CHRF) Update No 4.

This is the fourth in the series of updates for staff on progress with implementation of the CHRF grant.

We have just received the next drawdown of funds (£345,960) which means we only have £86,000 to claim before 31 March 2021. All the programme leads are working hard to get projects committed, invoiced and paid for by that date although some may inevitably run over. As you will recall, the criteria for the grant do not allow the PLC to fund capital projects such as rail renewal or building alterations. The money also only lasts until 31 March 2021. It does however give us some headroom in terms of also being able to demonstrate progress to ORR in terms of their expectations in preparation for reopening the railway.

Some of you may also know that the Department of Culture Media and Sport have invited applications for a second round of funding. We have therefore applied for a further £432,000 with a Business Action Plan setting out further proposals for expenditure in infrastructure engineering, mechanical engineering, training, Covid 19 prevention and marketing. We should know by 23rd March whether or not the bid has been successful. If it is, we shall be applying the same processes with the same people involved as currently.

Recent Progress

The following new projects have been approved by the Programme Board and are underway/have been implemented since the last update on 19th January. There have also been some revisions and updates to other existing approved schemes.

Infrastructure Engineering

- Stogumber access road and car park repairs
- Bridge repairs
- Line flailing programme
- Purchase of Permaquip Ironman
- RRV trailer repairs
- Whole line weed spraying
- Repairs to BL Goods Shed
- Tree felling
- Fishplate oiling
- Bridge overgrowth clearance

Mechanical Engineering

- Fitting out of BL compound tool container

- BL oil separator repairs
- Clearing of ME buildings gutters
- Repairs to carriage batteries
- Improvements to Minehead welding Bay lighting
- Repairs to BL water tower
- Replacement pit gratings Minehead shed
- Replacement welding fume extractors, Minehead and Williton
- PLC carriages upholstery repair/replacement

Covid 19

- Additional screens-Cafés and other areas
- Additional PPE
- Additional thermometers and sanitising equipment
- Gazebos for visitor shelter
- Additional racking
- Cafe equipment servicing
- Disposable cutlery and crockery

The Programme is also running a Cultural and Organisational Development Programme through the mechanism of something called the People Engagement Group, which has replaced the old Volunteer Recruitment Group. PEG has been working on a number of individual projects including:

- establishing apprenticeships linked to Bridgwater College (1 mechanical engineering at Williton and 1 for customer services at Minehead)
- developing proposals for environmental improvements along the railway
- looking at community outreach building on the work that the Heritage Trust has undertaken on learning and education,
- looking at how we can better address support for health and well-being amongst volunteers
- looking at how we can improve communications including making better use of WSR TV

In addition, many people will have seen that the PLC is out to advertisement for a new CME, Head of Infrastructure Engineering and Head of Operations. We are also looking for (on a voluntary basis) a new Volunteer Manager and Safety Lead.

As we near the end of the current Programme, it's appropriate to pay tribute to all those people who have made it a success in very challenging and time limited circumstances. The Programme Board (Geoff Garfield, Julien Weston, Joy Boswell, Martin Brown and Mike Thompson with administrative support from Les Blake) have done a superb job in helping to coordinate and oversee some fairly complex activities and have helped to ensure that everything has been done in a managed and professional way.

Key managers such as Andrew Young, Andrew Forster, Paul Fleet and David Noble have been at the sharp end of planning and delivery supported by Andrew Palk, Rhiannon Powis, Kerry Noble, Sam White and Michelle Waterman. Without their enthusiasm and commitment and willingness to go the extra mile on this, we would not be in such a great position to prepare to reopen the railway in May as we are now.

Everybody deserves a big round of applause!

Steve Williams

PLC CHRF Programme Lead

Book online at www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk